

These I Remember

The Martyrdom of the Sages

*Eileh ezk'ra v'nafshi alai eshp'cha.
Ki v'la'unu zeidim k'uga b'li hafucha.
Ki vimeis keisar lo al'ta arucha
la'asara harugei m'lucha.*

*B'lomdo seifer mipi m'shulei areimat.
V'heivin v'dikdeik b'dat r'shumat.
Ufatach biv'eileh hamishpatim
v'chashav m'zimat.
V'goneiv ish um'charo v'nimtza v'yado
mot yumat.*

*Gava leiv bigdolim
v'tziva l'mal'ot palteiro n'alim
v'kara la'asara chachamim g'dolim
m'vinei dat ut'ameha bfilpulim.*

*Dinu mishpat zeh la'ashuro
V'al t'av'tuhu b'chazav l'omro.
Ki im hotzi'uhu la'amito ul'oro
Ki yimatzei ish goneiv nefesh
mei'echav mib'nei yisra'eil
V'hitamer bo um'charo.*

**These I remember and spill out my soul.
How the arrogant consumed us
like a cake unturned.
In the days of the Caesars
arose no greater sage
than these ten killed by the Empire.**

**He studied books
for examples of treachery,
understanding precisely the written law.
He began with "These are the laws"
and thought, scheming:
"Whoever kidnaps a person and sells him,
if he is found out, he must be killed."**

**אלה אזכרה ונפשי עלי אשפכה.
כי בלעוננו ידים כעגה בלי הפוכה.
כי בימי קיסר לא עלתה ארוכה.
לעשרה הרוגי מלוכה:**

**בלמדו ספר מפי משולי ערמת.
והבין ודקדק בדת רשומת.
ופתח בואלה המשפטים וקשב מזמת.
וגונב איש ומכרו ונמצא בידו מות יומת.**

**גבה לב בגדולים
וצוה למלאת פלטרו נעלים
וקרא לעשרה חכמים גדולים
מביני דת וטעמיה בפלפולים.**

**דינו משפט זה לאשורו
ואל תעוניהו בכזב לאמרו
כי אם הוציאוהו לאמתו ולאורו
כי ימצא איש גונב נפש מאחיו מבני ישראל
והתעמר בו ומכרו.**

**Proud-hearted among the great,
he commanded that his palace
be filled with shoes
and called ten great sages
who understood the law
and its intricate meanings.**

**"Judge this case with certainty,
and do not speak
deceitfully or crookedly
but bring the truth to light:
A man is found who kidnapped a fellow
Israelite and oppressed him
and sold him."**

*Heim k'anu lo umeit haganav hahu.
Nam ayei avoteichem asher achichem
m'charuhu
l'orachat yishm'eilim s'charuhu
uv'ad na'alayim n'tanuhu.*

*V'atem kab'lu din shamayim aleichem.
Ki mimei avoteichem lo nimitza kachem.
V'im hayu v'chayim hayiti danam
lifneichem.
V'atem tisu avon avoteichem.*

*Z'man t'na lanu sh'loshet yamim
ad sheida im nigzar hadavar mim'romim
im anu chayavim va'asheimim
nisbol bigzeirat malei rachamim.*

*Chalu v'za'u v'na'u kulamo
Al rabi yishma'eil kohein gadol
nata'nu eineimo
l'hazkir et hasheim la'alot la'adoneimo
lada'at im yatz'a hag'zeira mei'eit
eloheimo.*

**They answered him,
“That thief must die.”
He said, “Where are your ancestors
who sold their brother
to a caravan of Ishmaelites,
turning him over for payment in shoes?**

**“You must accept Heaven’s judgment
upon yourselves.
For since the days of your ancestors
there are none like you.
If they were still alive, I would have
brought them before you for judgment.
But now you must bear
your ancestors’ guilt!”**

**הֵם כָּעָנוּ לוֹ וּמַת הַגִּבּוֹר הַהוּא
נָם אֵיִה אַבוֹתֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר אַחִיָּהֶם מְכָרוּהוּ
לְאַרְחַת יִשְׁמַעְאֵלִים סְחָרוּהוּ
וּבְעֵד נְעָלִים נְתַנּוּהוּ.**

