

Bialik the National Poet

With Rachel Korazim

Texts

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

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.

שְׁלוֹם רַב שׁוֹבֶיךָ, צִפְרָה נְחֻמָּדָת,
מְאַרְצוֹת הַחֹם אֶל-חִלּוֹנִי -
אֶל קוֹלְךָ כִּי עָרַב מֵה-נִפְשִׁי כְּלָתָה
בְּחֶרֶף בְּעֵזְבְךָ מֵעוֹנִי.

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?

זְמַרִי, סִפְרִי, צְפוּרֵי הַיְקָרָה,
מְאַרְץ מְרַחֲקִים נִפְלְאוֹת,
הַגֹּם שָׁם בְּאַרְץ הַחֻמָּה, הַיְזָפָה,
תִּרְבִּינָה הָרְעוֹת, הַתְּלָאוֹת?

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.

הַתְּשֻׁאֵי לִי שְׁלוֹם מֵאַחֵי בְּצִיּוֹן,
מֵאַחֵי הָרְחוֹקִים הַקְּרוֹבִים?
הוּי מְאַשְׁרִים! הִיִּדְעוּ יָדַע
כִּי אֶסְבֵּל, הוּי אֶסְבֵּל מִכְּאוֹבִים?

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.

הִיִּדְעוּ יָדַע מָה רַבּוּ פֹה שְׂטָנַי,
מָה רַבִּים, הוּי רַבִּים לִי קָמִים?
זְמַרִי, צְפוּרִי, נִפְלְאוֹת מְאַרְץ,
הָאֲבִיב בָּהּ יְנוּה עוֹלָמִים.

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?

הַתְּשֻׁאֵי לִי שְׁלוֹם מִזְמַרְת הָאָרֶץ,
מֵעֵמֶק, מִגְּיָא, מֵרֹאשׁ הָרִים?
הַרְחַם, הַנְּחַם אֵלּוּה אֶת-צִיּוֹן,
אִם עוֹדָה עֲזוּבָה לְקַבְּרִים?

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?

וְעֵמֶק הַשָּׁרוֹן וְגִבְעַת הַלְּבוֹנָה -
הִיִּתְנוּ אֶת-מֶרֶם, אֶת-נֶרְדִּים?
הַהִקִּיץ מִשְׁנֵתוֹ הַשָּׁב בַּיַּעֲרִים,
הַלְּבָנוֹ הִישׁוּ, הַנֶּרְדִּים?

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?

Has the heavy cloud withdrawn from them,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.

הַיַּרְדֵּן כַּפְּנִינִים הַטֵּל עַל הַר הֶרְמוֹן,
אִם יֵרֵד וְיִפֹּל כַּדְּמָעוֹת?
וּמַה-שְּׁלוֹם הַיַּרְדֵּן וּיְמִימָיו הַבְּהִירִים?
וּשְׁלוֹם כָּל-הַהָרִים, הַגְּבְעוֹת?

הַסָּר מְעַלִּיהֶם הָעָנָן הַכָּבֵד,
הַפָּרֶשׁ עֲלֻטָּה, צְלָמוֹת? -
זְמַרִי, צְפוּרִי, עַל-אֲרֶץ בְּהַ מְצֵאוֹ
אֲבוֹתַי הַחַיִּים, הַמְּוֹת!

הָאִם-עוֹד לֹא-נִבְלוּ הַפְּרָחִים שֶׁתִּלְתִּי
כַּאֲשֶׁר נִבְלַתִּי אֲנֹכִי?
אֲזַכְּרָה יָמַיִם כְּמוֹהֶם פְּרֻחַתִּי,
אֲדַע עֲתָה זְקֻנָּתִי, סָר כְּחִי.

סִפְרִי, צְפוּרִי, סוֹד שִׁיחַ כָּל-שִׁיחַ,
וּמַה-לָּךְ טְרַפְיָהֶם לְחֹשׁוֹ?
הַבְּשָׂרוֹ נַחוּמִים אִם-קוֹו לְיָמַיִם,
פְּרִימוֹ כִּלְבָּנוֹן יִרְעֶשׂוּ?

וְאֲחֵי הָעֹבְדִים, הַזֹּרְעִים בְּדָמָעָה -
הַקְּצָרוּ בְּרִנָּה הַעֲמָר? -
מִי יִתֶּן-לִי אֲבָר וְעַפְתִּי אֶל-אֲרֶץ
בְּהַ יִגַּץ הַשֶּׁקֶד, הַתְּמָר!

