

NIGHT TWOARDS

נאֶכְטווערטער
אַ מדרש אויפֿן חורבן

NIGHTWORDS

A LITURGY
ON THE
HOLOCAUST

מִיְלֵי לַיְלָה
מְדַרְשׁ עַל הַשׁוֹאָה

Compiled by David G. Roskies

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I dedicate *Nightwords* to his blessed memory.

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SOME WORDS ON *NIGHTWORDS*

The Day of Broken Covenants

In the Jewish calendar, there is a day for every purpose under heaven: a day for parody and a day for penitence, a day for feasting and a day for fasting, a day for reenacting the Exodus and a day for reliving the Exile. But where, in this orchestrated array of catharsis and commemoration, is there a day set aside for anger? How can we love God with all our heart and soul (Deut. 10:12) without a time for sanctioned rage? Can we rejoice before the Lord, affirm the covenant between the God of Israel and the People of Israel, if we cannot acknowledge the broken covenants? A marriage, no matter how solid, cannot be sustained without the ability to express one's disappointment, without a venue for one's sense of betrayal. So too the marriage promulgated at Sinai. "At Sinai we received the Torah," the poet Jacob Glatstein reminds us, "and in Lublin," in the shadow of the Maidanek death camp, "we gave it back." The destruction of European Jewry is the sign of God's betrayal of Israel. Yom Hashoah marks the day of broken covenants. It is the day of sanctioned rage against God.

Once before, the People of Israel stood at this very crossroads. The sin offerings had just been abrogated, priests and prophets were silenced, and God's Presence removed from the Temple in Jerusalem. What did the survivors do? Some, those distant Jews who were far removed from the catastrophic events and secure in their surrogate temples, went on with business as usual. Contrariwise, some turned the Destruction into the sum and substance of their faith; as Mourners of Zion, they donned sackcloth and ashes and ascended to the devastated Temple mount, there to recite dirges. Still others abandoned Judaism altogether.

The rabbinic course of action was to recreate Judaism in the wake of the disaster by formulating new laws and gathering new lore.

The Art of Sacred Parody

Rather than allow the Holocaust to become the crucible of Jewish culture, rather than turn every day in the calendar into a day of national mourning, it is possible—and preferable—to make Jewish culture the crucible in which all events, no matter how catastrophic, are reforged. That strategy was employed by some of the Rabbis after the Destruction of the Second Temple. They found a way of mimicking the sacrilege and channeling Jewish rage back toward the wellsprings of greatest sanctity. Confront that which is most timeless and sacred with the evil that your enemies have perpetrated in historical time. Do unto the sacred texts that which they have done to you. And out of that brutal juxtaposition of divine promise and historical reality, of prophecy and profanity, a new set of meanings evolved.

Nightwords is a primer in this art of sacred parody. It brings together the boldest such symbolic inversions from rabbinic, medieval, and modern literary sources. The oldest—and most celebrated—is from Talmud Gittin 56b:

WHO IS LIKE UNTO THEE AMONG THE MIGHTY (*elim*), ADONAI [Psalm 89:9]? In the school of Rabbi Ishmael it was taught: “Who is like unto Thee among the silent (*illemim*), Adonai”—since God sees the suffering of God’s children and remains silent!

A wordgame? Hardly. These words of the Rabbis border on blasphemy. They give license to argue with God using God's own words. Here is another, more elaborate example, from the *Midrash on Psalms 19:2*:

Rabbi Pinhas the Priest said: Moses established the order of prayer for Israel when he said: THE LORD YOUR GOD IS GOD OF GODS, AND LORD OF LORDS, THE GREAT, THE MIGHTY, THE AWESOME GOD. Jeremiah, in his order of prayer, said: THE GREAT, THE MIGHTY GOD, but not "the awesome God." Why did Jeremiah say "The mighty God?" Because, he explained, even though God saw the children put in chains and the Temple destroyed, He remained silent; hence it is proper to call God "mighty." But he did not say "the awesome God," because the Temple was destroyed. For where was the awe, if enemies came into God's house and were not awed? Daniel, in his order of prayer, said, THE GREAT, THE AWESOME GOD, but not "the mighty God." Why not? Because, as Daniel asked: "When God's children were put in chains, where was God's might?" (Trans. William G. Braude)

Jeremiah and Daniel are here recast as radical liturgists who throw back at God the failure to fulfil the letter of the divine promise to Moses. By the same token, the twelfth-century poet Isaac bar Shalom built an entire *piyyut* (liturgical poem) around Rabbi Ishmael's countercommentary on Psalm 89:9. The full weight of medieval Jewry's historical experience is brought to bear upon the covenantal promises made to Israel in the Torah—and subsequently broken. In *Nightwords*, Isaac bar Shalom's "There Is None Like You Among the Dumb" is enlisted to form the backbone of the "Yizkor" service. Only the date was changed, to update the charge.

Such arguing with God, which the Rabbis called *ḥutspah kelapei shemaya*, is nowhere more radically expressed than in the Book of Job. Job is our first modern, the progenitor of Dmitri Karamazov, of Sholem Aleichem's Tevye, of Kafka's Joseph K. In revising *Nightwords* for this, the fourth time, I was fortunate to have at my disposal a spare and vigorous translation of the Book of Job by my colleague, Raymond P. Scheindlin. Scheindlin's Job brings to mind the personal testimonies in poetry and prose from the Warsaw, Vilna, Lodz, Cracow, Bialystok, and Riga ghettos, in which adults protest their innocence and helplessness, children are wise beyond their years, and free thinkers turn in desperation and hope—to God. These wartime writings, which make up the authentic core of the literature of the Holocaust, pay close attention to the brick walls and barbed wire, to the specific terrors of night and day, to the passage of time, to the growing numbers of the dead and dying, and to the burden of memory that the survivors will have to carry with them. By using the 'Amidah (or Standing Prayer) as the moment of radical self-confrontation, one can recreate the dialogue of a ghetto Jew caught between a severed past and an unattainable future. Our latter-day Job, however, does not conclude with a voice that answers from the whirlwind. The whirlwind alone *is* the answer.

It is possible, through sacred parody, to allow for God's presence by categorically denying God's promise. Thus the fourth "Invocation" employs the richly ambiguous Hebrew phrase *yits'aku 'al Adonai*, which can be translated as "[each man, woman, and child] shall cry out against Adonai." Once again it is the Rabbis who took the lead in subverting the contextual meaning of the words. Where God exclaims to Cain in Gen. 4:10, "*kol demei aḥikha tso'akim eilay min ha'adamah*, Hark, your brother's blood cries out to Me from the

ground!” the Rabbis read *eilai*, with an aleph, as *‘alai*, with an ‘ayin. “Your brother’s blood cries out *against* Me from the ground!” After all, when one brother murders another, who is culpable if not the God who created each human in the divine image?

The Exodus, the Holocaust, and Yom Hashoah

Dialogue, voices, questioning, and yes, even orchestrated rage—all this hearkens back to the Passover seder. Not coincidentally, Yom Hashoah (or Holocaust Remembrance Week, as it called in the United States) takes place in the two-week period between the conclusion of Passover and Israel’s Independence Day. It is a period fraught with group memory. Just as the Exodus requires a seder, a communal retelling of the story, complete with special foods and songs, there is a felt need for a Holocaust-specific ritual to be recited year-in, year-out, in the presence of one’s family, community, synagogue, and church.

The Passover festival was ordained when the People of Israel stood poised between the ninth and tenth plagues (Exod. 12:14–28). Even while Egypt was being ravaged by the rod of God’s wrath, the celebration of Israel’s miraculous rescue was already laid out in bold detail. For seven days shall the People of Israel eat unleavened bread, all the people, even the strangers living in their midst; and a paschal lamb shall be sacrificed and consumed before sunrise, not just on this night but every year on this night in perpetuity. Much later, after the Second Temple was destroyed and the Jews were dispersed, the Rabbis entered the breach and invented the seder as we know it. Doing that which they did best—applying

the Torah to everyday life—the Rabbis turned the Passover festival as centered on the Jerusalem Temple into a ritual drama to be enacted by all Jews, everywhere.

The Jews of later generations are specifically enjoined to experience the event as if *they themselves* went out of Egypt. How? Not by listening to a rabbi preach, a professor lecture, or a politician extemporize. Rather, the Exodus is relived by performing a script that was compiled from many disparate sources and over many hundreds of years.

It is the duty of our generation to create a communal ritual for Yom Hashoah.

The Holocaust as a Paradigm Shift

A ritual for Yom Hashoah must begin with those aspects of the Holocaust that are utterly unassimilable. Unique to the Holocaust are the mounds of shoes, combs, hair, prostheses, eyeglasses, and valises belonging to the murdered victims. They bear witness to something heretofore unknown. Never have the innocent been so systematically stripped of security, sanctity, property, and sustenance before being stripped of their lives.

Unique to the Holocaust are the tattooed numbers. They represent the permanent branding of every Jew marked for slave labor and eventual murder. In the writings of Ka-Tzetnik 135633 (Yekhiel Feiner-Dinur), branding becomes a sign of the Apocalypse, beginning with the Jewish stars and armbands that civilians were forced to wear, and culminating in the branding of young Jewish women as *Feld-huren* in Auschwitz. How to live with the shame of it? How reclaim the status of a holy people when branding of the flesh is condemned by the Torah as a form of idolatry; when all the Torah scrolls have either been burned or made

into boots; when every prayer shawl was sold or bartered for bread; when the skin of the victims was used for lampshades?

It is for this reason that Elie Wiesel states, in biblical cadence, “In the beginning was the Holocaust.” He means that the Holocaust signals a rupture in the divine order and in Jewish self-understanding. If there is to be a sanctified life in the wake of this catastrophe, the people must discover new sources of meaning.

