**Bialik the National Poet**

**With Rachel Korazim**

**Texts**

* **To the Bird**
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To The Bird H.N.Bialik

שָׁלוֹם רָב שׁוּבֵךְ, צִפֹּרָה נֶחְמֶדֶת,

מֵאַרְצוֹת הַחֹם אֶל-חַלּוֹנִי -

אֶל קוֹלֵךְ כִּי עָרֵב מַה-נַּפְשִׁי כָלָתָה

בַּחֹרֶף בְּעָזְבֵךְ מְעוֹנִי.

זַמְּרִי, סַפֵּרִי, צִפּוֹרִי הַיְקָרָה,

מֵאֶרֶץ מֶרְחַקִּים נִפְלָאוֹת,

הֲגַם שָׁם בָּאָרֶץ הַחַמָּה, הַיָּפָה,

תִּרְבֶּינָה הָרָעוֹת, הַתְּלָאוֹת?

הֲתִשְׂאִי לִי שָׁלוֹם מֵאַחַי בְּצִיּוֹן,

מֵאַחַי הָרְחוֹקִים הַקְּרוֹבִים?

הוֹי מְאֻשָּׁרִים!  הֲיֵדְעוּ יָדֹעַ

כִּי אֶסְבֹּל, הוֹי אֶסְבֹּל מַכְאוֹבִים?

הֲיֵדְעוּ יָדֹעַ מָה רַבּוּ פֹה שֹטְנַי,

מָה רַבִּים, הוֹי רַבִּים לִי קָמִים?

זַמְּרִי, צִפּוֹרִי, נִפְלָאוֹת מֵאֶרֶץ,

הָאָבִיב בָּהּ יִנְוֶה עוֹלָמִים.

הֲתִשְׂאִי לִי שָלוֹם מִזִּמְרַת הָאָרֶץ,

מֵעֵמֶק, מִגַּיְא, מֵרֹאשׁ הָרִים?

הֲרִחַם, הֲנִחַם אֱלוֹהַּ אֶת-צִיּוֹן,

אִם עוֹדָהּ עֲזוּבָה לִקְבָרִים?

וְעֵמֶק הַשָּׁרוֹן וְגִבְעַת הַלְּבוֹנָה -

הֲיִתְּנוּ אֶת-מֹרָם, אֶת-נִרְדָּם?

הַהֵקִיץ מִשְּׁנָתוֹ הַשָּׂב בַּיְּעָרִים,

הַלְבָנוֹן הַיָּשֵׁן, הַנִּרְדָּם?

Greetings on your return, lovely bird,
to my window from warmer climes—
how my soul longed to hear your voice,
in the winter when you left my dwelling.

Sing to me, tell me, dear bird
from far-off wondrous places,
there in that warm and beautiful land,
do evil events and calamities happen too?

Do you bring greetings from my fellows in Zion,
from my brothers near and far?
O happy ones! Surely they must know
that I suffer, oh, how I suffer in pain.

Do they know how great are my enemies here,
how many rise up against me?
Sing to me, my bird, of the wonders of that land
where springtime ever dwells.

Do you bring me greetings from the land’s abundance,
from vale and from mountain top?
Does God have mercy on Zion,
though she is yet left with her graves?

And the Sharon Valley and the hills of myrrh—
do they give their spikenard and spice?
Does the ancient forest, the old Lebanon,
awake from its slumber?

Does the dew fall like pearls upon Mount Hermon,
or does it descend like tears?
And how fares the Jordan and its bright waters?
And each mountain and hill?

הֲיֵרֵד כִּפְנִינִים הַטַּל עַל הַר חֶרְמוֹן,

אִם יֵרֵד וְיִפֹּל כִּדְמָעוֹת?

וּמַה-שְּׁלוֹם הַיַּרְדֵּן וּמֵימָיו הַבְּהִירִים?

וּשְׁלוֹם כָּל-הֶהָרִים, הַגְּבָעוֹת?