וְאֲנִי מַה אֶסְפֵּר לָךְ, צְפוּר נַחְמָדָה,
מִפִּי מַה-תִּתְקוֹי לְשִׁמְעָ?
מִכֶּנֶף אֲרֶץ קָרָה לֹא-זְמִירוֹת תִּשְׁמָעֵי,
רַק קִינִים, רַק הִגָּה וְנִה.

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?

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!

הַאֲסַפֵּר הַתְּלֹאֹת, שֶׁכְּבָר הֵן בְּאַרְצוֹת
הַחַיִּים נִשְׁמָעוֹת, מוֹדְעוֹת? -
הוּא, מִסֵּפֵר מִי יִמְנֶה לְצָרוֹת הָעֹבְרוֹת,
לְצָרוֹת מִתְרַגְּשׁוֹת וּבָאוֹת?

נוֹדִי, צְפוּרִי, אֶל-הַרְדִּי, מִדְּבַרְךָ!
אַשְׂרִיתִי, כִּי עֲזַבְתָּ אֶת-אֶהְלִי;
לוֹ עָמִי שְׂכַנְתָּ, אֲזוּ גַם-אַתָּה, כְּנֹף
רְנַנִּים,
בְּכִיתָ, מֵר בְּכִיתָ לְגוּרְלִי.

אֵךְ לֹא בְכִי וּדְמָעוֹת לִי גֵהָה יִיטִיבוּ,
לֹא אֵלֶּה יִרְפְּאוּ מִכְּתִי;
כְּבָר עֵינַי עָשָׂשׁוּ, מִלְּאֵתִי נֹאד דְּמָעוֹת,
כְּבָר הִכְתָּה כְּעֵשֶׂב לְבַתִּי;

כְּבָר כָּלוּ הַדְּמָעוֹת, כְּבָר כָּלוּ הַקְּצִים -
וְלֹא הַקִּיץ הַקָּץ עַל-יְגוֹנִי,
שְׁלוֹם רַב שׁוּבְךָ, צְפוּרִי הִיקְרָה,
צִהְלִי-נָא קוֹלְךָ וְרַנִּי!
נִיסָן תִּרְנִיא

ALONE

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.

לבדי

כלם נשא הרוח, כלם סחף האור,
שירה חדשה את-בקר חיייהם הרנינה;
ואני, גוזל רף, נשתפחתי מלב
תחת כנפי השכינה.

בדד, בדד נשאיתי, והשכינה אף-היא
כנף ימינה השבורה על-ראשי הרעידה.
ידע לבי את-לבה: חרד חרדה עלי,
על-בנה, על-יחידה.

כבר נתגרשה מכל-הזויות, רק-עוד
פנת סתר שוממה וקטנה נשארה-
בית-המדרש – ותתכס בצל, ואהי
עמה יחד בצרה.

וכשקלה לכבי לחלון, לאור,
וכשצר-לי המקום מתחת לכנפה-
כבשה ראשה בכתפי, ודמעתה על-דף
גמרתי נטפה.

חרש בכתה עלי ותתרפק עלי,
וכמו שכה בכנפה השבורה בעדי:
"כלם נשא הרוח, כלם פרחו להם,
ואותר לבדי, לבדי"...

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

שמים, בקש רחמים עלי!
אם-יש בכם אל ולאל בכם נתיב-
ו א נ י לא מצאתיו-
התפללו אתם עלי!
א נ י - לבי מת ואין עוד תפלה בשפתי,
ויכר אולת יד אף-אין תקנה עוד-
עד-מתי, עד-אנה, עד-מתי?

התלן! הא צנאר - קום שחט!
ערפני כפלב, לה זרע עם-קרדם,
וכל-הארץ לי גרדם-
ואנחנו - אנחנו המעט!
דמי מטר - הך קדקד, ויזנק דם רצח,
דם יונק ושב על-בתנתך-
ולא? מח לנצח, לנצח.

ואם יש-צדק - יופע מיד!
אף אם-אחרי השמדי מתחת רקיע
הצדק יופיע-
מגר-נא כסאו לעד!
וברשע עולמים שמים ומקו;
אף-אתם לכו, ודים, בתמסכם זה
ובדמכם חיו והנקו.

