

# **Songs of Labor and Other Poems**

Morris Rosenfeld



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# Songs of Labor and Other Poems

**Morris Rosenfeld**

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## Songs of Labor and Other Poems

- Atonement Evening Prayer
- Exit Holiday

**translated by Rose Pastor Stokes and Helena Frank**

Produced by S Goodman, David Starner  
and the Online Distributed Proofreading Team

SONGS OF LABOR AND OTHER POEMS

---

## In the Factory

Oh, here in the shop the machines roar so wildly,  
That oft, unaware that I am, or have been,  
I sink and am lost in the terrible tumult;  
And void is my soul... I am but a machine.  
I work and I work and I work, never ceasing;  
Create and create things from morning till een;  
For what?and for whomOh, I know not! Oh, ask not!  
Who ever has heard of a conscious machine?

No, here is no feeling, no thought and no reason;  
This life-crushing labor has ever supprest  
The noblest and finest, the truest and richest,  
The deepest, the highest and humanly best.  
The seconds, the minutes, they pass out forever,  
They vanish, swift fleeting like straws in a gale.  
I drive the wheel madly as tho to oertake them,  
Give chase without wisdom, or wit, or avail.

The clock in the workshop,it rests not a moment;  
It points on, and ticks on: EternityTime;  
And once someone told me the clock had a meaning,  
Its pointing and ticking had reason and rhyme.  
And this too he told me,or had I been dreaming,  
The clock wakened life in one, forces unseen,  
And something besides;... I forget what; Oh, ask not!  
I know not, I know not, I am a machine.

At times, when I listen, I hear the clock plainly;  
The reason of oldthe old meaningis gone!  
The maddening pendulum urges me forward  
To labor and labor and still labor on.  
The tick of the clock is the Boss in his anger!  
The face of the clock has the eyes of a foe;  
The clockOh, I shudderdost hear how it drives me?  
It calls me Machine! and it cries to me Sew!

At noon, when about me the wild tumult ceases,  
And gone is the master, and I sit apart,  
And dawn in my brain is beginning to glimmer,  
The wound comes agape at the core of my heart;  
And tears, bitter tears flow; ay, tears that are scalding;  
They moisten my dinnermy dry crust of bread;  
They choke me,I cannot eat;no, no, I cannot!  
Oh, horrible toil I born of Need and of Dread.

The sweatshop at mid-dayIll draw you the picture:  
A battlefield bloody; the conflict at rest;  
Around and about me the corpses are lying;  
The blood cries aloud from the earths gory breast.  
A moment... and hark! The loud signal is sounded,  
The dead rise again and renewed is the fight...  
They struggle, these corpses; for strangers, for strangers!

## Songs of Labor and Other Poems

They struggle, they fall, and they sink into night.

I gaze on the battle in bitterest anger,  
And pain, hellish pain wakes the rebel in me!  
The clocknow I hear it aright!It is crying:  
An end to this bondage! An end there must be!  
It quickens my reason, each feeling within me;  
It shows me how precious the moments that fly.  
Oh, worthless my life if I longer am silent,  
And lost to the world if in silence I die.

The man in me sleeping begins to awaken;  
The thing that was slave into slumber has passed:  
Now; up with the man in me! Up and be doing!  
No misery more! Here is freedom at last!  
When sudden: a whistle!the Bossan alarum!  
I sink in the slime of the stagnant routine;  
Theres tumult, they struggle, oh, lost is my ego;  
I know not, I care not, I am a machine!...



## My Boy

I have a little boy at home,  
A pretty little son;  
I think sometimes the world is mine  
In him, my only one.

But seldom, seldom do I see  
My child in heavens light;  
I find him always fast asleep...  
I see him but at night.

Ere dawn my labor drives me forth;  
Tis night when I am free;  
A stranger am I to my child;  
And strange my child to me.

I come in darkness to my home,  
With weariness and pay;  
My pallid wife, she waits to tell  
The things he learned to say.

How plain and prettily he asked:  
Dear mamma, when's Tonight?  
O when will come my dear papa  
And bring a penny bright?

I hear her words I hasten out  
This moment must it be!  
The father-love flames in my breast:  
My child must look at me!

I stand beside the tiny cot,  
And look, and list, and ah!  
A dream-thought moves the baby-lips:  
O, where is my papa!

I kiss and kiss the shut blue eyes;  
I kiss them not in vain.  
They open, O they see me then!  
And straightway close again.

Heres your papa, my precious one;  
A penny for you! ah!  
A dream still moves the baby-lips:  
O, where is my papa!

And I think in bitterness  
And disappointment sore;  
Some day you will awake, my child,  
To find me nevermore.

## The Nightingale to the Workman

Fair summer is here, glad summer is here!  
O hark! tis to you I am singing:  
The sun is all gold in a heaven of blue,  
The birds in the forest are trilling for you,  
The flies mid the grasses are winging;  
The little brook babbles its secret is sweet.  
The loveliest flowers would circle your feet,  
And you to your work ever clinging!...  
Come forth! Nature loves you. Come forth! Do not fear!  
Fair summer is here, glad summer is here,  
Full measure of happiness bringing.  
All creatures drink deep; and they pour wine anew  
In the old cup of life, and they wonder at you.  
Your portion is waiting since summer began;  
Then take it, oh, take it, you laboring man!  
Tis summer today; ay, summer today!  
The butterflies light on the flowers.  
Delightfully glistens the silvery rain,  
The mountains are covered with greenness again,  
And perfumed and cool are the bowers.  
The sheep frisk about in the flowery vale,  
The shepherd and shepherdess pause in the dale,  
And these are the holiest hours!...  
Delay not, delay not, life passes away!  
Tis summer today, sweet summer today!  
Come, throttle your wheels grinding power!...  
Your worktime is bitter and endless in length;  
And have you not foolishly lavished your strength?  
O think not the world is with bitterness rife,  
But drink of the wine from the goblet of life.  
O, summer is here, sweet summer is here!  
I cannot forever be trilling;  
I flee on the morrow. Then, you, have a care!  
The crow, from the perch I am leaving, the air  
With ominous cries will be filling.  
O, while I am singing to you from my tree  
Of love, and of life, and of joy yet to be,  
Arouse you! O why so unwilling!...  
The heavens remain not so blue and so clear;  
Now summer is here! Come, summer is here!  
Reach out for the joys that are thrilling!  
For like you who fade at your wheel, day by day,  
Soon all things will fade and be carried away.  
Our lives are but moments; and sometimes the cost  
Of a moment overlooked is eternity lost.

## What is the World?

Well, say you the world is a chamber of sleep,  
And life but a sleeping and dreaming?  
Then I too would dream: and would joyously reap  
The blooms of harmonious seeming;  
The dream—flowers of hope and of freedom, perchance,  
The rich are so merrily reaping;  
In Loves eyes I'd fancy the joy of romance;  
No more would I dream Love is weeping.

