

# **Bialik the National Poet**

**With Rachel Korazim**

**Texts**

- **To the Bird**
- **Alone**
- **About The Slaughter**
- **The City of Slaughter**
- **Shabbat the Queen**
- **Under the Little Green Trees**

## To The Bird H.N.Bialik

Greetings on your return, lovely bird,  
to my window from warmer climes—  
how my soul longed to hear your voice,  
in the winter when you left my dwelling.

שלום רב ששובך, צפורה נחמצה,  
מארכות חום אל-חלוני -  
אל קולך כי ערב מה-גופשי כלתה  
בחורף בעזבך מעוני.

Sing to me, tell me, dear bird  
from far-off wondrous places,  
there in that warm and beautiful land,  
do evil events and calamities happen too?

זמרי, צפורי, צפורי היקרה,  
מארכץ מרחקים נפלאות,  
ה גם שם בארכץ המפה, היפה,  
תרכיבינה חרועות, התלאות?

Do you bring greetings from my fellows in Zion,  
from my brothers near and far?  
O happy ones! Surely they must know  
that I suffer, oh, how I suffer in pain.

התשאילו שלום מאמי בציון,  
מאמי הרחוקים הקרים?  
הו מאשרים! הידעו ידעת  
כי אסבל, הו אסבל מכאובים?

Do they know how great are my enemies here,  
how many rise up against me?  
Sing to me, my bird, of the wonders of that land  
where springtime ever dwells.

הידעו ידעת מה רבו פה שטני,  
מה רבים, הו רבים לי קמים?  
זמרי, צפורי, נפלאות מארכץ,  
האביב בה ינוה עולמים.

Do you bring me greetings from the land's abundance,  
from vale and from mountain top?  
Does God have mercy on Zion,  
though she is yet left with her graves?

התשאילו שלום מזמרת הארץ,  
מעמק, מגיא, מראש הרים?  
ברחים, הנם אלוה א-ציון,  
אם עוזה עזובה לקברים?

And the Sharon Valley and the hills of myrrh—  
do they give their spikenard and spice?  
Does the ancient forest, the old Lebanon,  
awake from its slumber?

ועמק השרון וגבעת הלבונה -  
הינו א-מרם, א-גרם?  
ההקייז משלתו השב ביערים,  
חלבנון היישן, הגרם?

Does the dew fall like pearls upon Mount Hermon,  
or does it descend like tears?  
And how fares the Jordan and its bright waters?  
And each mountain and hill?

הירד פִּנְגִּינִים הַטֵּל עַל הַר חֶרְמוֹן,  
אָס יְרֵד וַיַּפְלֵל כְּזַמְעוֹת?  
וּמָה-שְׁלוֹם הַיְרֵד וּמִמְּפִיו הַבְּהִירִים?  
וּשְׁלוֹם כָּל-הַהֲרִים, הַגְּבֻעוֹת?

Has the heavy cloud withdrawn from them,  
that had spread pitch black darkness –  
o sing to me, my bird, of the land in which  
my fathers found life and death!

הַסָּר מַעֲלִילִים חָעָנוּ הַכָּבֵד,  
הַפְּרֵשׁ עַלְתָּה, אַלְמֹות? –  
זָמָרִי, אַפּוֹרִי, עַל-אָרֶץ בָּה מֵצָאוֹ  
אָבּוֹתִי הַמִּיִּים, הַמִּוּתִים!

Are the flowers I planted yet unwithered,  
while I myself am withered?  
They remind me of the days in which I bloomed,  
but now I am grown old, my strength has gone.

הָאָס-עַד לֹא-נִבְלוּ הַפְּרִחִים שַׁתְּלַתִּי  
כְּאֵשֶׁר נִבְלַתִי אַנְכִּי?  
אָזְכָּרָה יָמִים כְּמוֹתָם פְּרִחָתִי,  
אֵד עַתָּה זָקַנְתִּי, סֶר פְּחִי.

Tell me, my bird, what each tree and shrub whisper,  
what do their leaves murmur to you?  
Do they tell tidings of comfort for which they wait so long,  
as their foliage rustles like the forests of Lebanon?

סָפִרִי, אַפּוֹרִי, סָזְדָּשִׁים כָּל-שִׁים,  
וּמָה-לְךָ טְרִפִּים לְחַשּׁוֹ?  
הַבָּשָׂרָנוּ נְחוּמִים אָס-קָוׁו לִימִים,  
פְּרִימָנוּ כָּלְבָנוּ יְרַעֲשָׁוּ?