**וְאַתֶּם קִבְּלוּ דִין שָׁמַיִם עֲלֵיכֶם
כִּי מִיָּמֵי אַבוֹתֵיכֶם לֹא נִמְצָא כָכֶם
וְאִם הָיוּ בַחַיִּים הָיִיתִי דָנָם לְפָנֶיכֶם
וְאַתֶּם תִּשְׂאוּ עוֹן אַבוֹתֵיכֶם.**

**זְמַן תְּנָה לָנוּ שְׁלֹשֶׁת יָמִים
עַד שֶׁנִּגְדַע אִם נִגְזַר הַדָּבָר מִמְרוֹמִים
אִם אָנוּ חַיִּים וְאֲשֵׁמִים
נִסְבֵּל בְּגִזְרַת מְלֵא רַחֲמִים.**

**חָלוּ וְזָעוּ וְנָעוּ כָלֵמוּ
עַל רַבִּי יִשְׁמַעְאֵל כִּהֵן גְּדוֹל נְתַנּוּ עֵינֵינוּ
לְהַזְכִּיר אֶת הַשֵּׁם לְעֹלוֹת לְאֲדוֹנֵינוּ
לְדַעַת אִם יִצָּאָה הַגִּזְרָה מֵאֵת אֱלֹהֵינוּ.**

**“Give us three days time,
so we can know
if this matter is ordained from above.
If we are obligated to bear this guilt
we will suffer the decree
of the Merciful One.”**

**They all were ill and anxious and moved.
Their eyes were on Rabbi Yishmael, the
High Priest, as he pronounced the Name
and rose to his Support,
to determine if the decree
had indeed come from his God.**

*Tiheir rabi yishma'eil atzmo
v'hizkir et hasheim b'siludim
v'ala lamarom v'sha'al
mei'eit ha'ish l'vush habadim
v'nam lo kab'lu aleichem tzadikim vididim.
ki shamati mei'achorei hapargod
ki b'zot atem nilkadim.*

*Yarad v'higid l'chaveirav ma'amar eil
V'tziva hab'liya'al l'horgam b'cho'ach
v'la'eil
Ush'nayim meihem hotzi'u t'chila
Sheheim g'dolei yisra'eil
Rabi yishma'eil kohein gadol
V'rabi shimon ben gamli'eil n'si yisra'eil.*

*K'rat rosho t'chila hirba menu livon
v'nam lo horgeini t'chila
v'al ereh b'mitat m'shareit l'dar b'ma'on.
L'hapil goralot tziva tzifon
V'nafal hagoral al raban shimon.*

*Lishpoch damo miheir k'shor par.
Uch'shenechtach rosho n'talo rabi
yishma'eil
v'tzarach alav b'kol mar kashofar.
I halashon ham'maheret l'horot b'imrei
sh'far
Ba'avonot eich ata lochechet et he'afar.*

**Rabbi Yishmael purified himself
And spoke the Name in withdrawal.
He rose up and asked
the linen-garbed man.
He said, "Accept this, dear just ones.
For I have heard from beyond the veil
that you have been caught in this trap."**

**He descended and told his companions
the Force's word.
So, the worthless one said to kill them with
power and might, taking two of them first,
great ones of Israel:
Rabbi Yishmael the High Priest
And Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel,
President of Israel.**

**טָהַר רַבִּי יִשְׁמַעֵאל עֲצָמוֹ
וְהִזְכִּיר אֶת הַשֵּׁם בְּסִלּוּדִים
וְעָלָה לְמָרוֹם וְשָׂאֵל
מֵאֵת הָאִישׁ לְבוּשׁ הַבְּדִים
וְנָם לוֹ קָבְלוּ עֲלֵיכֶם צְדִיקִים וַיְדִידִים
כִּי שָׁמַעְתִּי מֵאַחֲרַי הַפָּרְגוּד
כִּי בְזֹאת אַתֶּם נִלְקָדִים.**