Or say you the world is a banquet, a ball,  
Where everyone goes who is able?  
I too wish to sit like a lord in the hall  
With savory share at the table.  
I too can enjoy what is wholesome and good,  
A morsel both dainty and healthy;  
I have in my body the same sort of blood  
That flows in the veins of the wealthy.

A garden you say is the world, where abound  
The sweetest and loveliest roses?  
Then would I, no leave asking, saunter around  
And gather me handfuls of posies.  
Of thorns I am sure I would make me no wreath;  
(Of flowers I am very much fonder).  
And with my beloved the bowers beneath  
I'd wander, and wander, and wander.

But ah! if the world is a battlefield wild,  
Where struggle the weak with the stronger,  
Then heed I no storm and no wife and no child!  
I stand in abeyance no longer;  
Rush into the fire of the battle nor yield,  
And fight for my perishing brother;  
Well, if I am struck I can die on the field;  
Die gladly as well as another....

## Despair

No rest not one day in the seven for me?  
Not one, from the maddening yoke to be free?  
Not one to escape from the boss on the prowl,  
His sinister glance and his furious growl,  
The cry of the foreman, the smell of the shop,  
To feel for one moment the manacles drop?  
*Tis rest then you want, and you fain would forget?  
To rest and oblivion theyll carry you yet.*

The flowrs and the trees will have withered ere long,  
The last bird already is ending his song;  
And soon will be leafless and shadeless the bowrs...  
I long, oh I long for the perfume of flowrs!  
To feel for a moment ere stripped are the trees,  
In meadow lands open, the breath of the breeze.  
*You long for the meadow lands breezy and fair?  
O, soon enough others will carry you there.*

The rivulet sparkles with heavenly light,  
The wavelets they glisten, with diamonds bedight.  
Oh, but for a moment to leap in the stream,  
And play in the waters that ripple and gleam!  
My body is weakened with terrible toil.  
The bath would refresh me, renew me the while.  
*You dream of a bath in the shimmering stream?  
Twill comewhen forever is ended your dream.*

The sweatshop is smoky and gloomy and mean  
I strive oh, how vainly I strive to be clean!  
All day I am covered with grime and with dirt.  
You'd laugh, but I long for a spotless white shirt!  
For life that is noble, tis needful, I ween,  
To work as a man should; and still be as clean.  
*So now tis your wish all in white to be dressed?  
In white they will robe you, and lay you to rest.*

The woods they are cool, and the woods they are free;  
To dream and to wander, how sweet it would be!  
The birds their eternal glad holiday keep;  
With song that enchants you and lulls you to sleep.  
Tis hot here, and close! and the din will not cease.  
I long for the forest, its coolth and its peace.  
*Ay, cool you will soon be; and not only cool,  
But cold as no forest can make you, O Fool!*

I long for a friend who will comfort and cheer,  
And fill me with courage when sorrow is near;  
A comrade, of treasures the rarest and best,  
Who gives to existence its crown and its crest;  
And I am an orphan and I am alone;  
No friend or companion to call me his own.  
*Companions a-plenty theyre numberless too;*

Songs of Labor and Other Poems

*Theyre swarming already and waiting for you.*

## Whither?

**(To a Young Girl)**

Say whither, whither, pretty one?  
The hour is young at present!  
How hushed is all the world around!  
Ere dawn the streets hold not a sound.  
O whither, whither do you run?  
Sleep at this hour is pleasant.  
The flowers are dreaming, dewy-wet;  
The bird-nests they are silent yet.  
Where to, before the rising sun  
The world her light is giving?  
    To earn a living.  
O whither, whither, pretty child,  
So late at night a-strolling?  
Alone with darkness round you curled?  
All rests! and sleeping is the world.  
Where drives you now the wind so wild?  
The midnight bells are tolling!  
Day hath not warmed you with her light;  
What aid canst hope then from the night?  
Nights deaf and blind! Oh whither, child,  
Light-minded fancies weaving?  
    To earn a living.

## From Dawn to Dawn

I bend oer the wheel at my sewing;  
Im spent; and Im hungry for rest;  
No curse on the master bestowing,  
No hell-fires within me are glowing,  
Tho pain flares its fires in my breast.

I mar the new cloth with my weeping,  
And struggle to hold back the tears;  
A fever comes over me, sweeping  
My veins; and all through me goes creeping  
A host of black terrors and fears.

The wounds of the old years ache newly;  
The gloom of the shop hems me in;  
But six oclock signals come duly:  
O, freedom seems mine again, truly...  
Unhindered I haste from the din.

\* \* \* \* \*

Now home again, ailing and shaking,  
With tears that are blinding my eyes,  
With bones that are creaking and breaking,  
Unjoyful of rest... merely taking  
A seat; hoping never to rise.

I gaze round me: none for a greeting!  
By Life for the moment unpressed,  
My poor wife lies sleeping and beating  
A lip-tune in dream false and fleeting,  
My child mumbles close to her breast.

I look on them, weeping in sorrow,  
And think: When the Reaper has come  
When finds me no longer the morrow  
What aid then? from whom will they borrow  
The crust of dry bread and the home?

What harbors that morrow, I wonder,  
For them when the breadwinners gone?  
When sudden and swift as the thunder  
The bread-bond is broken asunder,  
And friend in the world there is none.

A numbness my brain is oertaking...  
To sleep for a moment I drop:  
Then start!... In the east light is breaking!  
I drag myself, ailing and aching,  
Again to the gloom of the shop.



## The Candle Seller

In Hester Street, hard by a telegraph post,  
There sits a poor woman as wan as a ghost.  
Her pale face is shrunk, like the face of the dead,  
And yet you can tell that her cheeks once were red.  
But love, ease and friendship and glory, I ween,  
May hardly the cause of their fading have been.  
Poor soul, she has wept so, she scarcely can see.  
A skeleton infant she holds on her knee.  
It tugs at her breast, and it whimpers and sleeps,  
But soon at her cry it awakens and weeps  
Two cents, my good woman, three candles will buy,  
As bright as their flame be my star in the sky!

Tho few are her wares, and her basket is small,  
She earns her own living by these, when at all.  
Shes there with her baby in wind and in rain,  
In frost and in snow—fall, in weakness and pain.  
She trades and she trades, through the good times and slack  
No home and no food, and no cloak to her back.  
Shes kithless and kinless one friend at the most,  
And that one is silent: the telegraph post!  
She asks for no alms, the poor Jewess, but still,  
Altho she is wretched, forsaken and ill,  
She cries Sabbath candles to those that come nigh,  
And all that she pleads is, that people will buy.