Midrash, Liturgy, Anthology

So the Holocaust resists a single layer of meaning, a single textual tradition. That is why we call this creative anthology of biblical, rabbinic, medieval, and modern sources a “midrash.” In midrash, no single voice is authoritative. No scholar, be he ever so famous, can provide the definitive interpretation. It is a level, and extremely cluttered, playing field. Each new reading is introduced the same way: “*davar aher*, and here is something else.” And if one reading contradicts the other, so much the better. What’s more, these insights and novellae are recorded in shorthand, a mere précis of what must have been a long and brilliant discourse. The traditional fragmentariness of midrash demands that we fill in the missing context.

The Holocaust is our Text and context; the rabbis and modern writers, our commentators. Since midrash stems from the fundamental belief that “text and experience are reciprocally enlightening; even as the immediate event helps make the ancient text intelligible, so in turn the text reveals the significance of the event” (Judah Goldin). If the Holocaust repre-

sents a new historical archetype, a new order of reality, it must somehow yield its meaning in fierce dialogue with received texts. One way to measure the awefulness of this event is by the number and diversity of the interpretations that it invokes or engenders: the prophets Isaiah and Ezekiel; Mishnahs Sotah, Kelim, and Berakhot; the medieval chronicles; Kierkegaard, Camus, and Kazantzakis.

Within their new anthological setting, these disparate texts shed some of their old meanings and gain new ones. The biblical ritual of *ḥalitsah* begins as a denial of responsibility for one's deceased brother, a denial mysteriously signaled by the removal of one's sandal. It ends with millions of abandoned shoes and no one to "establish a name" for their murdered owners except us, who have just removed our own shoes. Will we deny these brothers and sisters their names?

The midrashic method affords startling insights precisely because it invites the marriage of irrenconcilable ideas. *Nightwords* is structured around three such impossible pairings:

—God's command to Abraham to sacrifice his only son on the altar was enacted—in God's absence—by every Jewish mother and father who walked to their deaths hand in hand with their children.

—The Deuteronomic commandment to bind the straps of the tefillin for a sign upon one's hand is carried out with greatest devotion by those who have a concentration camp number tattooed on their arm.

—And the most awe-ful pairing: two maps, one laid upon the other. The first is of the Israelite camp in the desert with all the tribes neatly arrayed around the Ark of the

Covenant. The second is of Birkenau, the largest death camp in Europe, with its Family Camp, Women's Camp, Gypsy Camp, and "Canada." At the center of each of these encampments is a space where no mere mortal who enters will come out alive, so terrible is the cloud or Presence housed therein.

Once we are privy to such terrible knowledge, there is danger of succumbing to the Sitra Aḥra, to the Evil Side of life. The purpose of *Nightwords* is to give voice to the outrage, to grant the evil its due, and thereby to contain it. In its sequence and staging, *Nightwords* seeks to create a liturgical space in which the community removes its shoes in mourning, gives voice to its anger and grief, enters vicariously into that Other Time and Place, then reshapes itself through an assemblage of defiance, grief, and hope. The last two acts (the Hallel and Yizkor) are more straightforward, and less jagged than what comes before.

To encompass the entirety of our historical experience, even while cutting the enormity of Auschwitz down to manageable size, there must be a day set aside for the night, so that on the morrow, our fractured lives may be sanctified anew.

New Languages, New Songs, New Rituals

As the day of broken covenants, Yom Hashoah must stretch the bounds of the fixed liturgy beyond traditional limits and languages. *Nightwords* introduces Yiddish as a language of public prayer. Much maligned by friend and foe alike, Yiddish has more recently been enshrined as *leshon hakedoshim*, the language of the martyrs. But Yiddish can speak both for the fighters and the martyrs. The most famous hymns of the Jewish resistance are

Mordecai Gebirtig's "Es brent!" written in 1936, and Hirsh Glik's "Zog nit keyn mol!" written in 1943. They bespeak, in Yiddish, a covenantal faith that remained unbroken.

In contrast, the three Yiddish songs that are woven into the text of *Nightwords* are all in a minor key, all in the voices of the martyrs. Why has the voice of armed resistance been suppressed? I have done so in line with two outstanding monuments to the Holocaust: Rachel Auerbach's "Yizkor, 1943," written in Warsaw six months after the uprising and the final liquidation of the ghetto, and Nathan Rapoport's Warsaw Ghetto Monument, unveiled in 1948. From Auerbach and Rapoport we learn that a special effort is required to mourn the nameless millions. To bring the martyrs and fighters together in a single act of commemoration is to invite an invidious comparison between them. It is to imply that those who went to their deaths without guns in their hands were somehow to blame. But the dead are blameless! They perished, as Auerbach writes, as if swept away by some force of nature. While the fighters are remembered, each by name and political affiliation, the only monument to the martyrs are the words that we recite and the songs that we sing in their spoken language.

The German of Goethe, Heine, and Rilke is another language spoken by the murdered Jews. German-Jewish creativity is here represented by Martin Buber, Nelly Sachs, and Peter Weiss. Despite a desire for inclusivity and innovation, however, I could not bring myself to quote German-language texts other than through the neutral medium of English. *Nightwords* is about wrestling with the severed past, not restitution.

It is clearly no simple matter to experience the event as if *we ourselves* went out of Europe. The only viable model remains the Passover seder. But how much easier it was for the

Rabbis! The duration, basic narrative, and symbolic foods of the festival were already in place. The Rabbis' task was to draft a new script, with their favorite cast of characters playing the lead: Rabbi Akiva, Rabbi Tarfon, and other greats of the rabbinical academy. We who seek to commemorate the Holocaust have far fewer guidelines—and many more characters and cultural idioms to choose from.

Nightwords is situated between two different sets of cultural norms. It brings together the Theater of the Absurd, much in vogue in the years 1965–71 when *Nightwords* was evolving, and the culture of contemplative prayer, as practiced by a generation of young American Jews in Havurat Shalom Community Seminary. The connection between the thirty-six speaking roles and the substance of what they say is mostly ironic, in keeping with the conventions of absurdist theater, which questions all notions of authority. Thus, a “Child” is required to say things that no child in the “real” world ought ever to say. The “Mute” is given some of the most eloquent speaking parts.

From the Havurah's license to experiment, to “reinvent” Judaism in a more contemporary idiom, come the boldest moments in *Nightwords*. Hearing the Scroll of Happenings chanted to the traditional cantillation of the Torah brings home the elemental horror of the atrocities, the more so when their textual source is revealed to be a medieval chronicle. That all the participants are left staring at a mound of their own shoes breaks down those emotional barriers that we inevitably erect when we are forced to grapple with something beyond our comprehension.

But by what authority does one mandate so radical a rite as the Ritual of the Number—the experiential core of *Nightwords*? There is none. Some participants will recoil at the colossal

chutzpah of having each reader inscribe a number on the arm of the person next in line. What moral presumptuousness to act out becoming an inmate at Auschwitz! There was serious debate about this prior to the first public reading of *Nightwords* at Havurat Shalom. As fate would have it, the reading was attended by a survivor of Auschwitz with a bona fide number on his arm. He allayed our fears at service's end. Precisely because the burden of the number was only vicarious, he was pleased to have shared it with a group of American-born Jews. Some years later, my colleague Neil Gillman at the Jewish Theological Seminary had the opposite response. He observed that because of the Holocaust, something so benign as counting heads—as when we count the requisite ten Jews for a quorum—had taken on a sinister resonance. Upon discovering the number still inscribed on his forearm the morning after, he could not decide what to do. Does he wash it off or leave it on?

As always, the future will decide. It may be that this kind of religious engagement is altogether unworkable outside of North America. Or we may already be living at a time when religious passion expresses itself best by reclaiming that which carries the stamp of Tradition.

One thing is certain, however. Should there ever come a time when the sight of a number branded on human flesh does not strike terror in the heart and does not shake the foundations of one's faith, then at such a time the memory of the Holocaust will have died and the memory of Sinai will have been greatly diminished.

NEW YORK CITY
Shevat, 5760

NOTES ON STAGING

Nightwords can be staged in any manner of congregation: in an intimate, stripped-down setting; in a large sanctuary; in an outdoor amphitheater. Each setting requires a different level of preparation and allows for a different set of meanings.

At its simplest, *Nightwords* requires that only three participants rehearse their parts: the SINGER, who must learn to perform the three songs from the Vilna ghetto (with or without an accompanist); the POET, who recites the Names of the Children in Yiddish, and leads off the Yizkor Service by counting slowly from one to six million; and the HAZZAN, who chants from the Scroll of Happenings according to the Torah cantillation, rends a piece of his or her clothing, and then conducts the Hallel. An audio cassette is available from the office of CLAL that contains a recording of the songs, the recitation, and the cantillation. If any of these prove too daunting for the participants to learn, the tape may be substituted for the live performance.

Otherwise, no advance preparation or special linguistic competence are required. The roles may be handed out at random to the first 33 people who show up for the reading of *Nightwords*. (If there is less than a quorum, roles can be doubled up.) Alternatively, the ushers may ask people if they are comfortable reading Hebrew or Yiddish, and certain roles (such as the HISTORIAN, the MUTE, and the CARPENTER) may be handed out accordingly. There is something to be said for the element of surprise, for the unexpected meanings that accrue when a certain role, say, that of the NURSE or of ISAAC, is read by someone with a European or Israeli accent. One reading of *Nightwords* was performed by the parents and students of a sixth-grade class. This not only dramatized the Deuteronomic commandment

of teaching these words to one's children. There was also a special eloquence to the difficulty that the sixth-graders had pronouncing some of the words.