**יָרַד וְהִגִּיד לְחַבְרָיו מֵאֲמַר אֵל
וְצִוָּה הַבְּלִיעַל לְהַרְגֵם בְּכַח וְלֵאֵל
וַיִּשְׁנִים מִהֵם הוֹצִיאוּ תְחִלָּה
שְׁהֵם גְּדוּלֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:
רַבִּי יִשְׁמַעֵאל כִּהֵן גְּדוּל
וְרַבֵּן שִׁמְעוֹן בֶּן גַּמְלִיאֵל נָשִׂיא יִשְׂרָאֵל.**

**כָּרַת רֹאשׁוֹ תְחִלָּה הִרְבָּה מְנוֹ לְבַעַן
וְנָם לוֹ הִרְגִנִי תְחִלָּה
וְאֵל אָרְאָה בְּמִיתַת מְשֵׁרֶת לְדָר בְּמַעוֹן
לְהַפִּיל גּוֹרְלוֹת צִוָּה צְפֹעוֹן
וְנָפַל הַגּוֹרֵל עַל רַבֵּן שִׁמְעוֹן.**

**לְשַׁפֵּךְ דָּמוֹ מִהֵר כְּשׁוֹר פָּר
וּכְשִׁנְחָתָךְ רֹאשׁוֹ נָטְלוֹ רַבִּי יִשְׁמַעֵאל
וְצָרַח עָלָיו בְּקוֹל מֵר כְּשׁוֹפָר
אֵי הֲלָשׁוֹן הַמְּמַהֲרֶת לְהוֹרוֹת בְּאֲמָרֵי שְׁפָר
בְּעֹנוֹת אֵיךְ עָתָה לוֹחֶכֶת אֶת הָעֶפֶר.**

**He bent his head first with much protest,
Saying, "Kill me first,
so I do not see the death of the servant of
God, who dwells in the temple."
The adder commanded to cast lots.
And the lot fell to Rabban Shimon.**

**He hurried to spill his blood, like a bull ox.
When his head was severed,
Rabbi Yishmael took it,
And screamed over it,
in a voice bitter as a shofar,
"Oh, the tongue swift
to teach pleasing speech,
how does it now lick the dust,
because of our sins?"**

*Mah m'od bacha alav b'charada
bat b'liya'al l'kol b'chiyato
shel rabi yishma'eil am'da
to'ar yofyo b'liba cham'da
v'sha'ala mei'eit aviha chayato l'ha'amida.*

מה מאד בכה עליו בחרדה
בת בליעל לקול בכיתו
של רבי ישמעאל עמדה
תאר יפיו בלבה חמדה
ושאלה מאת אביה חיתו להעמידה.

*Ni'eitz b'liya'al davar zeh la'asoto
L'hafshit oro mei'al panav sha'ala mei'ito.
V'lo ikeiv davar zeh la'asoto.
Uk'shehigi'a limkom t'filin
tzarach b'kol mar l'yotzeir nishmato.*

נאץ בליעל דבר זה לעשותו
להפשיט עורו מעל פניו שאלה מאתו
ולא עקב דבר זה לעשותו
וכשהגיע למקום תפלין
צרח בקול מר ליוצר נשמתו.

*Sarfei ma'ala tza'aku v'mara
Zo tora v'zo s'chara
oteh kasalma ora
Oyeiv m'na'eitz shimcha hagadol v'hanora
Um'chareif um'gadeif al divrei tora.*

שרפי מעלה צעקו במרה
זו תורה וזו שכרה
עוטה בשלמה אורה
אויב מנאץ שמך הגדול והנורא
ומחרף ומגדף על דברי תורה.

*An'ta bat kol mishamayim
Im eshma kol acheir
ehefoch et ha'olam l'mayim
L'tohu vavohu ashit hadomayim.
G'zeira hi milfanai
kab'luha m'shasha'ei dat yomayim.*

ענתה בת קול משמים
אם אשמע קול אחר
אחפך את העולם למים
לתהו ובהו אשית הדומים
גזרה היא מלפני קבלוה משעשעי דת
יומים.

