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THE MOTIF OF DEATH AND DYING IN THE POETRY OF MICAH JOSEPH LEBENSOHN: TRANSLATION AND ESSAY

Gary S. Fink

Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for Ordination

Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion
Cincinnati, Ohio

March, 1978

Referee, Professor Werner Weinberg

DIGEST

Micah Joseph Lebensohn (1828-1852), Modern Hebrew literature's first lyrical poet, expresses in his verse the highest aspirations of the human spirit and the agony of death in one's youth. In this respect, much of his poetry reflects the turmoil of his own spirit. At the age of seventeen, Lebensohn was severely stricken with tuberculosis. Cycles of deterioration and remission marked the next seven years until his death at the age of twenty-four.

The first part of the thesis consists of a translation of the Hebrew poetry of Micah Lebensohn ("Mikhal"). All of the poetry in his collection Shirei Bat Tsiyon and most of the poems in his Kinor Bat Tsiyon are translated in this thesis. The translation includes all poems of Mikhal which relate to the theme of death and dying. Many literary and linguistic Biblical allusions and references are cited in the accompanying notes.

The second part of the thesis consists of a critical essay concerning the motif of death and dying in Mikhal's poetry. The relationship between Mikhal's terminal sickness, his view of life and death, and his poetic expression of the motif are examined through study of his poetry and current literature concerning the psychology of death and dying.

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I would like to thank Linda Skopitz for all her efforts in typing this thesis.

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My wife Stephanie has given me encouragement and inspiration throughout this project. My days at Hebrew Union College have been brightened and my life has been deepened by her companionship.

To Stephanie,

My Shulamith

"When man falls in love,

he knows nothing but joy."

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INTRODUCTION

The first part of this thesis consists of a translation of the Hebrew poetry of Micah Joseph Lebensohn (1828-1852). Lebensohn, known as "Mikhal," died at the age of twenty-four. His works are collected in two volumes, Shirei Bat Tsiyon and Kinor Bat Tsiyon. All of the poetry in the former and most of the poems in the latter are translated in this thesis. The translation includes all of Mikhal's poetry which relates to the theme of death and dying. Lebensohn's translations of other writers are not included.

In this translation, the Hebrew style and text is followed as closely as possible without impinging on English usage. If the pattern of rhyme were adhered to, considerable paraphrase would be necessary in translation. The Hebrew style is maintained, therefore, through the meter of the poetry. The English version is guided by rhythm rather than rhyme to allow greater faithfulness to the Hebrew text. We have chosen in some cases not to follow the punctuation of the Hebrew text in order to more accurately reflect the sense of the verse. It should be noted that no English translation of complete poems of Mikhal has yet been published.

A 1924 edition of Micah Joseph Lebensohn--His Poems,

Translations and Letters edited by Jacob Fichman and published in Berlin was used as the main Hebrew text. Footnotes in the translation mostly consist of Biblical references to which the Hebrew text alludes. Mikhal used Biblical Hebrew as the vocabulary with which to mold his poetry. Although the purpose of this thesis is not to provide a complete index of Biblical literary and linguistic allusions, we have noted many of the references encountered during the course of the translation. Other footnotes serve as explanatory notes to the translation. Hebrew words that contain a double meaning may also be explained. Occasionally, a printing error will be noted as well.

The second part of the thesis consists of a critical essay concerning the motif of death and dying in Micah Lebensohn's poetry. The relationship between Mikhal's terminal sickness, his view of life and death, and his poetic expression of the motif are examined through study of his poetry and current literature dealing with the psychology of death and dying. Footnotes to the essay allude to poems of Micah Lebensohn translated in this thesis unless otherwise specified.

ABBREVIATIONS--

Books of the Bible

Gen.	Genesis
Exod.	Exodus
Lev.	Leviticus
Num.	Numbers
Deut.	Deuteronomy
Josh.	Joshua
Judg.	Judges
I Sam.	I Samuel
II Sam.	II Samuel
I Kings	I Kings
II Kings	II Kings
Isa.	Isaiah
Jer.	Jeremiah
Ezek.	Ezekiel
Hos.	Hosea
Joel	Joel
Amos	Amos
Obad.	Obadiah
Jonah	Jonah
Mic.	Micah
Nah.	Nahum
Hab.	Habakkuk
Zeph.	Zephaniah
Hag.	Haggai
Zech.	Zechariah
Mal.	Malachi
Ps.	Psalms
Prov.	Proverbs
Job	Job
Cant.	Cantillations
Ruth	Ruth
Lam.	Lamentations
Eccles.	Ecclesiastes
Esther	Esther
Dan.	Daniel
Ezra	Ezra
Neh.	Nehemiah
I Chron.	I Chronicles
II Chron.	II Chronicles

Transliterations follow the more exact style of the American National Standard Romanization of Hebrew.

שירי
בת ציון

SHIREI BAT TSIYON

שְׁלֹמֹה

כשאדם נער אומר
דברי זמר.
(ילקוט קהלת)

בֵּין שַׁדְמוֹת עִיר צִיּוֹן וִירוּשָׁלַיִם
בָּעִיר שֶׁחֻבְּרוּ כָּל הַדְרֵי תִפְאֶרֶת;
כָּל חֶמְדַּת אֶרֶץ, כָּל קָדְשֵׁי שָׁמַיִם
וַאֲרָזִים עָנְדוּ כוֹכְבֵי אֵל לַעֲטֶרֶת;

בָּעִיר רַבָּתִי, בַּתֵּבֵל הַגְּבֶרֶת,
שָׁם יָנֵץ זַיִת וּתְאֵנִים יָנוּבוּ;
שָׁם צוּפִים תְּטוֹפְנָה גַּפְנֵי אַדֶּרֶת,
גַּם חָלָב וּדְבַשׁ מִגְּבָעוֹת יָזוּבוּ;

רוּחוֹת רַנֵּן וָגִיל סָבִיב יִסְחָרוּ,
בָּהּ גַּם לָאָבִיב הֲלִיכוֹת עוֹלָמִים;
וּלְמֵי הַיַּרְדֵּן בִּגְדוֹתָיו יֶחְמָרוּ
כָּל חֹדֶשׁ מוֹעֵד, אַף חַגִּים הַיָּמִים;

וּבְנוֹת הַשִּׁירָה בָּהּ שֶׁבֶת חָמָדוּ,
בָּהּ בֵּין פִּרְחֵי מוֹר יֶהְגֶּה שִׁיר גָּבֹהַּ;
שִׁירִים וּפְרָחִים בָּהּ יַחַד נוֹעָדוּ,
פִּרְחָהּ הוּא מִזְמוֹר, אַרְזָהּ שִׁיר אֱלוֹהַּ;

"When a man is young, he recites words of song"
(Yalkut Kohelet)

In Jerusalem's vineyards, the City of Zion,
The city where all that is splendorous meets;
Where earthly delights, and the hallowed in heaven,
And cedars have crowned the Lord's heavenly host;

In the burgeoning city, on land so expansive,
The olive trees blossom, figs ripen and fluorish;
From rich fertile vines drips the honeycomb's nectar,
And milk and sweet honey flow from the heights;

The swirling winds spread their delight through the hills,
The cycle of springtime forever returning;
The waters of Jordan foam at their banks,
Each month marks a holiday, daily a feast day;

The sweet sound of song in Jerusalem dwells,
Verses exult among blossoms of myrtle;
Blossoms and poems there mingle together,
Her flowers and cedars chant hymns to the Lord;

---

2. Ps. 122:3   4. Job 31:36   5. Lam. 1:1   7. Prov. 16:24
10. Hab. 3:6

בִּכְלִילַת־יוֹפִי זוֹ אֶרֶץ הַשִּׁירָה
כָּל אֶבֶן סֵפֶר, כָּל סֶלַע הוּא לוּחַ;
וּבְנֵזֶר הַיְקוּם הִיא אֶבֶן מַזְהִירָה,
הִיא לִמְּדָה חִין אָדָם אַף רוּם הָרוּחַ —

בֵּין שַׁדְמוֹת עִיר צִיּוֹן וִירוּשָׁלַיִם
הָלֹךְ יֵלֵךְ בֵּן עָלֵז גַּם שָׂמֵחַ;
גָּבֹהַּ כַּתָּמָר וִיפֵה עֵינַיִם,
בִּיפִי עֲלוּמִים כַּנִּצָּה פּוֹרֵחַ.

אָדוֹם הוּא וָצַח וּפָנָיו יִנְהָרוּ,
לְחָיָו כַּשֶּׁלֶג וְשִׂפְתָיו שׁוֹשַׁנִּים;
וּקְוֻצּוֹת רֹאשׁוֹ כָּעוֹרֵב שְׁחָרוּ,
עֵינָיו כַּיּוֹנִים עֲלֵי מַעְיַן גַּנִּים.

גַּם הוֹד עַנְוָה־צֶדֶק לֹא יִבּוֹל נֶצַח
וּפְאֵר תֻּמַּת לֵב עַל פָּנָיו יָנוּחַ;
הַדְרַת עֹז רוּחוֹ לוֹ תּוֹפַע עַל מֵצַח,
כִּי כִּיפִי גֵווֹ יִיף בּוֹ גַם הָרוּחַ.

וּכְשֶׁלֶג הַלְּבָנוֹן לֹא יָדַע רָגֶל
בֵּן זַכּוּ עֲלוּמָיו לֹא עוֹד הוּעָמוּ;
עַל כֵּן לִבּוֹ יִחַד, נַפְשׁוֹ בּוֹ תָּגֶל,
כִּי עוֹד לֹא קִינִים עַל אָזְנוֹ רָעָמוּ.

17 Perfect in beauty, this land of the psalm,
Each rock and each boulder--are annals of time;
This radiant gem in the crown of creation
Gives grace to mankind, and makes lofty its spirit--

21 In Jerusalem's vineyards, the City of Zion,
Happy and carefree, a lad goes his way;
Like a date-palm in stature, his eyes bright and clear,
In the vigor of youth, like a blossoming bud.

25 Ruddy and fresh, his face shines with light,
His cheeks white like snow, his lips like the rose;
The locks of his hair deepest black as the raven,
His eyes like the doves upon springs in a garden.

29 Righteous humility always within him,
The glow of youth's innocence shines from his face;
The strength of his spirit is etched on his brow,
The wind even serves to adorn the lad's frame.

33 As Lebanon's snow rests unmarred by man's tread,
His radiant youthfulness not yet has dimmed;
Devoting his heart and his soul to rejoicing,
For not yet his ears have heard mournful laments.

---

24. Job 20:11, 33:25; Ps. 89:46; Isa. 54:4 27. Cant. 5:2, 2:1
28. Cant. 1:15, 4:1 29. Ps. 45:5 34. Ps. 86:11

אָמוּן עֲלֵי תוֹלָע בִּדְבִיר תִּפְאָרָה
אַךְ הוֹד וּצְבִי מַלְכוּת עֵינָיו חָזָיו ;
עוֹדוֹ עַל עַרְשׂוֹ שִׁעֲשַׁע אֶת עֲטָרָה,
עַל כֵּן מוֹרָשָׁיו כַּמַּעְיָן יִשְׁלָיו ·

עוֹד לֹא חָשׁ יָגוֹן יַפְרִישׁ כַּצִּפְעוֹנִי
עוֹד לֹא יָדַע קִנְאָה בַּרְזֶל שִׁנֶּיהָ ;
וּבְגֹעַל פָּנָיו לֹא נִרְאָה לוֹ עֹנִי,
גַּם לֹא צָרָה יֵרָקוֹן עַל פָּנֶיהָ ·

אַךְ תִּקְוָה הַנְּעִימָה בַּת הַשָּׁמַיִם
עַל רֹאשָׁהּ זֵר עֲלִים כַּגַּן נִטָּעוּ,
גַּם גִּילָה צוֹהֶלֶת תִּמְחָא כַּפַּיִם —
עַל יָדוֹ הִתְהַלְּכוּ לוֹ הִתְרוֹעָעוּ ·

אַךְ כִּנְגֹהוֹת שַׁחַר חַיָּיו לוֹ עָלוּ,
עוֹד עַרְבָּם לֹא חָזָה עֵת כִּי יוּעָבוּ ;
עַל כֵּן הַחַיִּים כָּעֵץ לוֹ נִמְשָׁלוּ —
כָּל יוֹם לִפְרִי חָדָשׁ עֵינָיו חָשָׁבוּ ·

כִּמְנוּחָה נְעֵמָה נֶחְשַׁב לוֹ מָוֶת
וּכְעֶרֶשׂ שַׁאֲנַנָּה חָשַׁב הַקֶּבֶר ;
גַּן עֵדֶן לוֹ תֵּבֵל, לֹא בוֹר צַלְמָוֶת —
עוֹד לֹא הֵעִיר אָזְנוֹ קוֹל זַעֲקַת שֶׁבֶר ·

37 Pampered in scarlet, in high royal chambers,
Beholding the grandeur and pomp of the kingdom;
While still in the crib, the crown was his plaything,
His thoughts were as calm as a still, quiet pool.

41 Not yet feeling Agony sting like the viper,
Not yet knowing Jealousy, iron-fanged passion;
Unseen is the loathesome despair of Privation,
Nor seen is the mortified face of Distress.

45 The daughter of heaven is beautiful Hope,
Like a garden was planted the wreath on her head,
Gladness rejoices, clapping her hands--
They walk at his side and befriend the young lad.

49 His life at its peak like the radiant dawn,
He sees not the dusk, when clouds mask the light;
Life to him, therefore, appears like a tree--
Each day he sets sight at producing new fruit.

53 Death--he considers a pleasant repose,
The grave--he regards as a still, tranquil bed;
His world is an Eden, no pit of death's darkness--
Not yet do the screams of destruction arouse him.

---

37. Lam. 4:5 41. Prov. 23:32 49. Ps. 92:12 50. Lam. 2:1
54. Cant. 1:16

וּשְׁאֵלַת «מַדּוּעַ?» עוֹד לֹא הִבִּיעַ,
כִּי אֵזוֹר מָתְנָיו אֱמוּנָה הָיְתָה;
אֱמוּנָה שֶׁעַל רֹאשָׁהּ אוֹר יוֹפִיעַ
וּבִצְעִיף עֲרָפֶל פָּנִים כִּסָּתָה.

וּלְאוֹרָהּ אַךְ טוֹבוֹת עַל תֵּבֵל חָלוּ
וּצְעִיפָהּ יַסְתִּיר רָע תַּחַת שָׁמָיִם.

*

וּשְׁלֹמֹה הוּא! — אִם בֶּן מִי זֶה תִּשְׁאָלוּ,
בֶּן דָּוִד הוּא מֶלֶךְ בִּירוּשָׁלָיִם!

*

עַל הַרְרֵי הַלְּבָנוֹן אוֹזְרֵי עֲרָפֶל
וּלְכוֹבַע עַל רֹאשָׁם שֶׁמֶשׁ תּוֹפִיעַ;
כָּל הַר רָם יִבְזוּ, חֲשָׁבוּהוּ כַּנָּפֶל
וּלְמֵזַח יַחְגּוֹרוּ גַּלְגַּל רָקִיעַ.

עַל הַרְרֵי הַלְּבָנוֹן בֶּאֱשׁוּן הַלָּיִל
עֵת לַכֵּס אַרְצָה הַדְּמָמָה יָשָׁבָה —
שָׁם עָלָה הָעֶלֶם כַּצְּבִי, כָּאַיִל,
כִּי לַחֲזוֹת הוֹד מוֹרָא נַפְשׁוֹ יָאָבָה.

57 The ultimate "Why?!" he not yet expresses,
He always has girded his loins with a faith;
Faith--she radiates light from her brow
But her face remains covered and veiled in a fog.

61 The goodness of earth now swirls toward her light
While evil on earth has been cloaked by her veil.

If you ask who this is--it is Solomon, yea,
The offspring of David, Jerusalem's king!

65 Ribbons of fog cover Lebanon's mountains,
And sunlight appears as a cap on the peaks;
These hilltops disdain other mountains as dwarfs
And wrap, like a girdle, the circle of heavens.

69 The blackness of night covers Lebanon's mountains,
With silence enthroned on the seat of the earth--
For there the lad runs like a deer, like a ram,
To witness the awe that his soul had been yearning.

---

64. Eccles. 1:1   70. Exod. 17:16; The Hebrew כס is taken here as a form of כסא, "throne."   71. Cant. 2:9

חָלַף לַיְלָה, כּוֹכְבֵי נֶשֶׁף בָּרָחוּ,
סַהַר אָסַף נָגְהוֹ בִּשְׁמֵי עֲרָבוֹת;
עַל שַׁדְמוֹת חֶמֶד כַּר אַלּוֹן וָאָחוּ
שַׁחַר אוֹר יִזְרַח עַל בֹּקֶר לֹא עָבוֹת.

אָז צִלְלֵי אֹפֶל חִישׁ עָבְרוּ חָמָקוּ
וּמִנֹּגַהּ מִשְׁחָר יָפְזוּ הָרִים;
וּלְרֹאשׁ אַרְזֵי אֵל קַוֵּי אוֹר נָשָׁקוּ,
עֵרִים מִשְּׁנָתָם הַמְזַמְּרִים בַּיְעָרִים.

וּשְׁלֹמֹה נִדְמָה, אַךְ עֵינָיו נָהָרוּ,
בְּשַׁעַר דַּלַּת רֹאשׁוֹ יְכַנֵּף רוּחַ;
וּקְרָבָיו עֹמֶק תּוֹךְ לִבּוֹ יִסְעָרוּ;
מָה הוֹמָה רוּחוֹ! מַה נַּפְשׁוֹ תָּשׁוּחַ!

עַל יִפְעַת הוֹד נוֹרָא עֵינָיו יַשְׁקִיפוּ,
הִיא קָפְצָה פִיהוּ, קוֹל מִלָּיו נֶחְבָּאוּ;
עוֹד מֵיתְרֵי כִנּוֹרוֹ צוּף בַּל יַטִּיפוּ,
נִתְּקוּ זְמוֹתָיו, נוֹרָאוֹת נִפְלָאוּ.

וּרְגָעִים אֵלֶּה מָה רָמוּ נֶאְדָּרוּ!
עֵת רוּחַ תִּפָּעֵם יִרְחַב לֵב גֶּבֶר;
מִגִּילָה וּרְעָדָה עֵינָיו נִגָּרוּ,
אָז נַעֲרָץ אָדָם יָבֶז אֶרֶץ־קֶבֶר.

73 The eve passed away and the stars fled the night,
The cloud banks collected the gleam of the moon;
The dawn scatters light on the thin morning mist
Upon beautiful meadows of saplings and reeds.

77 The shadows of night slip away in the dawn,
The glistening mountains are gilded in sunlight;
The light rays kiss treetops of powerful cedars,
The songbirds awake in the trees from their slumber.

81 Solomon's eyes streamed with tears, he was silent,
The locks of his hair flying free in the breeze;
The depth of his heart and his being was stirred;
How roused was his spirit! How moved was his soul!

85 His eyes now beheld the magnificent splendor,
It silenced his tongue, his words became muted;
The strings of his harp could no longer drip honey,
His thoughts were distracted by wonder and awe.

89 How lofty and grand were these moments of awe!
When the spirit so moved can broaden man's heart;
His eyes poured out tears of excitement and joy,
This lad, so adored, then scorned at the grave.

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74. Cant. 7:3, Ps. 68:5 75. Isa. 30:22, Gen. 41:2, 18
77. Cant. 5:6 82. Cant. 7:6, Isa. 30:20 87. Prov. 16:24
90. Gen. 41:8

וּלְרֶגֶשׁ הַצְּדָקָה בּוֹ אָז יוּלֶּד
לֹא יָבִין כָּל רֶשַׁע אֵיךְ אִישׁ יָרֵעַ ;
הִתְרַפֵּק אָז יֹאבֶה בִּזְרֹעוֹת חָלֶד ,
כִּי כָל הַיְקוּם בּוֹ אָז אָח לוֹ וָרֵעַ .

אַךְ אָז מָצָא אָדָם יוֹצֵר וֶאֱלֹהַּ ,
רַעְיוֹנֵי אַל־מָוֶת אָז בּוֹ נוֹסָדוּ ;
אַךְ בִּרְגָעִים אֵלֶּה יַעַל גָּבֹהַּ ,
וּצְדָקָה הַנָּאוָה הֵם לוֹ יָלָדוּ .

הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ לִמְרוֹמִים יָצְאָה הֵאִירָה ,
זִיו אוֹרָהּ הֵפִיץ קָדִים עַל אֲדָמָה ;
גַּם שַׁדְמַת שֶׁלֶג מִנָּגְהָהּ הִזְהִירָה
וּנְעִימֵי זִמְרָה פָּצְחוּ רֹן בָּרָמָה .

וּשְׁלֹמֹה גַּם הוּא רִגְשׁוֹתָיו אָז הָמוּ ,
מִמַּחֲזֵה אֵל שַׁדַּי עֵינָיו יֶחֱזָיוּ ;
וּלְאֵין עוֹד הָכִיל פָּרְצוּ גַּם רָעָמוּ —
וַיַּךְ מֵיתְרֵי כִנּוֹרוֹ וַיֶּהֱמָיוּ .

זֶה כִנּוֹר לִשְׁלֹמֹה נֹעַם יַבִּיעַ —
לִנְעִים זְמִרַת־יָהּ הוּא דָוִד אָבִיהוּ ;
עַד לִקְצוֹת תַּחְתִּיּוֹת קוֹלוֹ הִגִּיעַ
וּבִצְבָא הַמָּרוֹם נָגַע עַל פִּיהוּ .

93 Benevolent feelings were then born within him,
Perceiving not evil or how man can sin;
His arms then were yearning to nestle the world,
To him, all creation is brother and friend.

97 Thus did a man find his God and Creator,
Immortal ideas were planted within him;
In these very moments, how high he ascends,
Giving birth to this feeling of beautiful justice.

101 The sun in the heavens emerges, illumines,
Dispersing its light rays on earth from the east;
Its radiance glistens on snow covered fields,
While beautiful psalms are resounding above.

105 Solomon's passions have also been stirred,
By the vision of God the Almighty he witnessed;
He can not contain himself, thundering, bursting--
He strikes at the strings of his harp and it rings.

109 O Solomon's harp--it so gracefully plays--
In the loveliest songs it is David his father;
Its music caresses the lowest of depths,
Its tune reaches up to the heavenly hosts.

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95. Cant. 8:5   102. Prov. 5:16   104. Isa. 14:7

בּוֹ נִגֵּן עַל גִּיל עַל עֲלִיצוּת מֶלֶךְ,
וּלְעִתּוֹת בַּצָּר בּוֹ הָגָה עַל שֶׁבֶר;
וּבְאֶרֶץ תַּלְאוּבוֹת עֵת בָּא כַּהֵלֶךְ
רָד בּוֹ בִּפְרִיץ חַיּוֹת וּבְרַהַב גֶּבֶר.

הוּא הִרְנִין בִּיהוּדָה מוֹצָאֵי עֶרֶב,
גַּם צֵאת חַכְלִיל שֶׁמֶשׁ מִפְּאַת קָדִימָה.
לוֹ הָשְׁלְמוּ אֲרָיוֹת וּכְפִירֵי אֶרֶב
וַחֲמָתָם אֶל קוֹלוֹ אִתּוֹ הִשְׁלִימָה.

מִשְּׂפַת יָם הַמֶּלַח הֵעִיר שָׁם שַׁחַר
לַאֲזִין זְמִרוֹתָיו מַנְגִּינוֹת שָׁמַיִם;
וּבְנֵי עַלְוָה רָגְזוּ עֵת אַפּוֹ יֵחַר,
וּבְשָׂשׂוֹן שָׁאֲבוּ נִחוּמָיו כַּמַּיִם.

כִּנּוֹר זֶה הִנְחִיל לִבְנוֹ זֶה הַנַּעַר
עַל אֵמוּן דַּרְכּוֹ וּבְרוּחוֹ אֵין סֶלֶף;
וּבוֹ גַּם עַתָּה הַבֵּן רוּחוֹ יָעַר
לָשִׁיר בּוֹ שִׁירוֹ חֲמִשָּׁה וָאָלֶף.

הוֹי חֶמְדַּת נֹעַר, אֲבִיב חֶלֶד גֶּבֶר!
הִנְּךָ גִּנַּת־אֵל לַבֵּן בָּךְ יָשׂוּחַ;
בָּךְ צִירֵי שָׁלוֹם יַחַז עַל כָּל עֵבֶר,
כְּלָךְ גִּילָה וָתוֹם אַף נִקְיוֹן רוּחַ.

113 Playing for royal and festive rejoicing,
At times of distress, when he thinks of destruction;
In troublesome lands when he comes as a stranger
He rules with it ravenous beasts, haughty men.

117 He exulted from Judah, in lands to the west
To the sunrise red sky in the eastern horizon.
Lion cubs lurking would calm to his music,
His voice would be soothing and quiet their wrath.

121 At the banks of the Salt Sea the morning sun wakens
To hearken his psalmody--heavenly strains;
When wrongdoers angrily seethe in their wrath,
They draw in like water his comfort and mirth.

125 Endowing his harp to his son, a young man
For his trustworthy way, his uprightness of spirit;
His son now expresses his spirit upon it
And sings with it songs numbered five and a thousand.

129 O youthful desire in the spring of man's life!
Behold, in God's garden, the child does seek you;
In you, all the angels of peace look about,
And freshness of spirit joins innocent joy.

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113. Hab. 3:14   115. Hos. 13:5   117. Ps. 75:7   118. Gen. 49:12   123. Hos. 10:9   126. Prov. 15:4, 11:3

זוֹ רוּחוֹ תְּתַקְּפֵהוּ לָרֹן וּלְשַׂמֵּחַ
וִירַנְּנוּ אִתּוֹ שָׁמַיִם גַּם אָרֶץ!
וּבְשִׁירוֹ כָּל חַי יָשִׁיר וִינַצֵּחַ
מִן שַׂרְפֵי מָרוֹם עַד זוֹחֵל וָשֶׁרֶץ.

כִּי אֱמוּנָתוֹ לוֹ תִכְרֶה אָזְנַיִם
לִשְׁמוֹעַ מַעֲשֵׂי אֵל יָשִׁיר רָקִיעַ;
הַקְשִׁיב מַעֲלָלָיו יְרַנּוּ שָׁמַיִם,
הַאֲזִין נוֹרְאוֹתָיו גַּם אֶרֶץ תָּרִיעַ.

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הַסְּתָיו אָז חָלַף גַּם קָרָה יָצָאָה,
גֶּשֶׁם וָזֶרֶם צָפוֹנָה אָרְחוּ;
וּלְאַף כָּל הַיְקוּם נִשְׁמַת אָבִיב בָּאָה,
וּכְמוֹ אַךְ רָאוּהוּ אֵלָיו שָׂמָחוּ.

«תֵּן לָנוּ בִּרְכָתְךָ» קָרְאוּ כֻלָּמוֹ —
וּפְרִי נָתַן לָעֵץ, עָלֶה לֶעָנָף;
שָׂדוֹת בִּירַק דֶּשֶׁא מַהֵר עָטָמוֹ,
וּזְמִירוֹת חָנַן כָּל צִפּוֹר כָּל כָּנָף.

כַּרְמֶל וּלְבָנוֹן יַלְדֵי שַׁעֲשׁוּעֵיהוּ
יָחֹן בַּעֲנָבִים וּכְפָרִים וּנְרָדִים ;
וּלְגִלְעָד וּבָשָׁן יָאֵר פָּנֵיהוּ
תֵּת לָמוֹ דֶּשֶׁן מֶתֶק צוּף וּמְגָדִים.

133 This spirit has moved him to gladness and song,
Earth and the heavens both chant in accord!
All creatures will triumph and sing with his song
From heavenly angels to reptiles and insects.

137 His faithfulness opened his ears to the sounds
To hear the Lord's deeds that the firmament sings;
To hearken His feats that the heavens would shout,
To heed His great wonders that earth would cry out.

141 Autumn has passed, and the winter has faded,
Downpours and rainstorms meandering northward;
The breath of the spring fills the lungs of all creatures,
They look upon springtime, and happy are they.

145 "Give us your blessing," all of them called--
As fruit endows saplings, and leaves adorn branches;
As green herbs have swiftly enveloped the meadow,
It graces the birds and the fowl with their songs.

149 Lebanon, Carmel--its child of delight,
It graces with fragrance of spice trees and grapevines;
To Gilad and Bashan its countenance shines
And gives them sweet honey, ambrosia, and oil.

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137. Ps. 40:7   147. II Kings 19:26, Isa. 27:37, 66:14, Ps. 37:2   149. Jer. 31:19   150. Cant. 1:14, 4:13
152. Cant. 4:13, 4:16, 7:14

עַל הָרֵי מוֹר וּבְשָׂמִים נֵרְדְּ וּלְבוֹנָה
שָׁם כָּל עוֹף זָמִיר, וּשְׁלֹמֹה גַּם שָׁמָּה;
אָבִיב הֱבִיאוֹ עַל אֵבֶר כַּיּוֹנָה
אֶל מִשְׁכַּן רוֹעִים מִקִּרְיָה הָרָמָה.

לִבּוֹ לֹא יָנַח, עוֹד רוּחוֹ הוֹמִיָּה,
וּכְנַהֲרוֹת אֵיתָן רַעְיוֹנָיו יִסְעָרוּ;
מִקֶּרֶב לִבּוֹ יֶאֱנַח דֻּמִיָּה
בִּיקוֹד אַהֲבָה כָּאֵשׁ עֵינָיו בָּעָרוּ;

תֵּבֵל וּמְלֹאָהּ מוּל פָּנָיו יִשְׂמָחוּ,
וּבְקִרְבּוֹ רוּחַ גִּיל בָּאָה כַּמַּיִם;
לוֹ יָשִׂישׂ הַכַּרְמֶל שָׁרוֹן וָאָחוּ,
לוֹ תָּחוּל אֶרֶץ, יָחֹגּוּ שָׁמָיִם.

אֶת שׁוּלַמִּית רוֹעָה בָּרָה גַּם תַּמָּה
יָפָה כַּלְּבָנָה וּכְשַׁחַר נִשְׁקָפֶת,
הַיָּפָה בַּבָּנוֹת, נָאוָה כַּחַמָּה,
בִּשְׂפָתָהּ קֶסֶם, אַף נֹפֶת נֹטֶפֶת —

אֶת שׁוּלַמִּית רָאָה בֶּן מֶלֶךְ נָעַר
עַל הַר הַלְּבָנוֹן רוֹעָה צֹאן אָחִיהָ;
חִישׁ הֵטִילָה בוֹ אַהֲבָה רוּחַ סָעַר,
אֶל לֵב עֶלֶם תָּמִים כּוֹנְנָה חִצֶּיהָ.

153 On mountains of spikenard, incense and myrhh
Solomon stands there with all of the songbirds;
Springtime enticed him on wings like the dove
From the height of the town to this pastoral temple.

157 His heart would not rest, his soul was still stirring,
His feelings erupted like powerful torrents;
He quietly sighed from the depths of his heart,
For the embers of love burned his eyes like a fire;

161 The world and its fullness rejoiced all around him,
A spirit of joy flowed within him like water;
For him delights Carmel and meadows of Sharon,
For him exults heaven, as earth spins and dances.

165 The shepherdess Shulamith--perfect and pure,
Fair as the moon, aglow like the morn,
Fairest of maidens, as lovely as sunlight,
Her lips hold enchantment, her words flow like honey.

169 The princely young man beheld Shulamith there
Amid Lebanon's hills grazing sheep for her brother;
She swiftly aroused in him turbulent passion,
Her arrows were aimed at the young man's pure heart.

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153. Cant. 3:6, 4:6, 4:14 156. Ps. 74:15 163. Gen. 41:2, 18
165. Cant. 6:9,10,5:2 166. Ibid. 6:10 167. Ibid. 1:8
168. Ibid. 4:11

אָז עַמּוֹ אַף כִּסְאוֹ נַפְשׁוֹ שָׁכְחָה
וּבְמַקֵּל רוֹעִים הֶחֱלִיף שֵׁבֶט מֶלֶךְ;
לִרְעוֹת אֶת שׁוּלַמִּית רוּחוֹ אָרְחָה,
אֶל הַר, אֶל עֵמֶק אִתָּהּ הָלֹךְ יֵלֵךְ.

כִּי יָפְיָהּ מַמְלַכְתּוֹ, כִּתְרוֹ עֵינֶיהָ,
וּמִמִּגְדַּל דָּוִד הִיא לוֹ נִשְׂגָּבָה;
גַּם הִיא אַךְ רְאָתָהוּ נִצָּב עָלֶיהָ —
וַתֶּאֱהַב הָעֶלֶם דָּגוּל מֵרְבָבָה.

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הֲלֹא הִיא הָאַהֲבָה רָאמוֹת עוֹלָלָה!
הִיא גַּם בָּאָדָם מֵחֹמֶר יְקֹרָץ
רוּחַ גַּם נֶפֶשׁ אַךְ הִיא בוֹ חוֹלְלָה;
הִיא טוּב שָׁמַיִם לוֹ נָתְנָה עַל אָרֶץ.

הִיא מִלַּת «נֶצַח» רִאשׁוֹנָה מִלְּלָה;
כִּי לֹא יוּכַל הַאֲמֵן כָּל דּוֹד כָּל גֶּבֶר
אִם רַעְיָה מֵתָה וּבְאִבָּהּ נָבֵלָה,
כִּי לֹא תוֹסִיף לָקוּם מִבְּלוֹת בַּקֶּבֶר.

173 His subjects and even the throne he forgot,
The staff of the shepherd replacing his scepter;
His spirit compelled him to tend to the shepherdess,
Wandering with her through mountains and valleys.

177 Her eyes were his crown and her beauty his kingdom,
To him, more exalted than David's high tower;
As Shulamith noticed him standing above her--
Her heart fell in love with this excellent youth.

181 Love is the coral we glean in this life!
It lies within man, who is fashioned from clay,
It dances within him, spirit and soul;
It gives man the bounty from heaven on earth.

185 "Forever"--this word was first uttered by Love;
All lovers, all men--can never believe
Their beloved will die, that her youth will decay,
That she no more will rise from the withering grave.

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175. Hebrew root רעה has double meaning of "befriend" and "pasture" or "tend." 178. Cant. 4:4 180. Cant. 5:10 181. I Chron. 6:58 182. Job 33:6 187. Cant. 6:11

וּבְנֵי אֱלֹהִים הִיא אַרְצָה הוֹרִידָה
לֶאֱהוֹב, לַחְשׁוֹק בִּבְנוֹת אָדָם גּוֹעַ;
וּשְׁפָלִים וּגְבֹהִים יַחַד הִצְמִידָה,
מֶלֶךְ אֶת רוֹעָה צִוְּתָה הִתְרוֹעֵעַ.

אַהֲבָה בַּנֹּעַר מַה יְּקָרָה נְעֵמָה!
עֶלֶם כִּי יִינַק מִשֹּׁד תַּנְחוּמֶיהָ
נַעַר כִּי יִשְׂמַח אַף יָגִיל בָּהֶמָּה —
כִּי נֹעַר פֶּרַח, הִיא דִּבְשׁוֹ הִנֵּהָ.

