

"DAY IS SAME AS NIGHT"

Yiddish music and Labor Songs
from the early 1900s

TRANSLATIONS*

Zhamele Lyrics A. Litwin (Sh. Hurwitz)

Du vest zayn g'vir mayn Zhamele
Flegt mir zinger bay mayn vigele
Ale nacht amol, mayn mamele,
Ich gedenk noch haynt ir nigele.

You'll be rich one day, my Zhamele,
That's what mother used to sing to me.
Every night at my cradle-le,
Still I hear her sad old melody.

Un meku'im iz geovrn mir
Di havtoches fun mayn mamele.
Shver tsu kirgn aza grosyn g'vir,
Aza'n oysher vi ir Zhamele!

Now my mother's dreams have come to pass.
All has come a reality.
Hard to find a richer one than me,
Than her son, Zhamele!

Shlofn, shlof ich oyf a kerbele,
Mach hamoytse oyf a Skorinke,
Un lechayim oyf a sherbele
Fu mit brunim vaser klorinke.

Sleep, I sleep on a bed of straw.
Make my prayers on a crust of bread,
Drink to life on a broken cup,
Sip fresh water from a water well.

Un di kinderlech un s'avybele,
Geyen oysgeputst antikele!
Durch in onitses dos laybele
Un fargartlt mit a shtrikele!

And my children and my darling wife.
They go dressed up in the latest style!
Wearing shirts of rags and tatters
Wrapped in belt of hempen rope!

Ikh un di Velt (The World and I). Abraham Reisen

Az di gantse velt volt laydn
mir aleyv volt gut zayn bloyz,
volt ikh dan di velt di gantse,
ayngeladn in mayn hoiz.

If the whole world were in sorrow
and I alone could feel no pain.
I'd invite the whole wide world,
to my house to heal again.

Ikh volt treystn zi un tserlen,
un gezogt: "nit zorg zikh velt!"
biz zi volt tsu zikh gekumen,
un zikh oyf di fis geshtelt.

I'd offer comfort and affection,
I'd say, don't cry or weep you world!
Until you'd finally find the courage,
to stand tall amidst your fears.

Az di velt geven volt gliklekh,
mir aleyv bloyz ful mit leydn,
volt ikh dan tsu ir gekumen,
un gefodert "gib mir freyd!"

If the world were full of pleasure
And I alone were full of pain,
I would then come to the world
to beg it give me joy again.

Ober az mir beyde laydn,
say di velt, say ikh aleyv,
hot di velt nit vu tsu kumen,
un ikh hob nit vu tsu geyn!

But since the world and I both suffer
Together and alone,
The world can find no refuge,
and I can find no home.

Tif in Veldele (Deep in Forest), anonymous.

Tif in veldele Shteyt a bey mele
Un di tsvgelech blien.
Un bay mir, orim shnayderl
Tut mayn hertsele tsien.

Deep in forest stands a little tree
And a branch is blooming.
And by me, a humble tailor boy
My whole heart is in agony.

Oyfn bey mele vakst a tsveygele
Un di bletelech tsviten.
Un mayn orim shvach hertsele

On the forest tree sprouts a little branch
And its leaves are growing.
And my poor weak suffering little heart

(Tif in Veldele, continued)

Tsit tsu mayn ziser Iten.

Longs for my dear sweet one.

Oyfn tsveygele shteyt a feygele
Un dos feygele pishtshet.
Un bay mir, orim shnayderl,
Mayn shvach hertsele trishtshet.

On a little branch perches a tiny bird
And the bird is chirping.
And by me, a poor little tailor boy,
My suffering heart is breaking.

Zits Ich Mir Oyfn Benkele (I sit myself on a little bench) Mark Olf.

Zits ich mir oyfn benkele
Un farkem mir mayne herelech,
Geyt farbay, oy, a shnayder-yung
Un zogt az ich bin nit erlech.

Sitting here on my little bench,
Combing out my lovely hair,
Passes by, a young tailor's son,
And tells me that I'm not honest.

Er zogt: as s'iz tint,
Un ich zog az a'iz penes.
Er zogt az her hot mich lib,
Un ich zog as s'iz nit emes!

He says, your hair is dyed,
And I say, it is natural.
He says, he loves me deeply,
And I say, no, it cannot be!

Zits ich mir oyfn fensterl
Un farflecht mir mayne tsepelech,
Geyt farbay, oy, a shuster-yung
Un zogt az ich bin nit erlech.

Sitting here on the window sill
Braiding out my lovely hair,
Passes by, a young cobbler's son
And tells me that I'm not honest.

Er zog, az s'iz ash,
Un ich zog as s'iz koyln,
Er zogt az er vet mich nemen –
Un ich zog: er vet ni poyln!

Then he says my hair is light,
And I tell him, that it's coal black,
Then he says he wants to marry me –
And I tell him, it cannot be.

Hot Rachmones Auf die Milchomo Korbones
Words by Sch. Frug, Music by Henry A. Russotto (1916)

Verse 1

Shtromen blut an taichen treren
siden flisen tief und breit,
unser alter groser ungluck
hot sein hand auf unser shpreit;
Hert ihr dort vie muters klogen
und von kinder das ge shrei
toite ligen auf die gasen
kranke fallen neben sei.