**How much he cried over him, trembling!
The worthless one's daughter
stood at the sound of his cry.
She coveted his beauty in her heart
and asked her father to keep him alive.**

**The fire-angels above yelled out bitterly,
“This is Torah and this its reward,
You who stretch light like a sheet?
The enemy scorns your great awesome
name, reviles and mocks
your Torah's words!”**

**The worthless one scorned to do this,
so she requested the rabbi's peeled face,
and her father did not prevent this.
When they arrived at the place
of the tefillin,
he screamed a bitter sound to
the one who formed his soul.**

**A daughter-voice answered from heaven:
“If I hear another sound
I will turn the world to water,
to emptiness and waste
this double realm of silence.
This is decreed before me;
accept it, you who take playful delight in
the two-day old law.”**

*P'kidim nehergu
mei'acharei shevet batei k'neisiyot
m'lei'ei mitzvoth k'rimon uch'zaviyot.
V'hotzi'u et rabi akiva doreish kitrei otiot
V'sar'ku v'saro b'masr'kot pifiyot.*

*Tziva l'hotzi rabi chanania ben t'radyon
mibeit ulamo.
Uvachavilei z'morot sar'fu gal'mo.
Us'fugin shel tzemer samu al libo
l'akeiv atzmo.
Uch'shenistal'ku miyad nisraf
v'seifer torah imo.*

*Kon'nu k'doshim am lo alman
Ki al davar mu'at nishpach daman
L'kadeish sheim shamayim mas'ru atzman
Baharigat rabi chutzpit ham'turg'man.*

*Ra'ada te'echoz kol shomei'a shimu'a
v'tizal kol ayin dimu'a
v'nehpach l'eivel kol sha'ashu'a
b'harigat rabi elazaar ben shamuh'a.*

**Caretakers were killed
after sitting in synagogues,
as full of commandments
as pomegranates, as storage-shelves.
Now they brought out Rabbi Akiva,
who inquired into letter-crowns,
and tore off his flesh
with double-edged flesh-hooks.**

**He commanded to bring Rabbi Chananya
ben Teradyon from his great hall.
They bound him with vines
to burn his body.
They put sponges of wool over his heart
to delay his death.
When these were withdrawn, he burned
immediately, and a torah scroll with him.**

פְּקִידִים נְהָרְגוּ מֵאַחֲרֵי שֶׁבֵּית בְּתֵי כְּנִסְיֹת
מְלֵאֵי מִצְוֹת כְּרֵמוֹן וְכִזְוִיֹּת
וְהוֹצִיאוּ אֶת רַבִּי עֲקִיבָא דוֹרֵשׁ כִּתְרֵי אוֹתִיּוֹת
וְסָרְקוּ בְּשָׂרוֹ בְּמַסְרְקוֹת פִּיפִיּוֹת.

צִוָּה לְהוֹצִיא רַבִּי חֲנַנְיָא בֶּן תְּרַדְיּוֹן
מִבֵּית אוּלָמוֹ
וּבְחֻבְלֵי זְמוֹרוֹת שָׂרְפוֹ גָּלְמוֹ
וּסְפוּגֵינֵי שֶׁל צְמֵר שָׂמוּ עַל לְבוֹ לְעַכֵּב עֲצָמוֹ
וּכְשֶׁנִּסְתַּלְקוּ מִיָּד נִסְרַף וְסֵפֶר תּוֹרָה עִמּוֹ.

קִוְּנֵנוּ קְדוֹשִׁים עִם לֹא אֱלֹמֵן
כִּי עַל דָּבָר מוֹעֵט נִשְׁפָּף דָּמֵן
לְקִדְשׁ שֵׁם שָׁמַיִם מְסֻרֵי עֲצָמֵן
בְּהַרְיַגַת רַבִּי חֲצִפִּית הַמְתַּרְגְּמָן.