נַחֲלַת עֶלֶם אוֹהֵב מַה לּוֹ שָׁפְרָה!
הֵן חֵיל וּצְבָא מָרוֹם אִם גָּבְהוּ לָמוֹ
קִנְּאוּ בִנְעִים חֶבְלוֹ, בּוֹ עֵינָם צָרָה —
כִּי אַךְ הֵם שָׁמָּה גַּלְמוּדִים הֲנָמוֹ.

הִיא אֶת דּוֹד עֶלֶם תַּעַל בִּכְנָפַיִם,
יַרְקִיעוּ לִשְׁחָקִים יֵרְדוּ לָאֲדָמָה;
יָשׁוּר צַלְמָהּ בִּמְקוֹם יָעִיף עֵינַיִם,
אַף יָזִין הוֹד קוֹלָהּ נִשְׁמַע בָּרָמָה.

מַעְיָנִים הוֹמִים וּמְפַכִּים מֵימֵיהֶם,
יֶהֱמוּ בָּרוּחַ אַלּוֹנֵי אַדֶּרֶת;
הַיּוֹנִים הוֹגִים עַל אֲרֻבּוֹתֵיהֶם —
קוֹל הָאַהֲבָה הוּא! אַךְ הִיא בָּם דּוֹבֶרֶת.

189 Love casts the children of God to the earth
To love and desire the daughters of mortals;
Love brings together the humble and haughty,
For a king and a shepherdess, love is decreed.

193 Love in one's youth, how precious and pleasant!
May every lad suck at the breast of her solace,
May youths all delight and rejoice in her comfort--
For youth is a flower, and Love is its honey.

197 How pleasant the lot of an amorous youth!
However much higher the heavenly hosts,
They envy his portion, they jealously eye him--
For they are alone, they are lonely on high.

201 She carries the passionate youth in her wings,
Ascending the heavens, then sweeps down to earth;
He glimpses her image wherever he looks,
And sustains her sweet voice which is heard in the heights.

205 The gurgling of brooks and the rushing of waters,
The whistling wind rustles through towering oaks;
The doves are heard cooing from niches and nests--
All voices of Love! Through them does love speak.

189.-190. Gen. 6:2 194. Isa. 66:11 197. Ps. 16:6
198. The Hebrew אם is taken to mean "however much," "in spite of." See "Kohelet," line 107. 200. Job 30:3 204. Jer. 31:14; Hebrew רמה is both place name "Ramah" and noun "heights" or "high place." 207. Isa. 60:8

וּבְעוֹז חִשְׁקוֹ יַחְשׁוֹב כִּי אֵין עַצֶּבֶת;
כִּי כָל אָדָם אוֹהֵב כֻּלּוֹ שָׂמֵחַ. —
אֵיךְ לֹא תַם כָּל עֶצֶב נִבְלַע הַמָּוֶת,
אִם הוּא וַאֲהוּבָתוֹ צֶמֶד צוֹלֵחַ?!

*

הַיּוֹם יָפוּחַ וּצְלָלִים נָטָיו,
הוֹד וָהָדָר שׁוֹתָה שֶׁמֶשׁ עַל עָבִים;
צִפּוֹר עֲפָאִים כַּחֲלִילִים יֶהֱמָיוּ
וּרְנָנִים נֶעֱלָסָה תָּשִׁיר אֲהָבִים.

וּפְנֵי מֵי הַיָּם אָז שֶׁמֶשׁ נָשָׁקָה,
וַיְּפַזּוּ הָרִים בִּיקוֹד שַׁלְהֶבֶת;
אֶת כָּל הַיְקוּם אַוַּת דּוֹדִים חָבָקָה,
אַךְ רוּחַ אַהֲבָה בַּתֵּבֵל נוֹשֶׁבֶת.

בֵּין צַמְּרוֹת אֶרֶז, בֵּין שׁוֹשַׁנֵּי הָרִים
שָׁם סֻכַּת עֲנָפִים בָּדָד עוֹמֶדֶת;
בָּהּ עֶרֶשׂ רַעֲנָנָה בַּעֲצֵי הַתְּמָרִים
וּבְשָׂמָהּ יִזַּל אֶל תֵּימָן יוֹקֶדֶת.

וּשְׁלֹמֹה שָׁם עִם שׁוּלַמִּית הַצְּבִיָּה
יָד תַּחַת רֹאשָׁהּ וִימִינוֹ חִבְּקָתָּה;
סָבִיב אַךְ הַשֶּׁקֶט וּנְעִימוֹת דּוּמִיָּה,
גַּם הֵם נֶאֱלָמִים וּלְשׁוֹנָם נָשָׁתָה.

209 In the vigor of passion he ponders no sadness;
When man falls in love, he knows nothing but joy--
How sorrow has ended, how death has been swallowed
For him and his loved one, a fluorishing pair!

213 The day has grown cool and the shadows have lengthened,
The sun sets on clouds in glory and splendor;
Like flutes is the cooing of birds on the wing
Chanting their melodies, joyfully singing.

217 The sunlight then kisses the face of the sea,
The glow of the flames are gilding the mountains;
The longings of lovers embrace all creation,
The spirit of love, how it sweeps through the world.

221 Near treetops of cedars and wild mountain roses,
A shelter of vine branches stands there alone;
A love seat of splendorous date palm within it,
Its perfume is carried to parched southern deserts.

225 There Solomon was with Shulamith fair,
Her head in his left hand, his right arm embraced her;
Stillness and silence delight all around them,
They also were quiet, their voices were hushed.

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213. Cant. 2:17, see also "Prayer," line 1 and "Holiday of Spring," line 1. 216. Job 39:13 223. Cant. 1:12 224. Cant. 4:16 225. Cant. 2:9,17, 8:14

הַדִּבֵּר אֵין בָּם, בִּשְׂפָתָם הַדְּמָמָה,
אַךְ לֵב דּוֹבֵר אַהֲבָה עַזָּה כַּמָּוֶת;
לֵבָב כִּי יָנַע גַּם רוּחַ נִפְעָמָה
הִיא שָׂפָה לִידִידִים חֶרֶשׁ דּוֹבֶבֶת.

וּרְגָעִים אֲחָדִים כֹּה נִצְּבוּ יַחַד,
וּבְלֵב הָעֶלֶם אֵשׁ דּוֹדִים בּוֹעֶרֶת;
אַךְ חָרֵד הַמֶּלֶךְ, עוֹד מָלֵא פַּחַד —
וּכְמוֹ עֶבֶד נִצָּב לִפְנֵי הַגְּבֶרֶת.

גַּם שׁוּלַמִּית תּוֹרִיד אַרְצָה עֵינֶיהָ,
בִּפְנֵי דוֹדָהּ לַחֲזוֹת אֵין עוֹז אֵין רַהַב;
אַהֲבָה גַּם בִּלְבָבָהּ עָרְכָה מוֹקְדֶיהָ,
לָכֵן עַל לֶחְיָהּ נִרְאָה אוֹת הַלַּהַב.

וּשְׁלֹמֹה אַךְ סַעַר עַז יְמַלְאֵהוּ,
לִבּוֹ חָשַׁב הִשָּׁבֵר, נַפְשׁוֹ גָּעָשָׁה;
אֶל לִבּוֹ הִגִּישָׁהּ לְשַׁקִּיט אִשֵּׁהוּ —
אַךְ סַעֲרַת נַפְשׁוֹ כַּיָּם עוֹד רָעָשָׁה.

הִיא בִּזְרֹעוֹת מֶלֶךְ עֵינָהּ עוֹד שָׁחָה,
עֹז פָּנִים לֹא יָדְעָה וּגְאוֹן תִּפְאֶרֶת;
וּבְחִבֻּק מֶלֶךְ עֲנָוָה לֹא שָׁכְחָה,
כִּי אַהֲבָה חָפְצָה לֹא בִקְשָׁה עֲטֶרֶת.

229 Both of them speechless, how silent their lips,
Their hearts spoke of Love--as mighty as death;
When the heart begins stirring, the spirit is moved,
This language of lovers is uttered in silence.

223 For just a few moments they thus stood together,
The heart of the lad burned with passionate love;
The king began quivering, filled with an awe--
Like a slave who is standing and facing his mistress.

237 Shulamith, too, cast her eyes to the ground,
Too humble and meek to look at her lover;
The love in her heart set it kindling afire,
The blush of excitement appeared on her cheeks.

241 Solomon welled up with powerful tempest,
His heart set to break, his soul began trembling;
Drew near her to quiet the flame in his heart--
But the storm in his soul like the ocean resounded.

245 In the arms of a king, she lowered her eyes,
She knew not his countenance, power or glory;
Embraced by a king, but ever so modest,
For Love she had yearned, never seeking the crown.

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231. Gen. 41:8 242. Jonah 1:4

הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ בָּאָה תֵּט לִקְצוֹת שָׁמֶיהָ,
וּפְנֵי שׁוּלַמִּית נֹגַהּ נֶגְדָּהּ עָטוּ;
וְתַעַר יִפְעָתָהּ שֶׁמֶשׁ לִלְחָיֶיהָ
עַד כִּי קַרְנַיִם גַּם מֵהֶנָּה נָטוּ.

וּשְׁלֹמֹה אַךְ הִבִּיט מַחֲזֵה הַדְּרָתָהּ
וּפִיהוּ עַל לֶחְיָהּ — וְהִיא נִכְלָמָה;
מִנְּשִׁיקוֹת פִּיו יִשַּׁק פִּיהָ וּשְׂפָתָהּ —
«מִי יִתֶּנְךָ אָח לִי» אָז הִיא זָמָמָה.

*

מִי אַתְּ הַנְּשִׁיקָה צִלְצַל הַשְּׂפָתַיִם
וּבְלֵב רֵעִים חֵץ כַּבָּרָק תְּשַׁלֵּחִי?
אַךְ פֶּה יִגַּע לַשָּׂפָה וּלְחָיַיִם,
וּמֵעַל שִׂפְתֵי אִישׁ לִבּוֹ תִקָּחִי!

*

הַלַּיִל אָתָא עִם חֶשְׁכַת אֵימָתָהּ,
עַל הַרְרֵי כַרְמֶל סוּגִים בַּשּׁוֹשַׁנִּים;
חָדַל כָּל שָׁאוֹן, הֲמֻלָּה שָׁבָתָה,
הִרְגִּיעוּ גַם שָׁקְטוּ כָל עֲצֵי גַנִּים.

אוֹר כּוֹכָבִים בִּמְסִלּוֹתָם זָרוּעַ,
יָקָר הוֹלֵךְ סַהַר בִּשְׁמֵי רָקִיעַ;
הַיַּעַר יִדּוֹם, לֹא עָנָף יָנוּעַ,
אַךְ הַמְזַמֵּר לַיְלָה בַּדְּמִי יָרִיעַ.

249 The sun now descends toward the edge of the sky,
But Shulamith's radiant face veils the sun;
Her beauty reflecting the sun on her cheeks,
That rays of its light now shine forth from her face.

253 Solomon looked at this vision of beauty,
His lips on her cheek--embarrassed is she;
He kisses her lips with the kiss of his mouth,
"If only my brother wast thou," she was thinking.

257 Who art thou, o kiss, ringing out from the lips,
In the lover's heart shooting your arrows like lightning?
A mouth that caresses the lips and the cheeks--
You capture the heart of a man through his lips!

261 Nighttime approaches with fears of the darkness
On mountains of Carmel, surrounded with roses;
All clamor has ceased, the tumult has ended,
All trees of the garden have quieted, calmed.

265 Light from the stars is sown in their pathways,
The precious moon arcs in the firmament sky;
The forest is silent, no birds on the wing,
Only the nightingale calls in the silence.

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250. Cant. 1:7 255. Ibid. 1:2 256. Ibid. 8:1
262. Ibid. 7:3 265. Ps. 97:11

במלון הכפרים, בערוגות הכרמים,
שם פרחה גפן וסמדר פתח;
תימן כי יפיח יזלו הבשמים,
דודאים ואהלות שם יתנו ריח.

בין לפרי המגדים תחת תפוח
בין צללי ליל שם שאון לא יעל;
ושלמה ויפתו שאנן ינוח —
אך עד בשחק ירח ממעל.

בו לבו אך שליו, נפשו בוטחת,
ממתקי אהבים רוחו שואפת;
«גיל עולמים חלקך, חדוה ונחת!»
האמונה ללבבו אמר מטפת.

וכצל לימינו התקוה נצבת,
אמריה יאזין כערוב קול נבל;
מניב בלשונה רוחו צוף שואבת:
«הון עתק על אהבה אפיל לך חבל».

אך גילת תום היא! עוד לא הוסיף דעת
על כן אך שולמית לו די ומדי;
ובחיק תמתו אך נפשו נרגעת,
כי דעת ומכאוב עוד השו שדי.

269 At the inns of the village, in patches of vineyards,
The grapevine has flowered, its blossom has opened;
When southern winds blow, the perfume is sprinkled
The fragrance of aloes and mandrake is scattered.

273 Under the apple tree, choicest of fruits,
In shadows of evening no clamor ascends;
As Solomon, Shulamith peacefully rest--
As moonlight diffuses through mist in the heavens.

277 His heart becomes tranquil, his soul is secure,
His spirit had yearned for the sweetness of love;
"Eternal delight and rejoicing, your portion!"
For Faith poured these words into Solomon's heart.

281 Hope, like a shadow, beside his right hand,
Hearing her speech like sweet sounds of the harp
His spirit drew honey from words on her lips:
"I give you a portion of wealth for your love."

285 O innocent joy! He knew nothing more,
He wanted no more than Shulamith, therefore;
In innocent bosom his soul became tranquil,
For God had erased all his knowledge of pain.

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269. Cant. 5:13, 6:2   270. Ibid. 7:13   271. Ibid. 4:16
272. Ibid. 7:14, 4:14   273. Ibid. 8:5   278. Ibid. 5:6
283. Ibid. 4:11   284. Prov. 8:18   287. Cant. 5:2, 6:9
288. Job 39:17

הִיא חוֹלַת אַהֲבָה עָלָיו מִתְרַפֶּקֶת,
וּבְרִשְׁפֵּי אֵשׁ לִבָּהּ עֵינָהּ בּוֹעֶרֶת;
בְּעֶזוּז אֲהָבִים צַוָּארוֹ חוֹבֶקֶת,
לֹא תִרְוֶה דוֹדִים, עוֹד נַפְשָׁהּ סוֹעֶרֶת...

*

שִׁית כַּלַּיִל צִלְּךָ, עֵץ הַתַּפּוּחַ!
הַכּוֹכָבִים, רֶגַע אַל נָא תָּאִירוּ!
וּלְבוּשׁ נָא קַדְרוּת, אוֹר סַהַר זָרוּחַ;
אַל נָא אֶת הָאַהֲבָה אַל נָא תָּעִירוּ.

נָחָה תֵבֵל כֻּלָּהּ, אֶרֶץ תַּרְגִּיעַ,
חֶשְׁכַת עָבִים כִּמְעִיל עָטוּ עֲרָבוֹת;
פֶּתַע קוֹל כִּנּוֹר יֶהוֹם אַף יָרִיעַ,
בִּדְמִי הַלַּיִל בֵּין סִבְכֵי עֵץ עָבוֹת.

כִּנּוֹר לִשְׁלֹמֹה הוּא הַמְשַׂמֵּחַ נוּגִים
וּלְקוֹל שִׁירוֹ יִקְּדוּ אֵלִים אַדִּירִים;
«מַה יָּפִית, נָעַמְתְּ אַהֲבָה בַּתַּעֲנוּגִים!»
לִשְׁלֹמֹה בֶּן דָּוִד הוּא שִׁיר הַשִּׁירִים.

289 She longed for the ailment of love to afflict him,
Her eyes burned with sparks of the fire in her heart
She clung to his neck with the strength of her love,
Her love was not sated, her spirit still stormed.

293 O apple tree, spread out your shadow like night!
O stars, cease your shining a moment, I pray!
Be garbed in the darkness as moonlight shines forth;
Please do not rouse, I pray, all my love.

297 The whole world is resting, the earth becomes calm,
The blackness of clouds wraps the sky like a robe;
When suddenly chords of the harp strings sound forth,
In the quiet of night, among thickets of trees.

301 Solomon's harp can delight the despondent
And towering trees even bow to its voice;
"How pleasant and fair art thou loved one, enchanting,"
For David's son Solomon, Song--of Songs.

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290. Cant. 8:6   292. Prov. 7:18   296. Cant. 2:7, 3:5, 8:4
303. Cant. 7:7

קֹהֶלֶת

KOHELETH

קֹהֶלֶת

הזקין אומר דברי הבלים.
(ילקוט קהלת)

אַרְמוֹן הַסָּפוּן בְּזָהַב פַּרְוָיִם
אֲרָזִים מוּפָּזִים וּבְרַק כּוֹתָרוֹת;
בֵּין עַמּוּדֵי שֵׁשׁ מַחֲמַדֵּי עֵינַיִם,
בֵּין אַבְנֵי חֵפֶץ וּסְגֻלּוֹת אוֹצָרוֹת,

בַּהֲדַר הֵיכָל זֶה בְּנֻוֵה כָּל תִּפְאֶרֶת
עַל כֵּס זָהָב וָשֵׁן מַעֲשֵׂה אָמָּנִים —
עָטוּי אַרְגָּמָן עַל רֹאשׁוֹ עֲטֶרֶת
יֵשֵׁב שָׁב דַּל כֹּחַ וּשְׂבַע רַב שָׁנִים.

וּשְׂעַר תַּלְתַּלָּיו כַּשֶּׁלֶג יֶחֱוָרוּ,
עַל מִצְחוֹ וּלְחָיָיו חֲרֻשָׁה עַצֶּבֶת;
כִּרְפָאִים בִּשְׁאוֹל פָּנָיו חֳמַרְמָרוּ,
מִבֵּין עַפְעַפָּיו אַךְ יָצִיץ צַלְמָוֶת.

וַחֲרוּתִים עַל פָּנָיו יֶחֱזוּ עֵינַיִם
כָּל צַר וּמָצוֹק וּתְלָאוֹת כָּל שֶׁבֶר;
לוּ עֵינָיו לֹא רָצוּ כַּחֲזִיז שָׁמַיִם
אָז נֶחְשַׁב כְּמֵת קָם לַיְלָה מִקֶּבֶר.

"When he became old, he spoke words of vanity."
(Yalkut Kohelet)

1 In the palace well inlaid with Parvaite gold
With cedars begilded and capitals gleaming;
Pillars of marble, delights to the eye,
Among jewels most precious and choicest of treasure,

5 In this glorious palace, the grandest abode,
On the ivory-gold throne, so expertly crafted--
Cloaked in bright scarlet, a crown on his head,
Sated with years he sits, gray-haired and weak.

9 The locks of his hair all have whitened like snow,
Sadness is etched on his forehead and cheeks;
His face becomes withered like spirits in Sheol,
The shadow of death peers out from his eyelids.

13 His eyes now discern from a face which is etched
With hardship, destruction, distress and each strait;
Were it not for the lightning that flashed in his eyes
He would seem like a night stalking corpse from the grave.

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1. II Chron. 3:6 11. Lam. 1:20

וּמַשְׁמִים יֵשֵׁב שֻׁדַּד כָּל תּוּשִׁיָּה
וּכְשֶׁבֶת הָאָבֵל בֵּינוֹת לַקְּבָרִים,
דּוֹמָם כַּמָּוֶת אַךְ רוּחוֹ הוֹמִיָּה —
מָה עַז יָגוֹן דּוֹבֵר מִבְּלִי אֲמָרִים!

מִי זֶה הַיָּשִׁישׁ נַעֲוֶה גַּם שָׁחוֹחַ
לֹא יוּכַל עוֹד מַלֵּט מַשָּׂא הַחַיִּים,
כַּצֵּל יִתְהַלֵּךְ אֵין עוֹז לוֹ וָכֹחַ?
קֹהֶלֶת הוּא מֶלֶךְ בִּירוּשָׁלָיִם!

הוֹי! הֲזֶה הָעֶלֶם כָּלִיל בַּהֲדָרוֹ
יְפֵה אַף נָעִים כָּאוֹר בַּצָּהֳרָיִם?
הַהֵם שַׂעֲרוֹתָיו כָּעוֹרֵב שְׁחָרוּ?
הַאֵלֶּה עֵינָיו כַּיּוֹנִים עַל מָיִם?!

הֲלֹא הוּא בְּכֹל נָחַל שִׁבְעָתַיִם,
אֵין מִסְפָּר לַעֲדָנָיו הוֹנוֹ וּשְׁלָלוֹ;
וּרְוָיָה כּוֹסוֹ מִבִּרְכוֹת שָׁמַיִם,
וִיפֵה־פִיּוֹת אֶלֶף הָיוּ גוֹרָלוֹ.

מַה זֶּה חָלַל לִבּוֹ, נַפְשׁוֹ זוֹעֶפֶת?
הַאִם מֵרֹב יָמִים יֶעֱצַב הָרוּחַ
עַד כִּי לַמָּוֶת חַיָּתוֹ נִכְסֶפֶת?
אוֹ מִשּׁוֹד אוֹיֵב לִבּוֹ לֹא יָנוּחַ?

17 Ravaged he sits there, bereft of good counsel
Like mourners left sitting amidst all the graves,
His spirit now quietly murmurs like Death--
How mighty is anguish that speaks without words!

21 O who is this man, so bent, old, and bowed
Unable to flee from the burden of life,
Walking about like a frail, weakened shadow?
Koheleth is he--in Jerusalem king!

25 Is this the same youth that was crowned with perfection,
Handsome and pleasant as light of the noonday?
Is this the same hair that was black as the raven?
Are these the same eyes once like doves on the water?

29 Had not he been granted a seven-fold portion,
Booty, luxurious wealth beyond number;
His cup overflowed with the blessings of heaven,
His lot was a thousand most beautiful women.

33 Why vexed is his soul, why wounded his heart?
Has his spirit been saddened by plenteous days
Until the desire of his life is for death?
Does his heart remain restless from enemies' ravage?

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24. Eccles. 1:1 29. Eccles. 11:2 32. Eccles. 2:8

הֲדְמֵי אָדָם שָׁפַךְ וָדָם רוֹדְפֵהוּ,
אוֹ דַכִּים וַעֲשׁוּקִים עָלָיו יִנְאָקוּ?
אוֹ נֹחַם אַכְזָרִי כָּעָשׁ יֹאכְלֵהוּ
כִּי רִצֵּץ אֶת עַמּוֹ תַּחְתָּיו נָהָקוּ?

הַאִם גַּם הוּא אָז לֹא יָדַע עוֹד דַּעַת
לִמְלוֹךְ כֵּאלוֹהַּ, כִּמְלָכֵינוּ עַתָּה?
כִּי עַנְוַת צִדְקָם עַד דַּכָּא מַגַּעַת,
עַל כֵּן אָרְחָם חַיִּים מַעְלָה גַּם מַטָּה.

הוֹי! לֹא רֹב יָמִים בּוֹ שֵׂיבָה זָרְקוּ,
כִּי לֹא לִימֵי גֶּבֶר יָמָיו הִגִּיעוּ!
וּבְזִקְנָתוֹ אֲחֵרִים עוֹד יֶחֱזָקוּ,
עוֹדָם רַעֲנַנִּים וּבְהוֹדָם יוֹפִיעוּ.

גַּם אוֹיֵב לֹא יָגוּר, מוּזָר לוֹ פַּחַד,
וּשְׁלוֹמוֹ מִסָּבִיב עַמִּים קָרָאוּ;
וּלְרַגְלָיו תֻּכּוּ מַמְלָכוֹת גַּם יַחַד,
שִׁחֵר אֶת פָּנָיו מִקְצוֹת אֶרֶץ בָּאוּ.

וּכְבָר גַּם הוּא הִכִּיר מַלְכוּת שָׁמַיִם,
וַיִּמְלוֹךְ גַּם אָז לִצְדָקָה וּלְחֶסֶד,
וּמְשָׁלָיו כֵּן יֹאמְרוּ אַחַת וּשְׁתַּיִם:
כִּי אַךְ עַל אֵלֶּה כֵּס מֶלֶךְ יוּסָד.

37 Does blood guilt for men he has slain still pursue him,
Do downtrodden, trampled ones cry out against him?
Does cruel regret now consume him like moths
For crushing his people who cried out beneath him?

41 Could he then possess or have any more knowledge
To rule like a god as kings will do now?
Their righteous humility reaches contrition,
Their life high above is the same as below.

45 Plenteous days have not caused his gray hairs,
For his days have not reached the full lifetime of man!
Others as old still maintain all their vigor,
For still they are fresh, and they radiate splendor.

49 He dreads not his foe, for fear is a stranger,
The nations around him all clamor his peace;
As kingdoms defeated all lie at his feet,
From the ends of the earth his presence they seek.

53 The kingship of heaven he long had acknowledged,
He reigned even then with compassion and justice,
His parables quoted from person to person:
On these things alone was the royal throne founded.

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39. Job 13:28   43. Ps. 90:3   45. Hos. 7:9   50. The Hebrew שלומו translates as "Solomon" and "his peace."

מִכָּל עָשׁוּק וָדָךְ וּקְצַר יָדַיִם
יָדוֹ לֹא קָפַץ וּדְלָתָיו לֹא נָעַל;
זִמּוֹת לֹא הֵפִיק בְּשֶׁפֶךְ דָּם כַּמַּיִם,
עוֹד הוּא רַבִּים הֵשִׁיב מִמְּעוֹל כָּל מָעַל.

אוֹתוֹ כָּל עַמּוֹ הוֹקִירוּ, אֲהֵבוּ,
כִּי אִישׁ בִּנְוֵה שָׁלוֹם שָׁכַן בָּטוּחַ;
וּשְׂבֵעִים וּשְׂמֵחִים אֶרֶץ יָשָׁבוּ,
אִישׁ תַּחַת גַּפְנוֹ בִּשְׂדוֹתָיו יָנוּחַ.

כִּי מֵעֵת יִשְׂרָאֵל אַרְצָם שָׁכָנוּ
עַל יָמִים כָּאֵלֶּה לֹא הִתְעַנָּגוּ;
וִימֵי כָּל שִׁבְתָּם בָּהּ עוֹד לֹא שַׁאֲנָנוּ,
אַךְ פָּחֲדוּ, רָהוּ, חָרְדוּ גַּם דָּאָגוּ.

אוֹ אוֹיְבִים מִחוּץ אֶת אַרְצָם רָעֲצוּ,
אוֹ אִישׁ אֶת דַּם אָחִיו שָׁפְכוּ יוֹשְׁבֶיהָ;
אָז רַגְלֵי בַת צִיּוֹן בַּדָּם מָחָצוּ
וּשְׂפָתֶיהָ אָדְמוּ מִדְּמֵי בָנֶיהָ.

וּבְיָמָיו אַךְ שָׁלוֹם פָּשׂ כַּיָּרֵחַ,
וּבִקְרָב וָלָחֶם אַרְצוֹ בַּל תֶּלְאָ;
עַל חֲבָלוֹ בַּנְּעִימִים עַמּוֹ שָׂמֵחַ,
עִתּוֹת הָעֵדֶן הָיוּ יָמִים אֵלֶּה.

57 On all those oppressed, on the powerless, weak
His hand did not close, and his door never locked;
He never conspired when blood flowed like water
But rather turned many from treacherous wrongs.

61 All of the nation adored him and loved him,
Each man in his peaceful abode dwelt securely;
Sated and happy, they lived in the land,
Each man was at rest by the vines of his field.

65 Since the days in which Israel had settled their land
No one delighted in times such as these;
In all of their days never knowing such peace,
But fear and alarm, apprehension and dread.

69 Either enemy foreigners trampled their land,
Or a man spilled the blood of his brother, his neighbor;
The feet of the daughter of Zion dripped blood,
Her lips had been reddened with blood of her children.

73 Tranquility shone like the moon in his day,
The land was not wearied with battle or war;
His nation in gladness rejoiced in his borders,
Times such as these were a Garden of Eden.

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68. Isa. 44:8

אַךְ הָהּ! אַךְ עַל עַמּוֹ קָם. זֶה אוֹרֵהוּ —
וּבְקֶרֶב לִבּוֹ אַךְ שׁוֹאָה וָאֶמֶשׁ.
כִּי יָקוּץ בְּחֶלֶד יִשְׂנָא חַיֵּיהוּ,
רַע עָלָיו הַמַּעֲשֶׂה תַּחַת הַשָּׁמֶשׁ.

הוֹי! גַּם הוּא מֵרֹאשׁ עָלָה בָּמֳתֵי חָלֶד
טֶרֶם אִוְּתָה נַפְשׁוֹ לִהְיוֹת בִּגְבוֹהִים;
אַךְ לֵב הוּתַל הִטּוֹ, נִתְעָה כַּיֶּלֶד —
חָכְמָה שָׁאַל עֵת נִרְאָה לוֹ אֱלֹהִים.

אַךְ חָכְמָה שָׁאַל הִיא אַךְ חָכְמַת אֶרֶץ,
וּמִבְּלִי אֱמוּנָה יָדָהּ קָצָרָה;
עַל כֵּן תּוֹלִיךְ שׁוֹלָל, תִּפְרוֹץ כָּל פֶּרֶץ
כִּי מִקֹּצֶר יָד בַּכֹּל תִּתֵּן סָרָה.

וּמְנָת כּוֹסוֹ מֵאָז — חָכְמָה הָיְתָה
אַף חָכְמַת לִבּוֹ מִכָּל אָדָם רָמָה;
חָכְמָה בִּקֵּשׁ, אוֹתָהּ עֵינוֹ רָאָתָה —
מֵאָז שִׂמְחַת נֹעַר לִנְהִי הוּשָׁמָה.

הוֹי עַזָּה מִמָּוֶת חָכְמָה הַזְּעוּמָה,
מַה טּוֹב בּוֹאֵךְ, פָּנַיִךְ כִּי זָרָחוּ!
וּבְגִשְׁתֵּךְ עָדֵינוּ הוֹי אַתְּ אֲיֻמָּה,
כֵּן תִּקְוָה וֶאֱמוּנָה מִמֵּךְ יִבְרָחוּ.

77 Alas! On his people his light has arisen--
But tumult and darkness gnaw deep in his heart.
Abhoring the world, disgusted with life,
All creation seems evil here under the sun.

81 At first he ascended the heights of the world,
His soul not desiring to take him so high;
His heart had deceived him, misled like a child--
When God had appeared, he asked Him for Wisdom.

85 The Wisdom he sought was the Wisdom of earth,
Lacking in faith, her hand becomes weak;
She leads one astray, and causes all breaches,
All is negated because of her weakness.

89 Wisdom--from then had become his cup's portion,
For Wisdom of heart more than man is exalted;
He seeks after Wisdom, his eyes then behold her--
And youthful rejoicing from then turns to wailing.

93 O cursed be Wisdom, more mighty than death,
How goodly your coming, your radiant presence!
But when you approach us, how dreadful you are,
As Hope flees before you and with it flees Faith.

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81. Isa. 14:14 83. Isa. 44:20 87. Job 12:7, 19
89. Ps. 16:5

תִּקְוָה וֶאֱמוּנָה אִם כָּהוּ גַּם יַחַד—
וּלְעֵדֶן יֵהָפְכוּ הַשְּׁאוֹל מִתַּחַת,
וּלְנָגְהָם יֵלֵךְ אִישׁ מֵאֵין כָּל פַּחַד—
אַךְ אַתְּ בְּרְבוֹת אוֹרֵךְ גִּלִּית אַךְ שַׁחַת.

אַתְּ גֵּרַשְׁתְּ אָז אָדָם מֵעֵדֶן גַּנִּים,
וּתְגָרְשִׁי כֵּן עוֹד גַּם אֵלֶּה הַיָּמִים
מִנְּוֵה עֲדָנָיו מֵחַיֵּי שַׁאֲנַנִּים
כָּל מַשְׂכִּיל דּוֹרֵשׁ לִדְבַר אֱמֶת תָּמִים.

גַּם תִּקְוָה וֶאֱמוּנָה מִלֵּב תַּבְרִיחִי,
גַּם כָּל חָזוֹן וּדְמוּת אִם גַּם נֶאְדָּרִי;
וּמַה זֶּה תִּתְּנִי אִם הַכֹּל תַּדִּיחִי?
אַךְ אֱמֶת מָרָה אוֹ שֶׁפֶק אַכְזָרִי.

עַל כֵּן חַכְמֵי קֶדֶם שָׂמוּ בָךְ כָּכָה:
עַל לֵב מָגֵן בַּרְזֶל, חֶרֶב עַל יָדַיִךְ;
כִּי חָרַבְתְּ כָּל לֵב יוֹדֵעַ אוֹתָכָה,
וּלְבָבֵךְ בַּרְזֶל כַּבַּרְזֶל עָלַיִךְ.

גַּם זֶה הַיַּנְשׁוּף הוּצַּב עַל קָדְקֳדֵךְ,
לֹא כִּי אִישׁוֹן לַיְלָה כַּיּוֹם לָךְ יְהִי,
אַךְ כִּי קִינִים וָהִי יֵלְכוּ עַל יָדֵךְ,
וּמְרִי יָגוֹן אִתָּךְ וִילֵל כָּל נֶהִי.

97 If Hope and if Faith would both languish and die--
They would transform the Sheol below to an Eden,
A man could then walk without fear in their aura--
But your light, O Wisdom, reveals but the pit.

101 Man--you drove out from the Garden of Eden,
In these times as well still you try to expel
From their peaceful abodes and a life so serene
The Enlightened who seek words of absolute truth.

105 Hope, also Faith do you drive from the heart,
All visions and dreams, no matter how great;
And what do you give, when all is cast out?
Just bitterest truth and the cruelest of doubts.

109 Therefore the sages of old thus perceived you:
A sword in your hand, iron shield in your heart;
You devastate every heart which has known you,
Like the iron upon you, your heart becomes iron.

113 The owl which is perched on your head--O Minerva,
Means not that the darkness will turn into light,
But that tearful laments now will walk at your side,
And with you goes bitterest anguish and wailing.

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115. Ezek. 2:10

וּדְמוּת אֵימָה זוֹ שׂוּמָה עַל לְבָּתֵךְ,
כָּל רוֹאֵי פָּנֶיהָ תַּהֲפוֹךְ לָאָבֶן;
כִּי רוֹאֵי אֶל לִבֵּךְ תָּמִית לַבָּתֵךְ,
וּלְאֶבֶן יֵהָפֵךְ הָאִישׁ בָּךְ יָבֶן.

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וּשְׁלֹמֹה גַּם הוּא אַךְ שָׂם בָּהּ מַעְיָנָיו
אָז כָּל חֶמְדָּתוֹ כַּצֵּל חִישׁ נֶהֱלָכָה;
לַהַט חַרְבָּהּ גֵּרְשׁוֹ מִגַּן עֲדָנָיו,
וּלְעֵינָיו תֵּבֵל כֻּלָּהּ אָז נֶהֶפָכָה.