On the whole, however, *Nightwords* speaks for and through an adult audience. Adolescents, for example, will have a hard time maintaining the solemnity of the Ritual of the Number; at their age, any bodily contact is fraught with embarrassment. Special provision, to be sure, should be made for the elderly, who may object to removing their shoes, and in any event would be greatly discomfited by having to retrieve their shoes at program's end.

Ushers should be posted at the door. Their task is to hand out copies of the service, to assign the roles, and to instruct the participants to remove their shoes at the door. The optimal layout calls for the congregation to be seated in concentric circles, with The Thirty-Six constituting the inner circle. Their physical proximity allows the Ritual of the Number to proceed more quickly. Four extra chairs should be placed in the center of the circle for the reading of the Scroll of Happenings. The space should also be big enough to accommodate all the shoes that will be dumped there during the *Halitsah* ceremony. At one well-attended reading of *Nightwords*, the ushers stuffed all the shoes into large plastic bags, which were then unceremoniously dumped inside the circle.

Other ritual objects include:

- 6 *yortsayt* (memorial) candles to be lit and positioned somewhere in the room;
- a washable ink felt-tip pen;
- a scroll containing the Scroll of Happenings.

To set the proper mood, there ought to be music playing in the background as the congregation is seated. Albinoni's *Adagio for Strings and Organ* is one possible choice. Recorded songs from the Holocaust might be another. Likewise, there is room for music at the end, when people are leaving.

Some thought ought to be given to the lighting: bright enough to read by, but dark enough to suggest a ritual of mourning.

Should *Nightwords* be transformed into a performance piece, which has occurred on numerous occasions, audiovisual aids (such as slides) and even costumes can be used. If the decision is made to turn the congregation into an audience, with only the active participants privy to a script, much thought ought to be given to the nature of the program notes. At a professional performance of *Nightwords* in Salt Lake City, the program contained the lyrics to all three ghetto songs, in Yiddish and English, and a simplified listing of the sources in order of performance; e.g.,

I. INVOCATION

Elie Wiesel

Judah Goldin

Isaiah 5:26–30

Based on Exodus 12:13–29

Simon Wiesenthal

From start to finish, the group reading of *Nightwords* takes about ninety minutes. Given that the congregants are held captive by having to locate their shoes from the heap, they ought to be apprised beforehand concerning the length of the program.

Although *Nightwords* is coherently structured for liturgical flow and dramatic progression, the division into discrete units makes it possible to shorten or otherwise adapt the work to one's needs. Whatever use you may make of *Nightwords*, the office of CLAL would appreciate receiving information thereof. Comments and criticism are also welcome.

THE THIRTY-SIX

1. Storyteller
2. Teacher
3. Prophet
4. Historian
5. Rabbi
6. Clerk
7. Dreamer
8. Abraham
9. Nurse
10. Isaac
11. Mute
12. Soldier
13. Tailor
14. Mystic
15. Philosopher
16. Investigator
17. Magician
18. Barber
19. Musician
20. Scribe
21. Carpenter
22. Counsel for Defense
23. Witness
24. Woman
25. Judge
26. Singer*
27. Citizen
28. Hazzan*
29. Cobbler
30. Doctor
31. Painter
32. Messenger
33. Clown
34. Child
35. School Girl
36. Poet*



Storyteller:

In the beginning was the Holocaust. We must therefore begin again. We must create a new Talmud and compile new midrashim, just as we did after the Ḥurban, the destruction of the Second Temple. We did so then in order to mark the new beginning: until then we lived one way; from then on nothing could be the same.

Teacher:

The ancient formulation has anticipated every single detail of later events. The scriptures are not only a record of the past but a foreshadowing of what will come.

Text and experience are reciprocally enlightening: even as the immediate event helps make the ancient text intelligible, so in turn the text reveals the significance of the event.

Prophet:

And the Lord will signal to a nation far away
And whistle for it from the end of the earth.
And it comes, swiftly, suddenly,
None fainting, none stumbling,
None napping or sleeping,
Not a belt undone,
Not a bootlace broken,
Arrows sharpened,
Bows all bent,
Horses' hooves as hard as flint,
Wheels like whirlwinds,
Roar it will roar
Like the roar of a lion
Seizing its victim
And carrying it off —
None shall be left to save!
His roaring on that day
Will be like the roar of the sea.
The land shows nothing but darkness,
Light blotted out by the clouds of dust.

וְנָשָׂא נֶס לְגוֹיִם מֵרְחוֹק
וְשָׂרַק לוֹ מִקְצֵה הָאָרֶץ
וְהִנֵּה מְהֵרָה קָל יָבוֹא.
אֵין עֵינַי וְאֵין כּוֹשֵׁל בּוֹ
לֹא יָנוּם וְלֹא יִישָׁן
וְלֹא נִפְתַּח אָזוֹר הִלְצִי
וְלֹא נִתַּק שְׂרוֹךְ נַעֲלִי.
אֲשֶׁר חִצָּיו שְׂנוּנִים
וְכָל־קִשְׁתֵּיתָיו דְּרָכוֹת
פְּרָסוֹת סוֹסָיו כִּצֵּר נִחְשְׁבוּ
וְנִלְגְּלוּ כִסּוּפָה.
שֶׁאֲגָה לוֹ כְּלָבִיא
יִשְׂאֵג כְּכַפְרִים וַיִּנְהָם
וַיֵּאחֶז טָרֵף וַיִּפְלִיט
וַאֲיֵן מִצִּיל.
וַיִּנְהָם עָלָיו בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא
כְּנִהְמַת־יָם
וְנִבַּט לְאָרֶץ
וְהִנֵּה־חֹשֶׁךְ
צָר וְאוֹר חֹשֶׁךְ בְּעֵרִיפֶיהָ.

Historian:

וְהָיָה לְפָנֵי הַגְּרוּשׁ הַגָּדוֹל

And it came to pass before the Great Deportation

וַיִּקְרָא יי אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵיהֶם:

that Adonai summoned the People of Israel and said to them:

For seven weeks or more the Destroyer shall enter the ghetto and smite your homes.

There will be blood on the lintels, and blood on your doorposts, and blood on the cobblestones, even unto the *Umschlagplatz*, the Roundup-Site, and beyond.

There will be a loud cry in the ghetto for there will be no house where there was not someone dead.

For fifty-six days the Destroyer—הַמְשֻׁחֵית—shall reign supreme.

But it shall come to pass, on the fifty-seventh day, that the slaughter shall abate.

Then I, Adonai, will speak unto the remnant of Israel—יִשְׂרָאֵל—and say:

בְּשִׁבְעָה וָעֶשְׂרִים יוֹם לַחֹדֶשׁ נִסָּן עֲצַרְתָּ תַעֲשׂוּ.
כָּל־מְלָאכָה זָלָה לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ עַד לְמַחֲרָת.
יוֹם אֲבָל וְזִכְרוֹן תַעֲשׂוּ לָכֶם.
וַעֲשִׂיתֶם לָכֶם עֲבוּדָה חֲדָשָׁה.
וְהִגַּדְתֶּם לָכֶם אֶת־הַדְּבָרִים, וְאָמַרְתֶּם אֶת־הַקִּיּוּנוֹת הָאֵלֶּה אֲשֶׁר אֲתָכֶם פֹּה
עַמִּי הַיּוֹם.
וּבָעֵת בּוֹא הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ, בַּעֲשׂוֹתְכֶם אֶת־הָעֲצָרָת, כָּל־אִישׁ בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל, אֲנָשִׁים
נָשִׁים וְטָף, יִצְעֲקוּ עַל יי.
וּשְׁמַרְתֶּם אֶת־הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה לְחֹק לָכֶם וּלְבְנֵיכֶם עַד עוֹלָם.

On the twenty-seventh day of Nisan you shall hold a solemn assembly;
no frivolous work shall be done on that day.
You shall observe a Day of Remembrance and Mourning.
New rites and rituals shall you fashion!
And you shall recite the words and chant the laments from that time and
place in which you find yourselves today.
And after nightfall, when you hold this solemn assembly, each man,
woman, and child shall cry out against Adonai.
You shall observe this as an institution for all time, for you and for your
descendants.

וְהָיָה כִּי יֹאמְרוּ אֲלֵיכֶם בְּנֵיכֶם: מָה הָעֲבוּדָה הַזֹּאת לָכֶם?

And when your children ask you, “What do you mean by this rite?” you shall say:

All:

It is the ritual of night
in remembrance of that night
without beginning or end
for the innocent People of Israel.

Rabbi:

An old Jewish legend has it that there are 36 righteous individuals on earth, unknown to others and themselves unaware of their mission. According to the Babylonian Talmud, “The world has not less than 36 pious men who every day see the face of God. They are the vessels into which the suffering of the whole world flows. If even one of them were not here, the world would perish with suffering.” They never make themselves known to other people. They appear during great catastrophes, perform their duty, and die.



עֶקְדָּה / 'AKEDAH: THE SACRIFICE

Clerk:

Holocaust. 1. A sacrifice wholly consumed by fire; a whole burnt offering.
2. a. A complete sacrifice or offering. b. A sacrifice on a large scale.

Dreamer:

Some time afterward, God put Abraham to the test. He said to him, “Abraham,” and he answered, “Here I am.” And He said, “Take your son, your favored one, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the heights that I will point out to you.”

Abraham:

It was early in the morning, I arose betimes, had the asses saddled, left my tent, and Isaac with me, but Sarah looked out of the window after us until we had passed down the valley and she could see us no more. We rode in silence for three days. On the morning of the fourth day I

Clerk Oxford English Dictionary.

Dreamer Genesis 22:1–2.