הֲסָר מֵעֲלֵיהֶם הֶעָנָן הַכָּבֵד,

הַפֹּרֵשׂ עֲלָטָה, צַלְמָוֶת? -

זַמְּרִי, צִפּוֹרִי, עַל-אֶרֶץ בָּה מָצְאוּ

אֲבוֹתַי הַחַיִּים, הַמָּוֶת!

הַאִם-עוֹד לֹא-נָבְלוּ הַפְּרָחִים שָׁתַלְתִּי

כַּאֲשֶׁר נָבַלְתִּי אָנֹכִי?

אֶזְכְּרָה יָמִּים כְּמוֹהֶם פָּרַחְתִּי,

אַךְ עַתָּה זָקַנְתִּי, סָר כֹּחִי.

סַפְּרִי, צִפּוֹרִי, סוֹד שִׂיחַ כָּל-שִׂיחַ,

וּמַה-לָּךְ טַרְפֵּיהֶם לָחָשׁוּ?

הֲבִשְּׂרוּ נִחוּמִים אִם-קִווּ לְיָמִים,

פִּרְיָמוֹ כַּלְּבָנוֹן יִרְעָשׁוּ?

וְאַחַי הָעֹבְדִים, הַזֹּרְעִים בְּדִמְעָה -

הֲקָצְרוּ בְרִנָּה הָעֹמֶר? -

מִי יִתֶּן-לִי אֵבֶר וְעַפְתִּי אֶל-אֶרֶץ

בָּה יָנֵץ הַשָּׁקֵד, הַתֹּמֶר!

וַאֲנִי מָה אֲסַפֵּר לָךְ, צִפּוֹר נֶחְמָדָה,

מִפִּי מַה-תְּקַוִּי לִשְׁמֹעַ?

מִכְּנַף אֶרֶץ קָרָה לֹא-זְמִירוֹת תִּשְׁמָעִי,

רַק קִינִים, רַק הֶגֶה וָנֹהַּ.

Has the heavy cloud withdrawn from them,
that had spread pitch black darkness –
o sing to me, my bird, of the land in which
my fathers found life and death!

Are the flowers I planted yet unwithered,
while I myself am withered?
They remind me of the days in which I bloomed,
but now I am grown old, my strength has gone.

Tell me, my bird, what each tree and shrub whisper,
what do their leaves murmur to you?
Do they tell tidings of comfort for which they wait so long,
as their foliage rustles like the forests of Lebanon?

And my brothers the workers, who sowed in tears—
do they harvest their sheaves in joy?
Who will give me wings that I may fly to the land
in which the almond and date-palm bloom?

And what can I tell you, lovely bird,
what do you hope to hear from me?
From this cold and distant land you will not hear songs,
only lamentations, only weeping and wailing.

Shall I tell of the hardships which are already
well known in the lands of the living –
o who can number the troubles past
and present and yet to come?

הַאֲסַפֵּר הַתְּלָאוֹת, שֶׁכְּבָר הֵן בְּאַרְצוֹת

הַחַיִּים נִשְׁמָעוֹת, מוּדָעוֹת? -

הוֹי, מִסְפָּר מִי יִמְנֶה לַצָּרוֹת הָעֹבְרוֹת,

לְצָרוֹת מִתְרַגְּשׁוֹת וּבָאוֹת?

נוּדִי, צִפּוֹרִי, אֶל-הָרֵךְ, מִדְבָּרֵךְ!

אֻשַּׁרְתְּ, כִּי עָזַבְתְּ אֶת-אָהֳלִי;

לוּ עִמִּי שָׁכַנְתְּ, אָז גַּם-אַתְּ, כְּנַף רְנָנִים,

בָּכִית, מַר בָּכִית לְגוֹרָלִי.

