

## 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  
נִם אֵיךָ אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר אַחֲיָהֶם מְכָרוּהוּ  
לְאַרְחַת יִשְׁמַעְאֵלִים סְחָרוּהוּ  
וּבְעֵד נְעָלִים נְתַנוּהוּ.**

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

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

**חָלוּ וְזָעוּ וְנָעוּ כָלֵמוּ  
עַל רַבִּי יִשְׁמַעְאֵל כִּהֵן גְּדוֹל נְתַנוּ 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 לְחֻבְרָיו מֵאֲמַר אֵל  
וְצִוָּה הַכְּלִיעַל לְהִרְגָם בְּכַח וְלֵאֵל  
וַיִּשְׁנִים מִהֵם הוֹצִיאוּ תְּחִלָּה  
שְׁהֵם גְּדוּלֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:  
רַבִּי יִשְׁמַעֵאל כִּהֵן גְּדוּל  
וְרַבֵּן שִׁמְעוֹן בֶּן גַּמְלִיאֵל נָשִׂיא יִשְׂרָאֵל.**

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

**לְשַׁפֹּךְ דָּמוֹ מִהֵר כְּשׁוֹר פָּר  
וּכְשִׁנְחָתָךְ רֹאשׁוֹ נָטְלוּ 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 דּוֹרֵשׁ כִּתְרֵי אוֹתִיּוֹת  
וְסָרְקוּ בְּשָׂרוֹ בְּמַסְרְקוֹת פִּיפִיּוֹת.**

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

**קִוְּנוּ קְדוֹשִׁים עִם לֹא אֱלֹמֵן  
כִּי עַל דְּבַר מוֹעֵט נִשְׁפָּף דָּמֵן  
לְקִדְשׁ שֵׁם שָׁמַיִם מְסֻרֵי עֲצָמֵן  
בְּהַרְיַגַת רַבִּי חֲצִפִּית הַמְתַּרְגְּמָן.**

**רְעָדָה תֶּאֱחֹז כָּל שׁוֹמֵעַ שְׁמוֹעַ  
וְתִזַּל כָּל עֵינַיִם דְּמוֹעַ  
וְנִהַפֵּף לְאַבָּל כָּל שֶׁעֲשׂוֹעַ  
בְּהַרְיַגַת רַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר בֶּן שְׁמוֹעַ.**

**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 מְעַדְנִי  
וְהַשְׁקוּנִי מִי רוֹשׁ וְלַעֲנִי  
בְּהַרְיַגַת 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  
בְּהַרְיַגַת 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 זְעֵזְעוּ קוֹמַתְתֶם בְּבַעוֹר הַיּוֹם הַבֶּא  
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 בת קול—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.