To honor the sweet, holy Sabbath, each one  
With joy in his heart to the market has gone.  
To shops and to pushcarts they hurriedly fare;  
But who for the poor, wretched woman will care?  
A few of her candles you think they will take?  
They seek the meat patties, the fish and the cake.  
She holds forth a hand with the pitiful cry:  
Two cents, my good women, three candles will buy!  
But no one has listened, and no one has heard:  
Her voice is so weak, that it fails at each word.  
Perchance the poor mite in her lap understood,  
She hears mothers crying but where is the good

I pray you, how long will she sit there and cry  
Her candles so feebly to all that pass by?  
How long will it be, do you think, ere her breath  
Gives out in the horrible struggle with Death?  
How long will this frail one in mother—love strong,  
Give suck to the babe at her breast? Oh, how long?  
The child mothers tears used to swallow before,  
But mothers eyes, nowadays, shed them no more.  
Oh, dry are the eyes now, and empty the brain,  
The heart well—nigh broken, the breath drawn with pain.  
Yet ever, tho faintly, she calls out anew:

## Songs of Labor and Other Poems

Oh buy but two candles, good women, but two!

In Hester Street stands on the pavement of stone  
A small, orphaned basket, forsaken, alone.  
Beside it is sitting a corpse, cold and stark:  
The seller of candles will nobody mark?  
No, none of the passers have noticed her yet.  
The rich ones, on feasting are busily set,  
And such as are pious, you well may believe,  
Have no time to spare on the gay Sabbath eve.  
So no one has noticed and no one has seen.  
And now comes the nightfall, and with it, serene,  
The Princess, the Sabbath, from Heaven descends,  
And all the gay throng to the synagogue wends.

Within, where they pray, all is cleanly and bright,  
The cantor sings sweetly, they list with delight.  
But why in a dream stands the tall chandelier,  
As dim as the candles that gleam round a bier?  
The candles belonged to the woman, you know,  
Who died in the street but a short time ago.  
The rich and the pious have brought them tonight,  
For mother and child they have set them alight.  
The rich and the pious their duty have done:  
Her tapers are lighted who died all alone.  
The rich and the pious are nobly behaved:  
A body what matters? But souls must be saved!

O synagogue lights, be ye witnesses bold  
That mother and child died of hunger and cold  
Where millions are squandered in idle display;  
That men, all unheeded, must starve by the way.  
Then hold back your flame, blessed lights, hold it fast!  
The great day of judgment will come at the last.  
Before the white throne, where imposture is vain,  
Ye lights for the soul, ye'll be lighted again!  
And upward your flame there shall mount as on wings,  
And damn the existing false order of things!

## The Pale Operator

If but with my pen I could draw him,  
With terror you'd look in his face;  
For he, since the first day I saw him,  
Has sat there and sewed in his place.

Years pass in procession unending,  
And ever the pale one is seen,  
As over his work he sits bending,  
And fights with the soulless machine.

I feel, as I gaze at each feature,  
Perspiring and grimy and wan,  
It is not the strength of the creature,  
The will only, urges him on.

And ever the sweat-drops are flowing,  
They fall over his thin cheek in streams,  
They water the stuff he is sewing,  
And soak themselves into the seams.

How long shall the wheel yet, I pray you,  
Be chased by the pale artisan?  
And what shall the ending be, say you?  
Resolve the dark riddle who can!

I know that it cannot be reckoned,  
But one thing the future will show:  
When this man has vanished, a second  
Will sit in his place there and sew.

## The Beggar Family

Within the court, before the judge,  
There stand six wretched creatures,  
Theyre lame and weary, one and all,  
With pinched and pallid features.  
The father is a broken man,  
The mother weak and ailing,  
The little children, skin and bone,  
With fear and hunger wailing.

Their sins are very great, and call  
Aloud for retribution,  
For theirs (maybe you guess!) the crime  
Of hopeless destitution.  
They look upon the judges face,  
They know what judges ponder,  
They know the punishment that waits  
On those that beg and wander.

For months from justice they have fled  
Along the streets and highways,  
From farm to farm, from town to town,  
Along the lanes and byways.  
Theyve slept full oftentimes in jail,  
Theyre known in many places;  
Yet still they live, for all the woe  
Thats stamped upon their faces.

The womans chill with fear. The man  
Implores the judge: Oh tell us,  
What will you? With our children small  
Relentlessly expel us?  
Oh let us be! Well sleep at night  
In corners dark; the city  
Has room for all! And some kind soul  
Will give a crust in pity.

For wife and children I will toil:  
It cannot be much longer  
(For God almighty is and good!)  
Ere I for work am stronger.  
Oh let us here with men remain,  
Nor drive us any further!  
Oh why our curses will you have,  
And not our blessings rather!

And now the sick man quails before  
The judges piercing glances:  
No, only two of you shall go  
This time and take your chances.  
Your wife and you! The children four  
Youll leave, my man, behind you,  
For them, within the Orphans Home,

## Songs of Labor and Other Poems

Free places I will find you.

The fathers dumb the mother shrieks:  
My babes and me you'd sever?  
If God there be, such cruel act  
Shall find forgiveness never!  
But first, oh judge, must you condemn  
To death their wretched mother  
I cannot leave my children dear  
With you or any other!

I bore and nursed them, struggling still  
To shelter and to shield them,  
Oh judge, I'll beg from door to door,  
My very life—blood yield them!  
I know you do not mean it, judge,  
With us poor folk you're jesting.  
Give back my babes, and further yet  
We'll wander unprotesting.

The judge, alas! has turned away,  
The paper dread unrolled,  
And useless all the mother's grief,  
The wild and uncontrolled.  
More cruel can a sentence be  
Than that which now is given?  
Oh cursed the system neath whose sway  
The human heart is riven!

## A Millionaire

No, not from tuning-forks of gold  
Take I my key for singing;  
From Upper Seats no order bold  
Can set my music ringing;  
But groans the slave through sense of wrong,  
And naught my voice can smother;  
As flame leaps up, so leaps my song  
For my oppressed brother.  
And thus the end comes swift and sure...  
Thus life itself must leave me;  
For what can these my brothers poor  
In compensation give me,  
Save tears for evry tear and sigh?  
(For they are rich in anguish).  
A millionaire of tears am I,  
And mid my millions languish.

## **September Melodies**

I

The summer is over!  
Tis windy and chilly.  
The flowers are dead in the dale.  
All beauty has faded,  
The rose and the lily  
In death—sleep lie withered and pale.

Now hurries the stormwind  
A mournful procession  
Of leaves and dead flowers along,  
Now murmurs the forest  
Its dying confession,  
And hushed is the holiest song.

Their prayers of departure  
The wild birds are singing,  
They fly to the wide stormy main.  
Oh tell me, ye loved ones,  
Whereto are ye winging?  
Oh answer: when come ye again?