אַךְ לֹא בְכִי וּדְמָעוֹת לִי גֵהָה יֵיטִיבוּ,

לֹא אֵלֶּה יְרַפְּאוּ מַכָּתִי;

כְּבָר עֵינַי עָשֵׁשׁוּ, מִלֵּאתִי נֹאד דְּמָעוֹת,

כְּבָר הֻכְּתָה כָּעֵשֶׂב לִבָּתִי;

כְּבָר כָּלוּ הַדְּמָעוֹת, כְּבָר כָּלוּ הַקִּצִּים -

וְלֹא הֵקִיץ הַקֵּץ עַל-יְגוֹנִי,

שָׁלוֹם רָב שׁוּבֵךְ, צִפּוֹרִי הַיְקָרָה,

צַהֲלִי-נָא קוֹלֵךְ וָרֹנִּי!

ניסן תרנ"א

Migrate, my bird, to your mountain, your desert!
Be happy that you have left my house;
if you dwelt with me, then you too, winged creature,
would weep bitterly over my fate.

Yet weeping and tears are not the best remedy,
they will not heal my affliction;
my eyes have already darkened, I have filled a

water-skin with tears,
my heart has already dried like grass;

The tears have already reached their end—
yet there is no end to my grief.
Greetings on your return, my dear bird,
let your song give me some happiness!

ALONE

לבדי

כֻּלָּם נָשָׂא הָרוּחַ, כֻּלָּם סָחַף הָאוֹר,

שִׁירָה חֲדָשָׁה אֶת-בֹּקֶר חַיֵּיהֶם הִרְנִינָה;

וַאֲנִי, גּוֹזָל רַךְ, נִשְׁתַּכַּחְתִּי מִלֵּב

תַּחַת כַּנְפֵי הַשְּׁכִינָה.

בָּדָד, בָּדָד נִשְׁאַרְתִּי, וְהַשְּׁכִינָה אַף-הִיא

כְּנַף יְמִינָהּ הַשְּׁבוּרָה עַל-רֹאשִׁי הִרְעִידָה.

יָדַע לִבִּי אֶת-לִבָּה: חָרֹד חָרְדָה עָלַי,

עַל-בְּנָהּ, עַל-יְחִידָהּ.

כְּבָר נִתְגָּרְשָׁה מִכָּל-הַזָּוִיּוֹת, רַק-עוֹד

פִּנַּת סֵתֶר שׁוֹמֵמָה וּקְטַנָּה נִשְׁאָרָה –

בֵּית-הַמִּדְרָשׁ – וַתִּתְכַּס בַּצֵּל, וָאֱהִי

עִמָּהּ יַחַד בַּצָּרָה.

וּכְשֶׁכָּלָה לְבָבִי לַחַלּוֹן, לָאוֹר,

וּכְשֶׁצַּר-לִי הַמָּקוֹם מִתַּחַת לִכְנָפָהּ –

כָּבְשָׁה רֹאשָׁהּ בִּכְתֵפִי, וְדִמְעָתָהּ עַל-דַּף

גְּמָרָתִי נָטָפָה.

חֶרֶשׁ בָּכְתָה עָלַי וַתִּתְרַפֵּק עָלָי,

וּכְמוֹ שָׂכָה בִּכְנָפָהּ הַשְּׁבוּרָה בַּעֲדִי:

"כֻּלָּם נָשָׂא הָרוּחַ, כֻּלָּם פָּרְחוּ לָהֶם,

וָאִוָּתֵר לְבַדִּי, לְבַדִּי…"

Wind blew, light drew them all.
New songs revive their mornings.
Only I, small bird, am forsaken
under the Shekhina’s wing.

Alone.  I remain alone.
The Shekhina’s broken wing
trembled over my head.  My heart knew hers:
her fear for her only son.

Driven from every ridge –
one desolate corner left –
in the House of Study she hides in shadow,
and I alone share her pain.

Imprisoned beneath her wing
my heart longed for the light.
She buried her face on my shoulder
and a tear fell on my page.

Dumbly she clung and wept.
Her broken wing sheltered me:
“scattered to the four winds of heaven;
they are gone, and I am alone”.

It was an ancient lament
a suppliant cry I heard
in that lost and silent weeping,
and in that scalding tear.