Abraham Soren Kierkegaard, from “Prelude I” in *Fear and Trembling and Sickness Unto Death*, translated with an introduction and notes by Walter Lowrie. Rewritten in the first person, Copyright © 1941, 1954 by Princeton University Press and reprinted with their permission.

said never a word, but lifted up my eyes and saw Mount Moriah afar off. I left the young men behind and went on alone with Isaac beside me up to the mountain.

Nurse:

Late Saturday evening we went out into the ghetto and barely made it to the courtyard of Strashuna 14. The courtyard was full of people. It was raining. Everyone was preparing for a journey. We collected our belongings and started moving along the road. At Lukishki they separated us, my husband and son on the side of the men, I and my two daughters among the women. The streets were already filled with thousands upon thousands of Jews, who had been brought from the neighboring regions. What would they do with us? No one dared think other than that — sooner or later — we would return to the ghetto.

Abraham:

But I said to myself: “I will not conceal from Isaac whither this course leads him.” I stood still, laid my hand upon the head of Isaac in benediction, and Isaac bowed to receive the blessing.

Nurse:

Friday at 6:00 a.m., we passed through a wooded hilly district. Ponar. We used to go here for outings and picnics before the war. We were unloaded in a sandy area among the hills, as if on another outing. We heard gunfire not far away. Germans gave the orders and the Lithuanians carried them out. The Lithuanians started arranging groups of ten. They were led away to the hills, shots were heard, and another group of ten was taken.

Abraham:

My look was mild, my speech encouraging. But Isaac was unable to understand me, his soul could not be exalted. He embraced my knees, he fell at my feet imploringly, he begged for his young life, for the fair hope of his future. Then I lifted up the boy, I walked with him by his side and my talk was full of comfort and exhortation. But Isaac could not understand me.

Nurse:

Suddenly, as if by an electric current, the real situation became clear. Women began to plead with the soldiers, by giving away watches, by getting undressed, some fell to their knees and began kissing the boots

of the soldiers. Women began to tear their hair from their heads, to rip off their clothes — to no avail. The soldiers took everything away, they teased and joked and with blows they drove them to the execution. Around twelve noon, when everyone was convinced that his fate was sealed and that no one would leave there alive, then came the change: as soon as their turn arrived, they got into line quietly, without protest or pleas, and set out in families on the last road.

Abraham:

I climbed Mount Moriah, but Isaac understood me not. Then for an instant I turned away from him, and when Isaac again saw my face it was changed, my glance was wild, my form was horror. I seized Isaac by the throat, threw him to the ground, and said, “Stupid boy, dost thou then suppose that I am thy father? I am an idolator. Dost thou suppose that this is God’s bidding? No; it is my desire!”

Nurse:

My turn came at 5:30 in the evening. I set out with my daughters. On the way between the hills we met more groups who, like us, were waiting for their fate. We were placed in a line and I felt my oldest daughter’s hand slipping out of mine.

Abraham:

Isaac trembled and cried out in his terror:

Isaac:

O God in heaven, have compassion upon me. If I have no father upon earth, be Thou my father!

Mute:

But there was no reply.

Soldier:

Abraham shouted, "Have mercy, Lord, do not burn them. Are you not good? Take pity, therefore, on your creatures."

Nurse:

And God answered him, "I am just. I shall burn them all."

Tailor:

(quietly)

Ask now and see, was there ever such a holocaust as this since the days of Adam? When were there ever a thousand and a hundred sacrifices in one day, EACH ONE OF THEM LIKE THE AKEDAH OF ISAAC SON OF ABRAHAM? Once at the Akedah on Mount Moriah, Adonai shook the world to its base!



Mystic:

WHEN THE RAM'S HORN SOUNDS A LONG BLAST on Mount Sinai: That is the horn of the ram substituted for Isaac.

Philosopher:

דָּרַב חֲסֵדָא וְרַבָּה בְּרִיָּה דְרַב הוֹנָא דְאָמְרִי תְרוּוּיָהּ:
מֵאִי הָרַ סִינַי — הָרַ שְׂרִידָה שְׁנֵאָה לְאָמוֹת הָעוֹלָם עָלְיוּ.

Rabbi H̄isda said: What is the meaning of Mount Sinai? It is the mountain from which there descended hatred, *sin'ah*, toward idolators.

What does this mean? That the hatred for our people stems from Sinai.

Investigator:

וַיְהִי בַדֶּרֶךְ בַּמְּלוּךְ, וַיִּפְגְּשֵׁהוּ יְיָ וַיִּבְקֶשׁ הַמִּיתוֹ.

AND IT CAME TO PASS BY THE WAY IN THE INN, THAT ADONAI MET MOSES AND SOUGHT TO KILL HIM. Perhaps this means that God suffers gusts of murderous exasperation at the Jews, towards a people who have made Him a responsible party to history and to the grit of man's

condition. He may not have wished to be involved; the people may have chosen Him, in the oasis at Kadesh, and thrust upon Him the labors of justice and righteous anger. It may have been the Jew who caught Him by the skirt, insisting on contract and dialogue. Perhaps before either God or living man was ready for proximity.

Magician:

וְהָיָה בְּעֵבֶר כְּבֹדִי וְשִׁמְתִיךָ בְּנִקְרַת הַצּוּר,
וְשַׁכְתִּי כְּפִי עָלֶיךָ עַד-עֲבָרִי.
וְהִסְרֹתִי אֶת-כְּפִי וְרָאִיתָ אֶת-אֲחֹרַי, וּפְנֵי לֹא יֵרְאוּ.

AND IT SHALL COME TO PASS, WHILE MY GLORY PASSETH BY, THAT I WILL PUT THEE IN A CLEFT OF THE ROCK, AND WILL COVER THEE WITH MY HAND WHILE I PASS BY: AND I WILL TAKE AWAY MINE HAND, AND THOU SHALT SEE MY BACK BUT MY FACE SHALL NOT BE SEEN. This may be the decisive clue: God can turn His back. There may be minutes or millennia — is our time His? — in which he does not see man, in which He is looking the *other way*. Why? Perhaps because through some minute, hideous error of design the universe is too large for His surveillance, because somewhere there is a millionth of an inch, (it need not be more) out of His line of sight. So He must turn to look there also. When God's back is towards man, history is Auschwitz.

Barber:

The heavens belong to Adonai,
But the earth He gave over to man.

Musician:

And so the bird of heaven, with archangelic shrieks, and his imperial
beak thrust upwards, and his whole captive form folded in the flag of
Ahab, went down with his ship, which, like Satan, would not sink to hell
till she had dragged a living part of heaven along with her.

Barber:

לֹא הַמֵּתִים יְהַלְלוּ־יָהּ
וְלֹא כָל־יֹרְדֵי דוֹמָה.

The dead cannot praise Adonai,
Nor any who go down into silence.

Barber Psalms 115:16.

Musician Herman Melville, *Moby Dick*, Boston, 1892, p. 533.

Barber Psalms 115:17.

Scribe:

We accepted the Torah on Sinai,
And in Lublin we gave it back.
The dead don't praise God —
The Torah was given for Life.
And just as we all stood together
At the giving of the Torah,
So indeed did we all die in Lublin.

Teacher:

Raba said: To those who go to the right, the Torah is a medicine of life;
to those who go to the left, it is a deadly poison.

Carpenter:

And God said to Moses:

וְעָשִׂיתָ אֶת־הַקְּרָשִׁים לְמִשְׁכַּן עֲצֵי שִׁטִּים עֲמֻדִים. עֲשֵׂר אַמּוֹת אַרְדָּ
הַקְּרֶשׁ, וְאֵמָה וְחֻצֵי הָאֵמָה רַחֵב הַקְּרֶשׁ הָאֶחָד. וְעָשִׂיתָ אֶת־הַקְּרָשִׁים
לְמִשְׁכָּן, עֶשְׂרִים קָרֶשׁ לְפֶאת נֹגֵבָה תִּימְנָה. וּלְצִלַּע הַמִּשְׁכָּן הַשְּׁנִיית לְפֶאת
צָפוֹן עֶשְׂרִים קָרֶשׁ. וּלְיִרְכְּתֵי הַמִּשְׁכָּן יָמָה תַּעֲשֶׂה שְׁשֵׁה קָרָשִׁים. וּשְׁנֵי
קָרָשִׁים תַּעֲשֶׂה לְמִקְצֵעַת הַמִּשְׁכָּן בְּיִרְכְּתֵיהֶם.

Scribe Jacob Glatstein, "The Dead Don't Praise God," in *I Keep Recalling: The Holocaust Poems of Jacob Glatstein*, trans. Barnett Zumoff (Hoboken, N.J.: Ktav Publishing House, 1993), p. 92. © 1993 Barnett Zumoff and used by permission.

Teacher *Talmud Shabbat* 88b.

Carpenter Exodus 26:15–16, 18, 20, 22–23.

You shall make the planks for the Tabernacle of acacia wood, upright. The length of each plank a cubit and a half. Of the planks of the Tabernacle, make twenty planks on the south side, and for the other side wall of the Tabernacle, on the north side, twenty planks. And for the rear of the Tabernacle, to the west, make six planks, and make two planks for the corners of the Tabernacle at the rear.

Counsel for the Defense:

Can you give us a description of the platform?

Witness:

The platform was behind the entrance gates
To the right of the platform was the men's camp
To the left the women's camp
At the end of the ramp
right and left
the new crematoriums
numbered II and III
At the switch
The trains were usually
Shunted onto the track to the right

Counsel for the Defense:

How long was the platform?

Witness:

About 850 yards long

Counsel for the Defense:

How long were the trains?