Oh hark to the wailing  
For joys that have vanished!  
The answer is heavy with pain:  
Alas! We know only  
That hence we are banished  
But God knows of coming again!

I



II

The Tkiyes\*–man has blown his horn,  
And swift the days declining;  
The leaves drop off, in fields forlorn  
Are tender grasses pining.

The earth will soon be cold and bare,  
Her robe of glory falling;  
Already to the mourners prayer  
The last wild bird is calling.

He sings so sweetly and so sad  
A song of friends who parted,  
That even if it find you glad,  
It leaves you broken hearted.

The copses shudder in the breeze,  
Some dream–known terror fearing.  
Awake! O great and little trees!  
The Judgment–day is nearing!

O men! O trees in copses cold!  
Beware the rising weather!  
Or late or soon, both young and old  
Shall strew the ground together... .

[\*Tkiye: first blast of the Rams horn.]

## Depression

All the striving, all the failing,  
To the silent Nothing sailing.  
Swiftly, swiftly passing by!  
For the land of shadows leaving,  
Where a wistful hand is weaving  
Thy still woof, Eternity!

Gloomy thoughts in me awaken,  
And with fear my breast is shaken,  
Thinking: O thou black abyss;  
All the toil and thrift of life,  
All the struggle and the strife,  
Shall it come at last to this?

With the grave shall be requited  
Good and evil, and united  
Neer to separate again?  
What the light hath parted purely,  
Shall the darkness join more surely?  
Was the victory won in vain?

O mute and infinite extension,  
O time beyond our comprehension,  
Shall thought and deed ungarnered fall?  
Evrything dost take and slay,  
Evrything dost bear away,  
Silent Nothing, silent All!...

## The Canary

The free canary warbles  
In leafy forest dell:  
Who feels what rapture thrills her,  
And who her joy can tell?

The sweet canary warbles  
Where wealth and splendor dwell:  
Who knows what sorrow moves her,  
And who her pain can tell?

## Want And I

Whos there? whos there? who was it tried  
To force the entrance Ive denied?  
An twere a friend, Id gladly borne it,  
But notwas Want! I could have sworn it.  
I heard thy voice, old witch, I know thee!  
Avaunt, thou evil hag, beshrew thee!  
Gods curse! why seekest thou to find me?  
Away to all black years behind me!

To torture me was thine endeavor,  
My body from my soul to sever,  
Of pride and courage to deprive me,  
And into beggary to drive me.  
Begone, where thousand devils burn  
Begone, nor evermore return!  
Begone, most wretched thou of creatures,  
And hide for aye thine hateful features!  
Beloved, ope the door in pity!

No friend have I in all the city  
Save thee, then open to my call!  
The night is bleak, the snowflakes fall.  
Thine own, old Want am I, believe me!  
Ah, what delight, wilt thou receive me?  
I found, when I from thee had parted,  
No friend but he was fickle-hearted!

Away, old hag! Thou liest, lo,  
Thou harbinger of pain and woe!  
Awayam I thine only friend?  
Thy lovers pale, they have no end!  
Thou vile one, may the devil take thee!  
Begone and no more visits make me!  
ForYiddish writers not to mention  
Men hold thee no such rare invention.

Tis true! yet those must wait my leisure.  
To be with thee is now my pleasure.  
I love thy black and curling hair,  
I love thy wounded hearts despair,  
I love thy sighs, I love to swallow  
Thy tears and all thy songs to follow.  
Oh great indeed, might I but show it,  
My love for thee, my pale-faced poet!

Away, Ive heard all that before,  
And am a writer, mark, no more.  
Instead of verses, wares I tell,  
And candy and tobacco sell.  
My life is sweet, my life is bitter.  
Im ready and a prompt acquitter.  
Oh, smarter traders there are many,

## Songs of Labor and Other Poems

Yet live I well and turn a penny.

A dealer then wilt thou remain,  
Forever from the pen abstain?  
Good resolutions time disperses:  
Thou yet shalt hunger oer thy verses,  
But vainly seeking to excuse thee  
Because thou dost, tonight, refuse me.  
Then open, fool, I tell thee plain,  
That we perforce shall meet again.

Begone the way that I direct thee!  
Ive millionaires now to protect me;  
No need to beg, no need to borrow,  
Nor fear a penniless tomorrow,  
Nor walk with face of blackest omen  
To thrill the hearts of stupid foemen,  
Who fain my pride to earth would bring,  
Because, forsooth, I sweetly sing!

Ho ho! ere thou art grown much older,  
Thy millionaires will all grow colder.  
Thou soon shalt be forgotten by them  
Theyve other things to occupy them!  
Just now with thee theyre playing kindly,  
But fortunes wheel is turning blindly  
To grind thy pleasures ere thou know it  
And thou art left to me, my poet!

## The Phantom Vessel

Now the last, long rays of sunset  
To the tree-tops are ascending,  
And the ash-gray evening shadows  
Weave themselves around the earth.

On the crest of yonder mountain,  
Now are seen from out the distance  
Slowly fading crimson traces;  
Footprints of the dying day.

Blood-stained banners, torn and tattered,  
Hanging in the western corner,  
Dip their parched and burning edges  
In the cooling ocean wave.

Smoothly roll the crystal wavelets  
Through the dusky veils of twilight,  
That are trembling down from heaven  
O'er the bosom of the sea.

Soft a little wind is blowing  
O'er the gently rippling waters  
What they whisper, what they murmur,  
Who is wise enough to say?

Broad her snow-white sails outspreading  
Gainst the quiet sky of evening,  
Flies a ship without a sailor,  
Flies and whither, who can tell?

As by magic moves the rudder;  
Borne upon her snowy pinions  
Flies the ship as tho a spirit  
Drove her onward at its will!

Empty is she, and deserted,  
Only close beside the mainmast  
Stands a lonely child, heartbroken,  
Sobbing loud and bitterly.

Long and golden curls are falling  
Down his neck and o'er his shoulders;  
Now he glances backward sighing,  
And the silent ship flies on!

With a little, shining kerchief,  
Fluttering upon the breezes,  
Unto me he sends a greeting,  
From afar he waves farewell.

And my heart is throbbing wildly,  
I am weeping tell me wherefore?  
God! that lovely child, I know him!  
Tis my youth that flies from me!