And my brothers the workers, who sowed in tears—  
do they harvest their sheaves in joy?  
Who will give me wings that I may fly to the land  
in which the almond and date-palm bloom?

וְאַמְּיִ הַעֲבָדִים, הַזְּרָעִים בְּדָמָה –  
הַקָּצָרְוּ בְּרִנָּה הַעֲמָרִי? –  
מַי יִתְּנוּ-לִי אָבָר וּעֲפָתִי אֶל-אָרֶץ  
בָּה יִנְאַזֵּז הַשְּׁקָד, הַתְּפִמָּר!

And what can I tell you, lovely bird,  
what do you hope to hear from me?  
From this cold and distant land you will not hear songs,  
only lamentations, only weeping and wailing.

וְאַגְּיִ מָה אָסְפֵר לְךָ, אַפּוֹר נְחַמְּדָה,  
מִפִּי מָה-תְּקֹנוּ לְשָׁמְעִי?  
מִפְּנֵי אָרֶץ קָרָה לֹא-זְמִירֹת תְּשִׁמְעִי,  
רַק קִינִים, רַק חָגָה וְנֵה.

Shall I tell of the hardships which are already  
well known in the lands of the living –  
o who can number the troubles past  
and present and yet to come?

האָסְפֵר הַתְּלָאֹות, שֶׁכְּבָר הוּא בָּאָרֶצֶת  
הַמִּיִּם נִשְׁמְעוֹת, מַוְּעָדֹת? –  
הַוַּי, מִסְפָּר מֵי יְמֵנָה לְאָרוֹת הַעֲבָרוֹת,  
לְאָרוֹת מִתְּרַגְּשֹׁת וּבָאוֹת?

Migrate, my bird, to your mountain, your desert!  
Be happy that you have left my house;  
if you dwelt with me, then you too, winged creature,  
would weep bitterly over my fate.

נוֹזִי, צְפּוֹרִי, אֶל-הַרְחָה, מַדְבָּרְךָ!  
אַשְׁרָתָה, כִּי עֲזֹבָת אֶת-אַחֲלִי;  
לוּ עַפְנִי שְׁכִינָתָה, אָז גַּס-אַתָּה, כָּנָה  
רַגְנִים, מֶרֶבֶת בָּכִית לְגֹזְלִי.

Yet weeping and tears are not the best remedy,  
they will not heal my affliction;  
my eyes have already darkened, I have filled a  
water-skin with tears,  
my heart has already dried like grass;

אֵך לֹא בָּכֵי וְדַمְעֹות לִי גַּהָּה יִיטִיבָּו,  
לֹא אֵלֶּה יְרָפָאוּ מִכְתָּי;  
כָּבָר עַיִן עַשְׁשָׁו, מִלְאָתִי נָאֵד דַמְעֹות,  
כָּבָר חַכְתָּה פְּעַשְׁבָּ לְבָתִי;

The tears have already reached their end—  
yet there is no end to my grief.  
Greetings on your return, my dear bird,  
let your song give me some happiness!

כָּבָר כָּלֹו מַדְמֹעֹות, כָּבָר כָּלֹו הַקְּאִים -  
וְלֹא הַקִּיז הַקָּז עַל-יְגֹנִי,  
שְׁלָוָם רַב שְׁוִיבָה, צְפּוֹרִי הַיְקָרָה,  
צְהַלִּי-נָא קֹלָךְ וּרְגִי!  
ニיסו トランニア

## ALONE

Wind blew, light drew them all.  
New songs revive their mornings.  
Only I, small bird, am forsaken  
under the Shekhina's wing.

Alone. I remain alone.  
The Shekhina's broken wing  
trembled over my head. My heart knew hers:  
her fear for her only son.

Driven from every ridge –  
one desolate corner left –  
in the House of Study she hides in shadow,  
and I alone share her pain.

Imprisoned beneath her wing  
my heart longed for the light.  
She buried her face on my shoulder  
and a tear fell on my page.

Dumbly she clung and wept.  
Her broken wing sheltered me:  
“scattered to the four winds of heaven;  
they are gone, and I am alone”.

It was an ancient lament  
a suppliant cry I heard  
in that lost and silent weeping,  
and in that scalding tear.

לבדי

כלם נושא ברות, כלם פסחן האור,  
שירה חדשה אט-בקר סימם הרגינה;  
ואני, גוזל רוח, נשפחתי מלב  
תחת פנוי השלינה.

בזד, בזד נשארתי, ותשכינה אפ-היא  
כనף ימינה השבורה על-ראשי הרעה.  
דע לבי אט-לבה: סרד פרדה על,  
על-בנה, על-יחידה.