**On The Slaughter**

By Chaim Nachman Bialik

Translated by A.Z. Foreman

Mercy O Heavens, beg mercy for me!

If a god be in you, with a way in you,

A way that I never knew

Pray unto him for me!

My own heart is dead, prayer drained from my tongue.

The hands lie limp, and hope undone.

How long? Until when? How long?

Executioner! Here is a neck to hew

With your mighty axe. Put me down like a dog.

All the world's my chopping block.

And we're just Jews, just a few.

My blood is fair game. From the skull you sever

Bursts the blood of old men, the blood of children.

Murder's blood be on you forever.

If Justice there be, let it now shine forth!

But if it wait till I'm killed from under the sky

To shine, let Justice die

And its throne be thrown to the earth

And heaven rot with eternal wrong.

Ye wicked, go forth in this your brute force,

And live in your blood, a cleansed throng.

And cursed be he that shall say: avenge this!

Such vengeance for blood of babe and maiden

Hath yet to be wrought by Satan.

Let blood just pierce the abyss

And pierce the abysmal black of creation

And there in the dark devour and corrode

The low Earth's rotting foundation!

על השחיטה

חיים נחמן ביאליק

שָׁמַיִם, בַּקְּשׁוּ רַחֲמִים עָלָי!

אִם-יֵשׁ בָּכֶם אֵל וְלָאֵל בָּכֶם נָתִיב –

וַ אֲ נִ י לֹא מְצָאתִיו –

הִתְפַּלְּלוּ אַתֶּם עָלָי!

אֲ נִ י – לִבִּי מֵת וְאֵין עוֹד תְּפִלָּה בִּשְׂפָתָי,

וּכְבָר אָזְלַת יָד אַף-אֵין תִּקְוָה עוֹד –

עַד-מָתַי, עַד-אָנָה, עַד-מָתָי?

הַתַּלְיָן! הֵא צַוָּאר – קוּם שְׁחָט!

עָרְפֵנִי כַּכֶּלֶב, לְךָ זְרֹעַ עִם-קַרְדֹּם,

וְכָל-הָאָרֶץ לִי גַרְדֹּם –

וַאֲנַחְנוּ – אֲנַחְנוּ הַמְעָט!

דָּמִי מֻתָּר – הַךְ קָדְקֹד, וִיזַנֵּק דַּם רֶצַח,

דַּם יוֹנֵק וָשָׂב עַל-כֻּתָּנְתְּךָ –

וְלֹא יִמַּח לָנֶצַח, לָנֶצַח.

וְאִם יֶשׁ-צֶדֶק – יוֹפַע מִיָּד!

אַךְ אִם-אַחֲרֵי הִשָּׁמְדִי מִתַּחַת רָקִיעַ

הַצֶּדֶק יוֹפִיעַ –

יְמֻגַּר-נָא כִסְאוֹ לָעַד!

וּבְרֶשַׁע עוֹלָמִים שָׁמַיִם יִמָּקּוּ;

אַף-אַתֶּם לְכוּ, זֵדִים, בַּחֲמַסְכֶם זֶה

וּבְדִמְכֶם חֲיוּ וְהִנָּקוּ.

וְאָרוּר הָאוֹמֵר: נְקֹם!

נְקָמָה כָזֹאת, נִקְמַת דַּם יֶלֶד קָטָן

עוֹד לֹא-בָרָא הַשָּׂטָן –

וְיִקֹּב הַדָּם אֶת-הַתְּהוֹם!

יִקֹּב הַדָּם עַד תְּהֹמוֹת מַחֲשַׁכִּים,

וְאָכַל בַּחֹשֶׁךְ וְחָתַר שָׁם

כָּל-מוֹסְדוֹת הָאָרֶץ הַנְּמַקִּים.