## To My Misery

O Misery of mine, no other  
In faithfulness can match with thee,  
Thou more than friend, and more than brother,  
The only thing that cares for me!  
Whereer I turn, are unkind faces,  
And hate and treachery and guile,  
Thou, Misery, in all times and places,  
Dost greet me with thy pallid smile.  
At birth I found thee waiting for me,  
I knew thee in my cradle first,  
The same small eyes and dim watched oer me,  
The same dry, bony fingers nursed.  
And day by day when morning lightened,  
To school thou ledst me home didst bring,  
And thine were all the blooms that brightened  
The chilly landscape of my spring.  
And, thou my match and marriage monger,  
The marriage deed by thee was read;  
The hands foretelling need and hunger  
Were laid in blessing on my head.  
Thy love for me shall last unshaken,  
No further proof I ask, for when  
My hopes for aye were from me taken,  
My Misery, thou wert with me then;  
And still, while sorrows storm is breaking  
Above me, and my head I bow  
The kindly and the unforsaking,  
Oh Misery, thou art with me now.  
Ay, still from out Fates gloomy towers  
I see thee come to me again,  
With wreaths of everlasting flowers,  
And songs funereal in thy train.  
And when life's curses rock me nightly,  
And hushed I lie in slumbers hold,  
Thy sable form comes treading lightly  
To wrap me in its garments fold.  
Thy brother let me be, and wholly  
Repay thee all I owe, tho late:  
My aching heart, my melancholy,  
My songs to thee I dedicate.

## O Long The Way

O long the way and short the day,  
No light in tower or town,  
The waters roar and far the shore  
My ship, my ship goes down!  
Tis all in vain to strive again,  
My cry the billows drown,  
The fight is done, the wind has won  
My ship, my ship goes down!  
Bright sun, adieu! Thoult shine anew  
When skies no longer frown,  
But Ithe deafening billows crash  
My ship, my ship goes down!



## To The Fortune Seeker

A little more, a little less!  
O shadow-hunters pitiless,  
Why then so eager, say!  
Whater you leave the grave will take,  
And all you gain and all you make,  
It will not last a day!

Full soon will come the Reaper Black,  
Cut thorns and flowers mark his track  
Across Lifes meadow blithe.  
Oppose him, meet him as you will,  
Old Times behests he harkens still,  
Unsparing wields his scythe.

A horrid mutiny by stealth  
Breaks out, of power, fame and wealth  
Deserted you shall be!  
The foam upon your lip is rife;  
The last enigma now of Life  
Shall Death resolve for thee.

You call for helptis all in vain!  
What have you for your toil and pain,  
What have you at the last?  
Poor luckless hunter, are you dumb?  
This way the cold pall-bearers come:  
A beggars soul has passed!

A little less, a little more !  
Look forth, look forth! without the door  
There stands a robber old.  
Hell force your evry lock and spring,  
And all your goods hell take and fling  
On Stygian waters cold.

## My Youth

Come, beneath yon verdant branches,  
Come, my own, with me!  
Come, and there my soul will open  
Secret doors to thee.

Yonder shalt thou learn the secrets  
Deep within my breast,  
Where my love upsprings eternal;  
Come! with pain opprest,  
Yonder all the truth Ill tell thee,  
Tell it thee with tears...

(Ah, so long have we been parted,  
Years of youth, sweet years!)

Seest thou the dancers floating  
On a stream of sound?  
There alone, the soul entrancing,  
Happiness is found!  
Magic music, hark! it calls us,  
Ringing wild and sweet!  
One, two, three! beloved, haste thee,  
Point thy dainty feet!  
Now at last I feel that living  
Is no foolish jest...  
(O sweet years of youth departed,  
Vanished with the rest!)

Fiddler, play a little longer!  
Why this hurry, say?  
Im but half-way through a measure  
Yet a little play!  
Smiling in her wreath of flowers  
Is my love not fair?  
See us in the charmed circle,  
Flitting light as air!  
Haste thee, loved one, for the music  
Shall be hushed anon...  
(O sweet years of youth departed,  
Whither are ye gone?)

Gracious youth of mine, so quickly  
Hath it come to this?  
Lo, where flowed the golden river,  
Yawns the black abyss!  
Where, oh where is my beloved,  
Where the wreath of flowers?  
Where, oh where the merry fiddler,  
Where those happy hours?  
Shall I never hear the echoes  
Of those songs again?  
Oh, on what hills are they ringing,

## Songs of Labor and Other Poems

O'er what sunny plain?  
May not I from out the distance  
Cast one backward glance  
On that fair and lost existence,  
Youths sweet dalliance?  
Foolish dreamer! Time hath snatched it,  
And, tho man implore,  
Joys that *he* hath reaped and garnered  
Bloom again no more!

## In The Wilderness

Alone in desert dreary,  
A bird with folded wings  
Beholds the waste about her,  
And sweetly, sweetly sings.

So heaven—sweet her singing,  
So clear the bird notes flow,  
Twould seem the rocks must waken,  
The desert vibrant grow.

Dead rocks and silent mountains  
Wouldst waken with thy strain,  
But dumb are still the mountains,  
And dead the rocks remain.

For whom, O heavenly singer,  
Thy song so clear and free?  
Who hears or sees or heeds thee,  
Who feels or cares for thee?

Thou mayst outpour in music  
Thy very soul... Twere vain!  
In stone thou canst not waken  
A throb of joy or pain.

Thy song shall soon be silenced;  
I feel it... For I know  
Thy heart is near to bursting  
With loneliness and woe.

Ah, vain is thine endeavor;  
It naught availeth nay;  
For lonely as thou camest,  
So shalt thou pass away.

## Ive Often Laughed

Ive often laughed and oftener still have wept,  
A sighing always through my laughter crept,  
Tears were not far away...  
What is there to say?

Ive spoken much and oftener held by tongue,  
For still the most was neither said nor sung.  
Could I but tell it so...  
What is there to know?

Ive hated much and loved, oh so much more!  
Fierce contrasts at my very heartstrings tore...  
I tried to fight them well...  
What is there to tell?

## Again I Sing my Songs

Once again my songs I sing thee,  
Now the spell is broken;  
Brothers, yet again I bring thee  
Songs of love the token.  
Of my joy and of my sorrow  
Gladly, sadly bringing;  
Summer not a song would borrow  
Winter sets me singing.  
O when life turns sad and lonely,  
When our joys are dead;  
When are heard the ravens only  
In the trees overhead;  
When the stormwind on the bowers  
Wreaks its wicked will,  
When the frost paints lying flowers,  
How should I be still?  
When the clouds are low descending,  
And the sun is drowned;  
When the winter knows no ending,  
And the cold is crowned;  
When with evil gloom oppressed  
Lie the ruins bare;  
When a sigh escapes the breast,  
Takes us unaware;  
When the snow-wrapped mountain dreams  
Of its summer gladness,  
When the wood is stripped and seems  
Full of care and sadness;  
When the songs are growing still  
As in Deaths repose,  
And the heart is growing chill,  
And the eyelids close;  
Then, O then I can but sing  
For I dream her coming  
May, sweet May! I see her bring  
Buds and wild-bee humming!  
Through the silence heart-appalling,  
As I stand and listen,  
I can hear her song—birds calling,  
See her green leaves glisten!  
Thus again my songs I sing thee,  
Now the spell is broken;  
Brothers, yet again I bring thee  
Of my love the token.  
Of my joy and of my sorrow  
Gladly, sadly bringing,  
Summer not a song would borrow!