Witness:

They usually took up about two thirds of the platform

Counsel for the Defense:

Where were the selections carried out?

Witness:

In the middle of the platform

Counsel for the Defense:

Where did the people line up?

Witness:

At both ends of the platform

Counsel for the Defense:

How wide was the platform?

Witness:

About thirty feet wide

Woman:

Before them stood a beautiful stone structure, trimmed with wood, built in the style of an ancient temple. Five wide concrete steps led to a low, but wide, massive, beautifully ornamented door. At the entrance, there were flowers and potted plants. But all around one saw hills of freshly raked earth. A huge excavator with steel clamps ejected tons of yellow sandy soil, and the dust it raised stood between the earth and the sun.

Scribe:

לא יקל אדם את-ראשו כנגד שער המזרח שהוא מכון כנגד בית קדשי הקדשים. לא יכנס להר הבית במקלו ובמנעליו ובפנדתו, ובאבקה שעל רגליו.

A man should not behave himself in an unseemly fashion while opposite the Eastern gate of the Temple, since it faces toward the Holy of Holies. He may not enter into the Temple Mount with his staff or his sandal or his wallet, or with the dust upon his feet.

Judge:

How big was this room?

Witness:

Smaller than the anteroom — about thirty yards long

Judge:

Once they were in, what did they see?

Witness:

There were concrete walls
In the middle of the room were the pillars and on each side
two posts made of perforated sheet iron
There were drains in the floor
This room too was brightly lit

Judge:

What could be seen through the window in the door?

Witness:

The people crowded the door and climbed up the pillars
They began to suffocate when the gas was thrown in

Singer:

(sung in Yiddish)

Beneath the Whiteness of Your Stars

Beneath the whiteness of your stars,
Stretch out toward me your white hand;
All my words are turned to tears —
They yearn to rest within your hand.

See, their brilliant light goes darker
In my eyes, grown cellar-dim;
And I lack a quiet corner
From which to send them back again.

Yet, O Lord, all my desire —
To leave you with my wealth of tears.
In me, there burns an urgent fire,
And in the fire, there burn my days.

Rest, in every hole and cellar
Weeps, as might a murderer.
I run the rooftops, ever higher,
And I search — where are you? Where?

Past stairs and courtyards I go running,
Chased by howling enemies.
I hang, at last, a broken bowstring,
And I sing to you — like this:

Beneath the whiteness of your stars,
Stretch out toward me your white hand;
All my words are turned to tears —
They yearn to rest within your hand.

Unter dayne vayse shtern
Shtrek tsu mir dayn vayse hant.
Mayne verter zaynen trenn
Viln ruen in dayn hant.

Ze, es tunklt zeyer finkl
In mayn kelerdikn blik.
Un ikh hob gornit keyn vinkl
Zey tsu shenken dir tsurik.

אונטער דיײַנע ווייסע שטערן
שטרעק צו מיר דיין ווייסע האַנט.
מײַנע ווערטער זײַנען טרענן
ווילן רוען אין דיין האַנט.

זע, עס טונקלט זייער פֿינקל
אין מײַן קעלערדיקן בליק,
און איך האָב גאָרניט קיין ווינקל
זיי צו שענקען דיר צוריק.

Un ikh vil dokh, got getrayer,
Dir fartroyen mayn farmeg.
Vayl es mont in mir a fayer
Un in fayer — mayne teg.

Nor in kelern un lekher
Veynt di merderishe ru.
Loyf ikh hekher, iber dekher
Un ikh zukh: vu bistu, vu?

Nemen yogn mikh meshune
Trep un hoyfn mit gevoy.
Heng ikh — a geplatste strune
Un ikh zing tsu dir azoy:

Unter dayne vayse shtern
Shtrek tsu mir dayn vayse hant.
Mayne verter zaynen treern
Viln ruen in dayn hant.

און איך וויל דאָד, גאָט געטרייער,
דיר פֿאַרטרויען מיין פֿאַרמעג.
ווייל עס מאָנט אין מיר אַ פֿייער
און אין פֿייער — מיניע טעג.

נאָר אין קעלערן און לעכער
וויינט די מערדערישע רו.
לויף איך העכער, איבער דעכער
און איך זוך: וווּ ביסטו, וווּ?

נעמען יאָגן מיך משונה
טרעפּ און הויפֿן מיט געוואָי.
הענג איך — אַ געפלאַצטע סטרונע
און איך זינג צו דיר אַזוי:

אונטער דיניע ווייסע שטערן
שטרעק צו מיר דיין ווייסע האַנט.
מיניע ווערטער זיינען טרערן
ווילן רוען אין דיין האַנט.

Moderato



Un-ter day-ne vay-se shte-rn Shtrek tsu mir dayn vay-se hant, _



May-ne ver-ter zay-nen tre-rn, Vi-ln ru-en in dayn hant. _



Ze, es tun-klt zey-er fin-kl ___ In mayn ke-ler-di-kn blik, _



Un ikh hob gor-nit keyn vin-kl Zey tsu shen-ken dir tsu-rik,



Un ikh hob gor-nit keyn vin-kl Zey tsu shen-ken ___ dir tsu-rik.

Isaac:

There are ten degrees of holiness. The holiest land in the world is the land of Israel. The walled cities of the land of Israel are still more holy. Of the walled cities the holiest city is Jerusalem. In Jerusalem the holiest place is the Temple Mount. The Rampart is still more holy. The Court of the Women is still more holy. The Court of the Israelites is still more holy. The Court of the Priests is still more holy. Between the Porch and the Altar is still more holy. The Sanctuary is still more holy, for none may enter therein with hands and feet unwashed. The Holy of Holies is still more holy, for none may enter therein except the High Priest on the Day of Atonement at the time of the Temple service.

Citizen:

And it came to pass, when the priests had come out of the holy place, that the cloud filled the house of Adonai, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud; for the glory of Adonai filled the house of Adonai.

וַיְהִי בְצֵאת הַכֹּהֲנִים מִן־הַקֹּדֶשׁ
וְהָעָנָן מָלֵא אֶת־בַּיִת יי.
וְלֹא־יָכְלוּ הַכֹּהֲנִים לַעֲמֹד מִפְּנֵי הָעָנָן,
כִּי־מָלֵא כְבוֹד־יי אֶת־בַּיִת יי.



הַלִּיצָה / ḤALITSAH: RITUAL OF THE SHOES

The ushers take all the shoes belonging to the participants and throw them into a pile at the center of the circle.

Ḥazzan:

And He said,
Do not come closer.
Remove your sandals from your feet,
For the place on which you stand is holy ground.

וַיֹּאמֶר:
אַל תִּקְרַב הַלֵּם
שֶׁל נַעֲלֶיךָ מֵעַל רַגְלֶיךָ
כִּי הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר אַתָּה עוֹמֵד עָלָיו אֲדַמְתִּי-קֹדֶשׁ הוּא.

Cobbler:

But if the man does not want to marry the widow of the war, she shall appear before the elders in court and declare:

Woman:

מֵאֵן יִבְמִי לְהִקִּים לְאַחִיו שֵׁם בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל,
לֹא אָבָה יִבְמִי.

There is a man who refuses to establish a name in Israel for his people,
he will not perform his duty.

Cobbler:

The elders of his town shall then summon him and talk to him. If he insists, saying, “I do not choose to marry her,” the widow of the war shall go up to him in the presence of the elders, pull the sandal off his foot, spit in his face, and make this declaration:

Woman:

כִּכָּה יַעֲשֶׂה לְאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר לֹא יִבְנֶה אֶת-בַּיִת אָחִיו.

Thus shall be done to the man who will not build up the house of his people!

Cobbler:

This ceremony is known as *ḥalitsah*.

Doctor:

(peremptorily)

Women and children are to take their shoes off at the entrance of the barracks. The stockings are to be put into the shoes. The children's socks are to be placed in the sandals, in the little shoes and slippers. Be neat.

And then again.

When going to the baths, take along your valuables, documents, money, a towel and soap. . . . We repeat: When going to the baths, take along your valuables, documents, money, a towel and soap. . . .

Dreamer:

But who emptied your shoes of sand
When you had to get up, to die?
The sand which Israel gathered,
Its nomad sand?
Burning Sinai sand,
Mingled with throats of nightingales,
Mingled with wings of butterflies,

Mingled with the hungry dust of serpents;
Mingled with all that fell from the wisdom of Solomon,
Mingled with what is bitter in the mystery of wormwood —

O you fingers
That emptied the deathly shoes of sand.
Tomorrow you will be dust.
In the shoes of those to come.

Mute:

A Cartload of Shoes

The wheels hurry onward, onward,
What do they carry?
They carry a cartload
Of shivering shoes.

The wagon like a canopy
In the evening light;
The shoes — clustered
Like people in a dance.

A wedding, a holiday?
Has something blinded my eyes?
The shoes — I seem
To recognize them.

The heels go tapping:
With a clatter and a din,
From our old Vilna streets
They drive us to Berlin.

אַ וואָגן שיד

די רעדער יאָגן, יאָגן,
וואָס ברענגען זיי מיט זיך?
זיי ברענגען מיר אַ וואָגן
מיט צאַפלענדיקע שיד.

דער וואָגן ווי אַ חופּה
אין אַוונטיקן גלאַנץ;
די שיד — אַ פֿולע קופּע
ווי מענטשן אין אַ טאַנץ.

אַ חתונה, אַ יום־טובֿ?
צי האָט מיד ווער פֿאַרבלענדט?
די שיד אַזוינע נאָנטע
אויף סיניי איד האָב דערקענט.

עס קלאַפּן די אָפּצאַסן:
וואַהין, וואַהין, וואַהין?
פֿון אַלטע ווילנער גאַסן
מע טרייבט אונדז קיין בערלין.