רְעֵדָה תֶּאֱחֹז כָּל שׁוֹמֵעַ שְׁמוֹעַ
וְתִזַּל כָּל עֵינַיִם דְּמוֹעַ
וְנִהְפֹךְ לְאַבֵּל כָּל שֶׁעֲשׂוֹעַ
בְּהַרְיַגַת רַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר בֶּן שְׁמוּעַ.

**Lament, holy ones, nation not widowed!
For a little thing their blood is spilt.
To sanctify Heaven's name,
they gave themselves,
with the killing
of Rabbi Chutzpit the Translator.**

**Whoever hears
will be gripped with quaking.
Every eye will drip with tears.
All play will turn to mourning
at the killing
of Rabbi Elazar ben Shamuah.**

*Shichatuni tzarai um'anai
Umilu k'reisam mei'adanai
V'hishkuni mei rosh v'la'anai
b'harigat rabi chanina ben chachinai.*

שְׁחַתְנוּנִי צָרִי וּמְעַנִּי
וּמְלֹאוּ כְרָסִם מְעַדְנֵי
וְהִשְׁקוּנִי מִי רוֹשׁ וְלַעֲנֵי
בְהַרְיגַת רַבִּי חֲנִינְאָ בֶן חַכִּינְאִי.

*Tak'fu aleinu tzarot mitzvoth l'hafeir
Umei'anu lakachat hon vachofer
Ki im nafshot hahogot imrei shefer
K'mo rabi y'sheivav hasofeir.*

תִּקְפוּ עָלֵינוּ צָרוֹת מִצְוֹת לְהַפִּיר
וּמֵאֲנֵנוּ לְקַחַת הוֹן וְכֹפֶר
כִּי אִם נַפְשׁוֹת הַהוֹגוֹת אִמְרֵי שֶׁפֶר
כְּמוֹ רַבִּי יִשְׁכַּב הַסּוֹפֵר.

*Yichatunu b'nei adina hashomeima
Heirei'u lanu mikol malchei adama
V'hargu mimenu kama v'chama
baharigat rabi y'huda ven dama.*

יִחַתְנוּנוּ בְּנֵי עַדִּינָה הַשׁוֹמְמָה
הִרְעוּ לָנוּ מִכָּל מַלְכֵי אֲדָמָה
וְהָרְגוּ מִמֶּנּוּ כַּמָּה וְכַמָּה
בְּהַרְיגַת רַבִּי יְהוּדָה בֶן דָּמָה.

*Dibarta beit ya'akov eish uveit yoseif lehava
Hein ata kash uram kava
Chai z'och komatam b'vi'ur hayom haba
Ki hiskimu laharog asara tzadikim im rabi
y'huda ven bava.*

דִּבְרַת בַּיִת יַעֲקֹב אֵשׁ וּבֵית יוֹסֵף לְהַבָּה
הֵן עַתָּה קַשׁ אֲוָרִם כָּבֹה
חַי זְעֵן קוֹמַתָם בְּבַעוֹר הַיּוֹם הַבֵּא
כִּי הִסְכִּימוּ לְהַרְגַּ עֲשָׂרָה צַדִּיקִים
עִם רַבִּי יְהוּדָה בֶּן בָּבָא.

**My foes, my tormentors,
have destroyed me.
They have filled their bellies
with my delicacies.
They have given me gall
and wormwood to drink
with the killing
of Rabbi Chanina ben Chachinai.**

**Children of desolating delicacy
have shattered us.
They have done us more evil
than any other earthly kings.
They killed of us how much? how much?
with the killing
of Rabbi Yehudah ben Dama.**

**They tried to force us with troubles
to violate commands.
They refused wealth and bribes,
preferring those who conceive
pleasing speech,
like Rabbi Yeshevav the Scribe.**

**You said, "The house of Jacob is fire;
the house of Joseph is flame."
Indeed, now straw
has extinguished their light.
Living one, quench their haughtiness with
the burning of the day to come.
They finished killing ten just men
with Rabbi Yehuda ben Bava.**

*Zot k'ra'atnu v'siparnu b'shinun.
V'shafachnu leiv shaful v'anun.
Mimarom haskeit tachanun
Adonai adonai eil rachum v'chanun.*