**The City of Slaughter (excerpt)**

<http://www.resources.en.wzo.org.il/home/P102.jsp?arc=201946>

Arise and go now to the city of slaughter;
Into its courtyard wind thy way;
There with thine own hand touch, and with the eyes of thine head,
Behold on tree, on stone, on fence, on mural clay,
The spattered blood and dried brains of the dead.
Proceed thence to the ruins, the split walls reach,
Where wider grows the hollow, and greater grows the breach;
Pass over the shattered hearth, attain the broken wall
Those burnt and barren brick, whose charred stones reveal
The open mouths of such wounds, that no mending
Shall ever mend, nor healing ever heal.
There will thy feet in feathers sink, and stumble
On wreckage doubly wrecked, scroll heaped on manuscript.
Fragments again fragmented

Descend then, to the cellars of the town,
There where the virginal daughters of thy folk were fouled,
Where seven heathen flung a woman down,
The daughter in the presence of her mother,
The mother in the presence of her daughter,
Before slaughter, during slaughter, and after slaughter!
Touch with thy hand the cushion stained; touch
The pillow incarnadined:
This is the place the wild ones of the wood, the beasts of the field
With bloody axes in their paws compelled thy daughters yield:
Beasted and swined!
Note also, do not fail to note,
In that dark corner, and behind that cask
Crouched husbands, bridegrooms, brothers, peering from the cracks,
Watching the sacred bodies struggling underneath
The bestial breath,
Stifled in filth, and swallowing their blood!
Watching from the darkness and its mesh
The lecherous rabble portioning for booty
Their kindred and their flesh!
Crushed in their shame, they saw it all;
They did not stir nor move;
They did not pluck their eyes out; they
Beat not their brains against the wall!
Perhaps, perhaps each watcher had it in his heart to pray:
A miracle, O Lord ¡ª and spare my skin this day!

Come, now, and I will bring thee to their lairs
The privies, jakes and pigpens where the heirs
Of Hasmoneans lay, with trembling knees,
Concealed and cowering -the sons of the Maccabees!
The seed of saints, the scions of the lions!
Who, crammed by scores in all the sanctuaries of their shame
So sanctified My name!
It was the flight of mice they fled,
The scurrying of roaches was their flight;
They died like dogs, and they were dead!
And on the next morn, after the terrible night
The son who was not murdered found
The spurned cadaver of his father on the ground.
Now wherefore dost thou weep, O son of Man?

And thou, too, pity them not, nor touch their wound;
Within their cup no further measure pour.
Wherever thou wilt touch, a bruise is found,
Their flesh is wholly sore.
For since they have met pain with resignation
And have made peace with shame,
What shall avail thy consolation?
They are too wretched to evoke thy scorn.
They are too lost thy pity to evoke.
So let them go, then, men to sorrow born,
Mournful and slinking, crushed beneath their yoke.
So to their homes, and to their hearth depart
Rot in the bones, corruption in the heart.
And go upon the highway,
Thou shalt then meet these men destroyed by sorrow,
Sighing and groaning, at the doors of the wealthy
Proclaiming their sores, like so much peddler's wares,
The one his battered head, t'other limbs unhealthy,
One shows a wounded arm, and one a fracture bares.
And all have eyes that are the eyes of slaves,
Slaves flogged before their masters;
And each one begs, and each one craves:
Reward me, Master, for that my skull is broken.
Reward me for my father who was martyred!

And so their sympathy implore.
For you are now as you have been of yore
As you stretched your hand
So will you stretch it,
And as you have been wretched

So are you wretched!
What is thy business here, o son of man?
Rise, to the desert flee!
The cup of affliction thither bear with thee!
Take thou their soul, render it in many a shred!
With impotent rage, thy heart deform!
Thy tear upon the barren boulders shed
And send they bitter cry into the storm.

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"חוגו את חגי אבותכם והוסיפו עליהם קצת משלכם לפי כחכם ולפי טעמכם ולפי מסיבתכם. העיקר שתעשו את הכול באמונה ומתוך הרגשה חיה וצורך נפשי, ואל תתחכמו הרבה."