I should not ask,
But something tears at my tongue:
Shoes, tell me the truth,
Where are they, the feet?

The feet from those boots
With buttons like dew —
And here, where is the body,
And there, where is the bride?

Where is the child
To fill those shoes?
Why has the bride
Gone barefoot?

Through the slippers and the boots
I see those my mother used to wear.
She kept them for the Sabbath,
Her favorite pair.

And the heels go tapping:
With a clatter and a din,
From our old Vilna streets
They drive us to Berlin.

איך דאַרף ניט פֿרעגן וועמעס,
נאָר סיטוט אין האַרץ אַ ריס:
אַ, זאָגט מיר שיד, דעם אמת,
וואו זענען זיי די פֿיס?

די פֿיס פֿון יענע טופֿל
מיט קנעפעלעך ווי טוי, —
און דאָ — וואו איז דאָס גופֿל,
און דאָרט וואו איז די פֿרוי?

אין קינדערשיד אין אַלע
וואָס זע איך ניט קיין קינד?
וואָס טוט ניט אָן די כלה
די שיכעלעך אַצינד?

דורך קינדערשיד און שקראַבעס
כידערקען מיין מאַמעס שיד!
זי פֿלעגט זיי בלויז אויף שבת
אַרויפֿציען אויף זיך.

און סיקלאָפֿן די אָפּצאַסן:
וואהין, וואהין, וואהין?
פֿון אַלטע ווילנער גאַסן
מע טרייבט אונדז קיין בערלין.

Painter:

It is twenty years now, Father, I have come home.
But in the camps, one can look through a huge square
Window, like an aquarium, upon a room
The size of my livingroom filled with human hair.
Others have shoes, or valises
Made mostly of cardboard, which once contained
Pills, fresh diapers. This is one of the places
Never explained.

All:

And He said,
Do not come closer.
Remove your sandals from your feet,
For the place on which you stand is holy ground.



סְפִירָה / SEFIRAH: RITUAL OF THE NUMBER

Rabbi:

And you shall bind them for a sign upon your hand. And you shall write them on the door posts of your house and on your gates. *Ukshartam le'ot 'al yadekha.*

וְקִשְׂרֶתֶם לְאוֹת עַל יָדְכֶם.

(The Thirty-Six roll up their left sleeves. One of the ushers gives a black felt pen to the SCRIBE, who inscribes the number A81173 on the arm of the Thirty-Fifth. The latter, in turn, inscribes the number A81174 on the reader closest to him and so on. The usher calls out each number as it is written. There should be complete silence. The reading resumes when the SCRIBE has his number A81208 inscribed.)

Clerk:

The entries for March 19, 1945 show that on this day 203 people were sent to death. They were assigned serial numbers from A81173 to A81376. The names of the dead are carefully listed. The victims are all reported as having died of the same ailment, heart failure. They died at brief intervals. They died in alphabetical order.

Scribe:

When your forms turned to ashes
Into the oceans of night
Where eternity washes
Life and death into the tides —
there rose the numbers —
(once branded into your arms
so none would escape the agony)
there rose meteors of numbers
beckoned into the spaces
where light-years expand like arrows
and the planets
are born
of the magic substances of pain —
numbers — root and all
plucked out of murderers' brains
and part already
of the heavenly cycle's
path of blue veins.

Messenger:

And you shall take two onyx stones, and grave on them the names of the children of Israel: six of their names on one stone and the names of the six that remain on the other stone. And you shall put the two stones upon the shoulder-pieces of the ephod, to be stones of memorial for the children of Israel; and Aaron shall bear their names before Adonai upon his two shoulders for a memorial. And these are the names of the twelve tribes that crossed the desert with Moses: the tribe of Poland, the tribe of Russia, the tribe of Lithuania, the tribe of Rumania, the tribe of Czechoslovakia, the tribe of Latvia, the tribe of Yugoslavia, the tribe of Hungary, the tribe of Germany, the tribe of France, the tribe of Holland and the tribe of Greece.

Tailor:

And Adonai spoke to Moses, saying:

Speak to the children of Israel, and tell them to make a yellow star upon their garments throughout their generations, one star over their heart and one on their back, of equal size and proportion: and it shall be for you a sign, that you may look upon it, and remember all the commandments of Adonai, and do them.

Do not follow your own heart and your own eyes, by which you are seduced: but *remember* and do all my commandments and be holy to

your God. I am Adonai your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, to be your God.

Ani adonay elohekhem, asher hotseti etkhem me'erets mitsrayim, lihyot lakhem lelohim.

אָנִי יי אֱלֹהֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתִי אֶתְכֶם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם
לִהְיוֹת לָכֶם לֵאלֹהִים.

Carpenter:

When Rabbi Meir died, there were no more makers of parables. When Ben Zoma died, there were no more expounders. When Rabbi Joshua died, goodness departed from this world. When Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel died, the locusts came and troubles grew. When Rabbi Eleazar ben Azariah died, wealth departed from the sages. When Rabbi Akiva died, the glory of the Torah came to an end.

מְשֻׁמֵת רַבִּי מְאִיר, בְּטָלוּ מוֹשְׁלֵי מְשָׁלִים.
מְשֻׁמֵת בֶּן זוֹמָא, בְּטָלוּ הַדְרָשָׁנִים.
מְשֻׁמֵת רַבִּי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ, פָּסְקָה טוֹבָה מִן הָעוֹלָם.
מְשֻׁמֵת רַבֵּן שְׁמַעוֹן בֶּן גַּמְלִיאֵל, בָּא גּוֹבֵי וְרַבּוֹ צָרוֹת.
מְשֻׁמֵת רַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר בֶּן עֲזַרְיָה, פָּסְקָה הָעֵשֶׂר מִן הַחֲכָמִים.
מְשֻׁמֵת רַבִּי עֲקִיבָא, בְּטָל כְּבוֹד הַתּוֹרָה.

Philosopher:

The beggars were rounded up, and there was no further singing in the ghetto. I heard singing only once more after the deportations began. A monotonous melody from the steppes sung by a thirteen-year-old beggar girl. Over a period of two weeks she used to creep out of her hiding place in the evening, when the day's roundups were over. Each day, looking thinner and paler and with an increasingly bright aureole of grief about her head, she took her place at her usual spot behind a house on Leszno Street and began the warbling by whose means she earned her bit of bread. . . .

מען האָט אַראָפּגערוימט פֿון גאַס די בעטלערס און עס איז אַנטשטומט געוואָרן אויף די געטאַ-גאַסן יעטוועדער געזאַנג.

נאָר איין מאָל האָב איך נאָך געהערט זינגען אין דער צייט פֿון אויסזידלונג, אַ יִדיש ליד, מיט אַ מאָנאָטאָנעם סטעפּ-ניגון, געזונגען דורך אַ בעטלער-מיידעלע, פֿון אַ יאָר דרייצן. אין משך פֿון אַ צוויי וואָכן פֿלעגט זי נאָך אַרויסקריכן פֿון אַ באַהעלטעניש אין די פֿאַרנאַכטן, ווען די אַקציע פֿלעגט זיך אָפּשטעלן — יעדן טאָג אַ מאָגערערע, אַ העכערע און בלייכערע מיט וואָס אַ מאָל אַ גרעסערן אַרעאָל פֿון טרויער אַרום קאָפּ . . . זי פֿלעגט זיך אַוועקשטעלן אויף איר אַמאָליקן אָרט. אונטער אַ הויז אויף לעשנאָ און טרעלירן אירע טרעלן צו באַקומען אַ שטיקעלע ברויט. . . .

Historian:

(loudly) Does it matter how they died!

(quietly) Does it matter how they died — by design or by chance, by will or by order? Does it matter how they were killed — with gas, with bullets, with disease, with cold, with heat, with chemicals or fire, with electricity or barbed wire, with whips or clubs or poison, with suffocation or experiment or work or starvation — with cruelty or quickly, with sadism or disgust, with pleasure or dread, with excess or moderation?

Clown:

כָּלֵם אֶהוּבִים, כָּלֵם בְּרוּרִים, כָּלֵם גְּבוּרִים.

They were all of them beloved, all of them pure, all of them strong, all of them holy and all of them in dread and awe at the will of their Master; and all of them opened their mouths in holiness and purity, with song and psalm.

And they all took upon themselves the yoke of heaven's kingdom one from the other and allowed each other to hallow their Creator: with troubled spirits, with stumbling speech and with no melody at all they responded together and exclaimed in fright:

All:

O LORD OF THE UNIVERSE, IT IS TERRIBLE!



Child:

וְשִׁמְתֶם אֶת־דְּבָרֵי אֱלֹהֵי עַל לִבְבְּכֶם וְעַל נַפְשְׁכֶם.
וְלִמְדַתֶּם אֹתָם אֶת־בְּנֵיכֶם לְדָבָר בָּם
בְּשֹׁבְתֶךָ בְּבֵיתְךָ וּבְלִקְחֶךָ בְּדֶרֶךְ וּבְשֹׁכְבְךָ וּבְקוּמְךָ.

And these words, which I command you this day, shall be upon your heart: and you *shall teach them diligently to your children*, and you shall discuss them when you sit in your house and when you walk upon the road and when you lie down and get up.

Citizen:

And what of them . . . the little children?

The little ones, and those smaller still who not long ago were to be seen in the arms of their mothers, smiling at a bird or at a sunbeam. Prattling at strangers in the streetcar. Who still played “pattycake” or cried “giddyup” waving their tiny hands in the air. Or called, “Pa-pa.” O, unrecognizable world in which these children and their mothers are gone. “Giddyup.”