כבר נתגשה מפל-הציזות, רק-עד  
פנת סתר שוממה וקענה נשארה –  
בית-המקרא – ותתפס באל, ואה  
עפה יסוד באלה.

וכשכללה לבבי למלון, לאור,  
וכשא-לי המקום ממתה לכתפה –  
גבשה ראשה בכתפי, ודמעתה על-זך  
גמורת נטפה.

חרש בכתה עלי ותתרפק עלי,  
וכמו שכה בכתפה השבורה בעדי:  
“כלם נושא ברות, כלם פרחו להם,  
ואומר לבדי, לבדי”...

## On The Slaughter

By Chaim Nachman Bialik  
Translated by A.Z. Foreman

Mercy O Heavens, beg mercy for me!  
If a god be in you, with a way in you,  
A way that I never knew  
Pray unto him for me!  
My own heart is dead, prayer drained from my tongue.  
The hands lie limp, and hope undone.  
How long? Until when? How long?

Executioner! Here is a neck to hew  
With your mighty axe. Put me down like a dog.  
All the world's my chopping block.  
And we're just Jews, just a few.  
My blood is fair game. From the skull you sever  
Bursts the blood of old men, the blood of children.  
Murder's blood be on you forever.

If Justice there be, let it now shine forth!  
But if it wait till I'm killed from under the sky  
To shine, let Justice die  
And its throne be thrown to the earth  
And heaven rot with eternal wrong.  
Ye wicked, go forth in this your brute force,  
And live in your blood, a cleansed throng.

And cursed be he that shall say: avenge this!  
Such vengeance for blood of babe and maiden  
Hath yet to be wrought by Satan.  
Let blood just pierce the abyss  
And pierce the abysmal black of creation  
And there in the dark devour and corrode  
The low Earth's rotting foundation!

על השחיטה  
חימן נהמן ביאליק

שׁמִים, בְּקָשׁוּ רַקְמִים עַלִּי!  
אָם-יִשְׁבָּכֶם אֶל וְלֹאֶל בְּכֶם נִתְּבֶּ—  
וְאֵן יִלְאֶמְצָא תְּבוּ—  
הַתְּפִלְלוּ אַפְּמָעֵלִי!  
אֲנֵי — לְבִי מַת וְאֵין עוֹד תְּפִלָּה בְּשָׁפְתִי,  
וְכָבֵר אָזַלְתָּ יְד אֲפָ-אֵין תְּקֹנָה עוֹד—  
עַד-מָתִי, עַד-אָנָה, עַד-מָתִי?

הַפְּלִינוּ! קָא צְנוֹאָר — קָוָם שְׁחַטִּ!  
עַרְפֵּנִי כְּכָלָב, לְכָ זְרוּעָ עַם-קְרֹדָם,  
וְכָל-הָאָרֶץ לִי גְּרֹדָם—  
וְאֶנְחָנוּ — אֶנְחָנוּ הַמְּעַט!  
קְמִי מְפַר — הַקְּרָלָד, וַיְזַנֵּק דָם רְצָחָ,  
דָם יְזַנֵּק וְשָׁב עַל-כְּתָמָנָתָךְ—  
וְלֹא יִמְחַ לְנֶצֶח, לְנֶצֶח.

וְאָם יִשְׁצָדָק — יַוְפֵעַ מִיד!  
אָה אַמ-אַחֲרִי הַשְּׁמָדִי מִפְּחַת רְקִיעַ  
הַצָּדָק יַוְפֵעַ  
יַמְגַר-נָא כְּסָאוֹ לְעָד!  
וְבְּרַשְׁעַ עַוְלָמִים שְׁמִים יִמְקֹוּ  
אָפָ-אַפְּמָעֵם לְכָוֹ, זְדִים, בְּחַמְסָכָם זָה  
וּבְדָמָכָם חַיוּ וְנֶזֶקָוּ.

וְאַרְוֹר הָאוֹמָר: נִקְםָ!  
נִקְמָה כְּזֹאת, נִקְמָת דָם יְלִד קְטוּ  
עוֹד לְאַ-בָּרָא הַשְּׂטָן—  
וַיְקַב הַקְּם אַת-הַתְּהָוָם!  
יַקְבֵ הַקְּם עַד תְּהִלּוֹת מְחֻשָׁכִים,  
וְאֶכֶל בְּחַשְׁךְ וְחַמֵּר שָׁם  
כָל-מוֹסְדּוֹת הָאָרֶץ בְּגַמְקִים.