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

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.

"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,

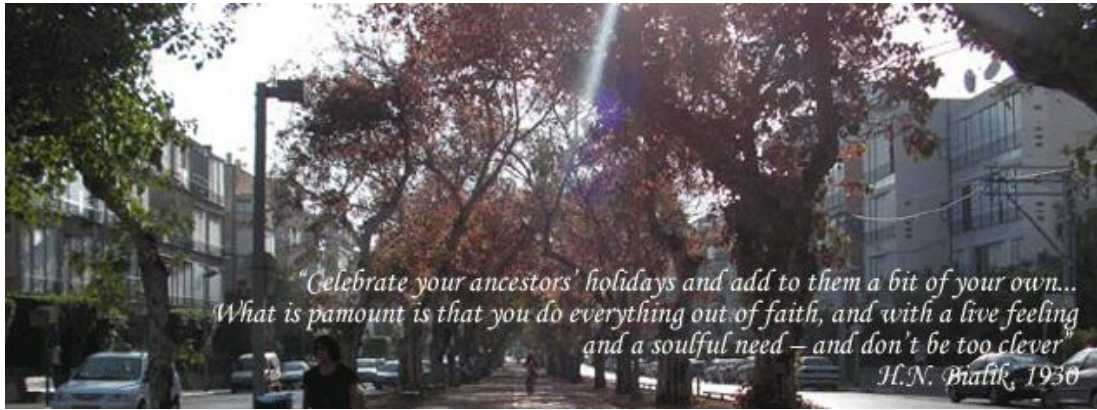
באיגרת תשובה לדוד אומנסקי, גניגר, 28 במרץ 1930

החמה מראש האילנות נסתלקה-
בואו ונצא לקראת שבת המלכה.
הנה היא יורדת הקדושה, הברוכה
ועמה מלאכים צבא שלום ומנוחה.
בואי בואי המלכה!
בואי בואי המלכה-!
שלום עליכם, מלאכי השלום.

קבלנו פני שבת ברננה ותפלה,
הביתה נשוכה, בלב מלא גילה.
שם ערוף השלחן, הנרות זאירו,
כל פנות הבית יזרחו, יזהירו.
שבת שלום ומברך!
שבת שלום ומברך!
בואכם לשלום, מלאכי השלום.

שבי, זכה, עמנו ובזיוף נא אורי
לילה ניום, אחר תעברי.
נאנקנו נכבדך ברגדי חמודות,
בזמירות ותפלות ובשלוש סעודות.
ובמנוחה שלמה,
ובמנוחה נעמה-
ברכנו לשלום, מלאכי השלום!

החמה מראש האילנות נסתלקה-
באו ונלנה את שבת המלכה.
צאמך לשלום, הקדושה, הזכה-
דעי, ששת ימים אל שובך נחכה...
כן לשבת הבאה!
כן לשבת הבאה!
צאתכם לשלום, מלאכי השלום!



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.

Unter di grininke beymelekh

[Under the little green trees]

H.N. Bialik – Leo Kopf

[See lecture: [Tree of Life](#)]

Unter di grininke beymelekh
shpilm zikh Moyshlekh, Shloymelekh,
Tsites, kapotkelekh, shtreymelekh,
Yidelekh, frish fun di eyelekh.

Gufimlekh shtroy, roykh un federlekh,
Khotsh nem un tsebloz zey oyf gliderlekh,
Khapn zey oyf gringe vintelekh
un es tsetrogn zikh feygelekh.

Nor eyn zakh farmogn zey - eygelekh,
Di eygelekh farmogn tsvey pintelekh,
Vos glien un finklen un tukn zikh
un epes vi neviish un vunderlekh.

Fartrakhtn zikh tif un farkukn zikh
oyf nekhtige teg un oyf feygelekh,
Oy, mir zol zayn, yidishe kinderlekh,
far ayere koshere eygelekh!

Under the little green trees
Little Moyshe's and Shloyme's play,
Fringed garments, coats and earlocks -
just like newly-hatched Jews.

Bodies like straw, smoke and feathers,
They can be blown away,
Little breezes catch them
And little birds disperse them.

One thing they have is little eyes,
The eyes have two little pupils
which glow and shine
prophetically and wonderfully.

Pensively they contemplate
the past and look at the birds,
O Jewish children, what would I give
for your pure little eyes!