זאת קראתנו וספרנו בשנון
ושפכנו לב שפול ואנון
ממרום הסכת תחנון
יי יי אל רחום וחנון

*Chanun habita mim'romim
tishpochet dam hatzadikim v'tatzmit damim.
Tireh b'fargodach v'ha'aveir k'tamim,
Eil melech yosheiv al kisei rachamim.*

חנון הביטה ממרומים
תשפכת דם הצדיקים ותמצית דמים
תראה בפגודך והעבר כתמים
אל מלך יושב על כסא רחמים:

**This happened to us,
and we recount it sharply,
spilling out our heart,
lowly and mournful.
From above hear our plea,
My Support, My Support,
compassionate and gracious Force.**

**Gracious one, look from above:
the spilt blood of the just, life's essence.
See within your veil,
and remove these stains,
guiding Force,
seated on a throne of compassion.**

**חטאנו צורנו. סלח לנו יוצרנו.
Chatanu tzureinu. S'lach lanu yotz'reinu.
We have erred, our Rock. Forgive us, you who form us.**

A Note on “These I Remember”

It is easy to understand why, in the musaf amida for Rosh Hashanah our tradition inserts sections concerning מלכויות (*malchuyot*, God's Guidance), זכרונות (*zichronot*, God's Mindfulness), and שופרות (*shofarot*, Shofar Sounds). It is not hard to understand why the tradition inserts the עבודה (Temple Service) section, describing the ancient ceremony of Atonement, into the musaf amida for Yom Kippur. However, why “These I Remember” (אלה אזכרה), a poem recounting the martyrdom of the ten sages, is inserted into the Yom Kippur liturgy may be a bit more difficult to discern.

Yom Kippur is, of course, also יום הדין (*yom hadin*), the Day of Judgment. We view ourselves as standing before God, who judges the quality of our lives. In doing so, we stand, as well, as our own judges. We are encouraged to be mindful of death, which will ultimately end the story of each life, to consider the overall shape of our lives in light of the ubiquitous possibility of death. We dress in white, yes, to symbolize purity, but also to symbolize our shrouds. We say *yizkor*, the memorial service for the dead. We remind ourselves that we are “maggots and worms.” All life tends to death. Human life is fragile, and this fragility is part of what makes human life so precious.

Our judgment as individuals is not all we are concerned with on *Yom Hadin*. The whole world, we are told, stands today before the bar of judgment. And we ourselves must judge the world. We must decide, “Is this world

good? Is this world worth my living in for another year?" It is not an easy question, but it is a question the answer to which expresses our fundamental attitude towards life. What makes this question hardest, perhaps, is what is known as "the problem of evil." Suffering, especially undeserved suffering, is, perhaps, the greatest objection to life, the greatest objection to this world. Can we face the world squarely and honestly, without sugar-coating it, without denial, in full recognition that its goodness and beauty are accompanied by pain and horror? Can we judge such a world good? Can we judge such a world the product of a beneficent creator? It is not easy to do so, but this is the religious task placed before us by Jewish tradition. It is why, in the face of death we say *Kaddish*: "May the great name of God be sanctified and amplified in the world God willingly created!"

For our tradition, the example of the ten slaughtered sages is the example *par excellence* of undeserved suffering and of the attitude which accepts such suffering while praising God and praising God's world. The author (an anonymous יהודה—Judah) is not at all unmindful of the objection that such events raise. This objection is voiced by God's own angelic choir, since it is not raised by the sages themselves. The author presents no fully formulated intellectual "theodicy" (defense of God). We have only the response of a בַּת קוֹל—a daughter-voice—demanding that the angels cease their questioning, threatening that the world-order would be, otherwise, undone. The author's response is probably to be found in the attitude of the sages themselves.—Our response is to be found in prayer, in our own attitudes as we consider their fate, as we confront our own fates, as we confront our world, as we confront a new year in that world.

Seen, in this way, the אלה אזכרה—"These I Remember"—constitutes an integral part of the experience of Yom Kippur.