## The City of Slaughter (excerpt)

<http://www.resources.en.wzo.org.il/home/P102.jsp?arc=201946>

Arise and go now to the city of slaughter;  
Into its courtyard wind thy way;  
There with thine own hand touch, and with the eyes of thine head,  
Behold on tree, on stone, on fence, on mural clay,  
The spattered blood and dried brains of the dead.  
Proceed thence to the ruins, the split walls reach,  
Where wider grows the hollow, and greater grows the breach;  
Pass over the shattered hearth, attain the broken wall  
Those burnt and barren brick, whose charred stones reveal  
The open mouths of such wounds, that no mending  
Shall ever mend, nor healing ever heal.  
There will thy feet in feathers sink, and stumble  
On wreckage doubly wrecked, scroll heaped on manuscript.  
Fragments again fragmented

Descend then, to the cellars of the town,  
There where the virginal daughters of thy folk were fouled,  
Where seven heathen flung a woman down,  
The daughter in the presence of her mother,  
The mother in the presence of her daughter,  
Before slaughter, during slaughter, and after slaughter!  
Touch with thy hand the cushion stained; touch  
The pillow incarnadined:  
This is the place the wild ones of the wood, the beasts of the field  
With bloody axes in their paws compelled thy daughters yield:  
Beasted and swined!  
Note also, do not fail to note,  
In that dark corner, and behind that cask  
Crouched husbands, bridegrooms, brothers, peering from the cracks,  
Watching the sacred bodies struggling underneath  
The bestial breath,  
Stifled in filth, and swallowing their blood!  
Watching from the darkness and its mesh  
The lecherous rabble portioning for booty  
Their kindred and their flesh!  
Crushed in their shame, they saw it all;  
They did not stir nor move;  
They did not pluck their eyes out; they

Beat not their brains against the wall!  
Perhaps, perhaps each watcher had it in his heart to pray:  
A miracle, O Lord †<sup>a</sup> and spare my skin this day!

Come, now, and I will bring thee to their lairs  
The privies, jakes and pigpens where the heirs  
Of Hasmoneans lay, with trembling knees,  
Concealed and cowering -the sons of the Maccabees!  
The seed of saints, the scions of the lions!  
Who, crammed by scores in all the sanctuaries of their shame  
So sanctified My name!  
It was the flight of mice they fled,  
The scurrying of roaches was their flight;  
They died like dogs, and they were dead!  
And on the next morn, after the terrible night  
The son who was not murdered found  
The spurned cadaver of his father on the ground.  
Now wherefore dost thou weep, O son of Man?

And thou, too, pity them not, nor touch their wound;  
Within their cup no further measure pour.  
Wherever thou wilt touch, a bruise is found,  
Their flesh is wholly sore.  
For since they have met pain with resignation  
And have made peace with shame,  
What shall avail thy consolation?  
They are too wretched to evoke thy scorn.  
They are too lost thy pity to evoke.  
So let them go, then, men to sorrow born,  
Mournful and slinking, crushed beneath their yoke.  
So to their homes, and to their hearth depart  
Rot in the bones, corruption in the heart.  
And go upon the highway,  
Thou shalt then meet these men destroyed by sorrow,  
Sighing and groaning, at the doors of the wealthy  
Proclaiming their sores, like so much peddler's wares,  
The one his battered head, t'other limbs unhealthy,  
One shows a wounded arm, and one a fracture bares.  
And all have eyes that are the eyes of slaves,  
Slaves flogged before their masters;

And each one begs, and each one craves:  
Reward me, Master, for that my skull is broken.  
Reward me for my father who was martyred!

And so their sympathy implore.  
For you are now as you have been of yore  
As you stretched your hand  
So will you stretch it,  
And as you have been wretched

So are you wretched!  
What is thy business here, o son of man?  
Rise, to the desert flee!  
The cup of affliction thither bear with thee!  
Take thou their soul, render it in many a shred!  
With impotent rage, thy heart deform!  
Thy tear upon the barren boulders shed  
And send they bitter cry into the storm.

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"חוגו אתagi אבותכם והוסיפו עליהם קצת משלכם לפי כחכם ולפי טעמכם ולפי מסיבותכם. העיקר שתעשו את הכל' באמונה ומtower הרגשה היה וצורך נפשי, ואל תתחכמו הרבה".