Winter sets me singing.

## Liberty

When night and silence deep  
Hold all the world in sleep,  
As tho Death claimed the Hour,  
By some strange witchery  
Appears her form to me,  
As tho Magic were her dower.

Her beauty heavens light!  
Her bosom snowy white!  
But pale her cheek appears.  
Her shoulders firm and fair;  
A mass of gold her hair.  
Her eyes the home of tears.

She looks at me nor speaks.  
Her arms are raised; she seeks  
Her fettered hands to show.  
On both white wrists a chain!  
She cries and pleads in pain:  
Unbind me! Let me go!

I burn with bitter ire,  
I leap in wild desire  
The cruel bonds to break;  
But God! around the chain  
Is coiled and coiled again  
A long and loathsome snake.

I shout, I cry, I chide;  
My voice goes far and wide,  
A ringing call to men:  
Oh come, let in the light!  
Arise! Ye have the might!  
Set Freedom free again!

They sleep. But I strive on.  
They sleep!... Canst wake a stone?...  
That one might stir! but one!  
Call I, or hold my peace,  
None comes to her release;  
And hope for her is none.

But who may see her plight  
And not go mad outright!...  
Now: up! For Freedom's sake!  
I spring to take her part:  
Fool! cries a voice. I start...  
In anguish I awake.



## A Tree in the Ghetto

There stands in th leafless Ghetto  
One spare-leaved, ancient tree;  
Above the Ghetto noises  
It moans eternally.

In wonderment it muses,  
And murmurs with a sigh:  
Alas! how God-forsaken  
And desolate am I!

Alas, the stony alleys,  
And noises loud and bold!  
Where are ye, birds of summer?  
Where are ye, woods of old?

And where, ye breezes balmy  
That wandered vagrant here?  
And where, oh sweep of heavens  
So deep and blue and clear?

Where are ye, mighty giants?  
Ye come not riding by  
Upon your fiery horses,  
A-whistling merrily.

Of other days my dreaming,  
Of other days, ah me!  
When sturdy hero-races  
Lived wild and glad and free!

The old sun shone, how brightly!  
The old lark sang, what song!  
Oer earth Desire and Gladness  
Reigned happily and long

But see! what are these ant-hills?  
These ants that creep and crawl?...  
Bereft of man and nature,  
My life is stripped of all!

And I, an ancient orphan,  
What do I here alone?  
My friends have all departed,  
My youth and glory gone.

Oh, tear me, root and branches!  
No longer let me be  
A living head-stone, brooding  
Oer the grave of liberty.

## The Cemetery Nightingale

In the hills embraces holden,  
In a valley filled with glooms,  
Lies a cemetery olden,  
Strewn with countless mouldring tombs.  
Ancient graves oerhung with mosses,  
Crumbling stones, effaced and green,  
Venturesome is he who crosses,  
Night or day, the lonely scene.  
Blasted trees and willow streamers,  
Midst the terror round them spread,  
Seem like awe-bound, silent dreamers  
In this garden of the dead.  
One bird, anguish stricken, lingers  
In the shadow of the vale,  
First and best of feathered singers,  
Tis the churchyard nightingale.  
As from bough to bough he flutters,  
Sweetest songs of woe and wail  
Through his gift divine he utters  
For the dreamers in the vale.  
Listen how his trills awaken  
Echoes from each mossy stone!  
Of all places he has taken  
Gods still Acre for his own.

\* \* \* \* \*

Not on Spring or Summer glory,  
Not on god or angel story  
Loyal poet-fancy dwells!  
Not on streams for rich men flowing,  
Not on fields for rich mens mowing,  
Graves he sees, of graves he tells.  
Pain, oppression, woe eternal,  
Open heart-wounds deep, diurnal,  
Nothing comforts or allays;  
Oer Gods Acre in each nation  
Sings he songs of tribulation  
Tunes his golden harp and plays.

## The Creation Of Man

When the world was first created  
By th all-wise Eternal One,  
Asked he none for help or counsel,  
Simply spake, and it was done!

Made it for his own good pleasure,  
Shaped it on his own design,  
Spent a long days work upon it,  
Formed it fair and very fine.

Soon he thought on mans creation,  
Then perplexities arose,  
So the Lord His winged Senate  
Called, the question to propose:

Hear, my great ones, why I called ye,  
Hear and help me ye who can,  
Hear and tell me how I further  
Shall proceed in making man.

Ponder well before ye answer,  
And consider, children dear;  
In our image I would make him,  
Free from stain, from blemish clear.

Of my holy fire Id give him,  
Crowned monarch shall he be,  
Ruling with a sway unquestioned  
Over earth and air and sea.

Birds across the blue sky winging  
Swift shall fly before his face,  
Silver fishes in the ocean,  
Savage lion in the chase.

How? This toy of froth and vapor,  
Thought the Senate, filled with fear,  
If so wide his kingdom stretches,  
Shortly he will break in here!

So the Lord they answered, saying:  
Mind and strength Thy creature give,  
Form him in our very image,  
Lord, but wingless let him live!

Lest he shame the soaring eagle  
Let no wings to man be givn,  
Bid him oer the earth be ruler,  
Lord, but keep him out of heavn!

Wisely said, the Lord made answer,  
Lo, your counsel fair I take!  
Yet, my Senate, one exception  
One alone, I will to make.

One exception! for the poet,  
For the singer, shall have wings;  
He the gates of Heavn shall enter,

## Songs of Labor and Other Poems

Highest of created things.

One I single from among ye,  
One to watch the ages long,  
Promptly to admit the poet  
When he hears his holy song.

## Journalism

Written today, and read today,  
And stale the news tomorrow!  
Upon the sands I build... I *play!*  
I play, and weep in sorrow:  
Ah God, dear God! to find cessation  
From this soul-crushing occupation!  
If but one year ere Thou dost call me Thither,  
Lord, at this blighting task let me not wither.

## Pen and Shears

My tailors shears I scornèd then;  
I strove for something higher:  
To edit newslive by the pen  
The pen that shall not tire!  
The pen, that was my humble slave,  
Has now enslaved its master;  
And fast as flows its Midas-wave,  
My rebel tears flow faster.  
The world I clad once, tailor-hired,  
Whilst I in tatters quakèd,  
Today, you see me well attired,  
Who lets the world go naked.  
What human soul, hower oppressed,  
Can feel my chained souls yearning!  
A monster woe lies in my breast,  
In voiceless anguish burning.  
Oh, swing ajar the shop door, do!  
Ill bear as neer I bore it.  
My blood!... you sweatshop leeches, you!...  
Now less Ill blame you for it.  
Ill stitch as neer in former years;  
Ill drive the mad wheel faster;  
Slave will I be but to the shears;  
The pen shall know its master!