און טאַקע זיי גופא — די קליינע קינדער?

די קלענערע און קלענסטע, אַזעלכע, וואָס זענען נאָך געזעסן אויף
די אָרעמס פֿון די מאַמעס, געשמייכלט צו אַ זונענשטראַל און צו אַ
פֿייגעלע; געמאַכט אַ "קוקו" צו אומבאַקאַנטע מענטשן אין
טראַמוויען. די וואָס האָבן נאָך געפליעסקעט "טאַסי", גערופֿן
"היטאַ" און געוונקען מיט די קליינע הענטעלעך: "פאַפאַ!"

פאַפאַ! וועלט אומדערקענטע! די קינדערלעך אין איינעם מיט די
מאַמעס זענען אַוועק "היטאַ". . . .

School Girl:

WHO IS LIKE UNTO THEE AMONG THE MIGHTY (*elim*), ADONAI? [Psalm
89:9] In the school of Rabbi Ishmael it was taught: "Who is like unto
Thee among the silent (*illemim*), Adonai" — since God sees the suffering
of God's children and remains silent!

Poet:

(stands) Now we shall recite the names.

(reads very quietly, almost in a whisper)

Blimeshi. Toybeshi. Rivele.

Leyenyu. Feygenyu. Perele.

All Female Readers:

Blimeshi. Toybeshi. Rivele.

Leyenyu. Feygenyu. Perele.

Poet:

Khatskele. Motele. Kivele.

Hershele. Leybele. Berele.

All Male Readers:

Khatskele. Motele. Kivele.

Hershele. Leybele. Berele.

Poet:

Shayeshi. Khayeshi. Goldeshi.
Mendelekh. Gnendelekh. Mindelekh.
Kh'tseyl in der nakht in der shloflozer
Nemen fun yidishe kinderlekh.

Nemen fun yidishe kinderlekh,
Rokhelekh, Rakhelekh, Nekhelekh,
Getselekh, Velvelekh, Vigderlekh,
Yankelekh, Yoynlekh, Mekhelekh.

Kopele, vu iz dayn kepele?
Vu iz dos likht fun dayn eygele?
Vu iz dayn hentele, Yentele?
Vu iz dayn fisele, Feygele?

Nemen — ot dos iz geblibn nor:
Dvoyrele — Dvoshele — Khayeke
Shmerele — Perele — Serele
Shimele — Shiyele — Shayele.

Ver kon gefinen itst Moyshelen,
Shoylikn, Shmulikn, Srolikn?
Got hot af zey nisht derbaremt zikh,
Hot zey geshonken Amoleynkn.

שאַיעשי. חיהשי. גאָלדעשי.
מענדעלעך. גנענדעלעך. מינדעלעך.
כיצייל אין דער נאַכט אין דער שלאָפֿלאָזער
נעמען פֿון ייִדישע קינדערלעך.

נעמען פֿון ייִדישע קינדערלעך,
רחלעך, ראַכעלעך, נעכעלעך,
געצעלעך, וועלוועלעך, וויגדערלעך,
יאַנקעלעך, יונהלעך, מעכעלעך.

קאָפעלע, וווּ איז דיין קעפעלע?
וווּ איז דאָס ליכט פֿון דיין אייגעלע?
וווּ איז דיין הענטעלע, יענטעלע?
וווּ איז דיין פֿיסעלע, פֿייגעלע?

נעמען — אָט דאָס איז געבליבן נאָר:
דבֿורהלע — דוואָשעלע — חיהלע.
שמערעלע — פערעלע — סערעלע.
שימעלע — שיעלע — שאַיעלע.

ווער קאָן געפֿינען איצט משהלען,
שויליקן, שמוליקן, שראָליקן?
גאָט האָט אויף זיי נישט דערבאַרעמט זיך,
האָט זיי געשאַנקען עמלקן.

All Female Readers:

Blimeshi — Toybeshi — Rivele.
Leyenyu — Feygenyu — Perele.

All Male Readers:

Khatskele — Motele — Kivele.
Hershele — Leybele — Berele.

Poet:

Oys un nishto mer di Heshelkh,
Heshelkh, Peshelekh, Hindelekh.
Klangen, bloyz klangen, bloyz
lidklangen —
Nemen fun yidishe kinderlekh.
Vu iz dayn fisele, Zisele?
Tsipele, vu iz dayn tsepele?
Roykh bitstu, Yenteles hentele!
Ash bistu, Kopeles kepele!

אויס און נישטאָ מער די העשעלעך,
העשעלעך, פעשעלעך, הינדעלעך.
קלאַנגען, בלויז קלאַנגען, בלויז
לידקלאַנגען —
נעמען פֿון ייִדישע קינדערלעך.
ווי איז דיין פֿיסעלע, זיסעלע?
ציפעלע, ווי איז דיין צעפעלע?
רויך ביסטו, יענטעלעס הענטעלע!
אַש ביסטו, קאָפעלעס קעפעלע!

(. . . in the sleepless night I count the names of Jewish children. . . .
Kopele, where is your little head? Where is the light of your eye? Yentele, where is your hand, and your foot — Feygele? Their names are all that remain. . . . Is there anyone who can still find a Moyshele, . . . ?
God did not have mercy upon them and gave them over to Amalek. . . .
The Heshlekh are no more. . . . Sounds, only the sounds of this poem are left of the names of Jewish children. Zisele, where is your foot?
Tsipele, where is your braid? Yentele's hand, you've been turned into smoke. Kopele's head, you've been turned into ash.)

(The POET is seated.)

Doctor:

Trained by hunger
The child always answers I am eating
Are you coming I am eating
Are you sleeping I am eating.

Singer:

(Sung in Yiddish)

Birds are drowsing on the branches.
Sleep, my darling child.
At your cradle, in the field,
A stranger sits and sings.

Once you had another cradle
Woven out of joy,
And your mother, oh your mother
Will never more come by.

I saw your father fleeing
Under the rain of countless stones,
Over fields and over valleys
Flew his orphaned cry.

Dremlen feygl af di tsvaygn,
Shlof, mayn tayer kind.
Bay dayn vigl, af dayn nare
Zitst a fremde un zingt:
Lyu-lyu, lyu-lyu, lyu.

S'iz dayn vigl vu geshtanen
Oysgeflokhtn fun glik,
Un dayn mame, oy dayn mame,
Kumt shoy'n keyn mol nit tsurik.
Lyu-lyu, lyu-lyu, lyu.

Kh'hob gezen dayn tatn loyfn
Unter hogl fun shteyn,
Iber felder iz gefloygn
Zayn faryosemter gevey'n.
Lyu-lyu, lyu-lyu, lyu.

דרעמלען פֿייגל אויף די צווייגן,
שלאָף מיין טײער קינד.
ביי דיין וויגל, אויף דיין נאַרע
זיצט אַ פֿרעמדע און זינגט
ליר־ליר, ליר־ליר, ליר.

סײַז דיין וויגל וווּ געשטאַנען
אויסגעפֿלאַכטן פֿון גליק,
און דיין מאַמע, אוי דיין מאַמע,
קומט שוין קיין מאָל ניט צוריק.
ליר־ליר, ליר־ליר, ליר.

כײַהאַב געזען דיין טאַטן לויפֿן
אונטער האַגל פֿון שטיין,
איבער פֿעלדער איז געפֿלויגן
זײַן פֿאַריתומטער געוויין.
ליר־ליר, ליר־ליר, ליר.

Moderato



Drem-len fey-gl af_ di tsvey-gn, Shlof, mayn tay - er_



kind. Bay dayn vi - gl af dayn na - re Zitst a frem-de un



zingt, Bay_ dayn vi - gl af dayn na - re Zitst a frem-de un



zingt: Lyu - lyu, lyu - lyu, lyu. _____



FIRST PRAYER

Clown and Prophet

(stand and remain standing)

Clown:

THE LORD YOUR GOD, HE IS GOD OF GODS, AND LORD OF LORDS, THE GREAT, THE MIGHTY, THE AWESOME GOD.

Prophet:

AWESOME? Where, then, is the awe, if the enemy desecrated and destroyed His houses of prayer in the tens of thousands?

Clown:

THE LORD YOUR GOD, HE IS GOD OF GODS, AND LORD OF LORDS, THE GREAT, THE MIGHTY GOD.

Prophet:

MIGHTY? When one million of his children were fed to the flames, where was God's might?

Clown:

THE LORD YOUR GOD, HE IS GOD OF GODS, AND LORD OF LORDS, THE GREAT GOD.

Prophet:

GREAT? When millions cried out to Him and He did not hear?

Clown:

THE LORD YOUR GOD, HE IS GOD OF GODS, AND LORD OF LORDS.

Prophet:

LORD? When death had unceasing dominion of the world?

Clown:

THE LORD YOUR GOD, HE IS GOD OF GODS.

Prophet:

GOD?

SECOND PRAYER

School Girl:

(stands and remains standing)

וְהָיָה חַיִּיךָ תְּלָאִים לְךָ מִנְּגִד
וּפְחָדֶת לַיְלָה וַיּוֹמֵם וְלֹא תֶאֱמִין בְּחַיִּיךָ.
בְּבֹקֶר תֹּאמַר מִי יִתֵּן עֶרֶב וּבְעֶרֶב תֹּאמַר מִי יִתֵּן בֹּקֶר
מִפְּחַד לְבָבְךָ אֲשֶׁר תִּפְחֹד וּמִמְרֹאֶה עֵינֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר תִּרְאֶה.

The life you face shall be precarious; you shall be in terror, night and day, with no assurance of survival. In the morning you shall say, “If only it were evening!” and in the evening you shall say, “If only it were morning!” because of what your heart shall dread and your eyes shall see.