חימ נחמן ביאליק,

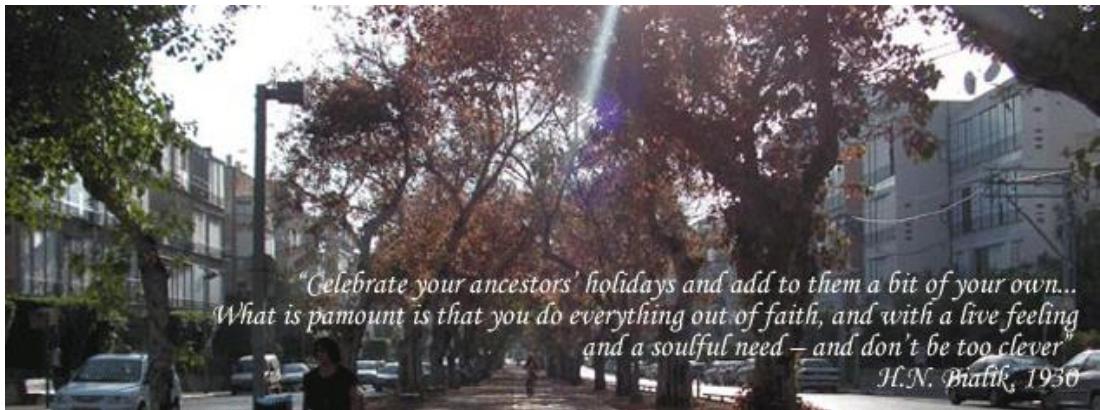
באיגרת תשובה לדוד אומנסקי, גניגר, 28 במרץ 1930

הספה מראש האילנות נסמלקה-  
בזאו נגא לא קראת שבט המלכה.  
הגה היא יונקית מקודשיה, הברוכה  
ועפה מלאכים אבא שלום ומנוחה.  
בזואי בזואי המלכה!  
בזואי בזואי המלכה!  
שלום עלייכם, מלאכי השלום.

קפלנו פני שבט ברננה ותפליה,  
הביתה נשובה, בלבד מלא גילה.  
שם עורך כסלוון, סגורות יairo,  
כל פנות בית ירוש, ינהיין.  
שבט שלום וمبرך!  
שבט שלום וمبرך!  
בזואכם לשולם, מלאכי השלום.

שבוי, זכה, עטנו ובזינך נא אורי  
לייה נוים, אמר פעררי.  
נאנה נכזב בברגד חמודות,  
בזמירות ותפלות ובשלוש סעודות.  
ובמנוחה שלמה,  
ובמנוחה נעמה-  
ברכונו לשולם, מלאכי השלום!

הספה מראש האילנות נסמלקה-  
באו ונלעה את שבט המלכה.  
צאתך לשולם, מקודשיה, קזקה-  
דע, שישת ימים אל שוכב נחכה...  
כו לשבט הבא!  
כו לשבט הבא!  
צאתכם לשולם, מלאכי השלום!



## Shabbat the Queen

The sun has already disappeared beyond the treetops,  
Come let us go and welcome the Sabbath Queen,  
She is already descending among us, holy and blessed,  
And with her are angels, a host of peace and rest,  
Come, O Queen,  
Come, O Queen,  
Peace be unto you, O Angels of Peace.'

We have welcomed the Shabbat with song and prayer,  
Let us return home our hearts full of joy.  
There, the table is set, the lights are lit,  
Every corner of the house is shining with a divine spark.  
A good and blessed Shabbat.  
A good and blessed Shabbat.  
Come in peace, O Angels of Peace.

Sit among us, O pure Shabbat Queen, and enlighten us with your splendor.  
Tonight and tomorrow–then you may pass on.  
And we for our part will honor you by wearing beautiful clothing,  
By singing zemirot, by praying, and by eating three meals.  
And with complete rest.  
And with pleasant rest.  
Bless me with peace, O Angels of Peace.

The sun has already disappeared beyond the treetops.  
Come let us accompany the Sabbath Queen's departure.  
Go in peace, holy and blessed.  
Know that for six day we will await your return.  
Yes, till next Shabbat.  
Yes, till next Shabbat.  
Go in peace, O Angels of Peace.

# Unter di grininke beymelekh

[Under the little green trees]

H.N. Bialik – Leo Kopf

[See lecture: Tree of Life]

Unter di grininke beymelekh

shpiln zikh Moyshelekh, Shloymelekh,  
Tsites, kapotkelekh, shtreymelekh,  
Yidelekh, frish fun di eyelekh.

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

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

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

Under the little green trees

Little Moyshe's and Shloyme's play,  
Fringed garments, coats and earlocks -  
just like newly-hatched Jews.

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

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

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