Streaming blood and pools of tears
simmers and flows deep and wide,
our ancient great misfortune
spread upon us with its hand.
Hear there the mothers' wailings
and the children's fearsome cries
The dead are lying on the alleys
The sick are falling near their sides.

Refrain:

Bruder shwester hot rachmunes,
grois and shreklick is die noit
Git die toite auf tachrichim
git die lebendike broit.

Brother, sister, have compassion
Gray and fearsome is the night
Give the dead their final shrouds
Give the living a piece of bread.

Verse 2

Von der waiten shwer zu fuhlen
waiter treren, fremd gewein
waiter ungluck, fremder ungluck
fremdes blut, nein bruder, nein
herzer tausend – un ein wehtog
tausent haiser – und ein thir
ale – ale ein verkloger

From afar it's hard to feel
the distant tears, foreign weeping
the distant misfortune, the strange misery
The strangers' blood no, brothers, no!
A thousand hearts a single pain
A thousand home, a single door.
All – all in a lament

Kranker yosem senen mir.

We are all sick orphans.

(Hot Rachmones, continued)

Refrain:

Bruder shwester hot rachmunes,
grois and shreklick is die noit
Git die toite auf tachrichim
git die lebendike broit.

Brother, sister, have compassion
Gray and fearsome is the night
Give the dead their final shrouds
Give the living a piece of bread.

Verse 3

Shtromen blut un taichen treren
sieden flisen ohn a shier
eimas moves kukt in fenster
und der hunger klappt in tier
shlaf is unser hand zu shtraiten
shtark und shwer is unser shmerz
Kum ie du mit treist und liebe
gutes heises yidish herz.

Streaming blood and pools of tears
Simmers and flows without an end
Lurking death is seen in windows
and the hunger knocks like a beast
sleep stays our hands in battle
strong and heavy is our pain
Come to me with comfort and love
The good warmth of the Yiddishe heart.

Refrain:

Bruder shwester hot rachmunes,
grois and shreklick is die noit
Git die toite auf tachrichim
git die lebendike broit.

Brother, sister, have compassion
Gray and fearsome is the night
Give the dead their final shrouds
Give the living a piece of bread.

Tog Azoy vi Nacht (Day is Same as Night) anonymous.

Tog a zoy vi nacht
Un nacht azoy vi tog,
Un neyen un neyen un neyen!
Un neyen un neyen un neyen!

Day is same as night
and night is same as day,
I sew, and I sew and I sew!
I sew, and I sew and I sew!

Helf mir shoy'n Gotenyu,
mayn shyner zol shoy'n kumen,
Un funder arbet zol ich avek geyen.

Help me oh dear God, may my
beloved come to me,
And from this work, I'll quickly go away.

Noch amol geneyt un vider
amol geneyt,
Geneyt un geneyt un geshtoch'n!
Geneyt un geneyt un geshtoch'n!

Still I am sewing,
always, always sewing
sewing, and sewing and poking
sewing, and sewing and poking.

Oy du ziser Goteynu,
du veyst doch de memes,
Az mayne beyner zenen mir tsubrochn.

Oh, you dear sweet God,
You who know the truth,
How my limbs are aching and are breaking

Tog azoy vi nacht
un nacht azoy vi tog,
Un neyen, un neyen un neyen!
Un neyen, un neyen un neyen!

Day is same as night,
and night is same as day.
I sew, I sew, I sew!
I sew, I sew, I sew!

Got zol mir shoy'n helfn,
di frayhayt zol shoy'n kumen,
Un ich zol zich shoy'n gicher,
mit ir zeyen!

Dear God please help me, so that
freedom will come soon,
I'll be with you and quickly go away.

Eyder Ich Leyg Mich Shlofn (As Soon as I Go To Bed) anonymous

Eyder ich leyg mich shlofn,
Darf ich shoy'n oyfshteyn.
Mit mayne kranke beyner
Tsu der arbet geyn.

No sooner I go to bedtime,
Must I wake again.
With my weary limbs
To work I go again.

Ich kum shpet tsu der arbet,
S'iz doch vayt der veg—
Shlogt men mir op
Far halbe teg!

If I come late to work,
It's a such long, long way,
They dock me straight off
For a half day pay.

refrain:

Tsu Got vel ich veynen,
Mit a groys geveyn!
Tsu vos ich bin geboyrn
A neytorin** tsu zayn.

To God will I cry,
With a cry of woe!
So why was I then born
A garment worker** to be.

Nodlen vern tsubrochn
Fuftsn a minut.
Di finger vern tsushtoch'n,
S' rint fun zey dos blut.

Needles are always breaking
Fifteen at a time.
My fingers all are aching.
Fingers flowing blood.

Ich layd shtendig hunger,
Ich hob nisht vos tsu esn.
Vil ich gelt betn,
Heyst men mir fargesn!

I'm so very hungry,
I don't have much to eat,
But when I ask for my pay,
They say just forget it!

refrain

** seamstress

**Translations by Laurie Israel*

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