## For Hire

Work with might and main,  
Or with hand and heart,  
Work with soul and brain,  
Or with holy art,  
Thread, or genius fire  
Make a vest, or verse  
If tis done for hire,  
It is done the worse.

## A Fellow Slave

Pale-faced is he, as in the door  
He stands and trembles visibly,  
With diffidence approaches me,  
And says: Dear editor,

Since write you must, in prose or rhyme,  
Expose my masters knavery,  
Condemn, I pray, the slavery  
That dominates our time.

I labor for a wicked man  
Who holds oer all my being sway,  
Who keeps me harnessed night and day.  
Since work I first began.

No leisure moments do I store,  
Yet harsh words only will he speak;  
My days are his, from week to week,  
But still he cries for more.

Oh print, I beg you, all Ive said,  
And ask the world if this be right:  
To give the worker wage so slight  
That he must want for bread.

See, I have sinews powerful,  
And Ive endurance, subtle skill,  
Yet may not use them at my will,  
But live a masters tool.

But oh, without avail do I  
Lay bare the woes of workingmen!  
Who earns his living by the pen,  
Feels not our misery.

The pallid slave yet paler grew,  
And ended here his bitter cry...  
And thus to him I made reply:  
My friend, you judge untrue.

My strength and skill, like yours, are gain  
For others... Sold!... You understand?  
Your masterwellhe owns your hand,  
And minehe owns my brain.



## The Jewish May

May has come from out the showers,  
Sun and splendor in her train.  
All the grasses and the flowers  
Waken up to life again.  
Once again the leaves do show,  
And the meadow blossoms blow,  
Once again through hills and dales  
Rise the songs of nightingales.

Wheresoeer on field or hillside  
With her paint-brush Spring is seen,  
In the valley, by the rillside,  
All the earth is decked with green.  
Once again the sun beguiles  
Moves the drowsy world to smiles.  
See! the sun, with mother-kiss  
Wakes her child to joy and bliss.

Now each human feeling presses  
Flour like, upward to the sun,  
Softly, through the hearts recesses,  
Steal sweet fancies, one by one.  
Golden dreams, their wings outshaking,  
Now are making  
Realms celestial,  
All of azure,  
New life waking,  
Bringing treasure  
Out of measure  
For the souls delight and pleasure.

Who then, tell me, old and sad,  
Nears us with a heavy tread?  
On the sward in verdure clad,  
Lonely is the strange newcomer,  
Wearily he walks and slow,  
His sweet springtime and his summer  
Faded long and long ago!

Say, who is it yonder walks  
Past the hedgerows decked anew,  
While a fearful spectre stalks  
By his side the woodland through?  
Tis our ancient friend the Jew!  
No sweet fancies hover round him,  
Naught but terror and distress.  
Wounds unhealed  
Where lie revealed  
Ghosts of former recollections,  
Corpses, corpses, old affections,  
Buried youth and happiness.

## Songs of Labor and Other Poems

Brier and blossom bow to meet him  
In derision round his path;  
Gloomily the hemlocks greet him  
And the crow screams out in wrath.  
Strange the birds and strange the flowers,  
Strange the sunshine seems and dim,  
Folk on earth and heavenly powers!  
Lo, the May is strange to him!

Little flowers, it were meeter  
If ye made not quite so bold:  
Sweet ye are, but oh, far sweeter  
Knew he in the days of old!  
Oranges by thousands glowing  
Filled his groves on either hand,  
All the plants were Gods own sowing  
In his happy, far-off land!

Ask the cedars on the mountain!  
Ask them, for they know him well!  
Myrtles green by Sharons fountain,  
In whose shade he loved to dwell!  
Ask the Mount of Olives beauteous,  
Evry tree by evry stream!  
One and all will answer duteous  
For the fair and ancient dream....

Oer the desert and the pleasance  
Gales of Eden softly blew,  
And the Lord His loving Presence  
Evermore declared anew.  
Angel children at their leisure  
Played in thousands round His tent,  
Countless thoughts of joy and pleasure  
God to His beloved sent.

There in bygone days and olden,  
From a wondrous harp and golden  
Charmed he music spirit-haunting,  
Holy, chaste and soul-enchanting.  
Never with the ancient sweetness,  
Never in its old completeness  
Shall it sound: his dream is ended,  
On a willow-bough suspended.

Gone that dream so fair and fleeting!  
Yet behold: thou dreamst anew!  
Hark! a *new* May gives thee greeting  
From afar. Dost hear it, Jew?  
Weep no more, altho with sorrows  
Bowd een to the grave: I see  
Happier years and brighter morrows,  
Dawning, Israel, for thee!  
Hearst thou not the promise ring  
Where, like doves on silver wing,  
Thronging cherubs sweetly sing

## Songs of Labor and Other Poems

Newmade songs of what shall be?

Hark! your olives shall be shaken,  
And your citrons and your limes  
Filled with fragrance. God shall waken.  
Lead you as in olden times.  
In the pastures by the river  
Ye once more your flocks shall tend.  
Ye shall live, and live forever  
Happy lives that know no end.  
No more wandering, no more sadness:  
Peace shall be your lot, and still  
Hero hearts shall throb with gladness  
Neath Moriahs silent hill.  
Nevermore of dread afflictions  
Or oppression need ye tell:  
Filled with joy and benedictions  
In the old home shall ye dwell.  
To the fatherland returning,  
Following the homeward path,  
Ye shall find the embers burning  
Still upon the ruined hearth!

## The Feast Of Lights

Little candles glistening,  
Telling those are listening  
Legends manifold,  
Many a little story,  
Tales of blood and glory  
Of the days of old.

As I watch you flicker,  
As I list you bicker,  
Speak the ancient dreams:  
You have battled, Jew, one time,  
You have conquerd too, one time.  
(God, how strange it seems!)

In your midst was order once,  
And within your border once  
Strangers took no part.  
Jew, you had a land one time,  
And an armèd hand, one time.  
(How it moves the heart!)

Glisten, candles, glisten!  
As I stand and listen  
All the grief in me,  
All the woe is stirred again,  
And the question heard again:  
What the end shall be?

## Chanukah Thoughts

Not always as you see us now,  
Have we been used to weep and sigh,  
We too have grasped the sword, I trow,  
And seen astonished foemen fly!

We too have rushed into the fray,  
For our Belief the battle braved,  
And through the spears have fought our way,  
And high the flag of victry waved.

But generations go and come,  
And suns arise and set in tears,  
And we are weakened now and dumb,  
Foregone the might of ancient years.

In exile where the wicked reign,  
Our courage and our pride expired,  
But een today each throbbing vein  
With Asmonean blood is fired.