כִּי כָל מַחֲמַדִּים וּמַמְתַּקֵּי אֶרֶץ
אִם אַךְ הִתְעַנֵּג בָּם נַפְשׁוֹ יָאָבָה —
אָז עֵינָיו בָּם רָאוּ אַךְ שֵׁאת וָפֶרֶץ,
כִּי שָׂטָן לִימִינוֹ חָכְמָה נִצָּבָה.

חַיִּים עֵת חָפֵץ לִרְאוֹת אֶת הָעַלְמָה
אָז קֶרֶב לִבּוֹ הַחָכְמָה אָמָרָה:
»זוֹ עֵינָהּ יָפָה תַּעַט אוֹר כַּשַּׂלְמָה,
מֵעוֹרוֹת עִם גִּידִים יַחַד חֻבָּרָה;

כֵּן בִּלְחָיֶיהָ כִּפְנִינִים אָדָמוּ —
אַךְ עוֹרְקִים גּוֹאָלִים בַּדָּם יָזוּעוּ;
וּצְחוֹק תֵּרָא בִּשְׂפָתֶיהָ נָעֵמוּ —
הוּא גִּידִים בִּבְשָׂרָם כֵּן אָז יָנוּעוּ.«

117 A terrible image you set on your heart,
For each one who looks at her face becomes stone;
Your fury will kill those who glance at your heart,
And you turn into stone every man who discerns you.

121 When Solomon's thoughts were directed toward Wisdom,
Then quickly his pleasures would vanish like shadows;
Her fiery sword had expelled him from Eden,
The world was completely transformed in his sight.

125 All the delight and the sweetness of earth
He enjoyed, for his soul had been longing for them--
But his eyes would perceive them as ruin and tempest,
With Wisdom, like Satan, beside his right hand.

129 Whenever he yearned to behold his beloved,
Wisdom would utter from deep in his heart:
"These beautiful eyes wrapped in light like a garment
Are fashioned together from sinew and skin;

133 Likewise her cheeks, like coral of crimson--
Are formed by the veins where impure blood is flowing;
The smile that appears on her splendorous lips--
Are muscles of flesh that are moving together."

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117. Minerva is described as carrying Medusa's image on her heart. 122. Ps. 109:23 123. Gen. 3:24 127. Lam. 3:47

וּבְצֵאת לִשְׂדֵי חֶמֶד כָּרִים וָאָחוּ
אֶל יִבְלֵי מַיִם בַּעֲמָקִים יֶהֱמָיוּ,
בֵּין אִבֵּי זֵיתִים בִּיפִי הוֹד יִפְרָחוּ
מִבְחַר רִמּוֹנִים עֵת עֵינָיו חָזָיו —

הוֹי! אָז לֹא לֵב יָשִׁית לִפְאֵר מִסָּבִיב,
לֹא נַפְשׁוֹ תַּעֲלוֹז, לֹא לִבּוֹ שָׂמֵחַ;
«מָה הֵמָּה» יִקְרָא «כָּל יַלְדֵי הָאָבִיב?
הֲלֹא רְקַב־הָדָר, מָוֶת פּוֹרֵחַ»!

וּלְפַקֵּד צִבְאוֹת רוּם כִּי בָא זֶה לַיִל,
בָּא לִרְאוֹת בַּהֲלִיכוֹת שָׁם הִלְכוּ הֵמָּה;
כִּי יִצְעַד הַסַּהַר לִפְנֵי הֶחָיִל
וּלְאַט יוֹבִילֵם לִמְנוּחָה נְעִמָה —

אַךְ לִשְׁלֹמֹה גַּם אֵלֶּה לֹא נֶהְדָּרוּ
מְנַהֲמַת לֵב יִקְרָא, מִמְּרִי עַצֶּבֶת:
«הֵן אוֹרָם מוֹתָם, כִּי כַּנֵּר יִבְעָרוּ —
וּמִי זֶה יָאִיר בָּם אִם לֹא הַמָּוֶת!»

כָּכָה נָבְלוּ קָמְלוּ רָאשֵׁי תִפְאֶרֶת,
וּמְלֹא תֵבֵל הָיָה מַהְפֵּכַת זָרִים;
אַךְ שִׁלְּחָה בָּם חָכְמָה חַרְבָּהּ חוֹדֶרֶת —
יָצָא כָּל הֲדָרָם, הָיוּ לִפְגָרִים.

137 Going out to the pleasureful meadows and pastures
And streams as they gurgle and run through the valleys,
Near olive trees greening which fluorish in splendor,
His eyes now beholding the choicest of fruits--

141 Alas! He could not set his heart on the beauty,
His soul could not cheer, no delight in his heart;
"What are they?" he cried, "these children of spring,
Is not beauty--decay, but a flowering death?"

145 Night came directing the heavenly host,
Coming to see that they stride in their courses,
Marching before this array is the moon,
Leading them slowly to pleasant repose--

149 Solomon found no enjoyment in these,
His heart groaned and shouted in bitterest sadness:
"Their light is their death for they burn like a candle--
Who else could be flickering in them but Death?"

153 The most beautiful, therefore, will wither, decay,
The fullness of earth overthrown by the strangers;
Wisdom has hurled out her sword at them, piercing--
Their beauty departs, and they turn into corpses.

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138. Isa. 30:25   145. Isa. 13:4

לַשָּׁוְא עַתָּה יָרִיד, שָׁוְא יֵבְךְּ תַּמְרוּרִים:
«לֵב הוּתַל הֲטַנִי, הוֹי מַה נוֹאַלְתִּי!
בִּדְמִי עֲלוּמַי וּבְשַׁחֲרוּת הַנְּעוּרִים
פּוֹתֶה אֵין לֵבָב לִי חָכְמָה שָׁאַלְתִּי.

שׁוּבִי עֵת יַלְדוּת אֶל נַפְשִׁי נֶאֱנָחָה,
עֵת הַאֲמֵן אֶת כֹּל יָכָלְתִּי צָלַחְתִּי;
וּבְטֶרֶם נַפְשִׁי לִגְדוֹלוֹת בָּרָחָה,
מִקְּטַנּוֹת שׁוֹקְטוֹת עֵת שָׁקַטְתִּי נַחְתִּי.»

שָׁוְא יִקְרָא לֶאֱמוּנָה, הִיא בוֹ בָגָדָה.
הָהּ! עוֹד הֵסִיתָה בוֹ חָכְמָה אַכְזָרִיָּה
אֶת שֶׁפֶק; הוּא לָהּ בֵּן לִשְׁאוֹל יָלָדָה,
הוּא הָפַךְ לִבּוֹ לִישִׁימוֹן וּשְׁאִיָּה.

*

הוֹי שֶׁפֶק אַכְזָרִי מֵחַיָּתוֹ יַעַר,
אֵיךְ פִּיךָ בַּכֹּל פָּתוּחַ כַּקֶּבֶר!
וּלְשׁוֹנְךָ עַכְשׁוּב הוּחַדָּה כַּתַּעַר,
וּכְחֵץ עָף מִקֶּשֶׁת תִּמְחַץ לֵב גֶּבֶר.

אַהֲבָה וִידִידוּת כַּצִּיץ לָךְ אֻמְלָלוּ,
כִּמְעַט אַךְ תַּשֵּׁב עָלֵימוֹ רוּחֶךָ;
אֹמֶן וָקֹשֶׁט כַּדֶּשֶׁא נָבָלוּ,
כִּי רוּחַ זִלְעָפוֹת נִשְׁמַת אַפֶּיךָ.

157 In vain do you wander and bitterly cry:
"My heart is deceived, a fool I become!
In the midst of my youth, in the prime of my life
For wisdom I asked, not my heart to mislead me.

161 Return, o my youth, to my spirit lamenting,
A time I believed all I did would succeed;
Not yet had my soul taken flight to find greatness,
When minor concerns gave me quiet and rest."

165 In vain he called Faith, but she surely betrayed him.
Wisdom so cruel has seduced him away
With Doubt, who was born unto Wisdom and Sheol,
This heart becomes wilderness, waste, desolation.

169 O Doubt--more cruel than beasts of the forest,
Your mouth, like the grave always open to all!
Your tongue like the viper, as sharp as a razor,
You shatter man's heart like the bow-driven arrow.

173 You wither affection and love like a flower,
The moment your spirit blows past them like wind;
Faith and the truth both fade as the grass,
From your hot scorching wind, the breath of your nostrils.

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157. Jer. 31:14   158. Isa. 44:20   159. Isa. 38:10
173. Job 14:2   175. Prov. 22:21   176. Ps. 11:6

כַּמָּגֵן בַּרְזֶל עַל לֵב אִישׁ תָּנוּחַ —
אִם תָּגֵן מֵהֶבֶל, מֵאֵמוּן־בֶּגֶד;
גַּם אַהֲבָה לֹא תִתֵּן בּוֹא לֵב וָרוּחַ,
גַּם קֹשֶׁט אֱמוּנִים כֵּן עוֹמֵד מִנֶּגֶד.

*

גַּם לִשְׁלֹמֹה כִּי בָא זֶה שֶׁפֶק פֶּתַע —
חָדַל מֵהַאֲמִין בִּרְעָיוֹת וָרֵעַ;
כִּי עָמֹק בִּלְבָבוֹ הַשֶּׁפֶק יִתַע,
וּלְשׁוֹנוֹ אַךְ תַּצְמִיד אֹמֶר: «מִי יוֹדֵעַ»?

אֹמֶר שֶׁפֶק הוּא מִקַּשְׁתּוֹ חֵץ רֶצַח!
אִם אַהֲבָה אוֹ תִקְוָה רֶגַע אָתָיו,
אֱמוּנָה כִּי תַבְטַח לוֹ חַיֵּי נֶצַח —
וּקְרָבָיו «מִי יוֹדֵעַ» אָז יֶהֱמָיוּ.

שׁוּלַמִּית אָז מֵתָה בִּדְמִי יָמֶיהָ,
הוּא עָמַד אֶצְלָהּ עֵת נַפְשָׁהּ נָפָחָה;
עֵת מִשְּׂאֵת מָוֶת רָחֲפוּ עֲצָמֶיהָ,
כִּצְחוֹק עוֹד בִּשְׂפָתָהּ וּכְמוֹ שָׂמֵחָה.

וּלְחָיֶיהָ אִם כַּסַּהַר חָוָרוּ,
עוֹד תִּקְוַת אַל־מָוֶת, חַיֵּי שָׁמַיִם
מֵעֵינֶיהָ כִּי עָשְׁשָׁה נִשְׁקְפוּ זָהָרוּ —
כֵּן תֶּחְשַׁךְ הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ בִּשְׁמֵי עַרְבַּיִם —

177 Like armor of iron you rest on man's heart--
Protect him from vanity, treacherous faith;
But Love you allow not in spirit or heart,
And Faith in the truth also stands to the side.

181 Solomon suddenly faces this Doubt--
And ceased to believe in compassion and friendship;
Doubt wanders freely so deep in his heart,
That his tongue frames the question, "Who knows?
O who knows?"

185 Thought from Doubt's bow--a murderous arrow!
If Love or if Hope has appeared for an instant,
And Faith has assured him of life everlasting--
Deep in his heart he must murmur, "Who knows?"

189 Shulamith died in the midst of her youth,
He stood at her side when her soul had expired;
When her body went limp at the triumph of death,
Her lips were still smiling as if she were pleased.

193 Her cheeks were as pale as the white of the moon,
The hope for a life after death, everlasting,
Shone from her eyes as they flickered and dimmed--
Just as the sun in the evening sky darkened--

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184. Ps. 50:19 189. Isa. 38:10 191. Jer. 23:9

וּשְׁלֹמֹה עַל עַרְשָׂהּ נַפְשׁוֹ כְּפוּפָה,
מְשֹׁמֵם הוּא כְּצִיּוּן נִצָּב עַל קָבֶר,
סָמְרוּ שַׂעֲרוֹתָיו אַף רוּחוֹ רָחֲפָה,
וְיָבְשָׁה עֵינוֹ אִם רַב כַּיָּם שָׁבֶר.

וּבְמוֹתָהּ עוֹד הִיא לִשְׁלֹמֹה מְלַלָה:
«אַל נָא תֶּאֱבַל דוֹדִי, הַשְׁבֵּת עַצֶּבֶת;
וּגְוִיָּתִי פֹּה אִם כַּצִּיץ נָבֵלָה —
רוּחִי רוּם תַּעַל בִּנְתִיבוֹת אַל־מָוֶת.»

וּשְׁלֹמֹה מְדַבְּרָהּ אַךְ כִּי שָׁמֵעַ,
וִילֵל הֶגֶה מִלֵּב עַל פִּיו הוֹפִיעַ;
וּבְקוֹל מַר קָרָא: «אֲהָהּ מִי יוֹדֵעַ
רוּחַ אָדָם אִם עוֹלָה לָרָקִיעַ?

גַּם הַבְּהֵמָה מִי יֵדַע רוּחַ בָּמוֹ,
הֲיוֹרְדָה הִיא מַטָּה אֶרֶץ לָנוּחַ?
מִי יוֹדֵעַ פֶּן מָוֶת אֶחָד לָמוֹ,
וּלְכֻלָּם יַחַד, הָהּ! אַךְ אַחַת רוּחַ...»

בִּזְרוֹעוֹתָיו כֵּן מֵת נָתָן לוֹ רֵעַ,
אָז לִמְּדוֹ הַנָּבִיא דַּרְכּוֹ הַיְשָׁרָה:
«הִנְּךָ מֶלֶךְ אַדִּיר וּגְדָל גַּם דֵּעַ
וּבְרֹאשְׁךָ אֶשְׂמַח כִּי תַּתִּי הָעֲטָרָה.

197 Solomon's soul at her bedside despaired,
Grieving like tombstones which stand at the grave,
His hair stood on end, his soul began quaking,
Were mighty seas shattered--his eye would be dry.

201 She whispered to Solomon while she lay dying:
"Mourn not my beloved, give rest to your sadness;
Though here lies my body that fades like a flower--
My soul ascends pathways of life everlasting."

205 When Solomon listened to Shulamith's words,
A wail from his heart then emerged from his lips;
He bitterly cried out, "Alas! O who knows
If the spirit of man will ascend to the heavens?

209 Who knows of the spirit implanted in beasts?
Does it stay here below on the earth to find rest?
Who knows if but one death awaits man and beast,
That both of them, ha!, are kindred in spirit . . ."

213 Nathan, his friend, also died in his arms,
The prophet then taught him the right path of life:
"Behold you--a wise and a powerful king,
I rejoice that the crown I bestowed on your head.

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197. Ps. 57:7 203. Isa. 28:1, 40:7,8 209.-212. Eccles. 3:19-21

אַךְ צוֹר תּוֹרָתִי כִּי מֵאֵל יָצָאָה,
אַךְ הִיא תּוֹרֶה אוֹר וּנְתִיבָהּ צָהֳרָיִם;
כִּי לַעֲשׂוֹת אַךְ טוֹב רוּחַ אֶל גֵּו בָּאָה,
וּלְאֵל מִקִּרְבֵּנוּ תָּשׁוּב שָׁמָיִם»·

וּשְׁלֹמֹה חִישׁ זָמַם: הוֹי מִי יוֹדֵעַ
אִם לֹא נֶפֶשׁ הִיא דָּם, וּמוֹחַ עֲצָמִים,
אִם לֹא מְגִידִים עֵין רוּחַ נוֹבֵעַ?
הָהּ! מַה בֶּצַע אִם כֵּן כִּי אֵלֵךְ תָּמִים

וּרְסִיס דָּם מִזֵּד יָהִיר לוֹ יִגָּרַע,
אוּלַי אָז יִצְדַּק וִיהִי גַּם עָנָיו?
אוּלַי תָּם יַתְעִיב עֲלִילָה, יִפָּרַע—
גִּיד אֶחָד בִּלְבָבוֹ אִם שִׁנָּה פָּנָיו»·

מִכְּאֵב שֶׁפֶק זָע וַיִּקְרָא בַּכֹּחַ:
«אוֹי לִי! מִי זֶה אֵיפֹה עָשַׁק מִמֶּנִּי
נֹעַם אֱמוּנָה זוּ נַחַת נִיחוֹחַ?
אָרוּר אָאוֹר אוֹתוֹ כָּל עוֹד עוֹדֶנִּי!

הֵן אֱמוּנֵי עַמִּי כֻּלָּם יִבְטָחוּ
כִּי לֹא רוּחַ הִיא מוֹחַ, נֶפֶשׁ דָּמִים,
לֹא נִטְפֵי דָּם אִם יִרְבּוּ אוֹ יֻקָּחוּ
יַעֲשׂוּ תָּם לָרָע אוֹ רָע לְגֶבֶר־תָּמִים»·

217 Preserve this, my teaching, from God it goes forth,
It will show you the light, for its pathways are brightness;
The spirit was planted so man would do good,
Then returns from within us to God in the heavens."

221 Solomon queried, "Alas! O who knows
If the soul is not blood or the marrow of bones,
If the well of the spirit does not flow through veins,
Then what do I profit by blamelessly walking?

225 If one drop of blood was withdrawn from a tyrant,
Would he become humble and also be righteous
And cease to do evil, be wanton, despised--
Could a vein in his heart change the face of the haughty?"

229 He shouted and quaked from the pain of his doubt:
"Alas! O who is oppressed more than I?
Has the sweetness of faith given pleasure or rest?
I curse it and damn it while life is within me!

233 Behold all my people, the faithful, do trust
That the soul is not marrow and spirit not blood,
That blood which is lost or increases can never
Turn righteous men villains or sinners to saints."

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217. Ezek. 5:3 218. The Hebrew "צהרים" has connotations of "blessing" or "happiness" and "brightness." 224. Gen. 6:9

מִתְמַהוֹן לִבּוֹ רָץ לְמָקוֹם שָׁם קֶבֶר,
שָׁם בֶּטֶן הַשְּׁאוֹל רַב אָדָם בָּלָעָה;
וּבֵין עַצְמוֹת מֵתִים וּגְוִיּוֹת גֶּבֶר
רֹאשׁ אֵיתָן אֶזְרָחִי רַגְלוֹ נָגָעָה.

הוֹי, מַה נּוֹרָא הוּא, אָיוֹם לָעֵינַיִם!
מִנִּקְרֵי עֵינָיו יָצִיץ שֵׁד עֵיפָתָה;
הַהֵם עֵינֵי אֵיתָן רָאוּ שָׁמַיִם?
הוֹי! אֵיךְ רֹאשׁוֹ הָהְפַּךְ לִדְמוּת אֵימָתָה!

וּשְׁלֹמֹה עַצְמוֹתָיו רָחֲפוּ חָרָדוּ;
„הֲזֶה קָדְקֹד — קָרָא — אָדָם כֵּאלוֹהַּ?
פֹּה חָכְמָה וּזְמִרוֹת יַחַד נוֹעָדוּ
וּנְגִינוֹתָיו הָלְכוּ בִּשְׁמֵי גָבוֹהַּ.

הֵן הוּא אֹזֶן חִקֵּר חָכְמָה נָדָעַת
אֵיךְ קָדְקֹד זֶה בּוֹ שִׁיר יָהּ חָמַד שָׁבֶת,
אֵיךְ מָעוֹן יְהִי אֶל שִׁקּוּץ תּוֹלָעַת?!
הוֹי בֵּית אֵל — וּמְתָקוֹ רִמָּה בַּת מָוֶת!"

237 His heart was bewildered, he raced to the graveyard,
Where bowels of Sheol consumed many men;
Among bones of the dead and the corpses of men,
His foot touched the skull--of Ethan the Psalmist.

241 How dreadful is this, a terrible sight!
From sockets of eyes peers a deathly dark ghost,
Are these eyes of Ethan who looked to the heavens?
Alas! How his head is a frightening image!

245 Solomon's frame starts to tremble in horror:
"This skull," he cried out, "was a man like a God?
For wisdom and singing had joined here together,
His melodies echoed in heaven above.

249 He thoughtfully searched to gain wisdom and knowledge,
O how could this skull in which psalms sweetly dwelled,
Become an abode for the maggot and worm?!
God's temple--its sweetness the worm, death's companion!"

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240. Ps. 89:1 242. Job 10:22

«מִי יוֹדֵעַ, קָרָא בִּבְכִי רַב נֶהִי,
אוּלַי מִן הַבְּהֵמָה אֵין מוֹתָר לָנוּ!
וּלְבָרוֹת רִם זֻלּוּת אִם אִישׁ זֶה יְהִי,
אוּלַי רִקָּבוֹן תָּמִיד הַחַיִּים בָּנוּ!»

הַצְּדָקָה רָאָה גַּלְמוּדָה בּוֹכִיָּה,
בָּנֶיהָ שֻׁדְּדוּ וְהִיא נֶהְפָּכָה;
רֻדְּפָה עַל צַוָּאר, נָסָה עַרְקָה צִיָּה,
לַחְמָהּ אֵפֶר, מֵימָהּ בִּבְכִי מָסָכָה.

דִּמְעוֹת עֲשׁוּקִים שָׁר וּמְנַחֵם אַיִן,
אַף כִּי אֵין מַצִּיל מִיַּד עוֹשְׁקָם כֹּחַ;
כִּי עָשׁוּק כִּי רָצוּץ — רָאָה — טוֹב עַיִן,
כִּי הוֹלְכֵי תוֹם יֵלְכוּ קוֹדֵר וְשָׁחוֹחַ.

[אִם גַּם לֵב מֶלֶךְ אַךְ יִמְלוֹךְ אֶל צֶדֶק,
אִם גַּם עֵין שַׁלִּיט אַךְ מִשְׁפָּט צוֹפִיָּה —
אַךְ עֵין אָדָם לוֹ, אֵיךְ יִרְאֶה כָּל בֶּדֶק
וּבְנִסְתָּר מֵעֵינוֹ עֵין תָּם בּוֹכִיָּה!]

253 "Who knows," he lamented in powerful wailing,
"Is man not preeminent over the beasts?!
If man is to rot into food for the worm,
Perhaps life within us is constant decay!"

257 Righteousness, crying alone, he observes,
Her children despoiled, herself overthrown;
Her neck is pursued; she must gnaw the dry ground,
Her bread is the ashes, her tears in her water.

261 Tears of oppression he cries without solace,
For no one can save him from hands that suppress;
He sees that the righteous are downtrodden, crushed,
That those who walk justly, walk bowed and in darkness.

265 (If even the heart of the king rules in justice,
If even the ruler's eye sees only right--
Can his eye, but human, behold every breach,
For hidden from sight cries the eye of the righteous!)

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254. Eccles. 3:19 255. Lam. 4:10; The Hebrew "רם זלות" is taken here to mean "crawling worm" from רמה. See אברהם אבן-שושן, המלון החדש, הוצאת קרית ספר Sivan Press, ירושלים, 1972 under "רם" 257. Isa. 49:21, Job 30:3 259. Job 30:3 260. Ps. 102:10 263. Prov. 22:9

אָז לִבּוֹ הִתְחַמֵּץ, רוּחוֹ הוֹמִיָּה,
בִּבְכִי קָרָא נוֹאָשׁ: «הוֹי! מִי יוֹדֵעַ
אִם שָׁם בִּשְׁמֵי שָׁמָיו עֵין אֵל צוֹפִיָּה,
וּבְנֹאדוֹ יָשִׂים דִּמְעַת תָּם גּוֹוֵעַ?»

חָזָה רִשְׁעֵי אַרְצוֹ חַיִל גָּבְרוּ
וַיְרַצְּצוּ נֵכִים, אַךְ הֵם לֹא יֻכַּתּוּ;
עַל מָטִים יֹאמְרוּ: הֶאָח עָרוּ עָרוּ!
עָתָק יַבִּיעוּ וּלְשׁוֹנָם רוּם שַׁתּוּ.

בְּדְמֵי הַנְּקִיִּים פַּעֲמֵיהֶם יִרְחָצוּ,
וּבְשֵׁבֶט בַּרְזֶל יָרוֹעוּ אֲדָמָה;
וּכְקֶטֶב יָשׁוּד צַדִּיקִים יְרָעֵצוּ,
וּלְלֹא הוֹעִיל יִתְּנוּ קוֹלָם בָּרָמָה.

לֵב בָּשָׂר לִשְׁלֹמֹה, אֹזֶן שׁוֹמַעַת,
וַיִּקְרָא בִּמְרִירוּת: «הוֹי מִי יוֹדֵעַ!
אוּלַי שָׁם בִּשְׁאוֹל אֵין חֶשְׁבּוֹן וָדַעַת,
וְקָשֶׁה יוֹם פֹּה יִבְכֶּה מֵאֵין שׁוֹמֵעַ?»

כָּבָה מַרְאֵי לִבּוֹ כֵּהוּ נֶעְכָּרוּ
עֵת רוּחַ שֶׁפֶק עָלֵימוֹ סָעָרָה;
כֵּן יִיבַשׁ עֵץ, טַרְפֵּי צִמְחוֹ יֶחֱוָרוּ,
קָרָה מִמְּזָרִים כִּי לָבוֹא נִמְהָרָה!

269 His heart is embittered, his spirit now clamors,
He cries in despair: "Alas, O who knows
If high in the heavens, God's eye is observing,
And tears of the righteous He puts in His bottle?"

273 The wicked of earth he sees prosper and flourish,
They crush all the trampled, but they are not beaten;
They say of the downtrodden, "Raze them, yea raze them!"
Their tongues become haughty with arrogant speech.

277 They wash off their feet with the innocents' blood,
Rent open the earth with a rod made of iron;
Like ravage and ruin they shatter the righteous,
Who raise up their voices in vain to the heights.

281 Solomon's heart is of flesh and he listens,
He bitterly cries: "Alas! O who knows?
Are knowledge and reckoning found there in Sheol?
Will anyone heed the forsaken one's cry?"

285 His insights of heart become troubled and dark,
The spirit of Doubt begins storming around them;
Saplings will wither, leaves will now fade,
As the frost from the north has so hastily come!

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273. Eccles. 3:16 274. Ps. 35:15 275. Ps. 137:7
278. Ps. 2:9 279. Ps. 91:6 280. Jer. 31:14 283. Eccles. 3:17 284. Job 30:25 287. Ezek. 17:9 288. Job 37:9

וּבְלֵב דַּוָּי קָרָא: «הוֹי מַכְאוֹב רֶצַח,
הוֹי עֵת וָפֶגַע לָעַד לֹא תֶחְדָּלוּ!
מַה שֶּׁנַּעֲשָׂה עוֹד יֵעָשֶׂה לָנֶצַח
חֶסְרוֹן וּמְעֻוָּת לְתִקּוּן לֹא יוּכָלוּ.

וּמַה שֶּׁכְּבָר הָיָה יִהְיֶה עוֹלָמִים;
לָכֵן אֲנַסֶּה נָּא לִבִּי לִשְׂמוֹחַ,
הַרְאוֹת נַפְשִׁי טוֹבָה בִּמְעַט הַיָּמִים,
לֶאֱכוֹל לִשְׁתּוֹת אוּלַי אֶמְצָא מָנוֹחַ».

וַיִּטַּע לוֹ גַּנּוֹת, פַּרְדֵּס וּכְרָמִים
וּסְגֻלּוֹת כָּנַס, גַּם שָׁרוֹת עִם שָׁרִים;
וַיִּבֶן הֵיכָלוֹת וּכְמוֹ הוֹד רָמִים
תַּעֲנוּגוֹת אָדָם וּבְרֵכוֹת וִיעָרִים.

שִׁדּוֹת וַעֲלָמוֹת רַכּוֹת וִיפֵה־פִיּוֹת
אֶלֶף תּוּבַלְנָה אֶל הַרְמוֹנוֹ שָׁמָּה;
אוּלַי בִּשְׂחוֹק גִּיל וּשְׂמָחוֹת הוֹמִיּוֹת
לֹא יַאֲזִין דִּבְרַת שֶׁפֶק לֹא נֶחָמָה.

כִּמְעַט רָאָה טוֹבָה גִּילָה וָנַחַת —
פִּתְאוֹם גַּם חָכְמָה שָׁם אַחֲרָיו צָעָדָה;
וַיְהִי הֵיכַל עֹנֶג לִשְׁאוֹל וּלְשַׁחַת,
כָּל שִׂמְחָה נוּגָה, כָּל חֶדְוָה שֻׁדָּדָה.

289 With faint heart he cries: "Oh the anguish of murder,
Unceasing is time, unending is chance!
What happened before, will happen again,
The bent and the crooked can never be straight.

293 For what always was, always will be;
Therefore, my heart must attempt to rejoice,
My soul will show pleasure the few days to come,
By eating and drinking perhaps I can rest."

297 He planted some gardens, vineyards and orchards,
Collecting a chorus of singers and treasure;
He built lofty temples like glorious heights,
Luxuries, swimming pools, forests of trees.

301 Beautiful mistresses, pleasing young maidens,
A thousand were lead to his concubine there;
Perhaps all the laughter and sounds of delight,
Will silence disquieting voices of doubt.

305 He briefly saw gladness, tranquility, joy--
When suddenly Wisdom came stalking behind them;
His palace of joy became Sheol, the grave,
His delight has been saddened, his pleasure is ravaged.

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289. Lam. 1:22 290. Eccles. 9:11 291. Ibid. 1:19
292. Ibid. 1:15, 6:13 293. Ibid. 1:9 294.-296. Ibid.
5:18, 8:15 297. Ibid. 2:4,5 298. Ibid. 2:8 299. Ibid.
2:4 300. Ibid. 2:5-8 301. Ibid. 2:8

כִּי חָכְמָה בִּקֹּרֶת אָז לוֹ אָמְרָה:
«שִׂמְחָה מַה זֹּה עוֹשָׂה וּשְׂחוֹק הַמְּהוֹלָל?
כָּל אִשָּׁה תֶּאֱהַב מִמָּוֶת הֵן מָרָה
וּבְחֶרְמֵי לִבָּהּ תֵּלֵךְ נִדְהָם שׁוֹלָל».

וּשְׂבַע תַּעֲנוּגוֹת זֶה עָיֵף יָגֵעַ
הוֹסִיף לָתוּר כֹּל יֵשׁ תַּחַת הַשָּׁמֶשׁ;
«אוּלַי אִם אֶרֶב — אָמַר — חָכְמוֹת דֵּעַ,
אוּלַי אֶמְצָא פֵּשֶׁר חִידוֹת הָאֶמֶשׁ.

אוּלַי לִשְׁאֵלוֹתַי מַעֲנֶה אֶשְׁמָעָה
אֵי מִזֶּה בָּא וּלְאָן יֵלֵךְ כָּל גָּבֶר?
לָמָּה רָעִים שָׁלוּ אוּלַי אֵדָעָה?
חֶשְׁבּוֹן וָדַעַת הֲיֵשׁ שָׁם בַּקֶּבֶר?»

אָז חִפֵּשׂ אַף חָקַר כָּל חֻקּוֹת אָרֶץ
מִן אֵזוֹב הַקִּיר עַד אֲרָזִים רָמִים,
מִן חַיְתוֹ יַעַר עַד רֶמֶשׂ וָשֶׁרֶץ,
גַּם מִנְּבוֹנִים לָמַד, דָּרַשׁ חֲכָמִים.

גַּם מִבְּנֵי קֶדֶם, גַּם חָכְמַת מִצְרַיִם
וּמִסִּתְרֵי אֱלִילִים חָכְמָה כּוֹזֶבֶת;
וּלְרָזֵי כֹּהֲנֵיהֶם פָּתַח אָזְנַיִם,
אוּלַי יוֹצִיא אוֹר מֵעִמְקֵי צַלְמָוֶת.

309 For critical Wisdom had said to him then:
"Is laughter not folly, what use is delight?
More bitter than death is the woman you love,
In the void of her heart, you go empty, confounded."

313 Sated in pleasures, but tired and weary,
He still explores all that is under the sun;
"Perhaps by increasing my Wisdom and Knowledge
I may find the answers to yesterday's riddles.

317 Perhaps I will hear a response to my questions,
From where does man come, and what is his end?
Perhaps I will learn why the wicked are tranquil,
Are knowledge and reckoning found at the grave?"

321 He inquired and searched all the ways of the earth
From the hyssop on walls to the towering cedars,
From the beasts of the forest to reptiles and insects,
He learned from the sages, and sought out the wise.

325 And those from the East, and the wisdom of Egypt,
The secrets of idols, the wisdom of liars;
He hearkened the mysteries known to their priests,
He hoped to draw light from the depths of the darkness.

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309. Lev. 19:20   310. Eccles. 2:2   311. Ibid. 7:26
316. Ibid. 8:1   317. Ibid. 5:19   322. I Kings 5:13

שָׁוְא בִּקֵּשׁ מִפִּיהֶם בִּינוֹת וָשֵׂכֶל
גַּם הֵם לִשְׁאוֹל יָדְעוּ, לַעֲנוֹת נִבְעָרוּ;
לָכֵן לִמְצוֹא חֵפֶץ עוֹד נַפְשׁוֹ תִּכֶל,
בִּקֵּשׁ דִּבְרֵי אֱמֶת אֲבָל נִסְתָּרוּ.

«הוֹי — קָרָא — הֵן אוֹסִיף אַךְ לַיְלָה וָאֶמֶשׁ
נוֹסְפוּ עוֹד חִידוֹת וּפִתְרוֹן אֵינֶנּוּ;
וּלְרִיק אַךְ בַּקָּשָׁתִיו פֹּה תַּחַת שֶׁמֶשׁ,
אַךְ עָמֹק עָמֹק הוּא מִי יִמְצָאֶנּוּ».

וּשְׁלֹמֹה קָרָא שֵׁם בִּלְאֻמֵּי אֶרֶץ,
וּמְלָכִים שָׁמְעוּ בָּאוּ וַיִּרְאוּהוּ;
תָּמְהוּ עַל חָכְמָתוֹ כִּי תִפְרוֹץ פֶּרֶץ,
רָאוּ כִּי חָכַם מֵרַבִּים קְדָמוּהוּ.

«אוֹיָה וּמַה בָּאתֶם?!» הוּא קָרָא לָמוֹ
הֵן יוֹסִיף אַךְ מַכְאוֹב אִישׁ יוֹסִיף דָּעַת,
חָכָם מִכָּל אָדָם הָאֻמְלָל כָּמוֹ —
וּבְרֹב חָכְמָה הִרְבֵּיתִי אַךְ רָב כָּעַס.

מַה זֶּה אוֹדִיעַ וּמְאוּם לֹא אֵדָעָה,
הֲזֹאת אוֹדַע כִּי לֹא נוּכַל יָדוֹעַ?
לֹא דֵעִי אַךְ אֵידִי מִכֶּם אֶמְנָעָה,
מֶה חָדֵל אָדָם אֵיךְ תֹּאבוּ שָׁמוֹעַ!

329 He sought out their wisdom and insights in vain,
They too knew the questions but answers knew not;
Therefore his spirit still yearns for His favor,
He searches for words of the truth which are hidden.