A few notes of clarification:

1. A "cake unturned" is a cake not turned over (since the baker isn't watching), so that the side that is down burns.
2. The Emperor begins studying with "These are the laws," that is *Parashat Mishpatim* (which begins at Exodus, 21:1. Note, especially, Exodus 21:16.)
3. The Emperor's filling the hall of judgment with shoes, and the reference to Joseph's brothers having sold him for shoes, invokes the prophetic protest of Amos (Chapter 2) that the powerful have "sold the just for a pair of shoes."
4. The "linen-garbed man" originates in one of Ezekiel's visions of heavenly events (Chapter 9).
5. The "President of Israel," is not, of course, the President of our contemporary State of Israel, but rather the President of the Council of Elders, that is, the Sanhedrin.
6. The "daughter-voice" is a *bat kol*. My translation is literal. The idiom means directly an "echo." It is most commonly translated, "a heavenly voice," which loses some of the "creative ambiguity."
7. The reference to the "two day-old law" reflects a legend that the Torah antedated the creation of the world by two thousand years, by way of Psalm 90 (The Psalm of Moses), which says "A thousand years are, in your eyes, like a day gone by." (Thus a two day-old law in God's time is two thousand years old in our time.)
8. The reference to Rabbi Akiva as one "who inquired into letter-crowns" refers to a Talmudic legend in which Moses asks God why God is placing crowns on the letters. God says that Rabbi Akiva will one day make many legal rulings on the basis of these crowns. Moses then gets to take a trip to Akiva's academy, where he has a hard time understanding the proceedings. He asks God what reward there is for such activity and God shows Moses a scene of Akiva's flesh being sold for dog food. Moses then raises the question which is in this poem put into the mouths of the angels.

9. “Children of desolating delicacy” is an intriguing way of referring to the Romans’ love of refinement and luxury. Their refined delicacy did not keep them from desolating butchery.
10. “The House of Jacob is Fire,” etc. See Obadiah 1:18.

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Israel's Strength
Chaim Nachman Bialik

And should you wish to know the Source
From which your tortured people drew
In evil days their strength of soul
To meet their doom, stretch out their necks
To each uplifted knife and axe,
In flames, on stakes to die with joy,
And with a whispered 'God is One,'
To close their lips?

And should you wish to find the Spring
From which your banished forebears drew,
'Midst fear of death and fear of life,
Their comfort, courage, patience, trust,
An iron will to bear their yoke,
To live bespattered and despised,
And suffer without end?

And should you wish to see the Lap
Whereon your people's galling tears
In ceaseless torrents fell and fell,
And hear the cries that moved the hills,
And thrilled Satan with awe and grief,
But not the stony heart of man,
Than Satan's and than rock's more hard?

And should you wish to see the Fort
Where your ancestors refuge sought,
And all their sacred treasures hid,
The Refuge that has still preserved
Your nation's soul intact and pure,
And when, despised and scorned and
scoffed,
Their faith they did not shame?

And should you wish to see and know
Their Mother, faithful, loving, kind,
Who gathered all the burning tears
Of her bespattered, hapless kin,
And when to her warm breast they came,
She tenderly wiped off their tears,
And sheltered them and shielded them,
And lulled them on her lap to sleep?

If you, my friend, do know yet not
This mother, spring, and lap, and fort,
Then go into the House of God,
The House of Study, old and gray,
Throughout the sultry summer days,
Throughout the gloomy winter nights,
At morning, midday, or at eve;
Perchance there is a remnant yet,
Perchance your eye may still behold
In some dark corner, hid from view,
A cast-off shadow of the past,
The profile of some pallid face,
Upon an ancient folio bent,
Who seeks to drown unspoken woes
In the Talmudic boundless waves;
And then your heart shall guess the truth,
That you have touched the sacred ground
Of your great nation's House of Life,
And that your eyes do gaze upon
The treasure of your nation's soul.

And know that this is just a spark
That by a miracle escaped
Of that bright light, that sacred flame,
Your forebears kindled long ago
On altars high and pure.