Tho cruel hands with mighty flail  
Have threshed us, yet we have not blenched:  
The sea of blood could naught prevail,  
That fire is burning, still unquenched.

Our fall is great, our fall is real,  
(You need but look on us to tell!)  
Yet in us lives the old Ideal  
Which all the nations shall not quell.

## Sfere

I asked of my Muse, had she any objection  
To laughing with me, not a word for reply!  
You see, it is Sfere, our time for dejection,  
And can a Jew laugh when the rule is to cry?  
You laughed then, you say? tis a sound to affright one!  
In Jewish delight, what is worthy the name?  
The laugh of a Jew! It is never a right one,  
For laughing and groaning with him are the same.  
You thought there was zest in a Jewish existence?  
You deemed that the star of a Jew could be kind?  
The Spring calls and beckons with gracious insistence,  
Jew, sit down in sackcloth and weep yourself blind!  
The garden is green and the woodland rejoices:  
How cool are the breezes, with fragrance how blent!  
But Spring calls not *you* with her thousand sweet voices!  
With you it is Sfere, sit still and lament!  
The beautiful summer, this life's consolation,  
In moaning and sighing glides quickly away.  
What hope can it offer to one of my nation?  
What joy can he find in the splendors of May?  
Bewildered and homeless, of whom whoso passes  
May fearlessly stop to make sport at his ease,  
Say, is it for him to seek flowers and grasses,  
For him to be thinking on meadows and trees?  
And if for a moment, forgetting to ponder  
On grief and oppression, song breaks out anew,  
I hear in his lay only: Wander and wander!  
And every note tells me the singer a Jew.  
A skilful musician, and one who is verséd  
In metre and measure, whenever he hears  
The pitiful song of the Jewish disperséd,  
It touches his heart and it moves him to tears.  
The blast of the Rams-horn that quavers and trembles,  
On this, now, alone Jewish fancy is bent.  
To grief and contrition its host it assembles,  
And causes the stoniest heart to relent.  
The wail that went up when the Temple was shattered,  
The song of Atonement, the Suppliants psalm,  
These only he loves, since they took him and scattered,  
Away from the land of the balsam and balm.  
Of all the sweet instruments, shivered and broken,  
That once in the Temple delighted his ear,  
The Rams-horn alone has he kept, as a token,  
And sobs out his soul on it once in the year.  
Instead of the harp and the viol and cymbal,  
Instead of the lyre, the guitar and the flute,  
He has but the dry, withered Rams-horn, the symbol

## Songs of Labor and Other Poems

Of gloom and despondence; the rest all are mute.

He laughs, or he breaks into song, but soon after,  
Tho fain would he take in mans gladness a part,  
One hears, low resounding athwart the gay laughter,  
The Suppliants psalm, and it pierces the heart.

I asked of my Muse, had she any objection  
To laughing with me, not a word for reply!  
You see, it is Sfere, our time for dejection,  
And can a Jew laugh when the rule is to cry?

## Measuring the Graves

First old Minna, bent and lowly,  
Eyes with weeping nearly blind;  
Pessyeh–Tsvaitel, slowly, slowly,  
With the yarn creeps on behind.

On the holy book of Minna  
Fall the tear–dropscarce a word  
(For the heart is moved within her)  
Of her praying can be heard.

Mighty Lord, whose sovereign pleasure  
Made all worlds and men of dust,  
I, Thy humble handmaid, measure,  
God, the dwellings of the just.

Speechless here the ground they cumber,  
Where the pious, gracious God,  
Where Thy hearts beloved slumber  
Underneath the quiet sod.

They who sing in jubilation,  
Lord, before Thy holy seat,  
Each one from his habitation,  
Through the dream for ever sweet.

From the yarn with which I measure,  
Pessyeh–Tsvaitel, filled with awe,  
Wicks will make, to search the treasure,  
Nightly, of Thy holy Law.

Praying still, by faith sustained:  
Thou with whom the holy dwell,  
Scorn not Jacobs prayer unfeigned,  
Mark the tears of Israel!



## The First Bath of Ablution

The wind is keen, the frost is dread,  
Toward the icy water,  
By aunt and mother forth is led  
The fishers lovely daughter.  
Dive in, dive in, my child, with haste!  
Theres naught whereon to ponder,  
The time, dear heart, we must not waste:  
The sun has set out yonder.  
Gods mercy, child, is great and sure:  
Fear not but He will show it!  
Leap in, leap out! and you are pure,  
Tis over ere you know it!  
The frost and cold with cruel knife  
The tender form assail.  
Ah, would you be a Jewish wife,  
You must not weep and quail!  
And in and out, she leaps. Once more!  
Poor girl, it has not served you.  
No purer are you than before:  
A Gentile has observed you!  
And into th icy flood again,  
In terror wild she leaps!  
The white limbs shudder... all in vain!  
The Christian still he peeps.  
The frost and cold, they burn and bite,  
The women rub their fingers,  
The lovely child grows white and white,  
As on the bank she lingers.  
The Law, my child, we must fulfill,  
The scoundrel see depart!  
Yet once! tis but a moments chill,  
Tis but a trifling smart!  
The white-faced child the Law has kept,  
The covenant unstained,  
For in the waters deep she leapt,  
And there below remained.

## Atonement Evening Prayer

Atonement Day evening prayer sadness profound.  
The soul-lights, so clear once, are dying around.  
The reader is spent, and he barely can speak;  
The people are faint, even the basso is weak.  
The choristers pine for the hour of repose.  
Just one two chants more, and the prayer book we close!

And now every Jew's supplication is ended,  
And Nilah\* approaching, and twilight descended.  
The blast of the New Year is blown on the horn,  
All go; by the Ark I am standing forlorn,  
And thinking: How shall it be with us anon,  
When closed is the temple, and everyone gone!

[\* Neilah, (Hebrew) Conclusion, concluding prayer.]

## Exit Holiday

Farewell to the feast-day! the prayr book is stained  
With tears; of the booth scarce a trace has remained;  
The lime branch is withered, the osiers are dying,  
And pale as a corpse the fair palm-frond is lying;  
The boughs of grey willow are trodden and broken  
Friend, these are your hopes and your longings unspoken!

Lo, there lie your dreamings all dimmd and rejected,  
And there lie the joys were so surely expected!  
And there is the happiness blighted and perished,  
And all that aforetime your soul knew and cherished,  
The loved and the longed for, the striven for vainly  
Your whole life before you lies pictured how plainly!

The branches are sapless, the leaves will decay,  
An end is upon us, and whence, who shall say?  
The broom of the beadle outside now has hustled  
The lime and the palm that so pleasantly rustled.  
There blew a cold gust, from our sight all is banished  
The shaft from a cross-bow less swiftly had vanished!