333 "Alas!" he cried out, "I add darkness and night
By increasing the riddles yet finding no answer;
In vain do I seek it here under the sun,
Who will obtain it in deepest of depths?

337 When Solomon beckoned the nations of earth,
The kings then would hearken and come to behold him,
His wisdom surprised them--exceeding all bounds,
They saw him as wiser than those who preceded.

341 "O why have you come?" to them he cried out,
"The man who adds knowledge increases his pain,
The wisest of men is most wretched among them--
The greater my wisdom, the more is my anguish.

345 For what can I teach when my knowledge is nil,
For shall I instruct what can never be known?
My pain, my opinion, I can not withhold from you,
Yearning to hear how fleeting is man!

342.-344. Eccles. 1:18   348. Ps. 39:5

חִישׁ מַהֲרוּ וּלְכוּ, פֶּן חָכְמָה תִּשְׁמָעוּ,
חִישׁ מַהֲרוּ עִוְרִים, פֶּן תִּפָּקַח עֵינֵיכֶם;
וּלְאוֹרָהּ תֵּלְכוּ חֹשֶׁךְ עַד תִּיגָעוּ,
אָז גַּם תִּמְאָסוּ כָּמוֹנִי חַיֵּיכֶם».

כֹּה מָרוּ לִשְׁלֹמֹה חַיָּיו בֶּחָלֶד,
כֹּה בַּצַּר לוֹ כָּל עַצְמוֹתָיו אָמָרוּ:
«הָהּ! טוֹב יוֹם הַמָּוֶת מִיּוֹם הִוָּלֵד
סִכְלוּת־מָה וָתוֹם מֵחָכְמָה יָקָרוּ!»

עַד נָח בַּקֶּבֶר לֹא יָדַע לָנוּחַ,
עוֹד יוֹם לִפְנֵי מוֹתוֹ קָרָא פַּעֲמַיִם:
הַכֹּל הֶבֶל! אַךְ הֶבֶל וּרְעוּת רוּחַ!
אָמַר קֹהֶלֶת — וַיִּסְגּוֹר עֵינָיִם.

*

אַךְ מַחֲזֵה אֵל שַׁדַּי אָז לִבּוֹ רָאָה,
הוּא הָאֵל נִרְאָה לוֹ עִיר גִּבְעוֹן לָיִל;
וּבְחֵיקוֹ יִרְאֶה הַחָכְמָה נִשָּׂאָה —
וּמִגְּבוּרַת שֶׁמֶשׁ אוֹרָהּ רַב חָיִל.

אוֹר הָאֱמֶת הוּא עִם חָכְמָה אֲצוּרָה,
לָהּ אַל מָגֵן חֶרֶב, הִיא לֹא חָכְמַת אֶרֶץ;
לָהּ עֵצָה, תוּשִׁיָּה, בִּינָה וּגְבוּרָה —
אֵלֶּה הֵם נִשְׁקָהּ, הִיא בָם תִּפְרוֹץ פֶּרֶץ.

349 Hurry, go quickly lest Wisdom you hear,
Hurry, O blind ones, lest eyes become opened;
You walk in her light, and find wearisome darkness,
Your life then despised as I abhor mine."

353 Thus bitter was Solomon's life on this earth,
And thus in his straits all his bones would cry out:
"O better is death than the day of one's birth,
Innocent folly is dearer than wisdom!"

357 He knew of no rest till he rest in the grave,
He twice had called out on the day before death:
Alas! All is vanity, striving for wind!
Thus spoke Kohelet--and closes his eyes.

361 His spirit beheld then a vision of God,
The God who appeared in the Gibeon night,
And saw in His bosom--Wisdom exalted--
Her powerful radiance stronger than sunlight.

365 Wisdom is bound up with light of the truth,
It is not earthly Wisdom, no sword can defend her;
Knowledge and Might, Understanding and Counsel--
Her weapons, and through them she breaks every bound.

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355. Eccles. 7:1 359. Eccles. 1:14 362. I Kings 3:5

זֶה שֶׁפֶק שָׁם הוּטַל תַּחַת רַגְלֶיהָ
יִשְׁכַּב דּוּמָם וּבְפִיו אֵין יֵשׁ עוֹד רוּחַ;
אַךְ רוּחַ דָּוִד לִימִין אֵל יֶחֱזֶה,
וּבְאוֹר אֱמוּנָה כַּסַּהַר זָרוּחַ.

גַּם רוּחוֹת יִרְאֵי אֵל מִסָּבִיב לָמוֹ,
וּכְכוֹכְבֵי אוֹר הֵם עַל יָדָם יָאִירוּ;
רֶכֶב אֱלֹהִים הוּא! אֲדֹנָי בָּמוֹ —
וּבְשִׁירֵי דָוִד לוֹ כֻלָּם יָשִׁירוּ.

וּצְדָקָה לִפְנֵיהֶם עַל רֹאשָׁהּ נֵזֶר,
בִּימִינָהּ תַּגְמוּלוֹת וּנְעִמוֹת נֶצַח;
עַל אוֹבֵד בָּאָרֶץ שָׁם תָּשִׁית עֵזֶר,
וּלְשָׁחִים עַד עָפָר תָּרִים הַמֵּצַח.

וַיַּרְא כִּי יֵשׁ אַחֲרִית תִּקְוַת אַל־מָוֶת,
כִּי אֵל עַל צַדִּיק מִמָּרוֹם יַשְׁגִּיחַ,
דִּמְעַת עֲשׁוּקִים עַל אֶרֶץ צַלְמָוֶת
שָׁם בִּמְרוֹם שָׁמָיו הוּא יִמְחֶה יָדִיחַ;

רָאָה רוּחַ אָדָם מִגֵּו נִשְׂגָּבָה
כִּי רוֹמֵמָה הִיא עַל מָוֶת וָקֶרֶץ,
וּלְאֵל אוֹתָהּ נָתַן שָׁמָּה הִיא שָׁבָה,
כִּי הִיא לֹא מֵעָפָר יָשֹׁב עַל אֶרֶץ.

369 Doubt has been hurled beneath Wisdom's feet,
It lies there in silence, its lips drained of spirit
At the right hand of God, the spirit of David,
In Faith's glowing light shining forth like the moon.

373 The souls of the pious he sees all around them,
They radiate light by their side like the stars,
The throne of the Lord! God is among them--
All of them sing to Him verses of David.

377 Justice, with crown on her head, goes before them,
Reward in her right hand, eternal delight;
Extending her help to the lost of the earth,
And raising the heads of those bowed to the dust.

381 The future holds hope for life everlasting,
The Almighty provides for the righteous on high,
The downtrodden's tears on this deathly dark earth
He cleanses away in the heights of his heaven;

385 He saw that man's soul is more lofty than body,
The soul will exult over death and destruction,
The spirit returns to the God who bestowed it,
Not part of the dust which has settled on earth.

378.-Ps. 116:12 379. Mic. 7:2 387. Eccles. 12:7

וּפִתְאוֹם עֵינֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ נִפְקָחוּ,
וַיִּקְרָא: סוֹף דָּבָר הַכֹּל תִּשְׁמָעוּ!
הָאֵל תִּירָאוּ מִצְוֹתָיו תִּקָּחוּ,
זֶה כָּל הָאָדָם! — וִיצוּרָיו גָּוָעוּ.

389 The eyes of King Solomon suddenly opened,
"All of you hear now the end of the matter!
Fear God," he cried out, "and keep his commandments,
For this is man's essence!"--his life then expired.

390.-392. Eccles. 12:13

נקמת שמשון

THE VENGEANCE OF SAMSON

גדולה נקמה שנתנה בין שתי
שמות, שנאמר: אל נקמות ה׳.
(סנהדרין צ״ב ע״ש)

אל מִזְבַּח דָּגוֹן הַסְּרָנִים לִפְלֶשֶׁת
בִּצְחוֹק בֶּן־מָנוֹחַ לִרְאוֹת נִקְהָלוּ;
שָׁם נִדְמֶה עַתָּה קוֹל חִצִּים וָקֶשֶׁת
אַךְ קוֹל נָקָם נִשְׁמָע, הוֹלְלִים יִצְהָלוּ.

וּבְצַוָּאר עָתָק יַבִּיעוּ גָבֹהַּ:
«נִרְדָּם אֵל עִבְרִים לֹא יוּכַל יוֹשִׁיעַ;
וַיּוּכַל לוֹ דָּגוֹן — אַךְ הוּא אֱלֹהַּ!
וַיֵּרֶד גִּבּוֹר עַמּוֹ עֻזּוֹ הִכְרִיעַ».

וּבְגִיל וּבִטְחָה שָׁם כֻּלָּם יָרֹנּוּ:
«חַת קָשֶׁה מִשְּׁאוֹל, כָּלָה עַז מִמָּוֶת,
מִגְּבוּרַת יָדוֹ כִּמְעַט קָט תַּמּוֹנוּ,
שָׁבְתָה נַאֲקַת חָלָל, אָפְסָה עַצֶּבֶת».

הָעָם כִּשְׁלֹשׁ אֶלֶף בַּגָּג נֶאֱסָפוּ,
אֶת מַחֲרִיב אַרְצָם לִרְאוֹת נוֹעָדוּ;
הוּא רֻתַּק בַּזִּקִּים, יָדָיו יָעֲפוּ,
אַךְ גֶּשֶׁת עָדָיו עוֹד יִירְאוּ יֶחֱרָדוּ.

"Great is vengeance that appears between two Names;
as it is written, 'O Lord, vengeful God' (Ps. 94:1)"
(Sanhedrin 92b)

1 At the altar of Dagon, the Philistine lords
Assemble together to mock ben-Manoah;
The voice of the arrow and bow now stands mute
But the voices of vengeance are heard shouting scorn.

5 With arrogant words they haughtily boast:
"The Hebrew God sleeps without power to save;
Dagon prevailed--he alone is our God!
Having broken his might, his nation's great hero."

9 In joy and security all of them taunt:
"Shame and defeat are far worse than the grave,
We quickly succumbed to his powerful hand,
But cries of the fallen and mourning have ceased."

13 Three thousand people now mass on the rooftop,
And gather to see him who ravaged their land;
Bound up and fettered, his arms become weary,
Yet fearful and trembling they dare not approach him.

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1. Judg. 16:23, Judg. 3:3 4. Isa. 44:25 5. Ps. 75:6
8. Isa. 41:2 11. Ezek. 16:47 13. Judg. 16:27
14. Judg. 16:24 15. Nah. 3:10

כֵּן אֲרִי בַסּוּגַר, חָח עַל אַפָּיִם,
וּכְבָר יִכְרַע דּוּמָם, נִלְכַּד בָּרֶשֶׁת —
אַךְ רֹאשׁוֹ יָנַע, אַךְ יִלְטֹשׁ עֵינָיִם,
עוֹד יֵחַת שׁוֹבֵהוּ יִירָא מִגֶּשֶׁת.

בֵּין הֲמֻלּוֹת אוֹיֵב קוֹל נַהֲמַת קָמִים,
בְּלָזוּת שִׂפְתֵי צָר כִּי יִשְׂמַח שָׂמוֹחַ —
שָׁם נִצָּב שִׁמְשׁוֹן בֵּין עַמּוּדִים רָמִים
וּבְאֵין אוֹנִים עוֹד, בִּזְרוֹעַ לֹא כֹחַ.

בֵּן לַיְלָה הַהוּא שֵׂיבָה בוֹ זָרְקָה,
וּשְׂעָרוֹ הִלְבִּין אַךְ הֵחֵל צָמֵחַ;
וּשְׂפָתָיו יִקְפּוֹץ, נַפְשׁוֹ הִתְאַפָּקָה,
וּלְחָיָיו הִלְבִּינוּ כִּפְנֵי יָרֵחַ.

בָּאַתְהוּ הָעַזָּה בִּמְצוּקוֹת גֶּבֶר,
אַךְ שָׁלוֹם עַל פָּנָיו — נוֹרָא מִדְּאָבָה;
כֹּה יַעֲמוֹד הַגִּבּוֹר דּוּמָם כַּקֶּבֶר,
כִּדְמִי הַר־אֵשׁ טֶרֶם יַחְצוֹב לֶהָבָה.

הֵילִילִי בַּת יַעֲקֹב, צַעֲקִי מִשְּׁפָיִים,
תֹּפְפִי עַל לִבֵּךְ, אַף גֹּזִּי הַשֵּׂעָר;
הֵן רֹדֵד אֲרִי וּמְשַׁסְּעוֹ כִּגְדָיִים
זֶה גִּבּוֹר יָלַד בָּךְ — מִשְׂחָק לַנַּעַר.

17 The lion is caged with a ring in his nose,
Kneeling in silence ensnared in the net--
If he lifts up his head or he flashes his eyes,
His keeper draws back, afraid to approach.

21 Amid throngs of his foes sounds the roar of his rivals,
Joyfully shouting their obstinate words--
Samson there stands between towering pillars
But drained of his power, his arms without strength.

25 His hair became hoary that very same night,
His hair, having whitened, profusely has sprouted;
He draws tight his lips, restraining his soul,
His cheeks become pale like the face of the moon.

29 The worst of man's straits have been cast upon Samson,
But peace marks his face--more awesome than weakness;
The hero stands thusly, as hushed as the grave
Like a dormant volcano before spewing fire.

33 O daughter of Jacob, lament from the heights,
Beat on your heart and shear off your hair;
The lion he slew and rent like a kid,
This hero you bore--is a plaything for children.

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17. Isa. 37:29 19. Job 16:9 21. Ezek. 1:24 22. Prov. 4:24
25. Hos. 7:9 27. Isa. 52:15, Job 5:16 33. Isa. 23:2
34. Nah. 2:8 35. Judg. 14:6

הֲזֶה אֵל־גִּבּוֹר וּנְזִיר אֵל מֵרֶחֶם,
נוֹרָא כָּרֶצַח, אַף אָיֹם כַּזַּעַם,
וַיִּסַּע שַׁעַר וָדֶלֶת עַל שֶׁכֶם,
וַיַּךְ רֹאשׁ צָרָיו כַּבָּרָק וָרַעַם?

זֶה שִׁנֵּי אֲרָיוֹת יָדוֹ נָתָצָה,
אֵיךְ בַּת אֵל נֵכָר מִבְּנוֹת לִפְלֶשֶׁת
אֵיךְ דִּכְּאָה חַיָּתוֹ אוֹנוֹ רָעֲצָה,
אֵיךְ מַחֲמָאוֹת פִּיהָ שָׂמָה לוֹ רֶשֶׁת!

לִיפִי עֵינֶהָ הִבִּיט, לַהֲדַר הַמֵּצַח —
וּבְחֵיקָהּ נִלְכַּד, אֶת נַפְשׁוֹ שָׁבָתָה;
לֹא יָדַע כִּי יֶאֱרוֹב בִּלְבָבָהּ רֶצַח,
בִּנְשִׁיקוֹת פִּיהָ סוֹד לִבּוֹ מָצָתָה.

אָז גִּלְּחָה רֹאשׁוֹ, אַף עֵינָיו נִקְּרוּ.
״הוֹי! קָרָא שִׁמְשׁוֹן: הֵן אוֹר אֵין לַשֶּׁמֶשׁ,
גַּם מוֹצָאֵי בֹקֶר לֹא לִי יַנְהִרוּ,
צָהֳרַיִם לִי אֹפֶל, יוֹם אוֹר לֵיל אָמֶשׁ.

אַךְ חֹשֶׁךְ מִסָּבִיב, אַךְ חֶשְׁכַת לַיִל!
וּנְעִמוֹת אוֹר חַיִּים לֹא אֶרְאֶה נֶצַח;
אוֹר עֵינַי לָקַחְתְּ כָּל אוֹן וָחַיִל,
חוּסִי! וּבְעַצְמוֹתַי שַׁלְּחִי גַּם רֶצַח.

37 Is this the same hero--a Nazirite born,
Awesome as fury, and fearsome as death,
Uprooting the gate of the town on his shoulder,
And smiting his foes like the thunder and lightning?

41 The jaws of a lion he smashed in his hand,
Then how could a Philistine daughter of idols
Have shattered his strength and prevailed over Samson,
And how could her coaxing have caught and ensnared him?!

45 He looked in her eyes, at her beautiful features--
Was trapped in her lap as she captured his soul;
Unaware that her heart hid his treacherous murder
The kiss of her lips had drawn out his heart's secret.

49 She shaved off his hair, then his eyes were impaled--
"Alas!" bemoans Samson, "The sun casts no light,
And the stars of the morning no longer illumine,
For night blankets noonday, and gloom wraps the daylight.

53 Darkness surrounds me, the blackness of night!
I never will witness the sweet light of life;
You wrenched out my eyes, my power and might,
Have mercy I pray! Strike me dead I implore!

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39. Judg. 16:3 44. Ps. 55:22 47. Note double meaning of root א-ר-ב : "lay in wait" and "treachery" or "deceit"
48. Cant. 1:2 49. Judg. 16:21 51. Ps. 65:9 52. Job 30:3

הַדְלִילָה אַתְּ, זוֹ אֹהַב מִבַּת עָיִן?
הַגְּמוּל אַהֲבָתִי הוּא, אִם כֹּה תִּגְמוּלִי?
לָמָּה לִי חַיִּים אִם אוֹר עֵינַי אָיִן?!
הֲמִיתִי גַּם אוֹיִבֵךְ — הֲלֹא תַּחֲמוּלִי».

כֵּן לָהּ הִתְחַנֵּן עֵת עֵינָיו עֻוְּרוּ,
אַךְ עַזָּה חֲמַת צָר מִשְּׁאוֹל קָשָׁתָה,
לֹא הָרְגוּ אוֹיְבָם אִישׁ חֶרְמָם שָׁמָרוּ,
לֹא עוֹד לָשְׂבַּע בּוֹ עֵינָם רָאָתָה.

בִּנְקַם הָרֶצַח כִּי נִקְּרוּ עֵינַיִם
עוֹד צַחֵק לִפְנֵיהֶם אוֹתוֹ הִצִּיגוּ;
וּלְנֶפֶשׁ אִישׁ עִוֵּר וּרְפֵה יָדַיִם
מַכָּיו וַעֲשׁוּקָיו עַתָּה יַלְעִיגוּ.

מִנִּקְרֵי עֵינָיו בַּלָּהוֹת הִשְׁקִיפוּ,
בִּלְבָבוֹ אֵשׁ תָּפְתֶּה כָּלָה וָקֶרֶץ;
גִּידָיו כִּפְתָנִים מֵי רֹאשׁ בּוֹ יַרְעִיפוּ,
וּלְקֶבֶר אָפֵל לוֹ הָיְתָה הָאָרֶץ.

מָה כִּמְנַת חֶלְקוֹ אֲיֻמָּה נוֹרָאָה!
עִוֵּר, אֵין אוֹנִים, אָסִיר בִּידֵי צָרִים;
אִישׁ אֵלֶּה קָרוּהוּ לֹא יִירָא רָעָה,
כִּי כִלָּה בּוֹ אֵל כָּל חִצָּיו אַכְזָרִים.

O fairest Delilah, more loved than all else,
In return for my love--thus you requite me?
Why should I live if my eyes see no light?!
Kill me, your enemy, have you no mercy?"

Thus he implored her, his eyes rendered blind,
His hate for the foe burning stronger than death.
They spared him, their enemy, guarding their captive,
But not yet were satisfied feasting their eyes.

With murderous vengeance they bored out his eyes
And set him before them to sport for the people;
The soul of the hero enfeebled and blind,
Now mocked by the nation he once had oppressed.

From the pit of his eyes viewing ruin and terror,
His heart burned the ravaging blazes of hell;
The sweat of his brow poured down snake-tightened sinews.
The world had become for him darkness and death.

O what is more awesome or worse than his portion!
Blinded and weak, in the bonds of the foe;
The man who could bear this will never fear evil,
Smitten by all of the Lord's cruelest arrows.

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59. Gen. 25:22   63. I Kings 20:42   65. Judg. 16:28, 16:21   66. Judg. 16:25   67. Neh. 6:9

כָּל עָנְיוֹ לֹא יָחוּשׁ וּכְאֵב עֵינַיִם
לֹא לַעַג וָבוּז וּצְחוֹק צַר מְנַגֵּד,
לֹא כֹחוֹ כִּי סָר, לֹא מַרְפֵּה יָדַיִם
אַף לֹא הָאַהֲבָה כִּי בָגְדָה בוֹ בֶּגֶד.

מַה לוֹ אַהֲבָה, מַה עֵינַיִם וָכֹחַ?
מֵתוּ כָּל מוֹרָשָׁיו תַּמּוּ לִגְוֹעַ!
אַךְ רֶגֶשׁ אֶחָד בּוֹ יִקְדַּח קָדֹחַ
וּבְלִבּוֹ הַמֵּת אַךְ רֶגֶשׁ זֶה יְנוֹעַ.

הַנְּקָמָה הִיא! חֹם לִבּוֹ הִיא הִבְעִירָה,
הִיא רוּחַ אַפּוֹ, הִיא בוֹ נִשְׁמַת חַיִּים;
לָכֵן לֹא נִפֵּץ גֻּלְגָּלְתּוֹ הַקִּירָה,
מַחֲנַק אֶל צַוָּאר לֹא שָׂם בִּנְחֻשְׁתַּיִם.

אֵיךְ יִבְחַר מָוֶת וָהֵם לֹא גָוָעוּ,
אִם עוֹד קָדְקֹד צָר יָדָיו לֹא רָעָצוּ?
קוֹל נִקְמַת אוֹיֵב אָזְנָיו שָׁמָעוּ,
וּבְדְמֵי כֻלָּם רַגְלָיו לֹא רָחָצוּ.

עִוֵּר גַּם חַלָּשׁ כַּמֵּת בְּאֶשׁוֹן קֶבֶר
מַה יוּכַל יַעַשׂ — וְזַעֲמָיו יֹאבֵדוּ?
לוּ צַוּוֹת יוּכַל אֶל רַעַם וָדֶבֶר,
אוּלַי צָרָיו אֵלֶּה אָז יִכָּחֵדוּ.

77 Numb to his plight, to his eyes' painful searing,
Not feeling the enemy's taunts and derision,
Or weakness of body or strength that was shorn,
Or the treacherous love which had sorely betrayed him.

81 What is love to him now, or his vision or power?
His senses have ceased, all have perished and died!
For one feeling only now rages within him,
Just one feeling stirs from his deadening heart.

85 Vengeance! Revenge blazes hot in his heart,
In the breath of his nostrils, his spirit of life;
Therefore he dashed not his skull to the wall
Nor strangled himself by the neck with his chains.

89 While his enemies live, how could Samson choose death,
When his hands have not shattered the skulls of his foe?
The voice of the enemy's vengeance he heard,
But his feet have not bathed in the streams of their blood.

93 Enfeebled and blind, like a corpse in the grave,
What can he do? Will his anger be lost?
If he could command all the thunder and plague
Perhaps then his foes would be finally ruined.

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79. Ibid. 93. Prov. 20:20

אָז גִּידֵי יָדָיו שֹׂרָגוּ מִזַּעַם,
וּבְחֵמָה נֶאֱלָמָה חָרַק שִׁנַּיִם,
וַיִּתְפַּלֵּל אֶל אֵל: «חַזְּקֵנִי הַפַּעַם!»
וּבְיָדָיו לָפַת עַמּוּדִים הַשְּׁנַיִם:

«הָהּ! מִשְּׁתֵּי עֵינַי אִנָּקְמָה נָא אַחַת!
מִנַּהֲמַת לִבּוֹ שָׁאַג בֶּן־מָנוֹחַ —
עִם אוֹיְבַי גַּם יַחַד אֵרְדָה לַשַּׁחַת».
וַיֵּט חִישׁ אֶת הָעַמּוּדִים בַּכֹּחַ.

פֶּתַע נַאֲקַת חָלָל אֶנְקַת מוּמָתִים
בִּנְפוֹל הַבַּיִת אֶל אָזְנוֹ מַגַּעַת;
אִם הוּא לֹא יֶחֱזֶה חֵיל צָרִים נִצְמָתִים,
אַךְ קוֹלוֹת רַב פֶּגֶר אָזְנוֹ שׁוֹמַעַת;

גַּם הוּא נָפַל חָלָל בֵּין בִּתְרֵי צָרָיו
אַךְ לַמָּוֶת כָּזֶה נַפְשׁוֹ צָמְאָה,
כִּי יְרַעֵץ גַּם מוֹתוֹ רֹאשׁ פַּרְעוֹת עָרָיו —
וּבְתִתּוֹ קוֹל נָקָם — נַפְשׁוֹ יָצָאָה.

97 His sinews grew taut in his turbulent wrath,
Seething in anger and gnashing his teeth,
He prayed to his God: "Grant me strength but this once!"
And grasped in his hands the two pillars beside him:

101 "Aha! For two eyes I seek vengeance this once!"
Samson did roar from his heart's raging clamor--
"My foes and I both will descend to the grave."
Then swiftly he toppled the pillars by might.

105 Suddenly screams of the dying and wounded
Were reaching his ears as the temple collapsed;
Though he could not witness his enemies perish,
His ears were attuned to the cries of the dying

109 He also fell dead among heaps of his foes
But his soul had been longing a death such as this,
In his death he had shattered the skulls of his foe--
As he cried for revenge--his sould then expired.

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97. Job 40:17 99. Judg. 16:28 100. Judg. 16:29
101. Judg. 16:28 103. Judg. 16:30 111. Deut. 32:42;
I Sam. 28:16

יָעֵל
וְסִיסְרָא

JAEL AND SISERA

לא נפל אדיר ביד כביר
ביד אשה רעץ קמיו
(יהודית ט״ז)

מְרוֹמֵי הַר תָּבוֹר לִשְׂדֵה מִלְחָמָה
יַרְעֵם קוֹל עַלְמָה וְיִבָּקַע אֲדָמָה·
לִקְרַאת רוֹמֵס אַרְצָהּ לַקְּרָב יָצָאָה
וּבְרָקִים מִפִּיהָ, בָּאֵשׁ הִיא בָאָה
וּדְבוֹרָה הִיא! הִיא בִּישֻׁרוּן שֹׁפֶטֶת,
אֵשֶׁת לַפִּידוֹת בַּקְּרָב אֵשׁ לוֹהֶטֶת,
בִּכְנַעַן שָׁם תִּלָּחֵם עַמָּהּ לָחָצוּ,
וּנְקָמוֹת עַתָּה מִימִינָהּ פָּרָצוּ·
בִּמְעַט עָם בָּאָה אַךְ עִם אֵל הַצְּבָאוֹת,
בִּשְׁמוֹ וּבְעֻזּוֹ שָׁם תַּעֲשֶׂה נוֹרָאוֹת·
בִּתְשַׁע מֵאוֹת רֶכֶב חֵיל סִיסְרָא יַחַד
תִּתְיַצֵּב עַלְמָה, תָּעוֹז מִבְּלִי פַחַד
אֶל בַּלָּהוֹת מָוֶת אֶל חֵיל רוֹמֵי קֶשֶׁת·
אַךְ חֶרֶב בִּימִינָהּ, וְהִיא נִגֶּשֶׁת—
וּכְמַגָּל שִׁבֳּלִים תִּקְצוֹר חֵיל קָמִים,
כַּלְּבִיאָה תְּחֶצֶה עַד צַוָּאר בַּדָּמִים·
עָלֶיהָ חִצֵּימוֹ אַךְ יִתְמֹלָלוּ,
וּלְפִי חַרְבָּהּ כַּקַּשׁ כֻּלָּם נָפָלוּ·
בֵּין רִבְבוֹת פֶּגֶר חַלְלֵי חֵיל מִלְחֶמֶת

"The powerful one did not fall at the hands of the mighty hero--the foe was shattered at the hands of a woman." (Judith 16)

From the battlefield site to the heights of Mount Tabor
A woman's voice thunders as earth quakes below.
She departs for the battle to face her oppressor
Advancing in flames, her mouth spewing lightning.
She is called Deborah--judge in Jeshurun,
Lapidoth's wife, pouring fire in the fray;
In Canaan she fights for her downtrodden people,
As vengeance explodes from her mighty right hand.
In a tiny array, but with God, Lord of Hosts,
In His Name and His might she arrives doing wonders.
As Sisera enters with nine hundred riders,
This woman stands firm in her strength, without fear
Of the terrors of death or the enemy archers.
With sword in her right hand, she enters the battle--
And cuts down her foes like the sickle cuts wheat,
Like a lioness tearing at blood-spattered throats.
She repulses the arrows cascading upon her,
Her enemy falls to her sword like the grain.
Among thousands of corpses, the victims of carnage,

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3. Isa. 16:4 6. Judg. 4:4; The name "Lapidoth" has connotation of "torch" or "fireball" from root ל-פ-ד.
11. Judg. 4:13 12. Ex. 2:4 13. Jer. 4:29 16. Isa. 30:28
17. Ps. 58:8

נִצָּבָה הַנְּבִיאָה, כָּאֵל הִיא נוֹקֶמֶת.

אַהֲבַת מוֹלַדְתָּהּ הָעַזָּה כַּמָּוֶת
הִיא לִבָּהּ הִרְהִיבָה בִּשְׂדֵה צַלְמָוֶת
לָשׂוּם נֶפֶשׁ בַּכָּף, צֵאת לִקְרַאת קֶרֶץ,
מִיַּד חוֹמֵץ וּמֵץ חַלֵּץ הָאָרֶץ,
אֶת רוֹמֵס עַל אַרְצָהּ לִרְמוֹס כָּרֶמֶשׂ—
וּדְבוֹרָה קָרְאָה שֵׁם יִנּוֹן עִם שֶׁמֶשׁ.

*

לִפְנֵי פֶּתַח אֹהֶל יָעֵל נִצֶּבֶת,
רוּחָהּ חֻבְּלָה בָּהּ, חַיָּתָהּ דּוֹאֶבֶת—
עַל עַמָּהּ עַל אַרְצָהּ נַפְשָׁהּ עָגְמָה,
יָדְעָה כִּי הַיּוֹם הַנְּבִיאָה נִלְחָמָה,
לָכֵן יֶחֱרַד לִבָּהּ, יֶהְגֶּה אֵימָתָהּ:
אוּלַי יַד סִיסְרָא עַל עַמָּהּ קָשָׁתָה?
עוֹד לִבָּהּ בָּהּ יָנַע, יִרְפּוּ יָדֶיהָ—
פִּתְאוֹם אִישׁ נָס מִקְּרָב הֵן בָּא עָדֶיהָ:
עָיֵף, פָּצוּעַ, אֵין בּוֹ אַךְ הַנְּשָׁמָה,
גַּם יָזוּב דָּמוֹ וִישׁוֹקֵק אֲדָמָה,
עֵינָיו צַלְמָוֶת, פָּנָיו חֳמַרְמָרוּ,
וּפְצָעָיו לֹא חֻבְּשׁוּ פִּיהֶם יִפְעָרוּ.
״חוּסִי נָא — יִקְרָא — מָט לָמוּת הַצִּילִי,
סִיסְרָא אָנֹכִי! אַל תִּירְאִי תָּחִילִי,
לֹא הַשָּׂר בִּצְבָא צָר יֶחֱזוּ עֵינַיִךְ,
נָס מִקְּרָב מִקֶּטֶל הֵן בָּא אֵלַיִךְ;

The prophetess stands, like a god she avenges.
As mighty as death is the love for her homeland.
This field of death's shadow emboldens her heart,
As she enters the ruins, her life in the balance,
And rescues the land from the ruthless oppressor
To crush, like a worm, him who tramples the earth--
Yea, Deborah's name shall endure like the sun.

Jael is standing in front of the tent flap
Broken in spirit, her frame is enfeebled--
Her soul is lamenting her people and land,
Aware that on this day the prophetess battles.
Her heart therefore trembles, possessed by sheer terror:
Could Sisera's hand be destroying her people!?
Her heart was still shaking, her hands became limp--
When suddenly fleeing the fray--came a man:
Exhausted and wounded, his soul barely stirring,
His blood flowing freely, it spilled to the ground.
His eyes were death's darkness, he foamed at the mouth,
The lips of his untended wounds gaping wide.
"Have compassion!" he pleaded, "pray save me from death.
For I am--Sisera! Be not afraid--
Perceive not an enemy chieftan before you,
But one who escaped from the carnage of battle;

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22. Cant. 6:5, Ps. 138:3   23. Judg. 12:3   24. Ps. 71:4; Isa. 16:4   26. Ps. 72:17; Judg. 5:31   28. Job 17:1
29. Job 30:25

אוֹיָה שָׁם הָעַלְמָה נַפְשִׁי שׁוֹאֶפֶת
וּבְחַרְבָּהּ בִּימִינָהּ אַחֲרַי רוֹדֶפֶת;
הוֹי! כָּל צִבְאוֹתַי נָפְלוּ בַמִּלְחָמָה,
וּלְדָמִי עוֹד תִּצְמָא תִּשְׁאַף בִּנְקָמָה,
הַצִּילִינִי נָא מִמּוֹת בִּנְקַם רֶצַח!
הֵן אֶרְאֶה טוּב לִבֵּךְ יוֹפַע עַל מִצַח,
וּתְנִי בִּנְוֵה שָׁלוֹם לִי אַךְ מָנוֹחַ–
שָׁם שֶׁאֲגָן לִי אֶגְוַע אוֹ אַחֲלִיף כֹּחַ».

*

וּלְחָיֵי זוּ יָעֵל מַה זֶּה חָוָרוּ?
מַה זֶּה כֹּה פִּתְאוֹם פָּנֶיהָ קָדָרוּ,
כִּמְדוּרַת תָּפְתֶּה מַה דָּלְקוּ עֵינֶיהָ,
מַדּוּעַ זֶה חֲרָדָה, פָּקוּ בִּרְכֶּיהָ?
הוֹי! הִגָּיוֹן נוֹרָא עַל לִבָּהּ עָלָה,
אָיוֹם כַּמָּוֶת, כִּשְׁאוֹל אַךְ בֶּהָלָה –
וּבְשָׂרָהּ סָמַר, הִלְבִּינוּ פָּנֶיהָ,
וּלְהִגָּיוֹן זֶה בָּהּ קָפְאוּ דָמֶיהָ.

*

אָז לַחֲדַר אָהֳלָהּ מַהֵר הוֹלִיכַתְהוּ,
שָׁם כָּרַע שָׁכַב, בַּשְּׂמִיכָה כִּסַּתְהוּ.
«הוֹי, הִצַּלְתְּ נַפְשִׁי אַתְּ יָעֵל מִשַּׁחַת,
אַךְ חֲמַת צִמְאָה כָּאֵשׁ בִּי קוֹדַחַת,
חוּסִי, קָרָא סִיסְרָא, יָפָה וּבָרָה!
וּמְעַט מַיִם קָרִים כַּבּוֹת אֵשׁ זָרָה
הוֹאִילִי הַשְׁקִינִי, נַפְשִׁי הָשִׁיבִי!