חיים נחמן ביאליק,

באיגרת תשובה לדוד אומנסקי, גניגר, 28 במרץ 1930

הַחַמָּה מֵרֹאשׁ הָאִילָנוֹת נִסְתַּלְּקָה -
בּוֹאוּ וְנֵצֵא לִקְרַאת שַׁבָּת הַמַּלְכָּה.
הִנֵּה הִיא יוֹרֶדֶת הַקְּדוֹשָׁה, הַבְּרוּכָה
וְעִמָּהּ מַלְאָכִים צְבָא שָׁלוֹם וּמְנוּחָה.
בּוֹאִי בּוֹאִי הַמַּלְכָּה!
בּוֹאִי בּוֹאִי הַמַּלְכָּה! -
שָׁלוֹם עֲלֵיכֶם, מַלְאֲכֵי הַשָּׁלוֹם.

קִבַּלְנוּ פְּנֵי שַׁבָּת בִּרְנָנָה וּתְפִלָּה,
הַבַּיְתָה נָשׁוּבָה, בְּלֵב מָלֵא גִּילָה.
שָׁם עָרוּךְ הַשֻּׁלְחָן, הַנֵּרוֹת יָאִירוּ,
כָּל פִּנּוֹת הַבַּיִת יִזְרָחוּ, יַזְהִירוּ.
שַׁבָּת שָׁלוֹם וּמְבֹרָךְ!
שַׁבָּת שָׁלוֹם וּמְבֹרָךְ!
בּוֹאֲכֶם לְשָׁלוֹם, מַלְאֲכֵי הַשָּׁלוֹם.

שְׁבִי, זַכָּה, עִמָּנוּ וּבְזִיוֵךְ נָא אוֹרִי
לַיְלָה וָיוֹם, אַחַר תַּעֲבֹרִי.
וַאֲנַחְנוּ נְכַבְּדֵךְ בְּבִגְדֵי חֲמוּדוֹת,
בִּזְמִירוֹת וּתְפִלּוֹת וּבְשָׁלוֹשׁ סְעוּדוֹת.
וּבִמְנוּחָה שְׁלֵמָה,
וּבִמְנוּחָה נַעֵמָה -
בָּרְכוּנוּ לְשָׁלוֹם, מַלְאֲכֵי הַשָּׁלוֹם!

הַחַמָּה מֵרֹאשׁ הָאִילָנוֹת נִסְתַּלְּקָה –
בֹּאוּ וּנְלַוֶּה אֶת שַׁבָּת הַמַּלְכָּה.
צֵאתֵךְ לְשָׁלוֹם, הַקְּדוֹשָׁה, הַזַּכָּה –
דְּעִי, שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים אֶל שׁוּבֵךְ נְחַכֶּה...
כֵּן לַשַּׁבָּת הַבָּאָה!
כֵּן לַשַּׁבָּת הַבָּאָה!
צֵאתְכֶם לְשָׁלוֹם, מַלְאֲכֵי הַשָּׁלוֹם!

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**Shabbat the Queen**

The sun has already disappeared beyond the treetops,
Come let us go and welcome the Sabbath Queen,
She is already descending among us, holy and blessed,
And with her are angels, a host of peace and rest,
Come, O Queen,
Come, O Queen,
Peace be unto you, O Angels of Peace.'

We have welcomed the Shabbat with song and prayer,
Let us return home our hearts full of joy.
There, the table is set, the lights are lit,
Every corner of the house is shining with a divine spark.
A good and blessed Shabbat.
A good and blessed Shabbat.
Come in peace, O Angels of Peace.

Sit among us, O pure Shabbat Queen, and enlighten us with your splendor.
Tonight and tomorrow–then you may pass on.
And we for our part will honor you by wearing beautiful clothing,
By singing zemirot, by praying, and by eating three meals.
And with complete rest.
And with pleasant rest.
Bless me with peace, O Angels of Peace.

The sun has already disappeared beyond the treetops.
Come let us accompany the Sabbath Queen’s departure.
Go in peace, holy and blessed.
Know that for six day we will await your return.
Yes, till next Shabbat.
Yes, till next Shabbat.
Go in peace, O Angels of Peace.