Alas! For the prophetess seeks out my soul,
As she clenches her sword in pursuit of my life.
Alas! All my forces have fallen in combat,
She thirsts for my blood, still she yearns for revenge,
Please save me from death, from her murderous vengeance!
Your brow is aglow with your goodness of heart,
O provide me a meadow of refuge and peace--
To replenish my strength, or to perish securely."

Why now do Jael's fair cheeks become pale?
Why does her face become suddenly dim?
What burns in her eyes like the fires of hell?
And why does she tremble, her knees start to totter?
Her heart is besieged by a horrible thought,
As awesome as Sheol, as shocking as death--
Her flesh becomes taut, her face becomes white,
This thought makes her lifeblood run cold in her veins.

She led him inside to the tent chamber quickly.
He collapsed to his knees, with a blanket she covered him.
"Jael, my soul you redeemed from destruction,
Yet sweltering thirst, like a fire, burns within me,
Have pity, my beautiful pure one," cries Sisera,
"A little cold water will dampen this fire,
O please give me drink to replenish my soul!

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57. Job 4:15 60. Judg. 4:18

ם נָתַתְּ לִי עוֹד תַּרְחִיבִי».
ירים חָלָב יָהָבָה,
ם רוּחוֹ לוֹ שָׁבָה:
עַלְמָה מֵהוֹן יְקָרָה!
נִגָּרָה,
יגִיךְ,
לֵיךְ».

תּוֹרִיד הָעֵינַיִם?
ינים,
מָה הַבֵּט לֹא תוּכַל עֵינָיו נִגָּרוּ,
מַה מִּלָּיו כַּחֲרָבוֹת לִבָּהּ גָּזְרוּ?
הוּא נִרְדָּם יִישַׁן וּשְׁנָתוֹ מְתֻקָּה —
וּלְאַט מִן הַחֶדֶר יָעֵל חֲמָקָה.

•

«אוֹי, קָרְאָה, מַכְאוֹבִי אָנוּשׁ וָנֶצַח!
אוֹי, אִם יַתֵּר לִבִּי אַף רַעְיוֹן רֶצַח
עַד שַׂעֲרַת רֹאשִׁי מִפַּחַד סָמָרָה,
אִם הוּא יָעִיק לִבִּי—רוּחִי בִּי צָרָה,
וּמָה אִם זְמּוֹתַי גַּם עוֹד אָפִיקָה,
עַל שׁוֹכֵב בֶּטַח כִּי חֶרֶב אָרִיקָה —
עַל נָס יָגֵעַ וּבְשׁוּבָה וּבְנַחַת,
תָּם לֹא יֵדַע כִּי לוֹ תִּצְפּוֹן רוֹצַחַת?
וּשְׁנָתוֹ מָה עֲרֵבָה שָׁלֵו יַרְגִּיעַ,

You gave me my life, pray now broaden my days."
She fed him some milk from a beautiful bowl,
He swallowed his fill--thus restoring his spirit:
"Young woman, your goodness is dearer than treasure!"
Sisera whispered, his eye shed a tear,
"On this foe of your people your eyes tendered mercy,
May you too be favored by God the Compassionate."

Why is she casting her gaze to the ground?
Why is she turning her face from the guest?
Why can not she glance at his tear-streaming eyes?
And why do his words cut her heart like a saber?
He slumbers so deeply, for sweet is his rest--
Slowly does Jael retreat from the chamber.

"Alas!" she bewails, "I will suffer forever!--
Permitting my heart to conceive of this murder,
The hair on my head stands on edge in my fright,
It staggers my mind, and distresses my spirit,
I reel at the thought of the treacherous deed.
Shall I draw out my sword upon him sleeping safely--
A refugee, wearied, who slumbers in peace,
Unknowing his murderess lies there in waiting?
How sweet is his slumber! How tranquil and calm.

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67. Judg. 5:25, 4:19 71. Ex. 23:22 81. Job 4:15
84. Ex. 15:9 85. Isa. 30:15

אוּלַי גַּם בַּחֲלוֹם לוֹ חֲסָדַי יוֹפִיעַ,
מַה נּוֹרָא כִּי יָקִיץ וּלְעֵינָיו יֶחֱזֶה
יָעֵל בִּכְלִי רֶצַח כַּמַּיִם פַּחַז!
זוּ יָעֵל מָעֲלָה תִּגְזוֹר חַיֵּיהוּ,
זוּ הִצִּילַתְהוּ אַךְ בַּעֲבוּר הָרְגֵהוּ,
זוּ אֲשֶׁר בֵּרְכָהּ: «הֵן חָסוּ עֵינַיִךְ
כֵּן גַּם אֵל חַנּוּן כֵּן יִגְמוֹל עָלַיִךְ»,
כֹּה הוּא בֵּרְכַנִי וַיִּישַׁן לָנוּחַ
וִיבָרְכֵנִי עַתָּה אוּלַי בָּרוּחַ;
וַאֲנִי — בִּשְׁנָתוֹ — אֶת נַפְשׁוֹ אֶקָּחָה,
אִישׁ בָּא בִּבְרִיתִי בִּשְׁלוֹמִי אֶרְצָחָה,
עֵת כִּי בָטַח מִנֶּשֶׁק נָעַר כַּפָּיו,
עוֹד דִּמְעוֹת תּוֹדָה לֹא יָבְשׁוּ עַל אַפָּיו —
וְדִמְעוֹת אֵלֶּה בְּדָמִים אֲשַׁלֵּמָה?
וּדְמֵי מִלְחָמָה בְּשָׁלוֹם אָשִׂימָה?
לֹא אֶעֱשׂ, אוֹר לַחֹשֶׁךְ לֹא אֶהְפּוֹכָה!!
עוֹד אֵיתָם, וּדְמֵי סִיסְרָא לֹא אֶשְׁפּוֹכָה!

אַךְ קוֹל אַחֵר דּוֹבֵר אֶשְׁמַע כִּי עָנָה,
קוֹל עַם מְשֻׁךְ מֹרָט זֶה עֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה,
קוֹל עַמִּי הוּא יַרְעִישׁ אָזְנַי בַּכֹּחַ
וַיְמַלֵּא לִבִּי חוֹם לִקְטוֹל לִרְצוֹחַ:
שָׁם יִישַׁן יָנוּחַ מֵץ שׁוֹדֵד אָרֶץ,
אֶת אַלְפֵי עַמִּי הִכְרִיעַ לַקֶּרֶץ,

Perhaps my compassion appears in his dreams.
How dreadful to wake and see Jael before him
With murderous weapon, unstable as water
Now rising against him to cut short his life--
Who saved him but only in order to slay him.
He uttered the blessing, "Your eyes tendered mercy,
May you too be favored by God the Compassionate."
Thus he has blessed me, then laid down to rest,
Perhaps he is blessing me now in his dreams
As I--while he slumbers--extinguish his soul,
And kill him who trusted my compact of peace.
Escaped from the slaughter, he laid down his arms,
With tears of thanksgiving still moist on his face.
Shall I requite Sisera's tears with his blood?
Can I breach the peace, shedding blood of the battle?
I can not! I will not turn light into darkness!!
Still guiltless am I, I will not spill his blood!

Yet another voice calls me, a voice I must hearken,
The voice of a nation, two decades oppressed,
The voice of my people resounds in my ears
And fills up my heart with a murderous passion:
There sleeps the looter who pillaged our land
Thousands of kinsmen he vanquished and murdered,

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90. Gen. 49:4 99. Isa. 33:15 104. Ps. 19:14
106. Isa. 18:2,7 109. Isa. 16:4

מִשּׁוֹד אֵם שָׁדַד בֵּן, לֹא שָׁמַע נֶהִי —
וּשְׁכוּלָה גַּם אִמּוֹ לָמָּה לֹא תֶהִי?
מַה יִּישַׁן יְחִי אִישׁ חֶמְלָה לוֹ אָיִן,
הַהוּא לֹא גָזַל שֵׁנָה מִכָּל עָיִן?
הֲלֹא כִּי יָקִיץ יוֹסִיף עוֹז וּזְרוֹעַ,
וּבְלֵב בַּרְזֶל לוֹ אֶת עַמִּי יָרוֹעַ,
וּדְמֵי עַמִּי הָהּ צוֹעֲקִים לִי מֵאֲדָמָה:
«מַלְאִי יָדֵךְ יָעֵל מַלְאִי בִּנְקָמָה!»

עַמִּי וָהוּא — הַבְּמֹאזְנֵי יִשְּׂאוּ יַחַד?
דּוֹם לִבִּי יַכְּנִי! סוּר מֶנִּי פַּחַד,
בּוֹא רֶצַח וַעֲלֵה מֵעִמְקֵי הַשַּׁחַת,
גָּרֵשׁ חוּס מִלִּבִּי, כָּל חוֹן וָנַחַת,
מַלֵּא בַּחֲמַת פֶּתֶן לִבִּי הַתָּמִים,
בִּמְעִילֵךְ כַּסֵּנִי בִּמְעִיל הַדָּמִים,
וּבְשַׂר לִבִּי הָסֵר וּתְנָה בוֹ אָבֶן,
בַּל יִשְׁמַע קוֹל הִי וַחֲנִינָה לֹא יָבֶן,
עַל עֵינַי שִׂים קַדְרוּת לְבִלְתִּי תֶחֱזֶינָה,
אֶת מִפְעַל יָדַי בַּחֶדֶר תַּעֲשֶׂינָה,
וּפִתְנֵי רֹאשֵׁךְ נָא יֶהֱמוּ יִשְׁרוֹקוּ,
וּדְמֵי חָלָל זֶה עוֹד רֶגַע יָלֹקוּ!

*

אָז שָׁלְחָה יָד לַיָּתֵד וּמַקֶּבֶת,
תִּקְרַב לַחֶדֶר עַל סִפּוֹ נִצֶּבֶת,
וּלְהַלְמוּת עֲמֵלִים תָּנִיף הַזְּרוֹעַ.
פֶּתַע מַרְעִיד עָמְדָה, לִבָּהּ יָנוּעַ,

Tore sucklings from mothers, ignoring their screams--
Why should his mother not likewise lament?
Why should this cruel one lie sleeping and live,
For he ravaged slumber from every eye!!
Will not he awaken, renewing his might
And again crush my people, with iron-clad heart?
The blood of my people cries out from the ground:
"Fill up thy hand, Jael, fill it with vengeance!"
Are my people and he--equal weight on my scales?
May heartlessness strike me! May terror retreat!
May Murder ascend from the depths of the pit,
May compassion and grace be expelled from my heart,
My pure heart must fill with the wrath of the viper.
Cover me now with your blood-dripping shroud,
And inlay a rock for the flesh of my heart
That will hear not his pleas or discern his laments.
Let darkness envelop my eyes, not to witness
The deed that my hands will commit in this chamber.
Let venemous snakes on your head scream and hiss,
For soon they will lap up the blood from this carcass!

Then mallet and tent peg she grasped in her hand,
Approaching the chamber, she stopped at the threshold,
Wielding the laborer's hammer in hand.
Then suddenly trembling, her heart began pounding,

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117. Gen. 4:10   126. Ezek. 2:10; Jer. 16:3   131. Judg. 4:21, 5:26   133. Judg. 5:26   134. Dan. 10:11

וּנְטוּעָה כַּמַּסְמֵר קָמָה נִצָּבָה,
קוֹל חַת וּפְחָדִים הֵן אָזְנָהּ קָשָׁבָה,
קוֹל סִיסְרָא דוֹבֵר מִמְּלוֹאֵי לִבֵּהוּ,
מֵעִמְקֵי נוּמָה, מִשְׁנָת עַל עֵינֵיהוּ.

«אוֹיָה הָעַלְמָה! אוֹיָה מָה אֲיֻמָּה!
כִּדְבוֹרָה גַּם תִּשּׁוֹךְ תַּצְמִיד הַמְּהוּמָה,
תַּרְעֵם עַל בָּרָק, יַפִּילוּ חֲלָלִים,
וּדְמֵי הֲרוּגִים הֵם עִלְּעוּ כַּנְּחָלִים
וּלְבָרוֹת כָּל חֵילִי, הָהּ, אֶל שִׁנֶּיהָ!
אוֹי עוֹד לֹא רָוְתָה וּנְטוּיוֹת עֵינֶיהָ,
אוֹיָה! גַּם אוֹתִי מֵרָחוֹק רָאָתָה
וַתִּלְטוֹשׁ עֵינֶיהָ וּכְנֶשֶׁר דָּאָתָה,
וּכְבָר חָרְקָה גַּם שֵׁן אוֹתִי לִבְלוֹעַ,
וַתְּעוֹפֵף חַרְבָּהּ קָדְקֳדִי לִבְצוֹעַ;
אָז יָרַד מַלְאַךְ אֵל וַיֵּט שָׁמַיִם—
וּבְאֶבְרָתוֹ סָךְ לִי, לָט בִּכְנָפַיִם,
פִּלֵּט מִדְּבוֹרָה זוּ דֶּבֶר וָשַׁחַת
יַחֲזִיק בִּימִינִי בַּחֲנִינָה וָנַחַת,
עוֹד בֶּטַח יַנְחֵנִי שָׁמָּה אָהֳלָה,
וּלְצִחֵה צִמְאוֹנִי יַשְׁקְ חָלָב סֶלָה».
«יָעֵל אַתְּ!..» (וּלְקוֹל זֶה הִיא בַּסַּף בָּאָה,
כִּנְפוֹץ רַעַם הָרִים חַתָּה נִדְכָּאָה,
וּרְסִיסֵי יֶזַע פָּרְצוּ עַל אַפָּיִם)

Upright she stands there, as stiff as a spike,
His frightful imploring resounds in her ears--
Sisera pleads from the well of his heart
From the depths of his slumber, with sleep in his eyes.

"Woe, the young woman! Alas, how alarming!
She stings like a hornet, she frames the confusion,
With Barak she thunders and slaughters the foe,
Imbibing as water the blood of the slain,
Devouring my forces, alas, with her teeth!
She still is not sated, directing her vision--
Alas! It is I whom she sees from afar,
And whetting her eyes for me, darts like an eagle,
She gnashes her teeth, she is ready to swallow,
Her saber takes flight to cut off my head!
But an angel of God then descended from heaven--
Enveloping me in her pinions and wings,
And saved me from Deborah, ruin and death.
Grasping my hand in her favor and mercy,
Securely she led me away to her tent,
I was parched with a thirst, she fed me some milk
"Oh, Jael!" (At these words, she came to the doorway,
Dismayed and confounded like thunderous mountains
As rivers of sweat broke out from her face)

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140. Ps. 50:19; The Hebrew name "Deborah," דבורה, translates as "bee." 142. Job 39:30 143. Lam. 4:10 146. Job 16:9 149. Ps. 144:5 154. Judg. 4:19, Isa. 5:13

יָעֵל אַתְּ הִיא, אַתְּ! מַלְאַךְ הַשָּׁמַיִם!
מַה־לָּךְ יַבֵּב אִמִּי, מַה זֶּה תַּשְׁקִיפִי?
הִנֵּה הֲלוֹם נָא עֵינַיִךְ הָעִיפִי,
וּרְאִי לִבְנֵךְ מֵצַל מַלְאָךְ גָּבוֹהַּ,
וּבָרְכִי עַלְמָה זוּ, בָּרְכִי לֶאֱלוֹהַּ!»

*

הִיא עוֹדָהּ בַּסַּף לַאֲזִין וּלְמוֹ אֹרֶב,
וּתְמוֹלֵל כָּל מִלָּה, לִבָּהּ כֶּחָרֶב,
וּבְיָדָהּ רָגְזוּ יָתֵד וּמַקֶּבֶת,
אִם חַדְרָהּ תָּבוֹא אוֹ תֵּצֵא חוֹשֶׁבֶת.
כֹּה עָמְדָה כִּמְעַט נִדְהֶמֶת רוֹעֶדֶת,
וַתִּפְרוֹץ חִישׁ אַהֲבַת אֶרֶץ מוֹלֶדֶת,
וּבְרוּחָהּ כִּי עַזָּה אוֹתָהּ נָשָׂאָה—
וּבִכְנָפֶיהָ הַחַדְרָה הִיא בָּאָה.

*

עַתָּה אֵין קֶשֶׁב אַךְ דּוּמִיָּה סֶלָה,
דּוּמִיָּה נוֹרָאָה סָבִיב אָהֳלָהּ —
פֶּתַע קוֹל נַאֲקַת חָלָל יַרְעֵם רָעַם,
מֵעַל קוֹל מַהֲלוּמוֹת קוֹל הוֹלֵם פָּעַם
(קוֹל זֶה עוֹד יַחֲרִיד כָּל אִישׁ רוֹעֶה רֵעַ,
הוּא יַמְסֶה כָּל לֵב יַרְגִּיז כֹּל שׁוֹמֵעַ)
אַחֲרָיו קוֹל אָנוּשׁ, קוֹל נֶפֶשׁ גּוֹוַעַת,
תֵּשַׁח אִמְרָתָהּ, אַךְ אֹזֶן שׁוֹמַעַת:
«יָעֵל אַתְּ הִיא מַלְאָכִי — מַלְאַךְ מָוֶת!»

"It is you! It is Jael! An angel of heaven!
Why do you cry, mother, what do you see?
Directing your vision, I pray, over there,
And seeing your son with his towering angel.
O bless this young woman with blessings of God!"

At the threshold she listens yet still lies in waiting,
Her heart like a dagger, she mumbles each word.
Her trembling hand clutches the hammer and stake,
Will she enter the room or decide to retreat?
Shaking in terror, she stands at the doorway,
When the love for her homeland suddenly surges
And bolsters her spirit with fierceness and might--
She approaches the chamber winged like an angel.

Now no one is listening, silence surrounds them,
A horrible silence surrounding the tent--
Then suddenly screams of the victim have thundered,
But sounds of the anvil have drowned out the blows
(Sounds that would frighten all men and their fellows,
Melting the heart of each terrified listener).
A whimper then sounded, the voice of the dying,
He whispered these words barely heard by the ear:
"Jael, my angel--an angel of death!"

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159. Judg. 5:28 161. Ezek. 31:3 164. Ps. 90:6
174. Prov. 18:6, 19:29; Isa. 41:7

וּדְמָמָה שָׁבָה דּוּמִיַּת צַלְמָוֶת.

*

צֵאת מִן הַחֶדֶר פָּרְצָה אֵשֶׁת חֶבֶר,
וּלְבֶן־פָּנֶיהָ כִּפְנֵי שׁוֹכְנֵי קֶבֶר,
עֵינֶיהָ כִּבְרָקִים בָּהּ יִתְגַּלְגָּלוּ,
מִכַּפֶּיהָ דָּמִים נָטְפוּ נָזָלוּ
בֵּין עֵינֶיהָ הָתְוָה תָּו אוֹת הָרֶצַח,
וּבְדָם שָׁפְכָה נִכְתַּם הוֹד הַמֵּצַח,
כִּנְצִיב שַׁיִשׁ נִצָּבָה, דּוּמָם עָמְדָה,
מֵרֶגֶל עַד רֹאשׁ לִרְגָעִים רָעֲדָה,
וּכְמוֹ חֻר צֶפַע רַגְלֶיהָ נָגָעוּ;
קוֹלָהּ לֹא נִשְׁמַע וּשְׂפָתֶיהָ נָעוּ,
לִרְגָעִים הַחַדְרָה תָּעִיף עֵינֶיהָ,
וּכְרֶגַע חִישׁ תַּסֵּב מִשָּׁם פָּנֶיהָ.
אָז יִתֵּן לִבָּהּ קוֹל אַנְחַת אֵימָתָהּ,
כִּי מַחֲזֶה נוֹרָא שָׁם עֵינָהּ רָאָתָה.
כֹּה מִבְּלִי דַּבֵּר שׁוֹמֵמָה נִפְעָמָה,
עַל רֶצַח עוֹלָלָה נַפְשָׁהּ לֹא נִחָמָה.

*

פִּתְאוֹם גַּם נִשְׁמַע קוֹל עַמָּהּ שָׂמֵחַ,
קוֹל עַם מִשְּׂדֵי לָחֶם שָׁב כִּמְנַצֵּחַ:
«אֲהָהּ!» קָרְאָה יָעֵל, גִּיל זֶה לֹא גִילִי,
לֹא לוֹחֲמִי רָצַחְתִּי—רַק חוֹסֶה צִלִּי!»
עוֹד הִיא דוֹבֶרֶת וּלְאָזְנָהּ צָלָלוּ
קוֹלוֹת רִבְבוֹת עָם כַּהֲמוֹת יָם יִצְהָלוּ,
«בָּרְכוּ אֶת יָעֵל! בֶּהָמוֹן יָרִיעוּ:

The hush of the shadow of death now returns.

The wife of the Kenite then burst from the chamber,
Her face had turned white like a corpse in the grave
Her eyes began rolling inside her like lightning
The blood had been streaming, it dripped from her hands--
And it marked on her forehead the symbol of murder.
As bloodstains bespattered her radiant brow,
She silently stood like a pillar of marble.
From head to her feet she sporadically trembled
As if she was stung by the bite of the adder.
Her voice was not heard, though her lips were in motion,
She constantly darted her eyes to the room
But quickly averted her glance from the chamber.
Her heart still resounded with terrible cries.
And the horrible sight that her eyes had just witnessed.
Unable to speak, distraught and disturbed
By the murderous deed she performed without pity.

Suddenly cries of rejoicing are heard
As her people return from victorious battle:
"Alas!," laments Jael, "This joy is not mine
For I slew not my foe, but one seeking my refuge!"
While she was yet speaking, her ears began tingling
As voices of multitudes roared like the sea,
"Blessed be Jael!," the people exclaimed,

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189. Isa. 11:8 190. I Sam. 1:13 203. Judg. 6:24

צָרֵנוּ לִשְׁאוֹל יָדֶיהָ הִכְרִיעוּ».
וּדְבוֹרָה לִפְנֵיהֶם חֲמוּצַת בֶּגֶד,
וּבָרָק אֶת חֵילוֹ יָרוּץ מִנֶּגֶד,
וּדְבוֹרָה שִׁיר עֹז זִמְרַת יָהּ הִיא שָׁרָה.
«וּתְבֹרַךְ מִנָּשִׁים יָעֵל» ... אָמָרָה —
«מִנָּשִׁים הִיא תְּבֹרָךְ» כָּל הָעָם יַעַן.
וַתְּחִי רוּחַ יָעֵל שָׁמְעָה, וַתַּעַן:
«עִם עַם זוּ אָגוּר וּבְאַרְצוֹ אֶחֱסָיָה,
וּלְטוּבוֹ וּשְׁלוֹמוֹ אֵיךְ לֹא אֶהֱמָיָה?
קוֹל עַם זֶה הוּא! וּשְׁאוֹן לִבִּי יַשְׁבִּיחַ,
יַלְבִּין חַטָּאתִי, דַּם כַּפֵּי יָדִיחַ,
וּדְבַר הַנְּבִיאָה הֵן בָּא מִגָּבוֹהַּ,
זֶה אוֹת לִי כִּי מַעֲשִׂי רָצָה אֱלוֹהַּ.

"Her hands have defeated our foe unto death."
Before them in battle-soaked garment stands Deborah,
And Barak, whose forces stood up to the foe,
She glorifies God in a powerful song.
"Blessed be Jael--most blessed of women."
"Blessed be Jael," the people respond.
The spirit of Jael revived when she heard them:
"I dwell with this people, their land is my shelter,
So how can I not share their welfare and peace?
My people's voice quiets the roar of my heart,
And has whitened my sin, wiped blood from my hands.
The words of the prophetess ring from on high
As a sign that my action was willed by the Lord."

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205. Isa. 63:1 208. Judg. 6:24 213. Ps. 65:8
214. Isa. 1:18; Ps. 26:6, 73:13

משה
על הר
העברים

MOSES ON MOUNT AVARIM

לא כן עבדי משה בכל ביתי נאמן הוא.
הראיתיו מה למעלה מה למטה מה לפנים
מה לאחור מה שהיה ומה שעתיד להיות.
(ילקוט תורה תשל"ט)

עַל רֹאשׁ הַר גָּבוֹהַּ זֶה הַר עֲבָרִים
גַּלְמוּד כָּעַרְעָר מַה יַּעֲמוֹד שָׁם גֶּבֶר?
וּשְׂפָתָיו אֵיךְ נָדְמוּ אֵין קוֹל וּדְבָרִים,
וּבְנוֹת עֵינָיו אַךְ פּוֹנוֹת אֶל כָּל עֵבֶר.

מַה יָּעִיף עַפְעַפָּיו, מַה שָּׁם יֶחֱזָיו?
מַה גִּיל וּרְעָדָה מִפָּנָיו נִשְׁקָפוּ?
מַה זֶּה לִשְׁמֵי עַל מָה כַּפָּיו נְטָיו?
וִיצוּרָיו מַה יָּנוּעוּ וִירוֹפָפוּ?

אַדְמַת קֹדֶשׁ יָשׁוּר וִירוּשָׁלַיִם,
מֵעוֹדוֹ עַד כֹּה שָׁם בָּהּ כָּל מַעְיָנָיו
וּלְמַעֲנָהּ נָשָׂא רָעוֹת רִבּוֹתַיִם—
עַתָּה הִיא תַּעֲמוֹד מִמּוּלוֹ וּלְפָנָיו.

אֶרֶץ חָלָב וּדְבַשׁ אַךְ בָּהּ יָזוּבוּ
עֵינֵי אֵל מִמַּעַל תָּמִיד אֵלֶיהָ;
כָּל עֵץ כָּל פְּרִי שָׁם יִיפוּ יְנוּבוּ,
וִירַחֵף רוּחַ אֵל עַל כָּל פָּנֶיהָ.

". . . not so My servant Moses; trusted was he in all My abode. I showed him what is above, what is below, what is ahead, what is behind, what was, and what will be." (Yalkut Torah)

1 On the mountain's high summit, on Mount Avarim
Why does the man stand alone, like a cypress?
How silent his lips, no voice, no words,
But the glance of his eyes he casts to each side.

5 What does he view that his eyelids should flutter?
What trembling and joy are seen on his face?
Why does he stretch out his palms to the heavens?
And why do his limbs become weakened and quiver?

9 The City of Peace he observes, and the Holy Land,
Always to her he directed his thoughts
For her sake he carried the evil of thousands--
He faces her now, as she stands there before him.

13 The land which is flowing with milk and with honey
God's eyes from the heavens are always upon her;
Each tree and each fruit-blossom sprout there in splendor,
The spirit of God hovers over her surface.

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1. Num. 27:12   2. Jer. 48:6   10. Ps. 87:7

הוֹי! כָּל הַיָּמִים אַךְ חָלְפוּ עָבָרוּ
עַד הִקְרִיב לָגֶשֶׁת אַךְ לִגְבוּלֶיהָ;
מָה רַבּוּ מַעֲשִׂים עַל יָדוֹ נוֹצָרוּ
עַד הִקְרִיב—וּבוֹא לֹא יוּכַל אֵלֶיהָ.

עַד לִשְׁמוֹנִים שָׁנָיו גָּר שָׁם בַּצִּיָּה
בָּדָד שָׁם כָּאֵל עַל חוּג הַשָּׁמַיִם!
בָּאֵל אַךְ הָגָה שָׁם בִּילֵל הַשְּׁאִיָּה,
עוֹד שָׁם אֶל אֶרֶץ זוּ נָשָׂא עֵינַיִם.

מִישִׁימוֹן יָצָא וּבְלִבּוֹ אֵל נוֹרָאוֹת
הָאֵל זֶה מָצָא אַחֲרֵי הֶעֱמִיק חֵפֶשׂ;
אָז לִפְנֵי מֶלֶךְ עַז עָשָׂה נִפְלָאוֹת
וַיַּךְ כָּל עַמּוֹ בִּדְוֵי גוּף וָנֶפֶשׁ.

מִיְּדֵי שַׁלִּיט רַב רֹאשׁ כָּל מַלְכֵי אֶרֶץ
עַם מֹרָט וּמְמֻשָּׁךְ מָשַׁךְ בַּכֹּחַ;
לִפְנֵי עַם דַּל וָרָשׁ עָמַד בַּפֶּרֶץ,
מוּל רַבִּים עַמִּים הִמְלִיט הַמַּלְקוֹחַ.

בָּקַע מֵי יַמִּים וּמִדְבָּר הִבְקִיעַ,
בִּקַּע מַיִם מִצּוּר, מָן מִשָּׁמַיִם;
כָּבַשׁ הַבָּשָׁן וֶאֱמוֹרִי הִכְרִיעַ —
עַד הֵבִיא עַם זוּ עַל יַד יַרְדֵּן מַיִם.

17 Alas! All the days, how they passed and flew
Until he drew near to approach her borders:
How many the deeds that his hand had created
Until he drew near--but could not come upon her.

21 Till his eightieth year he dwelled in the desert
Alone as a god on the circle of heaven!
To God he then moaned amidst wailing of ruins,
Even there to the Land he directed his visions.

25 He departed the wasteland revering his God
This God which he found after searching so deeply;
Against powerful Pharaoh he then performed wonders
Plaguing his nation in body and spirit.

29 From the hands of the ruler of earthly kings
A nation was pulled and was plucked out by might;
For a downtrodden people he stood in the breach,
And delivered the spoils before numerous nations.

33 He split the sea's waters, the desert absorbed them,
Struck water from rock, and drew mannah from heaven;
Captured the Bashan, and conquered Amora--
To the bank of the Jordan he thus brought the nation.

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20. Deut. 32:52 23. Deut. 32:10 27. Ex. 34:10 30. Isa. 18:2,7

פִּתְחוּ סִפְרֵי עִתִּים עַד לִימֵי תוֹהוּ
וּסְפָרוֹת כָּל קוֹרוֹת קִרְאוּ נָא שָׁמָּה;
וּרְאוּ — הֵן הָיָה בָּאָדָם כָּמוֹהוּ,
וּכְנַפְשׁוֹ זוֹ אִם בִּנְפָשׁוֹת עוֹד קָמָה?

רִאשׁוֹן לִמְחוֹקְקֵי חֻקִּים הַגְּבוֹהִים,
אִישׁ—נִתְּנוּ עַל יָדוֹ רָאשֵׁי תוּשִׁיָּה,
אִישׁ—לִמְלוֹא תֵבֵל הוּא נָתַן אֱלֹהִים,
אִישׁ—הַס פִּי אֱנוֹשׁ, לוֹ נָאוָה דוּמִיָּה!

אִישׁ כִּלְכֵּל עַם רָב עַל אַדְמַת צַלְמָוֶת—
שָׁם שֶׁמֶשׁ בַּחֲמָתָהּ כָּאֵשׁ קוֹדַחַת,
נַהֲרֵי חוֹל אַרְצָה אַךְ נַחֲלֵי שַׁלְהֶבֶת,
וּלְעֵינֵי הֵלֶךְ מַרְאֶהָ כַּשַּׁחַת.

וּלְפָנָיו רַגְלֵי אִישׁ שָׁם לֹא דָרָכוּ,
וּפְרִיץ חַיּוֹת שׁוֹאֵף דָּם שָׁם אוֹרֵחַ,
שָׁם צִפְעוֹנִים עִקְּבוֹת הֵלֶךְ יִנְשָׁכוּ
וּפְתָנִים יֵאָבְקוּ אֶל אוֹר יָרֵחַ.

שָׁם נִהַג כַּצֹּאן עָם אַרְבָּעִים שָׁנָה,
אַחֲרָיו מִצְרַיִם לְדָמֵיהֶם צָמִים,
אִתּוֹ עַם לֹא עָז—אַךְ טָרְחָם מִי מָנָה?
וּלְפָנָיו תֹּהוּ—אַף צָרִים נִלְחָמִים.

37 Open the scrolls to the ancient beginnings
Recounting the annals of history there;
And see--if you find among men one like him;
Did a life such as his ever rise among souls?

41 Unequaled among the inscribers of law,
A man--so was granted preeminent wisdom,
A man--filled the earth as he gave to it God,
A man--lips are dumb. Silence befits him!

45 He sustained a vast nation in lands of deep darkness--
That the sun's heated wrath had scorched like a flame,
The rivers of sand became valleys of fire,
A sight of destruction to wayfarers' eyes.

49 No man had set foot there or tread before Moses,
Where ravenous beasts craved the sojourner's blood,
Where vipers would snap at the wanderer's heels
And snakes there would writhe in the light of the moon.

53 For two-score years a nation he shepherds,
Behind him stands Egypt thirsting its blood
With him a people enfeebled and burdened,
Before him disorder and threatening foes.

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38. Ps. 71:15 44. לו is taken to refer to איש .

כָּכָה תָּלוּ לוֹ חַיָּיו אַךְ מִנֶּגֶד,
גַּם הָעָם אָהֵב אֶת חַיָּיו מֵרֵרוּ,
גַּם סַקְּלוֹ אֶבֶן אָמְרוּ בּוֹגְדֵי בֶגֶד,
וּבְטוּבוֹ כִּחֲשׁוּ וּבְרִית אֵל הֵפֵרוּ.

וּכְנֹחַ הָיָה אָז אֶחָד הַגֶּבֶר
צָף עַל שִׁמְמוֹת תֵּבֵל, עַל חֹמֶר מַיִם,
עֵת הָיְתָה תֵּבֵל לִמְלוֹאָהּ אַךְ קֶבֶר
וַיָּחֶל נֹחַ אֱלֵי אַרְצוֹת חַיִּים.—

כֵּן בֵּין שִׁמְמוֹת מִדְבָּר, בַּלָּהוֹת צַלְמָוֶת
אֶל אַדְמַת אֵל נֶפֶשׁ מֹשֶׁה נִכְסָפָה,
תּוֹחִיל צֵאת מִשְּׁאוֹל לִמְקוֹם חַיִּים שֶׁבֶת—
שָׁם קִוְּתָה לָנוּחַ מִכֹּל יְעָפָה.

כִּי אַחֲרֵי דַכָּא הַנְּפִילִים תַּחְתֵּיהוּ
וִימִינוֹ הִכְרִיעָה כָּל שְׁאֵת וָשֶׁבֶר
—כִּי מַה יִּבָּצֵר מֵאִישׁ אֵל שׁוֹמְעֵהוּ?—
אַחֲרֵי הוֹבִיל שָׁם גַּם עַמּוֹ לַקָּבֶר;

וּלְבַדּוֹ נִשְׁאַר מֵאַלְפֵי הָרְבָבָה,
אָז יָצָא מִישִׁימוֹן וַעֲצָתוֹ קָמָה,
וּלְפָנָיו גַּם אַרְצוֹ הָכֵן נִצָּבָה—
אַךְ עַזָּה מִצְוַת אֵל «לֹא תָבוֹא שָׁמָּה»!

His life was suspended in doubt before him,
For the nation he loved had embittered his years,
And the traitorous band that had plotted to stone him,
Rejected his virtue, renounced the Lord's mandate.

He then was a man left as lonesome as Noah
Who floated on wasteland, on tempest-tossed sea,
When the fullness of earth had become a vast grave
Noah had hoped for land brimming with life--

From desolate wilderness, horror of darkness
Moses had longed for the land of his God,
From the grave he envisioned a homeland of life--
Expecting to rest there from all his fatigue.

After he smote all the giants beneath him
His hands overcame the destruction and carnage,
--For what limits a man to whom God always hearkens?--
After bearing his people to graves in the desert.

Alone he remained from the thousands of myriads,
Coming out of the desert, his work was accomplished,
Before him his land now stands firmly established--
Then God's harsh command, "Do not come upon her!"

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57. Deut. 28:66 62. Hab. 3:15 65. Job 24:17
70. Lam. 3:47 76. Deut. 32:52

לְנְבוֹ הָהָר עֲלֵה! צִוָּה, וַיַּעַל —
שָׁם אַרְצוֹ זוֹ אַרְצוֹ עֵינוֹ צוֹפִיָּה,
הָאָרֶץ אוֹתָהּ נַפְשׁוֹ כִּשְׁמֵי מַעַל;
מִכְּאֵבוֹ כִּי עַז בִּלְשׁוֹנוֹ דוּמִיָּה.

כֹּה יַעֲמוֹד שָׁם וּבַת עֵינוֹ קָדְרָה,
עַד קָדְרָה גַּם שֶׁמֶשׁ וַתָּבוֹא יָמָּה,
פִּתְאוֹם שָׁקְעָה, כְּחֵץ חִישׁ עָבְרָה,
אוֹר עוֹלָמִים יֶחְשַׁךְ, אוֹר שֶׁמֶשׁ לָמָּה!?

אָז חַם לִבּוֹ בוֹ וּפָנָיו הֵאִירוּ,
נַפְשׁוֹ תִּתְעַטָּף אַךְ עֵינוֹ דָמָעָה,
הַדְּמָעוֹת רִאשׁוֹנוֹת עֵינָיו הִגִּירוּ;
דִּמְעוֹתָיו נִרְאוּ אַךְ נַפְשׁוֹ גָּוָעָה.

הַלַּיְלָה חָלַף, גַּם שֶׁמֶשׁ יָצָאָה,
אַךְ לָבְשָׁה קַדְרוּת עָלָיו בַּשָּׁמַיִם;
הוּא יִשְׁכַּב דוּמָם כִּי שִׁמְשׁוֹ בָּאָה —
וּנְטוּיָה עוֹד עֵינוֹ לִירוּשָׁלָיִם.

77 "Mount Nebo ascend!" he was ordered and climbed--
There was his land, his eyes viewed his land,
The land his soul yearned for as heaven above;
The fierceness of pain had muted his tongue.

81 There he stands, and his eyesight has dimmed,
The sun also fades and descends toward the sea,
It suddenly sinks like a quick passing arrow,
The world's light has darkened, what matters the sunlight!?

85 His heart is still warm, his face shines with light,
His soul is bound up but his eye sheds a tear,
The first stream of tears that his eyes have poured out;
Though his soul has expired, his tears are seen flowing.

89 The nighttime has passed, and the sun has ascended,
But darkness is shrouded upon it in heaven;
He lies in silence, his sun has departed--
But his eyes are still fixed toward the City of Peace.

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77. Deut. 32:49

ר'

יהודה

הלוי

YEHUDA HALEVI

על אפר מוקדה שמה יתנפלו
ובחיק שממתה בבכי יתגלגלו.
(שירי שפת קדש, 100)

שָׁם לִירוּשָׁלַיִם שַׁעַר הָרָקִיעַ
לִמְקוֹם הַלְוִיִּם שִׁירֵיהֶם אָז שָׁרוּ,
וִיהוּדָה הַלֵּוִי גַּם שָׁם הִגִּיעַ—
וּלְקוֹנֵן שָׁם בְּכֹסֶף שִׁירָיו נֶאְדָּרוּ.

לִבּוֹ בּוֹ נִשְׁבַּר, אַף רוּחוֹ נִבְקָה,
וּדְמָעוֹת תּוֹךְ עֵינָיו כַּסִּיר יִרְתָּחוּ;
גַּם קִינַת כִּנּוֹרוֹ פֹּה הִתְאַפָּקָה,
וּבְנוֹת שִׁירוֹ כֻּלָּן תּוֹךְ לִבּוֹ שָׁחוּ.

אֶת אַרְצוֹ הוּא נָטַשׁ אֶרֶץ מוֹלֶדֶת,
אֵשֶׁת אֲהוּבָה וּבָנוֹת הַשְּׁתַּיִם;
קָדִים שָׂם פָּנָיו כַּצִּפּוֹר נוֹדֶדֶת,
אֶל אֶרֶץ אָהַב מִבָּבַת עֵינַיִם.

הָאָרֶץ גַּן עֵדֶן שֵׁנִי הָיְתָה,
בָּהּ עֵץ הַדַּעַת כִּי רוּחָהּ רָמָה—
גַּם הִיא עֵץ חַיִּים לָאָדָם הֶרְאֲתָה,
גַּם רוּחַ אֱלֹהִים מִתְהַלֵּךְ שָׁמָּה.

"They fell on the ashes of her altar; they wallowed, crying, in the midst of her desolation." (Shirei Sefat Kodesh, 100)

There stands Jerusalem, threshold of heaven
The site where the Levites had chanted their psalms,
Where Yehudah Halevi had also arrived--
Lamenting with longings of passionate verse.

His heart had been shattered, his spirit was broken,
His tears overflowed as a hot seething cauldron;
The lament of his harp overwhelming his spirit,
His elegies plunged to the depths of his soul.

He abandoned his land, the land of his birth,
And a wife so beloved, a pair of fine daughters;
He faced only east, as a bird on the wing,
To the land he revered above worldly possessions.

This land was another Garden of Eden,
Her spirit sublime, in her midst tree of knowledge--
For man she had sprouted the tree of long life,
Through the breadth of the land stirred the spirit of God.

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8. Eccles. 7:4   14. Gen. 2:9   15. Gen. 2:9, 3:22
16. Gen. 3:8

וּשְׁעָרֶיהָ הֵם גַּם שַׁעֲרֵי שָׁמַיִם
כִּי עַל כֵּס מַלְכוּתָהּ יֵשֵׁב אֱלוֹהַּ;
אַרְצָהּ, כָּל אֶבֶן בָּהּ—מִזְבֵּחַ אֵל חַיִּים
כָּל סֶלַע—מַעֲמָד לְנָבִיא אֵל גָּבוֹהַּ.

לִמְחוֹז קֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה נַפְשׁוֹ כָּלְתָה
שָׁם עַל הַרְרֵי צִיּוֹן לַחֲצוֹב לוֹ קֶבֶר;
וּבְמַרְאָה וּבַחֲלוֹם הִיא לוֹ נִרְאֲתָה,
שָׁם שַׂרְעַפָּיו כַּנְּשָׁרִים יַעֲלוּ אֵבֶר.

בֵּין יִלְלַת סוּפָה וּסְעָרָה הוֹמִיָּה,
בְּפִגּוּשׁ מְקַדִּים רוּחַ שׁוֹד נֶאֱמַשׁ
וּצְנֵפָה כַּדּוּר צָנַף הָאֳנִיָּה,
וַיִּרְמוּ גַּלִּים כַּבּוֹת אֵשׁ שֶׁמֶשׁ;

בֵּין רַעֲמֵי שׁוֹאָה וַחֲזִיזֵי צַלְמָוֶת
עַל גַּג הַסְּפִינָה הוּא עוֹמֵד בּוֹטֵחַ;
עַיִן לְעַיִן יִרְאֶה אֶת הַמָּוֶת—
יִזְכּוֹר אֶרֶץ קָדְשׁוֹ וְהוּא שָׂמֵחַ.

וַיִּקְרָא לִבְנוֹת שִׁירוֹ נִתְהַימֶינָה,
וִיהוּדָה אָז יָשִׁיר שִׁיר מַה גָּבוֹהַּ!
וּבְנוֹת הַיָּם בְּיִפִי קוֹלָן תִּדְמֶינָה
אֶל אִישׁ שָׁר עַל מַיִם כִּנְבִיא אֱלוֹהַּ!

17 Her gates also mark the gateway to heaven
The Lord is enthroned on the seat of her kingdom;
Each stone in her surface--an altar to God
Each boulder--is set for the Mighty One's prophet.

21 His soul's inner longings had pined for that sanctum
To hew him a grave in the mountains of Zion;
She appeared to Yehudah in visions and dreams,
His thoughts there took wing as the soaring of eagles.

25 The howl of the storm and the roar of the tempest,
In tumult and blackness met easterly winds
Whirling the ship like the rage of the whirlpool,
The sun's flame extinguished in surging of waves;

29 Amidst thundering frenzy and flashing of darkness,
On the deck of the ship stands Yehudah securely;
He stands eye to eye--staring down Death--
Recalling the Holy Land, spirit elated.

33 Verses of song he intones, they resound,
As Yehudah now sings from his verses exalted!
The powerful voice of the breakers then calms
As he chants to the sea like a prophet of God!

גַּם סַעַר עָמַד, גַּם גַּלִּים יִשְׁתּוֹקוּ,
גַּם רַעַם בְּגַלְגַּל קוֹל לֹא יַשְׁמִיעַ!
אַף כַּבִּירִים מַיִם לֹא עוֹד יָשֹׁקוּ
לִשְׁאוֹן קוֹל הַלֵּוִי רֶגַע הֵרִיעַ.

שׁוּב אֶל חוֹף הַיָּם הָאֳנִיָּה חָתָרָה,
חִישׁ עַל אַדְמַת קֹדֶשׁ רַגְלוֹ דָּרָכָה;
מֶה הָמָה לִבּוֹ, מָה נַפְשׁוֹ סָעֲרָה!
וּלְחֵיק אֶרֶץ כִּמְעַט רוּחוֹ נִשְׁפָּכָה.

וּדְמָעוֹת כַּיָּם מֵעֵינָיו נָהָרוּ
מִנְּשִׁיקוֹת פִּיהוּ יִשַּׁק הָאֲדָמָה;
חִישׁ הִתְבּוֹלָלוּ הַדְּמָעוֹת נִגָּרוּ
בַּעֲפַר אַרְצוֹ זוּ—כִּי הָיְתָה לִשְׁמָמָה.

אָז מִהֵר לָכֶת אֶל מַשּׁוּאוֹת נֶצַח
שָׁם אַךְ חַיְתוֹ טֶרֶף—הוֹי שׁוֹד וָשַׁעַר!
כָּל קֹדֶשׁ יִשְׁבּוּ יִלְדֵי אוֹן נָרֶצַח
וּפְרָאִים אַכְזָרִים מֵחַיְתוֹ יָעַר.

וּבְאִישׁוֹן אֲפֵלָה וּדְמִי הַלַּיִל
עַל קֶבֶר בֶּן־אָמוֹץ עֵינוֹ בוֹכִיָּה:
«הֲזֶה הִרְעִים כָּאֵל בְּעוֹז וָחַיִל,
אֵיךְ קִנְּנוּ עַל קִבְרוֹ שַׁמָּה וּשְׁאִיָּה!»

The storm has abated, the surf has been silenced,
The voice of the thundering waves becomes muted!
Gone is the crash of the sea's mighty waters
The moment the voice of Halevi cries out.

Once more toward the coast the ship plows the deep,
He swiftly sets foot on the Lord's holy land;
How moved is his heart, how stirred is his spirit!
His soul nearly drains to the bosom of earth.

Tears flood his eyes like the sea's rushing waters
He kisses the earth with the touch of his lips;
Quickly the tears have poured out and are mixed
With the dust of this land in a state of destruction.

He hurriedly rushed to the ancient remains
And found beasts of prey--devastation and pillage!
For villainous murderers captured each shrine
Barbarous savages, beasts of the forest,

In depths of the darkness and quiet of night
He wept on the grave of Isaiah ben Amoz:
"As God, this one thundered with power and might,
How profound the lament on his desolate grave!"

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38. Isa. 17:12, 28:2   41. Jonah 1:13   46. Eccles. 1:2
51. Job 34:36   53. Prov. 7:9

קֶבֶר בֶּן־חִלְקִיָּה עֵינָיו הִשְׁקִיפוּ:
אִישׁ לְבִכְיָתוֹ חוֹמוֹת צִיּוֹן דָּמָעוּ,
כָּל דִּמְעוֹת עַמּוֹ מֵעֵינָיו הֵצִיפוּ,
כָּל אֶנְקוֹת מְתֶיהָ מִפִּיו נִשְׁמָעוּ.

הָהּ! לַשָּׁוְא עַל קִבְרוֹ יָמֵר יִתְאוֹנֵן—
שָׁמֵם הַקֶּבֶר וּדְשָׁאָיו נִחָרוּ,
הַיַּנְשׁוּף יְיַלֵּל עַל קֶבֶר הַמְקוֹנֵן
וּזְאֵבֵי עֶרֶב עַל טַרְפָּם יִנְעָרוּ.

כַּרְמֶל חָזָה עַל רֹאשׁ צִיּוֹן עֲטֶרֶת,
הַר חֶמְדוּ חוֹזִים, כָּל צִיץ בּוֹ פּוֹרֵחַ—
עַתָּה סוּפָתָה אַךְ עָלָיו סוֹעֶרֶת,
וּכְפֶגֶר עֲנָק הוּא דוֹמֵם קֵרֵחַ.

וּלְרַגְלָיו אִם עוֹד תִּפְרַח הַחֲבַצֶּלֶת
וַחֲמוּדָה שׁוֹשַׁנָּה תָּפִיץ נִיחוֹחַ—
אַךְ, הָהּ, הִיא תָּנֵץ תִּפְרַח אַף נוֹבֶלֶת
מֵאֵין אִישׁ עָלֶיהָ יִשְׂמַח שָׂמוֹחַ.

וּבְנוֹת צִיּוֹן לֹא עוֹד—אוֹיָה הַיְקָרוֹת!
(הוֹ גּוֹלוֹת סוּרוֹת בַּאֲרָצוֹת נָכְרִיּוֹת)
אוֹתָן עַל רֹאשָׁן תְּעַנּוֹדְנָה עֲטָרוֹת,
לֹא עוֹד תֵּצֶאנָה בִּמְחוֹלוֹת הוֹמִיּוֹת.

57 Then the grave he beheld--Jeremiah the prophet:
The ramparts of Zion had wept with his tears,
When the tears of his people had streamed from his eyes,
And the cries of her martyrs burst forth from his lips.

61 O for nought on this grave did he bitterly grieve--
The shrub had been scorched on the desolate gravesite,
The night owl cried out on the grave of the mourner
The prairie wolf howled at the corpse of its prey.

65 He viewed Mount Carmel as a crown upon Zion,
The beholder's delight, as each bud on her blossoms--
Now galestorm and tempest are whirling about her,
Like the corpse of a giant, with silent bare summit.

69 Yet still at her feet is the lily in bloom
And the choicest of roses have scattered their scent--
She still blooms and flowers, then withers and fades
Although man no longer rejoices upon her.

73 O daughters of Zion no more--all so precious!
(Exiled and banished to lands of the stranger)
Whose heads were adorned and were crowned with a wreath,
No more will emerge in their dancing and song.

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60. Jer. 51:52   63. Isa. 34:11   64. Hab. 1:8
66. Num. 17:23   69. Isa. 35:1

עוֹד בְּיׇפִי נׇגְהוֹ הַשַּׁחַר זוֹרֵחַ,
אַךְ לֹא עוֹד כִּנּוֹרִים אוֹתוֹ יָעִירוּ;
עוֹד בִּנְעִים הוֹדוֹ הַשָּׁרוֹן פּוֹרֵחַ,
אַךְ לֹא עוֹד הַנְּבִיאִים עָלָיו יָשִׁירוּ.

חַם לֵב הַמְשׁוֹרֵר, כְּלְיוֹתָיו יֶהֱמָיוּ,
אֶל אַרְזֵי הַלְּבָנוֹן חִישׁ רַגְלָיו נָעוּ –
עוֹד יַלְדוּת בַּת צִיּוֹן הֵם אָז חָזָיוּ,
גַּם אֶנְקַת מוֹתָהּ עוֹד הֵמָּה שָׁמָעוּ.

מְגִילָהּ גַּם אֶבְלָהּ לָקְחוּ לָמוֹ חֵבֶל,
כִּי נָתְנוּ עֵצִים לִבְנוֹת בּוֹ אַרְמוֹנִים,
וּלְהֵיכְלֵי תַּעֲנוּגוֹת—כִּנּוֹר וָנֶבֶל,
וּלְבָתֵּי עוֹלָם—עֵץ קֶבֶר וַאֲרוֹנִים.

אֵלֶּה הַנְּפִילִים וּשְׁכֵנֵי שָׁמַיִם
עַל רֹאשָׁם יִרְבַּץ שֶׁלֶג עוֹלָמִים,
אַף גִּשְׁמוּ כִּתְפֵיהֶם מִמְּטַר עֹז מַיִם,
אֵלֶּה הַיְשִׁישִׁים וּשְׂבֵעֵי רוֹב יָמִים.

עַל רֹאשׁ הַמְשׁוֹרֵר רָאשֵׁיהֶם הֵנִיעוּ,
וּכְאִלּוּ עַל צִיּוֹן גַּם הֵם יֶאֱבָלוּ;
אָז הָמוּ מֵעָיו כַּכִּנּוֹר הֵרִיעוּ,
מִפִּיו זְמִרוֹת קֹדֶשׁ כַּצּוּף נָזָלוּ.

77 The radiant morn still resplendently shines,
Although no more harps can arouse it from slumber;
The Sharon still blossoms in beauty and splendor,
Although no more prophets can chant verse upon it.

81 Through the heart of the poet surged passion and
yearning,
His feet quickly bounded toward Lebanon's cedars--
That witnessed the youth of the Daughter of Zion,
That still hear the sigh of Jerusalem's martyrs.

85 The cedars partook of her joy and her mourning,
As trees would be hewn in constructing a palace,
And temples delightful--for harp and the lyre,
But also in graveyards for coffins of lumber.

89 These towering giants who reach to the heavens
Always encrusted with snow on their pates,
Whose shoulders are streaming with cool rushing water,
These are the ancients, abundant in days.

93 Their peaks seem to nod and acknowledge the poet,
As if toward Mount Zion their faces all darken;
His heart's inner longings burst forth as the harp,
Like the flowing of honey, psalms pour from his lips.

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84. Jer. 51:52   92. Gen. 35:29

אָז שָׁר שִׁירוֹ «צִיּוֹן הֲלֹא תִשְׁאֲלִי»...
דָּמוּ הָאֲרָזִים לֹא עוֹד נָדוּ נָעוּ,
וּכְמוֹ אָמְרוּ לַקִּינָה: אַל תֶּחְדָּלִי!
כִּי קִינוֹת יִרְמְיָהוּ שֵׁנִית יִשְׁמָעוּ.

הוּא שָׁר בַּלְּבָנוֹן—כָּל חַי בּוֹ נָדָמוּ,
כִּי רוּחַ אֵל שַׁדַּי מִפִּיו נֶאֱצָלָה;
וּבְנִיב «קַדְמוּת נְעוּרָיִךְ» מִלָּיו תַּמּוּ,
כִּי תַרְדֵּמַת יָהּ אָז עָלָיו נָפָלָה.

אָז הוּבָא בַּחֲלוֹם אֶל מַמְלְכוֹת הַמָּוֶת—
וּפָתַע הַקְּבָרוֹת פִּיהֶם פָּעֲרוּ,
קָאוּ הָרְפָאִים מִתַּחַת מַצֶּבֶת,
וּדְמֵי הַמְשׁוֹרֵר קָפְאוּ נִצְרָרוּ.

מְתֵי צִיּוֹן הֵמָּה קָמוּ מִקֶּבֶר,
וּבְעַד אֱלֹהֵימוֹ אָז הֻרְגוּ הָכְרָעוּ;
אַךְ מֻכִּים וּפְצוּעִים שֶׁבֶר עַל שֶׁבֶר,
וּשְׂרוּפֵי מוֹקֵד וּבְמַיִם טֻבָּעוּ.

גַּם אֲכוּלֵי רָעָב וּדְקוּרֵי חָרֶב
מֻשְׁלָכִים לַכְּפִירִים וּלְחֻמֵי דָבֶר,
מַקְדִּישֵׁי שֵׁם הָאֵל בֹּקֶר וָעֶרֶב—
וּבְעַד עַמָּם, הָהּ, הֵם יָרְדוּ אָז קָבֶר!

97 Reciting "O Zion! Wilt thou not ask . . ."
The cedars are silent, no longer they stir,
Seeming to shout to his dirge "Do not cease!"
As they hear once again Jeremiah's lament.

101 As he chants--all the creatures in Lebanon quiet,
From his lips now emerges the spirit of God;
With the words "former youth" is his poem completed,
Yehudah now sinks into heavenly slumber.

105 In his dream he is brought to the kingdom of death--
Where the mouth of each grave shows a gaping abyss,
Vomiting spirits from under their headstones,
The blood of the poet runs cold in his veins.

109 The martyrs of Zion arise from the grave,
Conquered and slain in defense of their God;
Those broken in body with festering wounds,
Burned at the stake, and drowned in the waters.

113 Those consumed by starvation, impaled by the sword
And cast to the lions, flesh eaten by plague,
Who daily were martyred to hallow God's name--
For the sake of their nation, ha! doomed to the grave!

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97. Line 1 of "ציון הלא תשאלי" by Yehuda Halevi
103. Ibid., last line

מִקְצוֹת אָרֶץ שָׁם כֻּלָּם נִזְעָקוּ —
וּפְנֵיהֶם מֵרָקָב מִתּוֹלָע בָּלוּ,
שָׁפוּ עַצְמוֹתָם, עֵינֵיהֶם נָמָקוּ,
וּבְחוֹרֵי עֵינֵימוֹ רִמָּה יִזְחָלוּ.

גַּם חוֹזֵי אֵל שַׁדַּי מִבּוֹר נִמְלָטוּ,
שָׁמָּה בֶּן־אָמוֹץ כֵּאלֹהִים יָשִׂיחַ,
גֵּוּוֹ פָּצוּעַ וּלְחָיָיו מֹרָטוּ,
עַל מָתְנָיו שָׂק, יָרִיעַ אַף יַצְרִיחַ.

שָׁם בֶּן־חִלְקִיָּה, פָּנָיו מַה קָדְרוּ!
עַל תַּלְתַּלֵּי רֹאשׁוֹ אָבָק וָאֵפֶר,
וּבַטִּיט וָבֹץ פָּנָיו חֳמַרְמָרוּ —
בִּימִינוֹ הַקִּינוֹת בִּמְגִלַּת סֵפֶר.

אוּרִיָּה וּזְכַרְיָה שָׁם יִתְנוֹדָדוּ,
מִלִּבָּם יָזוּב דַּם רֹמַח תָּקוּעַ;
כָּל מוּמָת עַל דָּתוֹ שָׁמָּה נוֹעָדוּ —
וּמְתוֹם אֵין בָּם וּסְגוֹר לִבָּם קָרוּעַ.

אָז סָבִיב לַמְשׁוֹרֵר כֻּלָּם צָבָאוּ
וּבְחוֹרֵי אֵין־עַיִן אֵלָיו הִבִּיטוּ;
גֶּשֶׁת אֵלֵימוֹ — לוֹ דוּמָם יִקְרָאוּ,
וִידֵי־עֲצָמוֹת עַל כֵּן לוֹ הוֹשִׁיטוּ.

117 All of them wail from the ends of the earth--
Their faces decaying, infested with maggots,
Their bones have been crushed, and their eyeballs
    have rotted,
Their eye sockets covered and crawling with worms.

121 The Mighty One's prophet arose from the grave,
There stood Isaiah, like God he admonished,
His back sorely wounded, his cheeks roughly plucked,
Girded in sackcloth he shouts, even screams.

125 Jeremiah appeared, how darkened his face!
Ashes and dust on the locks of his hair,
His face had been ravished in mud and the mire--
In his hand, lamentations inscribed on a scroll.

129 Zechariah there wandered, and also Uriah,
Their hearts spurted blood from the spears still
    implanted;
Every martyr there drifted, each slain for his faith--
No one unscathed, for each heart was rent open.

133 Swirling they gather encircling the poet
And cast empty stares from blank sockets of eyes;
Draw near him--and softly they beckon Yehudah,
The bare bony fingers reach out for his flesh.

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123. Isa. 50:6   129. II Kings 14:29, Zech. 1:1, II Sam. 11:13

וִידֵי מֵתִים עוֹדָם נוֹגְעִים בּוֹ יַחַד,
עוֹד חֶרְדַּת הַחֲלוֹם עַל לִבּוֹ סוֹעֶרֶת;
פִּתְאוֹם גַּם יַד חַי, הוֹי חָמָס וָפַחַד,
גַּם חֶרֶב יַד חַי, הוֹ, בּוֹ חוֹדֶרֶת!

חֶרֶב אַכְזָר חַי לֵב חוֹלֵם חָדָרָה,
כַּאֲפִיקֵי מַיִם הוֹי דָּמָיו יָצָאוּ!
וּבְזִרְמַת דָּמוֹ גַּם נַפְשׁוֹ נִגָּרָה:
«לָנוּ נִדְמֵיתָ!» הַמֵּתִים קָרָאוּ.

וּצְחוֹק תַּעֲנוּגִים, לֹא חֶרְדַּת צַלְמָוֶת,
אַךְ הוֹד נֹעַם יָהּ חָפַף עַל פָּנֵיהוּ;
פֹּה תַּם חֲלוֹמוֹ, הוֹ חֲלוֹם מַר מָוֶת
אַךְ הַמְשׁוֹרֵר לֹא עוֹד פָּתַח עֵינֵיהוּ.

כִּי אַךְ כִּמְעַט נִרְדָּם מַשְׁמִים יָגֵעַ,
וַעֲרָבִי אַכְזָרִי עַז לֵב וָמֵצַח
—הוֹ אָח לַנָּמֵר, הוֹ לַפֶּתֶן רֵעַ! —
בַּחֲמַת חֶרֶב רָעָה שָׁלַח בּוֹ רֶצַח.

זֵכֶר שֵׁם קָדְשׁוֹ לֹא יָסוּף מִיהוּדָה;
צוֹם הַחֲמִישִׁי עַל קִינוֹת בֶּן־חִלְקִיָּה
עֵת תִּתְיַפֵּחַ בַּת צִיּוֹן הַשְּׁדוּדָה —
אָז גַּם אֶל שִׁירוֹ זֶה עֵינָהּ בּוֹכִיָּה.

137 While the hands of the dead ones all touch him together,
The horror-filled dream still tormenting his mind;
A living hand, suddenly terror and violence,
A living hand plunges a sword through his heart!

141 The living one's sword pierced the heart of the dreamer,
His blood surges out like currents of water!
His soul, too, departs in the torrents of blood:
"You've become one of us!", all the dead ones cry out.

145 He laughs with contentment, not fearing death's shadow,
The Lord's peaceful splendor surrounding his face;
His vision ends here, his death-bitter dream
For the eyes of the poet no longer can open.

149 He barely had slumbered, fatigued and astonished,
When the murderous Arab, so heartless and cold
--A brother to leopards, to poisonous vipers!--
With the sword's evil wrath slew Yehudah Halevi.

151 His sanctified name is preserved within Judah;
On the fast day in Av, Jeremiah's laments
Stir the Daughter of Zion, defiled, to bewail--
And her eye sheds a tear for his passionate psalms.

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149. Ezek. 3:15

כִּנּוֹר
בַּת צִיּוֹן

KINOR BAT TSIYON

הַתְּפִלָּה

PRAYER

התפלה

נטו צללי ערב, היום יפוח,
ומזמרי בליל דומם נאנחו,
בין אלי היער ישרוק הרוח,
ובהדרת קדש הם יקדו ישחו.

הדור בלבוש כסף יצא ירח,
ולראשו זר־זהר ענד כוכבים,
כנשיא הליל הוא שואף זורח,
לו נאוה קדש על כסא העבים.

מה תיף בהדרך, האח, ליל האביב!
לבי בי ירחב, אף נפשי רוממה,
זו יפעת הקדש אחזה מסביב
הסירו לי שפה – רוחי שוממה!

אך לבי דובר ברעדה לו גילה,
אל אל בי יתפלל בדמי האמש,
גם קול תבל כלה לי קול התפלה –
מקול כוכבי נשף עד קול הרמש!

אז אתי ארזי אל יקדו לאלה,
צפרים שרים אתי יתפללו,
ובני־אלהים כל צבאות גבה
אתי יבעיון, משדי ישאלו!

1 The day has grown cool as the dusk shadows lengthen,
Hushed is the sigh of the songbirds at night,
The wind whistles through lofty oaks in the forest,
They bow in obeisance, in sanctified splendor.

5 The moon, as a silver-draped globe, slowly rises,
Its shimmering halo adorning the stars,
Like a prince of the night, it reaches for brilliance,
Hallowed, it rests on a star-embossed throne.

9 How wondrous your beauty, o nighttime of spring!
My heart opens wide, my soul is exalted,
I view all around me ineffable splendor,
It robs me of speech--and devours my spirit!

13 My heart, trembling joyously speaks to the Lord,
In the quiet of night to the God found within me,
In sounds of the earth I hear voices of prayer--
From the voice of the stars to sounds of the insects!

17 I bow with the towering cedars to God,
The birds, chanting with me, now offer a prayer,
All of God's creatures in splendid array
Beseech the Almighty, with me they entreat Him

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1. Cant. 2:17, 4:6; Lebensohn uses the same line to begin his poem "Holiday of Spring." 4. Ps. 29:2, 96:9; I Chron. 16:29; Gen. 43:28 11. Ezek. 28:7, 17; Hebrew reads זו in some texts, זו is better reading 20. Isa. 21:12

וּדְמִי הַלַּיְלָה חִישׁ נֶהֱפַּךְ לַהֲמֻלָּה,
קוֹל «הַלְלוּיָהּ» בִּמְלֹא אֶרֶץ הֵרִיעַ,
הַלְלוּיָהּ! אִתִּי תִּקְרָא תֵּבֵל כֻּלָּהּ,
שָׁמַיִם שָׁמָּה וּשְׁאוֹל כִּי אַצִּיעַ!

אָז שִׁמְךָ בַּכֹּל חָזִיתִי אֱלֹהַי,
וּבְכָל כּוֹכַב אוֹר הוּא חָקוּק עַל מֵצַח,
וּבְכָל הַיְצוּרִים בָּם אֶתְמַהּ תָּמֹהַּ,
אוֹתוֹתֶיךָ אֶחֱזֶה בִּכְתָב הַנֵּצַח.

כִּי שִׁמְךָ, אֵל שַׁדַּי, הֵם כָּל פְּעָלֶיךָ—
זֶה אֲדֹנָי בָּם כָּאָרֶץ כַּמָּאוֹר,
אִישׁ אִישׁ מֵאַלְפֵי רִבֹּאוֹת מַעֲשֶׂיךָ —
אוֹת מִשִּׁמְךָ הוּא, אֵל כַּבִּיר, אֵל נָאוֹר!

מַה שּׁוֹלָל הִלְכָה נַפְשִׁי, מַה תָּשׁוּחַ!
וּנְשָׁמָה בַּמֵּתִים מַה זֶּה הִפַּחְתִּי?
דּוּמָם הַחֶלֶד, בַּתֵּבֵל אֵין רוּחַ,
אַךְ אָנֹכִי, אֵלִי, אָנֹכִי שִׁבַּחְתִּי!

פִּי נָתַתִּי אֶל דַּבֵּר לֹא יוּכָלוּ,
הָרוּחַ אַךְ סוֹאֵן, יֶהוֹם הַסַּעַר,
אַרְזֵי אֵל יָנוּעוּ, לֹא יִתְפַּלָּלוּ,
הָעוֹף אַךְ יֶהֱמֶה וִיצַפְצֵף בַּיַּעַר!

21 Quickly the silence of night becomes tumult,
The fullness of earth crying out "Halleluyah!"
"Halleluyah," the depths of the world with me shout,
The heavens and Sheol are there as I pray!

25 The Name of the Lord I see in all things,
In each burst of starlight inscribed on His brow,
I am awed and astounded at all things created,
His signs I perceive as eternal inscriptions.

29 In all of Your works lies your Name, the Almighty--
Like earth, like the moon, the Lord is within them.
Each man from among all Your countless creations--
Is a mark of Your Name, O Glorious God!

33 Why was my spirit mislead and subdued?!
Why have I breathed a soul in the dead?
Hushed stands the world, no spirit within it,
But I, O my Lord, I will sing of Your Presence!

37 I gave them a mouth, but they can not speak,
The wind only stirs, the storm starts to howl.
The cedars of God all tremble, not pray,
The birds only coo and chirp in the forest!

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24. Ps. 139:8   33. Mic. 1:8; Ps. 42:6   34. Job 31:39
38. Isa. 9:4

הֲיְסַפְּרוּ שָׁמַיִם, יַגִּיד רָקִיעַ?
הֵן נֶפֶשׁ אֵין בָּם כִּי תַעֲרֹג, כִּי תִכֶל!
אַךְ רוּחִי דִּבֶּר בָּם וּפִי הִבִּיעַ,
בֹּהוּ חַי הֵמָּה מִבְּלִי דַעַת שֵׂכֶל!

גַּם אַךְ גּוּפַת מֵת הַתֵּבֵל הִנֶּהָ—
וּבָהּ אַךְ יָנוּעוּ גְלָמִים לֹא חַיִּים,
מֵתִים הֵמָּה גַּם כָּל הַחַי עָלֶיהָ,
כִּי אֶל אֵל חַי לֹא יִשְׂאוּ עֵינַיִם!

אַךְ הָאָדָם, הָאָדָם חַי הִנֵּהוּ!
וּבִלְתּוֹ בַּכֹּל אַךְ מָוֶת וָקֶרֶץ;
כִּי לִבּוֹ אֵל יֶחֱזֶה, עֵינוֹ תִרְאֵהוּ—
הוּא עֵין כָּל הַיְקוּם, הוּא הַלֵּב בָּאָרֶץ!

הוּא הַחַי מַטָּה כָּאֵל בַּשָּׁמַיִם,
וּלְבַדּוֹ אַךְ הוּא אֶל אֵל יִשָּׂא מֵצַח,
עַל כַּנְפֵי הַתְּפִלָּה יִסַּק כַּפַּיִם,
בָּהּ דּוֹבֵר אֱנוֹשׁ רִמָּה אֶל אֵל נֵצַח!

בִּגְדוֹלוֹת אֱלֹהַּ נַפְשׁוֹ כִּי תָבֶן,
כִּי יַעֲמוֹד בּוֹדֵד לִפְנֵי אֵל שָׁמַיִם,
אָז תּוּגַל אַט מֵעַל לִבּוֹ הָאֶבֶן,
וּמִשָּׁם יִזְּלוּ דֶרֶךְ עֵינָיו מַיִם!

41 Can heavens declare, can the firmament speak?
No soul lies within them, no longing desire!
The voice of my spirit has spoken within them,
They are formless and void, with no rational thought!

45 Behold, the world stands as a bleak, lifeless body--
Within her shifts matter, unfinished and dead,
The creatures upon her are no more than corpses,
Not lifting their eyes to the God of all life!

49 But behold, there lives Man, Man is alive!
Without him is everything death and destruction;
His heart perceives God, his eyes have beheld Him--
Man--the world's heart, the eye of creation!

53 Man lives below, as God in the heavens,
He alone lifts his brow to the Lord of the world,
He lifts up his hands upon wings of his prayer,
Thus Man, but a worm, speaks to God the Eternal!

57 His soul seeks discernment of God's mighty power,
Alone does he stand before God of the cosmos,
Then slowly the rock shall be rolled from his heart,
And from there will the tears start to flow through
his eyes!

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42. Ps. 109, Ps. 42:2 55. Ps. 139:8 56. Job 25:6
59. Prov. 18:2

וּמַה יִּנְעַם לוֹ אָז צָקוּן הַלַּחַשׁ,
וּבְנַחַת וּלְאַט אָז נַפְשׁוֹ בֹּכִיָּה
דִּמְעָה אַחַר דִּמְעָה אָז חִישׁ גַּם תֵּחַשׁ—
וּתְפִלָּה עִמָּהֶן יוֹצֵאת דוּמִיָּה!

זוּ הִיא הַשָּׂפָה שֶׁבֵּין אֵל וָגֶבֶר
בְּקַצּוֹת כָּל הָאָרֶץ וּבְאַפְסֵי חָלֶד,
אַךְ בָּהּ כָּל אָדָם עַל אֵל יָשִׂים שֶׂבֶר,
כִּי עִם אֵל כְּאָב לוֹ דוֹבֵר כַּיֶּלֶד!

לָכֵן לֵב אָדָם בּוֹ סָמוּךְ בָּטוּחַ
עֵת תִּבּוֹק הָאָרֶץ וְיֵהָרֵס חָלֶד,
וּצְבָא כָּל הַיְקוּם עֵת יַחֲלוֹף כְּרוּחַ—
הוּא מֵחֵיק מָוֶת לַחַיִּים יִוָּלֵד!

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וּבְרוּכָה אַתְּ הַתְּפִלָּה, בַּת הַלְּבָבוֹת!
הֵן בִּכְנָפַיִךְ מַרְפֵּא אֶל כָּל שֶׁבֶר,
כַּטַּל שֶׁיּוֹרֵד פֹּה מִשְּׁמֵי הָעֲרָבוֹת
תַּרְוִי לֵב אֱנוֹשׁ, תִּגְהִי רוּחַ גֶּבֶר!

How pleasing to Man, then, to utter the whisper,
His soul then laments in deliberate grace,
Tear after tear will quickly stream out--
And with them a soft-spoken prayer is poured out!

This is the language of Man with his God,
From the edge of the world and far reaches of earth,
Through prayer does Man express hopes to his Lord,
To God--like a child who speaks to his father!

Therefore does Man put his trust in the Lord
When the earth is laid waste and the world is despoiled,
And the host of earth's creatures pass on as the wind--
From the bosom of death he is born into life!

Blessed are you, o prayer of the heart!
Your wings provide healing for every wound,
Like the dew that descends from the heaven at dawn
Man's heart will be sated, his spirit revived!

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61. Isa. 26:16; Job 31:5 69. Isa. 24:3 76. Prov. 17:22; Hos. 5:13

כ

אל הכוכבים

TO THE STARS

אֶל הַכּוֹכָבִים

אֶל פַּאֲתֵי הַיָּמָּה בָּאָה הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ
וּבְשַׁחַק וָאָרֶץ לַיִל יַצִּיעַ,
וּלְרַגְלוֹ פָּשְׁטוּ דְמִיָּה וָאֶמֶשׁ,
וַיֵּצְאוּ חוֹצֵץ כָּל צִבְאוֹת רָקִיעַ!

וּכְאִיֵּי זָהָב עַל יָם הַשָּׁמַיִם
יִשְׁאָפוּ יִזְרָחוּ, יַחֲנוּ יִסָּעוּ,
יֵלְכוּ יִדְאוּ וַיִּשׁוֹטְטוּ כָּעֵינַיִם
עַל אֹרַח אֵין קֵץ וּנְתִיב לֹא יָדָעוּ!

אָז חַם בִּי לִבִּי, אַף רוּחִי נֶהֱרָה:
„עִמְדוּ, קָרָאתִי, עִמְדוּ עַד אַרְגִּיעַ!
(מְנַהֲמַת לִבִּי עַל פִּי אֵשׁ בָּעֲרָה)
הַגִּידוּ מִי אַתֶּם צִבְאוֹת רָקִיעַ?

מִי זֶה אַתֶּמָה חֵיל נוֹרָא, חֵיל נָאוֹר,
אֵין קֵצֶה אֵין סוֹף, אֵין רֵאשִׁית וּתְחִלָּה,
הַאֲרָצוֹת הֵמָּה כָּל כּוֹכָב וּמָאוֹר?
אָבְדוּ עֶשְׁתֹּנֹתַי וּבְפִי אֵין מִלָּה!

אוֹ רַעְיוֹנֵי אֵל וּשְׂעִפֵּי אֱלֹהַּ
עַל סִפְרֵי שַׁחַק חֲקוּקִים אַתֶּמָה?
הַחֵקֶר עֶלְיוֹן וּבִינַת גָּבֹהַּ
יִמְצָא הַיּוֹדֵעַ לִקְרֹא בָּהֵמָּה?

Toward the edge of the sea the sun now descends
And evening encroaches on heaven and earth,
Silence and darkness spread out at its feet,
Each host in the firmament marches in rank!

Like islands of gold on the sea of the heaven
They glitter and shine, encamp, then move onward,
Swiftly they dart, like the blink of an eye,
Upon infinite tracks, along pathways unknown!

My heart warms within me, my spirit is drained:
"Be still," I call out, "Be still as I calm!
(My heart becomes tempest as flames burn within)
O hosts of the firmament, tell me, who are you?"

Who are you, o awesome and shining array,
No limit or finitude, start or an end,
Are the luminous bodies and stars also worlds?
My lips become speechless, my thoughts are confounded!

Are you Divine Will or the Lord's deepest thoughts
Inscribed in the tablets of heaven above?
Can the wisest of men--by reading the stars--
Find wisdom exalted and ultimate answers?

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4. Prov. 30:27 8. Prov. 12:28 11. Ps. 38:9
17. Job 4:13, Job 20:2

אוֹ גָּדְלוֹ תָּרֹנּוּ שִׁירֵי אֲהָבִים,
וּמְזַמְּרֵי אֵל אַתֶּם, שָׁרֵי־שָׁמַיִם!
וּפִיתָגוֹר וַאֲפְּלָטוֹן חוֹלְמִים נִשְׂגָּבִים
לַאֲזִין שִׁירֵיכֶם אָז כָּרוּ אָזְנַיִם?

אוֹ כִּי יִנְווּ בָּכֶם נַפְשׁוֹת הַיְשָׁרִים
בֵּין עַרְבוֹת אוֹרְכֶם, בֵּין זָהֳרֵי צַחְצָחוֹת,
כִּי יִטְּשׁוּ אֶרֶץ בָּהּ מָוֶת וּקְבָרִים,
הִתְעַלֵּס בִּנְעִימוֹת נֶצַח וּשְׂמָחוֹת!

הוֹי, מִי אַתֶּמָה? לִפְנֵיכֶם אוֹחִילָה!
וּצְעִיף הַסֵּתֶר נָא קִרְעוּ מֵעֲלֵיכֶם!
עַל חֶבְיוֹן עֻזְּכֶם לוּ רֶגַע אָגִילָה,
לוּ שָׁדוּד אַף אֶפּוֹל אֶל זִיק קַוֵּיכֶם!

הֵן אֶזְכּוֹר עֵת חָלְפוּ לִי שָׁנִים שֶׁבַע
אַךְ דָּרְכָה רַגְלִי עַל מִפְתַּן הַחַיִּים,
אָז עָמַד הַיֶּלֶד עַל שִׂיא הַגֶּבַע
וּכְבָר אֲלֵיכֶם הוּא נָשָׂא עֵינַיִם!

לִבִּי בִּי הִשְׁתּוֹמֵם, נַפְשִׁי תָּשׁוּחַ,
נָזְלוּ עֵינַי לָכֶם דִּמְעוֹת עֲדָנִים,
וּכְאִלּוּ עַל פָּנַי אָז יַחֲלוֹף רוּחַ,
וּלְאָזְנַי לָאַט סוֹד שִׂיחַ שַׁאֲנַנִּים!

21 Do you chant songs of love to the greatness of God,
Are you the Lord's choir, a heavenly chorus?
Pythagorus, Plato, profoundly had dreamed
Of hearing your songs by attuning their ears!

25 Are the souls of the righteous abiding among
Vast plains of your light or their dazzling scorched deserts?
Do they cast aside earth with its death and the grave,
Rejoicing in peace and eternal delight?!

29 Who are you, o stars? Before you I wait!
The veil of your secrecy please tear away!
If I could rejoice in your intimate power,
If I could fall prey to your shining horizons!

33 I remember a time as my seventh year passed,
My feet barely trod on the threshold of life,
A boy, then, was standing on top of the height,
And already to you he had lifted his eyes!

37 My heart was astounded, my soul had been humbled,
As delicate tears slowly dripped from my eyes;
That moment--my cheeks seemed caressed by the wind,
My ears heard the secretive whispers of angels!

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24. Ps. 40:7 27. Isa. 58:11

בֶּן עֶשֶׂר וּשְׁתַּיִם הָיִיתִי נַעַר,
אָז «מִי אַתֶּם» לָכֶם מִלִּים עָרַכְתִּי,
וּשְׂפָתַי צָלְלוּ, עָלַי סִמֵּר שַׂעַר,
בַּהֲגִיגִי אֵשׁ לָכֶם לִבִּי שָׁפַכְתִּי!

עַתָּה קוֹל עֶלֶם נָא שִׁמְעוּ שָׁמֹעַ,
וּמְעַטִּים אִם יָמַי פֹּה עֲלֵי אֶרֶץ,
אַךְ לִבִּי בִּי זָקֵן יִגְוַע גָּוֹעַ
אַחֲרֵי רָאָה עֳנִי חֳלִי וָפֶרֶץ!

עֲנוּנִי נָא עֲנוּנִי, שׁוֹכְנֵי רָמָה!
הֲלִיכוֹת עוֹלָם נָא עִצְרוּ כְּרֶגַע!
אֲהָהּ, קָצָה נַפְשִׁי בִּמְלֹא הָאֲדָמָה
בָּהּ יֻלַּד אֱנוֹשׁ לְעָמָל וָפֶגַע!

פֹּה תִּנְוֶה רִשְׁעָה גַּם תָּגוּר עַוְלָתָהּ,
פֹּה דִּבָּה נִתְעָבָה, הָהּ, תַּחֲלִיק פִּיהָ—
אֱמוּנַת שָׁוְא תָּפִיץ עֶבְרוֹת אֵימָתָהּ,
לִימִינָהּ נִצָּב הַשֶּׁקֶר אָחִיהָ!

אֲהָהּ, פֹּה שִׂנְאַת דָּת מוֹרָאָה נִגְאָלָה
עַל פִּיהָ אֵל חַנּוּן, בִּימִינָהּ חֶרֶב
וַתִּתְפַּלֵּל אַף תִּכְרַע עֵת תַּעַשׂ כַּלָּה,
וּבְשֵׁם אֵל סַלָּח תִּטְרוֹף כִּזְאֵב עֶרֶב! . .

41 At twelve years of age, a young lad I still was,
The question "Who are you?" to you I put forth,
My hair stood on end and my lips would be trembling,
To you would my heart spew its fire as I mused!

45 Listen now, please, to the voice of a youth,
Though here on this earth my days may be few,
My heart, old and weary, does surely expire
Upon seeing affliction, destruction and ruin!

49 Answer me, answer, o dwellers on high!
Your course of eternity stop now, this instant!
My spirit despises the fullness of earth
Where man is born destined for toil and death!

53 Evil resides here and Wickedness dwells,
Infamous Slander here smoothly seduces--
Hypocrisy spreads her own terrible rage,
And Falsehood, her brother, stands at her side!

57 Hate of Religion, most foul and polluted,
Her hand holds a sword while espousing God's mercy,
She prays and she kneels as would only a bride
And in gracious God's name, like a prairie wolf plunders! . . .

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43. Hab. 3:16 44. Ps. 39:4 50. Hab. 3:6 53. Ps. 92:16
54. Ps. 5:10; Prov. 28:23, 2:16, 7:5 57. Zeph. 3:1

תֵּבֵל זוּ בָּרָא אֵל בַּחֲרוֹן אַפַּיִם
אָז הִשְׁלִיכָהּ מִפָּנָיו בַּחֲמַת קֶצֶף,
וַיַּרְא הַמָּוֶת וַיִּלְטוֹשׁ עֵינַיִם,
וַיַּעַט אֵלֶיהָ בָּחֳרִי וָשֶׁצֶף!

וּבֵין צִפָּרְנָיו יֹאחֲזֶנָּה לָנֶצַח,
אָז גַּם הָאָסוֹן לָהּ חָרַק שִׁנַּיִם,
אֶל הָאָדָם מִהַר חִישׁ בַּחֲמַת רֶצַח
וִיעַנֶּה אוֹתוֹ כָּל עוֹדוֹ בַּחַיִּים!

הוֹי, מָוֶת אָיוֹם, אֱלִיל כָּל הָאָרֶץ!
כֹּהֲנוֹ הַזְּמַן יַקְרִיב חִישׁ לוֹ אֲשָׁמִים—
מִזְבְּחוֹתָיו כָּל קֶבֶר עַל אַדְמַת־קָרֶץ
וּמְלוֹא הַיְקוּם זִבְחֵי אֱלִיל הַדָּמִים!

הוֹי, אֶזְכּוֹר אֶשְׁתּוֹלֵל! הוֹי, שׁוֹד וָרֶצַח!
גַּם הַזְּמַן פֹּה אַיִן! אֵין כֹּל וּמְאוּמָה!
הַמָּוֶת הוּא הַזְּמַן, לוֹ גַּם הַנֶּצַח,
הוֹי, קָצָה נַפְשִׁי בַּתֵּבֵל הַזְּעוּמָה!

אֲלֵיכֶם שׁוֹכְנֵי עָל, נַפְשִׁי כָּלְתָה!
פִּתְחוּ שִׂפְתוֹתֵיכֶם, שִׂפְתֵי עוֹלָמִים!
הוֹרוּ נָא הָעֶלֶם עֲדֵיכֶם אָתָה,
אֶל אוֹרְכֶם וַאֲמִתְּכֶם מוֹרָשָׁיו צְמֵאִים!

61 This world was created in God's heated wrath,
He cast it away in the fury of anger,
Seeing its moment, Death sharpened his eyes,
And seized upon earth in a furious rage!

65 He clenched it between his sharp talons forever,
Calamity entered then, gnashing its teeth;
So he hurried to Man, bringing murderous passion,
And torturing him all the days of his life!

69 O terrible Death, false god of the earth!
Whose high priest is Time with guilt offerings quick--
Graves mark each sacrifice doomed on the wasteland,
And blood from god's offerings fills up creation.

73 I recall and go mad! O ruin and murder!
For Time here is absent! Just emptiness--nothing!
For Death here is Time, with power eternal,
My spirit despises this cursed meager world!

77 My soul has been yearning the dwellers on high!
Open your lips, your lips of eternity!
Pray teach this youth who approaches you now,
He hungers your light and your truth to inherit!

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64. Isa. 22:17 66. Ps. 37:12

הֲגַם בֵּינֵיכֶם רִשְׁעָה מִתְקַדֶּשֶׁת,
עוֹשְׁקָה וּבְכָה, חוֹמְסָה וּמִתְפַּלֶּלֶת?
הֲגַם שָׁם הַחֲנוּפָּה יִרְאָה לוֹבֶשֶׁת
וּבָרֵי לֵבָב בַּשַּׁחַת טוֹבֶלֶת?

הֲתִרְאוּ שָׁם אֱמֶת עַיִן לַעַיִן?
תֶּחֱזוּ סוֹד הַבְּרִיאָה מֵאִישׁ נִשְׂגָּבָה?
לָדַעַת אֵיךְ רִקְמָה יֵשׁ רָב מֵאַיִן,
חֹק הַנֶּצַח בּוֹ הִיא רָצָה אַף שָׁבָה!

אִמְרוּ אִם עוֹלֶה מָוֶת גַּם אֲלֵיכֶם?
הֲתִגְוַע גַּם עַיִשׁ שָׁם עַל בָּנֶיהָ?
אוֹ הֲיֵשׁ גַּם שָׂב גַּם יָשִׁישׁ בֵּינֵיכֶם?
אִם זָקְנָה שֶׁמֶשׁ, אִם כָּהוּ עֵינֶיהָ?

אוֹ אִם חַיֵּי עַד לָכֶם נִתְּנוּ מָנָה
וּמִסְפּוֹר חֲדַלְתֶּם שָׁנִים גַּם יָמִים?
וּבְנֵי אָדָם מָה הֵם, אִמְרוּ נֶאֱמָנָה!
גַּם מָה הֵמָּה לָהֶם חַיֵּי עוֹלָמִים?

הוֹי, אֶת מִי זֶה אֶשְׁאַל? הוֹי, רַעְיוֹן יָלֶד!
לָכֶם גַּם מוֹרָשַׁי לָרִיק אַךְ חָלוּ —
זֶה שָׁנִים אֵין חֵקֶר כָּל חַכְמֵי חָלֶד
אֶתְכֶם יִדְרוֹשׁוּ, יַחְקוֹרוּ, יִשְׁאָלוּ!

81 Does Wickedness hallow itself there among you,
Do Tears and Oppression wreak havoc and pray?
Does Hypocrisy cloak itself smugly with Awe,
Leading the upright in heart to the pit?

85 Can Truth there be visible, seen eye to eye?
Or creation's deep secrets, too lofty for man?
Do you know how existence was wrought from a void,
And the laws of eternity captured within it!?

89 Please tell me if death can ascend to the stars?!
Does the Great Bear expire with all of its children?
Are old ones and aged among you as well?
Will the sun ever age, will its eyes become dim?

93 Is life everlasting your portion alloted?
The days and the years--have you ceased their recounting?
And Man, what is he, will you tell me in candor,
What is he to the heaven's eternal existence?

97 But whom shall I ask? What childish thoughts!
To you go my longings, in vain do they swirl--
For years without end all the sages on earth
Have probed you, o stars, have studied and sought you.

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87. Ps. 135:15

גַּם קוֹרְאֵי סִפְרֵי רוֹם, הוֹבְרֵי שָׁמַיִם
לָרִיק אַךְ לָרִיק לָכֶם נָשְׂאוּ מֵצַח—
וּלְאָדָם הֶבֶל לֹא תַטּוּ אָזְנַיִם,
אִלְּמִים חֵרְשִׁים תֵּלְכוּ הֲלִיכוֹת נֶצַח!

גַּם עוֹד אָז בִּימֵי יַלְדוּת הָאָרֶץ
עֵת לִבְנֵי אָדָם הֱיִיתֶם לֵאלֹהִים,
שַׁלִּיטִים עַל כֹּל, עַל חַיִּים וָקֶרֶץ
וַעֲשַׁן בָּמוֹתֵיכֶם עוֹלֶה לִגְבוֹהִים;

גַּם אַחֲרֵי כֵן עֲצַת שַׁדַּי כִּי קָמָה
וַיּוּכַח דַּעַת כִּי אֵין אֵל עִמָּדוֹ—
אַתֶּם הֶחֱרַשְׁתֶּם וּלְשׁוֹנְכֶם נֶאֱלָמָה,
כִּי שָׂם חֲסִין יָהּ עַל פִּיכֶם אֶת יָדוֹ!

101 Those who decipher the heavenly books,
In vain, but for nought do they lift up their brow--
You do not give a hearing to man who is vanity,
Muted and deaf through the course of eternity!

105 In primitive times, Man's childhood on earth,
At a time when the stars were the gods of mankind,
Rulers of all, over life and destruction,
The smoke of your altars would rise to the heights;

109 Later, Almighty God's rule was established
And all would acknowledge that none stands beside Him--
The stars became quiet, their tongues had been silenced,
As God in His grace placed His hand on their lips!

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112. Ps. 89:9

כ) חַג
הָאָבִיב

HOLIDAY OF SPRING

חג האביב

נטו צללי ערב, היום יפוח,
כל רחבי-העיר הצללים בלעו,
ובשפרע היובל שמש ישוח —
אך לקצות עבים עקבותיו נודעו!

וברלין העיר הומיה צולחת,
כי חג לה היום, חג פסח, חג אביב!
וכמדה היא תלבש גילה ונחת,
ובחוצותיה אך צהלה מסביב!

משמים אשב ביתי, אנוש על שברי,
על נחלה מכתי רוחי נעכרת —
הה, בדמי ימי יהיה לבי קברי
ויגון נשמתי בו כאש בוערת!

הה, ודמעות לא עוד עיני תנהרנה,
וכבר נהרי נחלי דמעה נבעו.
לא עוד מקרבי אנחות תסערנה,
וכבר רב אנחות לבי קרעו!

שקט-תהו בי ומנוחת הקברות
כיער אחרי התחולל בו רוח,
כצי אחרי נפץ אל ים הסערות —
אויה, כי כן גם לבי בי ינוח!

The day has grown cool as the dusk shadows lengthen,
The city's expanses are swallowed in shadow,
The sun slowly sinks by the banks of the Spree--
As its footprints embroider the edges of clouds!

Berlin now erupts with tumultuous throngs,
Who celebrate Easter, the feast day of spring!
Cloaked in a garment of joy and elation,
Her streets all abound with the cry of rejoicing!

I sit at home desolate, broken and weak,
Possessing a sickness afflicting my spirit--
The grave stalks my heart in the midst of my days
And the grief of my soul seethes within like a fire!

No longer will teardrops stream forth from my eyes,
For rivers of tears have already flowed out.
Soon sighs will no longer pour out from within,
For already my sighs rent open my heart!

Menacing silence and peace of the grave
Like the calm after storm winds have ravaged the forest,
Like debris of a ship wrecked by turbulent seas--
Now fill up my heart with an uneasy calm!

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1. Cant. 2:17, 4:6; Lebensohn uses the same line to begin his poem "Prayer." 2. Job 38:18 3. Jer. 17:8
9. Job 21:5; Ps. 69:21 11. Isa. 38:10

הִנְנִי חָי, אַךְ עָיְפָה נַפְשִׁי לַמָּוֶת!
חַי אָנִי, אִם נִקְרָא לַמָּוֶת חַיִּים...
אִם עֶלֶם נוֹשֵׂא כָּל עָקַת צַלְמָוֶת
עוֹד חַי יִקָּרֵא תַּחַת הַשָּׁמַיִם!

חַי, הָהּ, עוֹדֶנִּי, כִּי לְגַדִּיל הַשֶּׁבֶר
עוֹד אַהֲבַת הַחַיִּים בָּנוּ תָּנוּחַ.
הוֹי, מַה נּוֹרָא הוּא לָשִׂישׂ אֱלֵי קֶבֶר
עֵת בַּחַיִּים תִּדְבַּק נֶפֶשׁ וָרוּחַ!

אֲרוּרָה אַהֲבַת־הַחַיִּים לָנֶצַח!
בִּמְצוּקוֹת כָּל גֶּבֶר הִיא הַנּוֹרָאָה!
הִיא תִכְלָא יָדַי בְּעָצְמוֹת שִׁית רֶצַח,
וּמַדּוּחֵי תִקְוֹת־שָׁוְא הִיא נִבָּאָה!

*

קוֹל צָהֳלַת עָם שָׁם בַּחוּצוֹת יָרִיעַ,
וּכְבָר אוֹר הַגַּז בָּרְחוֹבוֹת זָרוּחַ.
אֶעֶזְבָה נָּא בֵיתִי, אֵצְאָה אַרְגִּיעַ,
הָהּ, אוּלַי רֶגַע גַּם עָצְבִּי יָנוּחַ!

וּכְבָר עֲלָמוֹת יָפוֹת שָׁם נָהֲרוּ.
הָהּ, אַךְ גִּילַת רַנֵּן עַל כָּל אַפַּיִם!
בֵּין מַרְאוֹת הוֹד אֵלֶּה פָּנַי קָדָרוּ,
כְּעָנָן יִשְׁכּוֹן בֵּין כּוֹכְבֵי שָׁמַיִם!

21 I live, but my soul is fatigued unto death!
I live, if the grave ever passes as life . . .
If a youth bears the weight of the darkness of death
And can still be called living here under the heavens!

25 I live, I still am, but to heighten the pain
The love of this life still resides in us all.
How fearful it is to exult at the grave
While the soul and the spirit still cling unto life!

29 Cursed be love of this lifetime forever!
This, the most grievous of all human straits--
Preventing these hands from destroying myself,
And painting illusions of dreams and vain hopes!

33 The shouts of the people resound in the streets,
The glimmering gaslights appear on the lanes.
Drawn from my house, I seek rest for a moment,
Perhaps now my pain will desist for a time!

37 The lovely young women already rush out.
Each face is aglow in ecstatic delight!
My own face has dimmed amid glorious sights,
Like a cloud which obscures the ethereal stars!

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23. Ps. 55:4

וִיפֵה־פִיּוֹת עֲלָמוֹת עוֹטוֹת שָׁנִים
לַשָּׁוְא עֵינֵיהֶן תְּפַקֵּדְנָה אֲהָבִים.
הָהּ, חָלְפָה חֶמְדַּת יָמַי, עֵת עֲדָנִים,
עֵת לִיפִי־הוֹד נַפְשִׁי שָׁרָה עֲגָבִים!

בְּיפִי עֵינְכֶן לֹא עוֹד אֶחֱזֶה שָׁמַיִם
גַּם קוֹלְכֶן כִּי עָרֵב אָזְנִי לֹא תָבֵן.
הָהּ! לָטֹרַח לִי כָּל נֹעַם הַחַיִּים
כִּי לִבִּי בִּי חָלַל וַיְהִי לָאָבֶן!

גַּם אַהֲבַת חַנָּה יָפָתִי הָאַחַת
מִלֵּב קָרַעְתִּי עַז אַהֲבָה כַּמָּוֶת!
מַה לָּהּ אֶל לִבִּי? שָׁם עָרוּךְ הַשַּׁחַת!
אוֹר־חַיִּים הֲיִשְׁכּוֹן בִּמְקוֹם צַלְמָוֶת?

*

בֵּין מִצְהֲלוֹת הָמוֹן חוֹגֵג שָׂמֵחַ
קוֹדֵר הִלַּכְתִּי וָאָחִישׁ הַפָּעַם.
הוֹי, הֵן מִיגוֹנִי אָנֹכִי בוֹרֵחַ,
מִכֹּבֶד תּוּגָה, מִנֵּטֶל הַזַּעַם!

אֶת רֶכֶב־הַבַּרְזֶל רֶגַע עָבַרְתִּי,
אֶת בֵּית הַזִּמְרָה גַּם הֵיכַל הַמֶּלֶךְ;
עַד קַצְוֵי־בֶּרְלִין נֶהְדַּפְתִּי נִנְעַרְתִּי,
בֵּין רִבְבוֹת־עָם נוֹדֵד אֲנִי וָהֶלֶךְ!

41 The beautiful women attired in bright scarlet--
In vain do their eyes seek to search for their lovers.
Oh gone are the days of my passion, desire,
When my soul sang its love to beauty and splendor!

45 In the charm of your eyes, I no longer see heaven,
My ears can not fathom your sweetness of voice.
The pleasures of life are a burden to me,
My heart has been crushed and is lifeless like stone!

49 The love for my dearest one, Hanna, I tore
From my heart--for the power of love is like death!
What is she to my heart? There my ruin awaits me!
For how can life's radiance dwell in death's shadow?

53 I walk almong joyous and festival throngs,
Distressed and afflicted, I hurry my footsteps.
I run from my grief, I flee from my pain.
From the weight of my anguish, the burden of pain!

57 Soon I have passed by the railroad's main station,
The opera house, and the grand royal palace;
Shaken and pushed to the edge of Berlin,
Till I wander alone through the teeming assembly!

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42. Hos. 8:9 56. Prov. 27:3 59. Neh. 5:3

אַךְ לָרִיק אֶרוּצָה—רֵעָיָה אֲיֻמָּה...
תִּשְׁמוֹר צְעָדַי, הָהּ, אַחֲרַי הִיא הוֹלֶכֶת –
עַד בִּלְעִי רֻקִּי לֹא תֶרֶף הַזְּעוּמָה
וּבְיָד נַעֲרָצָה בִּימִינִי תוֹמֶכֶת!

וּמְגוּרוֹת צַלְמָוֶת אִתָּהּ הֵם בָּאִים –
פָּנֶיהָ הַשְּׁאוֹל, רֵיחָהּ רֵיחַ קֶבֶר...
שֻׁפּוּ עַצְמוֹתֶיהָ—וּכְמוֹ הָרְפָאִים,
וּלְחַיַּי תֹּאמַר: אֵין תִּקְוָה וָשֶׁבֶר!

וּבְאִבֵּי יָמַי בִּי תָּפְתֶּה עֲרָכָה
הִיא חִבְּלָה רוּחִי, לָהּ לִבִּי מוֹרָשָׁה,
וּבְכוֹס עֲלוּמַי, הָהּ, לַעֲנָה מָסָכָה...
מַחֲלָתִי הִיא – הָהּ, מַחֲלָה מִשְּׁאוֹל קָשָׁה!

אַחֲרֶיהָ מָוֶת יִתְהַלֵּךְ כָּרֵעַ,
הוֹי, אַחַר לֶכְתּוֹ, יִצְעַד בַּעֲצַלְתַּיִם.
שַׁוְעִי לֹא יַאֲזִין, קוֹלִי בַּל שׁוֹמֵעַ.
אָרוּר הַמָּוֶת! אֲרוּרִים הַחַיִּים!

61 But in vain do I flee, for my dreadful companion . . .
Watches my footsteps, and follows behind me--
Who not for an instant will cease in his curse
Whose terrible hand always clings to my own!

65 The terrors of Death have accompanied him--
His face is the pit, his odor the grave . . .
His bones lay exposed like ghosts of the dead--
He tells of my life, all my hopes have been dashed!

69 In the spring of my days, a hell burns within me,
Destroying my spirit, my heart's sole possession,
Wormwood is mixed in the cup of my youth . . .
My Malady--ha!--worse than death is my illness!

73 Death, a companion, has followed my sickness,
It steps along lazily, sluggishly trailing,
Ignoring my cries, never hearing my voice,
O cursed be death, and may life, too, be damned!

---

63. Job 7:19, Prov. 22:14   67. Job 33:21   69. Job 8:12
74. Gen. 34:19, Eccles. 10:18

הַיַּיִן

WINE

הַיַּיִן

וְיַיִן יְשַׂמַּח חַיִּים
(קהלת י׳ י״ט)

חֵץ יְעוּפוּן
יְמוֹת חֶלְדֶּךָ,
מַהֵר יְסוּפוּן
שְׁנוֹת חַיֶּיךָ!

כִּי לְכָל רֶגַע
הֲלֹא הִנֵּהוּ
קֶבֶר וָפֶגַע
הַבָּא אַחֲרֵיהוּ!

מָוֶת וְחַיִּים
אַחִים הֵנָּמוֹ –
תַּחַת שָׁמַיִם
שָׁם חֻבְּרוּ לָמוֹ!

חַיִּים וָקֶרֶץ
יָקִיאוּ יִבְלָעוּ,
כָּל יֵשׁ בָּאָרֶץ
יִכַלּוּ יִבָּרְאוּ!

"and wine gladdens life" (Ecclesiastes 10:19)

1 The days of your life
Are arrows in flight,
For your years of existence
Will speedily end!

5 At every moment
Standing before us--
The grave and affliction
Companions of life!

9 Both death and this life
Are brothers in spirit--
Joining together
Here under the sun!

13 Life and extinction
Are vomited, swallowed,
For all things on earth
Are formed and expire!

---

7. I Kings 5:18

וּכְבָר תַּמּוּ לָמוֹ
יָמִים עָבְרוּ,
עֲתִידוֹת אַיָּמוֹ
הוות נִמְהָרוּ!

וּמִי יְשַׂמְּחֵנוּ,
יָפִיץ עַצֶּבֶת?
יַמְתִּיק חַיֵּינוּ,
יַשֶּׁה הַמָּוֶת!

הַיַּיִן, הַיַּיִן!
הוּא גּוֹרֵשׁ עַצֶּבֶת,
וִישַׂמַּח חַיִּין
וִיבַלַּע הַמָּוֶת!

17 My days are complete
Already they end,
O where is the future
The present fades quickly!

21 Who gladdens my spirits,
Disperses my pain?
Who sweetens my life,
That death is forgotten?!

25 Wine! Only wine!
Will chase out the anguish,
And brighten my life
That death is consumed!

---

19. Deut. 32:35 20. The translation expresses the double implication of "הווה," meaning "ruin" (cf. Isa. 47:11, Ezek. 7:26) and "הווה," meaning "present." 23. Job 20:12

דָּלִיָה
נִדַּחַת

THE TOSSED TWIG

דָּלִיָּה נִדַּחַת

הַיָּם יֶהוֹם בְּשָׁאוֹן וָרַעַשׁ
עַל פְּנֵי מֵימָיו דָּלִיָּה נוֹסַעַת –
«אֲהָהּ, דָּלִיָּה!
אָן אַתְּ עֲנִיָּה,
אָנָה תִּסְּעִי?
בְּסַעַר וְשׁוֹאָה
כִּי תֵלְכִי תוֹעָה
הֲבַל תִּירָאִי?
נָא הֵעָצְרִי
אַל נָא תִבְרָחִי!
נָא הִשָּׁמְרִי
לְבִלִּי תִדָּחִי»!

*

«עֲלֵי עֵץ רַעֲנָן
יָשַׁבְתִּי שַׁאֲנָן,
וּפֶתַע נִדַּפְתִּי
בְּלֹא עֵת נִקְטַפְתִּי.
אִם מִמְּקוֹם הוּלַדְתִּי

אֲהָהּ נָדַדְתִּי
לָמָּה לִּי חַיִּים?
לָכֵן יִשָּׂאוּנִי
לָכֵן יֶהְדָּפוּנִי
בַּחֲמָתָם הַמַּיִם»!

The turbulent waters explode in a din
On the face of the deep is a twig tossed about--
"Alas, poor twig!
O twig, so afflicted,
Where do you stray?
In storm and in tempest
You wander and roam
Do you not fear?
Be still for a moment,
Do not drift away!
Watch out for yourself
Lest outcast you be!"

"I once dwelled in peace
On a fluorishing sapling,
Plucked in my youth
And cast out abruptly.
If wander I must
From the place of my birth
Then why should I live?
Let furious waters
Then carry me off
Yea, cast me about!"

---

4. Isa. 51:11   7. Neh. 4:2

על
החלירע
בעיר
ברלין

CHOLERA IN THE CITY OF BERLIN

שֵׁנָה יְשֵׁנָה שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ
וַיֵּט אַחֲרֶיהָ אָחִיהָ הַמָּוֶת.
חוּלִי וָגֹחִי, בֶּרְלִין, כִּי בָא קֶרֶץ
וּבְצַעַד אוֹנוֹ בָּךְ יִצְעַד צַלְמָוֶת!

כִּי בָא חֳלִי־רָע מִתְהַלֵּךְ אוֹרֵחַ
מִשְּׂעַר רֹאשׁוֹ יָטִיל קֶטֶב וָדֶבֶר;
עֵת רוּחַ אַפּוֹ כַּמַּגָּל שׁוֹלֵחַ
גֶּבֶר חַי־אוּלָם חִישׁ יוּטַל לַקָּבֶר!

וַאֲנִי דוֹמֵם אֵלְכָה בֵּית מֵתֵי־דֶבֶר
שָׁם בֵּין הַמֵּתִים גַּם חוֹלִים נִזְעָקוּ —
מִתְעַתְּדִים לָמוּת וּצְפוּיִם אֶל קֶבֶר
וּבְגָרוֹן נִחָר מִכְּאֵב מַר נֶאֱנָקוּ!

הוֹי, אָיוֹם מַרְאָם כִּשְׂעִירֵי הַלָּיִל!
וּתְכֵלֶת נוֹרָאָה לְחָיָם כִּסָּתָה;
יֵאָבְקוּ אֶת מוֹתָם בִּדְמִי אֵין חָיִל —
בַּדֵּיהֶם יָזוּעוּ, עֵינָם כָּהָתָה!

זֶה עֶלֶם עָנוֹג יִשּׁוֹם יִשְׁאַף רוּחַ,
נַאֲקוֹת חָלָל יֶאֱנֹק מִלֵּב וָקֶרֶב;
וּכְבָר קָפָא דָּמוֹ בוֹ—וַיָּנוּחַ
וּבֵין מַפְּלֵי מִצְחוֹ לַדֶּבֶר אֶרֶב!

1 Slumber engulfs the heaven and earth
Followed by Death, its companion and brother,
Tremble and labor, Berlin, over ruin,
With powerful step, Death's shadow walks with you!

5 The cholera comes like an unwelcomed guest,
The hair on its head casts down sickness and plague;
The breath of its nostrils shoots forth like a sickle,
As powerful men soon are cast in the grave!

9 I silently walk through the hospital's dead
And there among corpses, the sick also call--
All destined to die, as they look toward the grave,
With parched throats they cry out in bitter distress!

13 Their appearance is dreadful, like nightmarish demons!
A sickly blue color now covers their cheeks;
In silence they feebly do battle with death--
Appendages trembling, their eyes have grown dim!

17 A delicate youth lies gasping for air,
The whole of his being cries out with his death;
His blood has congealed in his veins--he lies still
As the plague lies in waiting in putrified flesh.

---

3. Mic. 4:10   4. Prov. 44:12   6. Isa. 28:2   8. Ps. 73:4
16. Job 18:13   20. Job 41:15, Job 38:40

מַה תִּירָא עֶלֶם! וּמַה כֹּה תֶּהִימָה?
לָמָּה זֶה שֵׁנָה כָּל חַי אִוּוּ יַחַד,
וּשְׁנַת הַמָּוֶת אֲרוּכָּה וּנְעִימָה
מִבְּלִי בַלְהוֹת־חֲלוֹם—מַה תִּפְחַד פָּחַד?

הַעוֹד הַתִּקְוָה תַט לִבְּךָ לִבְטוֹחַ?
תִּקְוָה פֶּסֶל־תֹּהוּ, סֵמֶל־צַלְמָוֶת...
וּבְגֵוָהּ אֵין דָּם, בַּעֲצָמֶיהָ מֹחַ —
אַחַת הִיא הַתִּקְוָה וְהִיא הַמָּוֶת!..

מוּת נָא גֹוֵעַ! מוּתָה נָא וּמוּתָה!
מִשְׁכָּבְךָ בַקֶּבֶר הֲלֹא אַךְ נַחַת —
עַל אֵלֶּה הַחַיִּים אֲנִי אָחוּסָה
פֶּן עוֹד יִחְיוּ עוֹד יִדְווּ עֲדֵי שָׁחַת!

לִשְׁאוֹל אִם גַּם תֵּלֵךְ אוֹ אֶל שָׁמַיִם,
לַתֹּהוּ אִם תָּשׁוּב וּלְאָבְדַן־נֶצַח —
אַשְׁרֶיךָ! אָבְדַן וּשְׁאוֹל טוֹב מֵחַיִּים!
טוֹבוּ מֵאֶרֶץ, מִמְּעָרַת הָרֶצַח!

לֹא בִנְאוֹת־קֶבֶר תַּחְתִּיּוֹת אֲדָמָה
אַחַר נִקְּרָה עַיִן נִקַּף עוֹרֶךָ —
לֹא שָׁם עָרוּךְ תָּפְתֶּה וּשְׁאוֹל לֹא שָׁמָּה!
אַךְ פֹּה אֶרֶץ הֵם, פֹּה תִּרְאֵם עֵינֶךָ!

21 What do you fear? And why do you stir?
For all living beings together crave sleep,
And the slumber of death is eternal and sweet
Without nightmarish horrors--so why be afraid?

25 Is Hope still enticing your heart to security?
Hope, a vain idol, a sign of Death's darkness?
No blood in your body, your bones drained of marrow--
Just one hope remains now, and that hope is Death!

29 O plagued ones, please die! May you die, pray expire!
Your bed in the grave will provide you with peace--
I pity those people remaining alive,
For they will yet live, feeling pain till the grave!

33 No matter if heaven or earth you attain,
Returning to chaos, eternal extinction--
Rejoice! For your passing is better than life!
And preferred to this world, to this murderous den!

37 Not in the underground meadow of graves
When your eyes are bored out and your skin has decayed--
Hell is not found there or even the pit!
But here on this earth will you surely behold them!

---

34. Esther 9:5 38. I Sam. 11:2, Job 19:26

הַיַּלְדוּת

YOUTH

גַּן אֱלֹהִים עֵת הַיַּלְדוּת הִנֶּהָ
מוֹעֲדִים כֻּלָּה אַף חַגִּים יָמֶיהָ,
בַּגַּן הַזֶּה מַלְאֲכֵי־שָׁלוֹם יָטוּשׁוּ
וּלְרַגְלָם פִּרְחֵי חֵן וָהוֹד יָפוּשׁוּ,
גִּילָה וָתֹם צָהֳלָה אַף נִקְיוֹן רוּחַ
הֵם הַפְּרָחִים לַיֶּלֶד בָּם יָשׂוּחַ.—
שָׁמָּה בַיְּעָרִים צִפֳּרִים אַךְ שָׁרִים,
שָׁם דִּמְמַת עֵדֶן אַל שְׁאוֹן מֵעָרִים!
שָׁם בַּשָּׁמַיִם הַתְּכֵלֶת לָטֹהַר,
הָאָרֶץ אַךְ הוֹד אַךְ חֶמֶד וָזֹהַר!
שָׁם דּוֹם כָּל נְהִי נֶאֱלָמָה הַזְּעָקָה
שָׁם לֹא עָדָה אֵבֶל דָּרְכָה הַנְּאָקָה—
בַּגַּן הַזֶּה אֶזְכְּרָה אַף אֶהֱמָיָה
גִּילַת עֲדָנִים שֶׁאָפְתִּי לִרְוָיָה!

The time of one's youth is a garden of God,
Daily a holiday, festivals always,
The angels of peace dart about in the garden
While delicate flowers spring up at their feet.
Rejoicing and innocence; fresh happy spirits--
These are the blossoms of thought in a child.
There in the forest, the birds sweetly sing
In the quiet of Eden, no din of the city!
Above arc the heavens, a crystal blue color,
Delightful is earth--how enchanting and radiant!
Grief has been silenced, lamenting lies muted,
No mourning will visit, or anguish will tread--
In this garden of God I recall, and I yearn
For the pleasant delights I had sought in abundance!
. . .

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8. Jer. 15:8

THE MOTIF OF DEATH AND DYING

IN THE POETRY OF MICAH JOSEPH LEBENSOHN

THE POET

Micah Joseph Lebensohn (1828-1852), Modern Hebrew literature's first lyrical poet, expresses in his verse the highest aspirations of the human spirit and the agony of death in one's youth. In this respect, much of his poetry reflects the turmoil of his own spirit. At the age of seventeen, Lebensohn was severely stricken with tuberculosis. Cycles of deterioration and remission marked the next seven years until his death at the age of twenty-four.

Born in Vilna in 1828, Micah Lebensohn ("Mikhal") received an education steeped in the values of the Haskalah (Enlightenment) movement. Micah's father, Abraham Dov Lebensohn (Adam Hakohen), was a well-known leader in the budding intellectual enlightenment of the period, and was himself an outstanding Hebrew poet. Adam Hakohen provided his son with a rich and rigorous linguistic and literary education. In addition to his Hebrew education and intensive study of Bible, Mikhal was privately tutored in French and German literature. He quickly became recognized throughout the Vilna literary world when, at nineteen, he translated much of Virgil's Aeneid from Schiller's German version.

The Romantic movement greatly influenced the poetry of Micah Lebensohn. The sweet softness and youthful freshness of his lyrical poetry, portraying personal conflicts and

emotional turmoil, distinguishes his style from the earlier rational and more rhetorical Haskalah literary tradition. Much of his poetry concerns the theme of early death and death before fulfillment. Lebensohn's poetry expresses not only his own frustration and emotional discord, but gives voice to the universal vision of unfulfilled dreams and unattained hopes.

Micah Joseph Lebensohn's poetic style brought life, motion, and a soul to a fledgling body of Modern Hebrew literature. Although Lebensohn did not live to see his own dreams fully realized, his vision of an enlightened and flourishing community of Hebrew writers and poets was fulfilled by successive generations of Jews who further aspired to transform a dead language into a living literature.

PSYCHOLOGY OF DEATH AND DYING

Contemporary literature concerning the psychology of terminal illness and death allows us to see more clearly the connections between Mikhal's poetry and his personal anguish. We will briefly consider appropriate themes and insights from this psychological literature.

In On Dying and Denying, Avery Weisman points out that traditional religion of the Middle Ages provides security, faith, and knowledge in the face of death. The critical doubt essential to our secular Modern Age, however,

fosters confusion and uncertainty.[1] Modern man must seek his own answer to the ultimate question of the meaning of life and death. Weisman's description accurately applies to the cultural milieu surrounding Mikhal. As part of the budding Jewish Enlightenment, Micah Lebensohn found himself at the intellectual crossroads of religion and secularism, and faith and critical doubt. He could not accept religious tradition uncritically, but rather sought his own answers to the mysteries of death and life.

Weisman comments that man inevitably confronts an ultimate paradox of human existence. On the one hand, he is a conscious being capable of rational and creative thought, and assumes omnipotently that he will endure forever. On the other hand, man realizes his insignificance and mortality in the face of an infinite, eternal cosmos.[2]

The most powerful fears of a dying person were reported by N.H. Cassem. He describes a survey conducted among terminally ill cancer patients which revealed that the highest ranking fears were: "being left alone to die" and "being disfigured."[3] Cassem concludes that circumstances

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[1] Avery D. Weisman, On Dying and Denying, New York, Behavioral Publications, Inc., 1972, p. 2.

[2] Ibid. p. 4.

[3] N.H. Cassem, "Care of the Dying Person" in Earl A. Grollman, ed. Concerning Death: A Practical Guide for the Living, Boston Beacon Press, 1974, p. 28.

surrounding one's death are more terrifying than death itself.

Elisabeth Kubler-Ross[4] outlines five stages of development of the terminally ill. The first stage is "Shock and Denial," in which the existential reality of death is pushed out of mind. In the second stage, "Anger," one rages against the injustice of his death and may even express envy and bitterness toward those still living. The third phase of terminal illness is labeled "Bargaining." The dying person now looks for comfort and assurances that his life and death are meaningful. Kubler-Ross calls the fourth stage "Depression." It is marked by despair, sadness, and mourning for one's self and for the loss of loved ones. In the last phase, "Acceptance," the individual accepts the verdict of death with a "quiet expectation."

N.H. Cassem[5] notes that different stages can coexist within a person at the same time. The poetry of Mikhal most often expresses feelings described in the middle three stages--"Anger," "Bargaining," and "Depression."

DEATH BEFORE SELF-FULFILMENT

Lebensohn's epic poem "Moses on Mount Avarim" eloquently represents its author's concern with the theme

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[4]Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, On Death and Dying, New York, Macmillan Company, 1969.

[5]Cassem, p. 19.

of death before fulfillment. The poet depicts the prophet's last painful moments as he faces the land of Canaan--the final goal of his life's labor. In the shadow of his impending death, Moses realizes that he will never set foot upon the Land. He mournfully reflects on the burdens of leadership and on his struggle to liberate a band of slaves from Egyptian bondage and lead a disciplined nation into the Promised Land. His life represents mighty achievements, but his final goal is unrealized. Ultimately, with the setting of the sun, Moses' "soul is bound up, but his eye sheds a tear."[6]

DEATH AND THE PASSAGE OF TIME

In "Kohelet," Mikhal informs the reader that awareness of death has aged the king beyond his years:

> Plenteous days have not caused his gray hairs,
> For his days have not reached the full lifetime of man!
> Others as old still maintain all their vigor,
> For still they are fresh, and they radiate splendor.[7]

Lebensohn yearns for the days of his youth and for all that "youth" represents to him, especially peace of mind.[8] The youthfulness of Solomon is portrayed as blissful innocence and the antithesis of death:

> Death--he considers a pleasant repose,

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[6]"Moses on Mount Avarim," line 86.

[7]"Koheleth," lines 45-48.

[8]Ibid., lines 161-164.

> The grave--he regards as a still tranquil bed;
> His world is an Eden, no pit of death's darkness--
> Not yet do the screams of destruction arouse him.[9]

Youth is associated with a garden of God[10] where, like Eden, death does not visit, where "no mourning or anguish will visit or tread."[11] Mikhal notes in his interpretation of Solomon that youthful love, representing eternity, is blind to the finitude of death:

> In the vigor of passion he ponders no sadness;
> When man falls in love, he knows nothing but joy--
> How sorrow has ended, how death has been swallowed
> For him and his loved one, a fluorishing pair![12]
>
> 'Forever'--this word was first uttered by Love;
> All lovers, all men--can never believe
> Their beloved will die, that her youth will decay,
> That she no more will rise from the withering grave.[13]

The faith of youth is pictured as drawing one closer to God and protecting one from thoughts of death.[14]

In his poem "To the Stars," Mikhal portrays Time as the high priest of Death, the false god of earth. Time brings the sacrifices to the altar of Death.[15] The effect of time on mortal man is apparent to Koheleth, whose hair has turned gray and whose eyes have become dim.[16] Time,

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[9] "Solomon," lines 53-56; see also lines 34-36, 41-44.

[10] Ibid., lines 129-130.

[11] "Youth," lines 11-12.

[12] "Solomon," lines 209-212.

[13] Ibid., lines 185-188.

[14] "Solomon," lines 57-58, 137-140.

[15] "To the Stars," line 70 [16] "Koheleth," lines 25-28

to Koheleth, is seen as a relentless pursuer who never shows mercy to its prey:

> Unceasing in time, unending is chance!
> What happened before will happen again,
> The bent and the crooked can never be straight.[17]

ULTIMATE UNDERSTANDING

The quest for the meaning of life in the face of death occurs in both "Koheleth" and "To the Stars." Koheleth searches far and wide for ultimate answers. He seeks the answers in nature's smallest features and in its grandest facets. He inquires of sages, from wisdom of ancient Egypt, and even sorcerers.[18] But no one could provide him with answers in his quest. The theme of "To the Stars" concerns the author's desire to learn what is beyond death. He asks the stars about the secret of immortality and life after death. Although the stars seem eternal themselves, Mikhal questions the finity of the cosmos:

> Please tell me if death can ascend to the stars?!
> Does the Great Bear expire with all of its children?
> . . .
> Is life everlasting your portion alloted?[19]

If the stars are eternal, surely they possess the key to unlock the secret of creation and immortality.[20] He soon

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[17]Ibid., lines 290-293, see also lines 25-28.

[18]Ibid., lines 315-332.

[19]"To the Stars," lines 89-90, 93.

[20]Ibid., lines 87-88, 95-96.

realizes, however, that man cannot learn the secret of creation from the stars; only God Himself possesses the answers. He then reviles against the stars:

> You do not give a hearing to man who is vanity,
> Muted and deaf through the course of eternity!
> . . .
> The stars became quiet, their tongues had been silenced,
> As God in His grace placed His hand on their lips![21]

FAITH AND REASON

When Lebensohn asks for ultimate answers, he asks for "Wisdom." "Wisdom" to the young poet represents the critical thought of the Age of Enlightenment. The members of his intellectual circle had cast off the constraints of blind religious faith and looked also to the secular world for answers. But the answers were not forthcoming. In a nascent Jewish Age of Reason, Lebensohn's quest for Wisdom had brought enlightenment but also anguish:

> The man who adds knowledge increases his pain,
> The wisest of men is most wretched among them--
> The greater my wisdom, the more is my anguish.[22]

According to Mikhal, Wisdom destroys faith and promotes doubt, causing one to realize how little he knows. His pain comes from the realization that ultimate answers to the dilemma of death can never be found, leaving one with doubt and insecurity. Wisdom has undermined traditional

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[21] Ibid., lines 103-104, 111-112.

[22] "Koheleth," lines 342-344.

religious faith as a source of secure answers.[23]

The poem "Koheleth" describes King Solomon's search for wisdom. All his energy and thought is directed toward finding ultimate meaning in life and discovering that which is not vanity but immortal. But his pain is great because Wisdom has only brought him Doubt. Mikhal describes Doubt as a wild beast whose mouth is always open like the grave. It crushes man's heart by exposing that which is vanity and by destroying his faith.[24] Koheleth equates Wisdom with Death. The light of Wisdom, he maintains, "reveals but the pit."[25] Wisdom is reviled more than death and destroys Hope and Faith:

> Hope, also Faith do you drive from the heart,
> All visions and dreams, no matter how great;
> And what do you give when all is cast out?
> Just bitterest truth and the cruelest of doubts.[26]

The critical reality of Wisdom ravages even Love. Whenever Koheleth would yearn for his beloved, Wisdom would whisper in his ear that she is nothing more than sinew and skin.[27] By questioning the immortality of the soul, Doubt destroys Love and Hope.[28] Wisdom turns joy to sadness, spring to winter, and "youthful rejoicing from

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[23]Ibid., lines 333-336. [24]Ibid., lines 169-180.

[25]Ibid., line 100.

[26]Ibid., lines 105-108; see also lines 93-96.

[27]Ibid., lines 129-132. [28]Ibid., lines 185-188

then turns to wailing."[29]

Wisdom and Death drive humankind out of the Garden of Eden. The insecurity of critical Wisdom becomes the antithesis of youthful innocence, of blind faith and Eden.[30] Lebensohn, through Koheleth, cautions his readers against eagerness for enlightenment, which will open the eyes but also bring pain.[31] Lebensohn's Koheleth, like the Biblical figure, decides to seek material pleasures and passions hoping that they "will silence disquieting voices of doubt."[32] But to no avail, as:

> He briefly saw gladness, tranquility, joy--
> When suddenly Wisdom came stalking behind them.
> His palace of joy became Sheol, the grave,
> His delight has been saddened, his pleasure is ravaged.[33]

Micah Lebensohn's view of Wisdom was not one-sided. He understood both sides of the tension between secular reason and traditional faith. The poem "Koheleth" originally ended with Solomon's pessimistic expression of secular doubt. He concludes, "Alas! All is vanity, striving for wind!"[34] The poet's correspondence and his notes[35] suggest

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[29]Ibid., lines 91-92; see also lines 285-288.

[30]Ibid., line 101. [31]Ibid., lines 349-350.

[32]Ibid., line 304. [33]Ibid., lines 305-308.

[34]Ibid., line 359.

[35]Jacob Fichman, Mikhah Yosef Lebenzon--Shirim, Tel Aviv, Dvir, 1942, p. 93. Joseph Klausner, Hahistoriyah Shel Hasifrut Ha'ivrit Hahadashah, Jerusalem, Hebrew University, 1930, Volume III, pp. 264f., 279.

that he then added eight stanzas to end on a more traditional note of faith. After the dying Solomon closes his eyes, he sees a vision of God which confirms that life has ultimate meaning and in which Wisdom herself reveals traditional religious truths. Wisdom is portrayed as carried in the bosom of God.[36] "Doubt has been hurled beneath Wisdom's feet,"[37] for "wisdom is bound up with light of the truth."[38]

Throughout his poetry, Mikhal expresses the tension between the Wisdom of traditional faith which triumphs over Death and Doubt, and the Wisdom of critical reason, which brings Doubt, Pain, and Death. Neither position alone seems to represent the poet's own views. It is rather the tension between them that best expresses the yearnings and questionings of Micah Lebensohn.

Just as his views on Wisdom represent polar opposites, so do his conceptions of Faith. Traditional Faith, if strong and viable, overpowers Doubt and Death. The "traditionalist" ending of Kohelet expresses this view:

> All of you hear now the end of the matter!
> Fear God, he cried out, and keep his commandments,
> This is man's essence!--his life then expired.[39]

On the other hand, Wisdom and Doubt may shatter faith. Although Nathan the prophet advises Solomon that faith in God's teachings is the proper path of life, Solomon's maintains persistent doubts. He wonders if man's

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[36]"Koheleth," line 364. [37]Ibid., line 369.

[38]Ibid., line 365. [39]Ibid., lines 390-392.

disposition to do good or evil comes not from faith but from the composition of his blood or his humors.[40] This questioning of faith leads him to pursue material pleasures and passions.

Another question troubling Solomon concerns immortality of the soul. Some of Lebensohn's verse suggests the affirmative view--that man does gain eternal existence. Koheleth is reassured in the vision of God as he lay dying:

> The future holds hope for life everlasting,[41]
> . . .
> The soul will exult over death and destruction,
> The spirit returns to the God who bestowed it.[42]

On her death bed, Shulamith reassures her beloved Solomon that "My soul ascends pathways of life everlasting."[43] But even after this assurance, Solomon doubts the spirit's immortality: "He bitterly cried out, 'Alas! O who knows/ If the spirit of man will ascend to the heavens?'"[44] He continues to ponder if both man and beast have the same spirit which dies here on earth with the body.

Another facet of Solomon's concern with life's meaning is expressed in his preoccupation with ultimate justice. He wonders if the earth's righteous ones accrue Divine reward. This poetic theme may indicate that Lebensohn sees himself as a pious man undeserving of his early death. His concern for ultimate justice may be part

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[40]Ibid., lines 222-228. [41]Ibid., line 381.

[42]Ibid., lines 386-387. [43]Ibid., lines 203-204.

[44]Ibid., lines 207-208.

of his quest to find meaning in his own demise. Again, he writes from the perspective of both doubt and traditional faith. On the side of doubt, Solomon is skeptical of ultimate justice, for

> He bitterly cries, 'Alas! O who knows?
> Are knowledge and reckoning found there in Sheol?
> Will anyone heed the forsaken one's cry?[45]

Further, Righteousness is portrayed as being broken and destroyed by Doubt; Solomon wonders if righteousness is rewarded in the world to come.[46] He questions why the wicked fluorish and the righteous suffer.

In his death-dream, on the other hand, the Hebrew king sees Justice at God's side raising the righteous of earth from the dust and oppression. He concludes that "the Almighty provides for the righteous on high."[47]

MAN--TRANSCENDING OR SUCCUMBING TO DEATH

In the poem "Koheleth," Solomon realizes how small and insignificant mortal man is when he discovers that he has no knowledge of ultimate answers. He realizes the extent of his own ignorance and impotence in the face of death.[48] Mikhal presents death as the most potent force in the cosmos, more powerful than love, life, or hope. He conveys this view of death through similes in which death represents

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[45]Ibid., lines 282-284. [46]Ibid., lines 257-272.

[47]Ibid., line 382. [48]Ibid., lines 345-348.

ultimate power.[49]

Death is seen as total darkness overpowering the light of day and light of life. This motif of death's darkness finds expression in "Moses on Mount Avarim." Moses' eyesight dims as the sun sets, blanketing the world with darkness. Mikhal writes, "The world's light has darkened, what matters the sunlight!?[50] The next morning, the sun ascends, but "darkness is shrouded upon it in heaven."[51]

Despite Lebensohn's verses that recognize the power of Death over man, other verses express confidence of man's ultimate immortality. The grandeur and eternity of nature cause man to see himself as transcending death in the apparently eternal cosmos. In "Solomon," the young prince saw the stars and "His eyes poured out tears of excitement and joy,/ This lad, so adorned, then scorned at the grave."[52] In "Prayer," the poet recognizes that man has a soul and mind to commune with God.[53] Man is the crown of creation who trusts in the Lord, and he alone in nature gains everlasting life after death, for "from the bosom of death he is born unto life!"[54]

Micah Lebensohn chose Moses to symbolize and express

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[49]E.g. Ibid., line 311, "Solomon," line 230.

[50]"Moses on Mount Avarim," line 84.

[51]Ibid., line 90. [52]"Solomon," lines 91-92.

[53]"Prayer," lines 21-24, 37-40. [54]Ibid., line 72.

extreme loneliness. The figure of Moses lends itself to such a description--alone he lead the people of Israel, constantly facing the wrath of their rebellions. And alone he died in a forgotten location. What better figure for Lebensohn to convey his own feelings of oppressive loneliness than Moses? The young poet describes the prophet as he reaches Mt. Avarim: "Why does the man stand alone, like a cypress?"[55] In reviewing Moses' life, Lebensohn writes: "Alone he remained from the thousands of myriads,"[56]/"He then was a man left as lonesome as Noah."[57] The reference to Noah heightens the powerful image of the solitary man fighting against forces which besiege him. Noah was besieged by ravaging flood, Moses by a stiff-necked people and Micah Lebensohn by a deathly disease.

FEAR OF DISFIGUREMENT

In his vivid and horrifying descriptions of the dead, Mikhal reveals his fear of disfigurement in the grave itself. In "Cholera in the City of Berlin," Lebensohn describes the sick: "Their appearance is dreadful, like nightmarish demons!/A sickly blue color now covers their cheeks."[58] The poet parallels a scene in Shakespeare's "Hamlet" as he describes Koheleth beholding the skull of

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[55]"Moses on Mount Avarim," line 2. [56]Ibid., line 73.

[57]Ibid., line 61.

[58]"Cholera in the City of Berlin," lines 13-14.

Ethan Ezrachi:

> Alas! How his head is a frightening image![59]
> . . .
> O how could this skull in which psalms sweetly dwelled,
> Become an abode for the maggot and worm?![60]

Lebensohn's most powerful description of the dead occurs in "Yehuda Halevi." Halevi sees a vision of Jewish martyrs rising from the grave. For them, death has meant decay:

> Their faces decaying, infested with maggots,
> Their bones have been crushed and their eyeballs have rotted,
> Their eye sockets covered and crawling with worms.[61]

TREACHEROUS MURDER

Micah Lebensohn's epic poem "Jael and Sisera" reveals the poet's unorthodox feelings about murder. Deborah is portrayed as an admirable heroine who slaughters her people's foe with violence and might. "Yea, Deborah's name shall endure like the sun," writes Mikhal. Yet his poem is built around and originally ended[62] with Jael's feelings of guilt for having murdered an enemy chieftan in her tent. Lebensohn's different approach to the two murderesses indicates his special sensitivity. He lauds Deborah, the military heroine, for battlefield murder, yet

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[59]"Koheleth," line 244. [60]Ibid., lines 250-251.

[61]"Yehuda Halevi," lines 118-120.

[62]Fichman, p. 92; Klausner, p. 264f.

indicts Jael for treacherously murdering the enemy captain. The difference is clear. Deborah engages in a straightforward battle unto death. The risks and outcome are clear--either life and victory, or death and defeat. Jael, on the other hand, murders Sisera with guile and treachery. Sisera comes to her seeking refuge, which she grants. Immediately, she is "besieged by a horrible thought,"[63] namely, the murder of this guest under her protection. But this thought stirs her conscience and she trembles and totters in guilt and fear:

> I reel at the thought of the treacherous deed.
> Shall I draw out my sword upon him sleeping safely--
> A refugee, wearied, who slumbers in peace,
> Unknowing his murderess lies there in waiting?[64]

Jael's guilt for her treachery becomes so great that she calls on Murder itself to overpower her hesitation.[65] Sisera sees Jael as a saving angel,[66] but she is ironically transformed when Sisera wakes to see her deliver the fatal blows and cries, "Jael, my angel--an angel of death!"[67] Jael's deed is compared to Cain's first sin of fratricide: "The blood had been streaming, it dripped from her hands--/ And it marked on her forehead the symbol of murder."[68]

Originally, Lebensohn ended the poem with Jael "Unable to speak, distraught and disturbed/By the murderous

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[63]"Jael and Sisera," line 51. [64]Ibid., lines 83-86. [65]Ibid., lines 121, 124-126. [66]Ibid., lines 149-151. [67]Ibid., line 179. [68]Ibid., lines 184-185.

deed she performed without pity."[69] The poet later added some verses, at the insistence of his father and a friend,[70] in order to absolve Jael of some of the guilt. Why did Mikhal paint Jael as aghast of the treacherous murder she committed? How could he empathize so strongly with Sisera's betrayal and death? Perhaps the poet identified with Sisera because he too was betrayed and cut down by a treacherous killer--his sickness.

THE TURMOIL OF TERMINALITY

Lebensohn expresses bitterness at the injustice of being afflicted while still in his youthful prime in his "Holiday of Spring":

> In the spring of my days, a hell burns within me,
> Destroying my spirit, my heart's sole possession,
> Wormwood is mixed in the cup of my youth.[71]

Mikhal draws the image of personified Death lurking behind him and behind all who are soon doomed to die. His own sickly condition, which tenaciously clings to him, sapping his strength, is viewed as Death's accomplice and Lebensohn's accursed companion.[72] In "Cholera in the City of Berlin,"

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[69]Ibid., lines 195-196.

[70]Fichman, p. 92f.

[71]"Holiday of Spring," lines 69-71.

[72]Ibid., lines 61-65.

the figure of Death lurks behind the entire afflicted city.[73]

Throughout "Holiday of Spring," Mikhal expresses anger at those still living as he contrasts the city's festive atmosphere of gaiety and cheer with the anguish of his own affliction:

> Berlin now erupts with tumultuous throngs,
> I sit at home desolate, broken and weak,
> Possessing a sickness afflicting my spirit--[74]

Lebensohn's bitter view of the living is carried over to life itself; Mikhal "despises the fullness of earth/Where man is born destined for toil and death!"[75] Hell, to Micah Lebensohn, is not found in the grave, but rather is beheld here on earth in the pain and suffering of the living.[76]

Although the young poet uses the motif of spring to symbolize life's beauty and radiance;[77] he also twists its meaning in his melancholy. Spring is transformed from a symbol of life to a powerful reminder of inevitable, pressing death. Mikhal writes, "Is not beauty--decay, but a flowering death."[78] When he sees the beauty of life and the world, he bitterly thinks:

> The most beautiful, therefore, will wither, decay,
> . . .

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[73]Ibid., line 34. [74]Ibid., lines 9-12.

[75]"To the Stars," lines 51-52.

[76]"Cholera in the City of Berlin," lines 31,32,37-41.

[77]"Prayer," lines 15,16,73; "Solomon," lines 9-10.

[78]"Koheleth," line 144.

Their beauty departs, and they turn into corpses.[79]
. . .
Perhaps life within us is constant decay.[80]

Mikhal views the world as "created in God's heated wrath,"[81] cast away by the Lord "in the fury of anger."[82] To Micah Lebensohn, life means death's pain and affliction. Life, to the poet, is haunted by Death. The poem "Wine" expresses its author's fury at the anguish of life"

At every moment
Standing before us--
The grave and affliction
Companions of life!

Both death and this life
Are brothers in spirit--
Joining together
Here under the sun![83]

Mikhal rages against death as well as life. He writes, "O cursed be death, and may life, too, be damned!"[84]

At times, Mikhal's poetry reveals an acceptance and even a welcoming of death's peace. He writes, " . . . the slumber of death is eternal and sweet/Without nightmarish horrors--so why be afraid?"[85] For Koheleth, death is a welcome repose: "he knew of no rest till he rests in the grave."[86] The young poet reassures those who have contracted

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[79]Ibid., lines 153,156. [80]Ibid., line 256.

[81]"To the Stars," line 61. [82]Ibid., line 62.

[83]"Wine," lines 5-12. [84]"Holiday of Spring," line 76.

[85]"Cholera in the City of Berlin," lines 21-24.

[86]"Koheleth," line 357.

cholera in the city of Berlin that "your bed in the grave will provide you with peace--."[87] Lebensohn's attitude, however, reveals more than just a quiet resignation and acceptance of death. It shows that the poet welcomed death as a relief for the pain and sickness of life. He welcomed death inasmuch as it seemed a more pleasant alternative than life. He comments, "Rejoice! For your passing is better than life!"[88] The burden of living drove him to accept and embrace dying.

DEATH AND SELF-FULFILLMENT

Is any fulfillment in death possible? Micah Joseph Lebensohn writes of three cases in which death is not total vanity, or totally meaningless. The first is altruistic death, or risking one's life for a higher cause. The figures of Deborah ("Jael and Sisera") and Moses ("Moses on Mount Avarim") illustrate a willingness to die for the Jewish people. Lebensohn writes that Moses' life was "suspended in doubt"[89] and Deborah's "life [was] in the balance."[90] Both risked their lives to preserve, build, or defend the Hebrew people.

The second case in which meaning is preserved in

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[87]"Cholera in the City of Berlin," line 30.

[88]Ibid., line 35. [89]"Moses on Mount Avarim," line 57.

[90]"Jael and Sisera," line 23.

death involves immortality of the soul. In "Koheleth," Lebensohn expresses through his hero that ultimate justice prevails, that immortality of the soul will overcome physical withering in the grave.

The third case in which fulfillment in death is possible also involves immortality. One who leaves behind personal creations of literature is assured of a degree of immortality. His works will continue after his death. Yehuda Halevi exemplifies a poet of Zion who died an early death yet whose poetry lives on forever. Lebensohn writes that Halevi is remembered through the poetic liturgy of Tisha B'Av.[91]

Micah Lebensohn surely was convinced that his own poetry would give meaning to his shortened life. A brief time before his death, the poet's father asked him where his manuscripts were. The younger Lebensohn pointed to the place and said, "They will not waste away."[92]

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[91]"Yehuda Halevi," lines 151-154.

[92]Kol Shire ʾAdam Umikhal, Vilna, 1895, Vol. II, p. 208.

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