THIRD PRAYER

Painter:

(stands and remains standing)

But before my weary brain can labor and choose some object, a dark, cloudy autumn night spreads its wings over the ghetto dwellers. With evening comes darkness, and the ghetto then becomes a city of madmen and lunatics. The darkness is double: no light outside for fear of air attack. The gas lamps are not lit. Shop windows are extinguished. Shutters are sealed over doors. Quite simply, as it is written [Exod. 10:21]: “a darkness that can be touched.”

Inside the houses there is no spark of light: at midnight the electric current is cut off, and a watery tallow candle that melts and drips when it smells fire replaces it. By the dim light of the candle the night shadows thicken. You are completely sunk in thoughts and shadows. The silence of the ghetto in the darkness increases the fear of night, full of secrets and hints. In my room there is no living being except the patient with her burning fever and death lying in wait for her.

“If only it were morning!”

FOURTH PRAYER

Mystic:

(stands and remains standing)

גלוסט זיך מיר צו טאָן אַ תּפִּילָה — ווייס איך ניט צו וועמען,
דער, וואָס האָט אַ מאָל געטרייסט מיך, וועט זי ניט פֿאַרנעמען,
ווייס איך ניט צו וועמען —
האַלט זי מיך אין קלעמען.

I think I just thought of a prayer,
But I can't imagine who might be there.
Sealed in a steel womb,
How can I pray? To whom?

FIFTH PRAYER

Dreamer:

(stands and remains standing)

קְרֹאנָא הַיֵּשׁ עוֹנֵךְ
וְאֵל מִי מְקַדְּשִׁים תִּפְנֶה.

Go, cry out your rage — but who will answer?
Which of the angels would you implore?

SIXTH PRAYER

Storyteller:

(stands and remains standing)

Warsaw is depressed and wrapped in deep mourning. But it is no ceremonial mourning with only the outward trappings, lacking heartfelt grief. On the contrary, if we could, we would weep bitterly, and our cry would rise to the high heavens. Were it not for fear of the evil kingdom, our wailing would burst forth in the dark alleys, and we would cry and weep and wail dreadfully for our calamity, as vast as the sea. But because of the sword, drawn and waiting for our plaint to lop off our heads—our grief does not break out. Our hearts—are our graves.

SEVENTH PRAYER

Soldier:

(stands and remains standing)

אָרֶץ אֵל תְּכַסֵּי דָמִי
וְאֵל יְהִי מְקוֹם לְזַעֲקוֹתַי.

O Earth! Do not conceal my blood!
And may my cry not find a place to rest!

EIGHTH PRAYER

Historian:

(stands and remains standing)

History will revere your memory, people of the ghetto. Your least utterance will be studied, your struggle for man's dignity will inspire poems, your scum and moral degradation will summon and awaken morality. Your murderers will stand in the pillory forever and ever.

NINTH PRAYER

Child:

(stands and remains standing)

תָּם וְרָשָׁע הוּא מְכֻלָּה.

The good and the guilty He destroys alike.

TENTH PRAYER

Abraham:

(stands and remains standing)

My son! You should not regret it that you have been with me in the locked-up streets of the ghetto—Dzika, Stavki, and Mila.

My son, you should not regret your crying today. It does not matter that, when you look up to the sun, tears come into your eyes.

For you will see, my child, you will see: where today there is wailing and sadness hovers in homes; and the Angel of Death reigns supreme like a drunken madman; and people in rags, heaps of shattered hopes, cower along old, dark, and smoky walls; and bodies of old men rot away in doorways or on bare floors, covered with newspapers or pieces of stone; and children shiver and whisper: “We are starving” and like rats stir in piles of refuse; and worn-out women hold up their hands, thin as ribbons in their last barren consumptive prayers; and frost and disease close in on dying eyes that, in their last agony crave for a crust of bread—

There, my dear, my sunny child,
there will yet come
that great,
that greatest of days
that last, the very last day—
and it will be as in a dream . . .

ELEVENTH PRAYER

Woman:

(stands and remains standing)

הַלַּיְלָה הַזֶּה הוּא יְקָוֶהוּ אֶפֶל
אֶל יַחַד בְּיַמֵּי שָׁנָה
בְּמִסְפַּר יָרְחִים אֶל גְּבֹא.

Black take that night!
May it not count in the days of the year.
May it not come in the round of the months.

TWELFTH PRAYER

Teacher:

(stands and remains standing)

I want my little daughter to be remembered. Margalit, 20 months old today. Has mastered Yiddish perfectly, speaks a pure Yiddish. At 9 months began to speak Yiddish clearly. In intelligence she is on a par with 3- or 4-year-old children. I don't want to brag about her. Witnesses to this, who tell me about it, are the teaching staff of the school at Nowolipki 68.

I am not sorry about my life and that of my wife. But I am sorry for the gifted little girl. She deserves to be remembered also.

Woman Job 3:6–7. Trans. Raymond P. Scheindlin. See above.

Teacher "Israel Lichtenstein's Last Testament," Warsaw ghetto, 31 July 1942, the eleventh day of the Great Deportation. Translated from the Yiddish by Lucy S. Dawidowicz in *A Holocaust Reader* (New York: Behrman House, 1976), p. 296. © 1976 Lucy S. Dawidowicz and used by permission.

THIRTEENTH PRAYER

Investigator:

(stands and remains standing)

אָ, ברידער מיינע, הייבט אַרויף דעם קאָפּ,
דעם זינקעדיקן ווי די זון, דעם קראַנקן.
איך וויל אייך זען אין אייער זונק אַראָפּ,
פֿאַרנעמען מיינע אייגענע געדאַנקען;
פֿאַרבלייבט אַ רגע נאַקעט, אָנעם איצט.
נאָר לייענט זיך אַליין, ווי אַ פֿאַרברעכער
די אותיות אין זיין טויטנצעל פֿאַרקריצט,
און טראַכט צי אייער וויי קען גרייכן אייביקער און העכער!

Brothers, lift your heads, your sick
heads sinking
like the sun: I want to see you as you sink
hearing at least what I'm thinking.
Stay naked for now, stripped of the present.
Read yourself, as condemned men
read scratches in the walls of their cell.
Do you think your pain will surmount its moment?

FOURTEENTH PRAYER

Scribe:

(stands and remains standing)

און איצטער, ווען די שרעק פֿון טויזנט יאָר
האָט אייך באַרינגלט מיט די שוואַרצע פּלויטן,
פֿאַרשאַלטן אייך צו זיין דער לעצטער דור,
אין פֿאַלקס־מנורה — יאַרצייטיקע קנױטן;
ווען יעדער איז אַליין אַ דאַרף, אַ שטאַט,
געקלעפט פֿון ווייב און קינדס פֿאַרגליווערט פנים —
צי האָט דעם חורבנס צאַרנדיקער זאָט
דערגרייכט כאַטש אייער פֿוסטריט און געלאָזן דאַרט סימנים?

And when a thousand years of enmity
has walled the light out completely,
and cursed you, last generation,
wicks in your nation's memorial candles;
when each of you is a separate city
cemented together out of kith's congealed faces,
has destruction's furious violation
dared your footsteps to leave traces?

FIFTEENTH PRAYER

Rabbi:

(stands and remains standing)

חֲלִילָה לִי אִם אֶצְדִּיק אֶתְכֶם
עַד אֲגֹוע לֹא אֶסִיר תַּמְתִּי מִמְּנִי.

Never will I call you right,
Never deny my innocence
Until the day I die!

SIXTEENTH PRAYER

Magician:

(stands and remains standing)

עס שרעקט מיך אייער פֿריישאַפֿט נאָך אַנאַנד,
נאָך מער ווי מינע לעצטע דריי סעקונדן.
צי וועט אייך דען אַריינלאָזן איר לאַנד
ווי שטערן האָבן יום־טובֿ־ליכט געצונדן?
איך האָק מיין שאַרבן אָן אַ שטיין און זוד
אין שפּליטער זינעם טרייסט פֿאַר אייך, די לעצטע.
ווייל איך בין אויך אַן אות אין אייער בוך,
און מיין זון איז ווי אייערע אין פֿרילינג אַ פֿאַרקרעצטע.

I fear the freedom you'll find finally
more than the three seconds I propose for myself.
Will you be admitted to that hallowed land
where stars ignite lamps on the shelf?
I beat my skull on stones to find consolation
for you in the fragments, you, the last,
for I, too, am a letter in your book,
my sun, too, is spring's leprous outcast.

SEVENTEENTH PRAYER

Carpenter:

(stands and remains standing)

For there is hope of a tree,
If it be cut down, that it will sprout again,
And that the tender branch thereof will not cease.

Though the root thereof wax old in the earth,
And the stock thereof die in the ground;
Yet through the scent of water it will bud,
And put forth boughs like a plant.
But man dieth, and lieth low;
Yea, man perisheth, and where is he?

כִּי יֵשׁ לְעֵץ תְּקוּוּהָ
אִם יִכָּרַת וְעוֹד יִחְלִיף
וְיִנְקָתוֹ לֹא תִחְדָּל.
אִם יִזְקִינׁוּ בְּאָרֶץ שְׂרֵשׁוֹ
וּבְעֵפֶר יָמוּת גִּזְעוֹ.
מִיֵּרֵחַ מַיִם יִפְרֹחַ
וְעֵשָׂה קִצִּיר כְּמוֹ-נֹטֶעַ.
וְגָבַר יָמוּת וַיִּחְלַשׁ
וַיִּגָּוַע אָדָם וְאִינוֹ.

EIGHTEENTH PRAYER

Messenger:

(stands and remains standing)

May we be the redeemers for all the rest of the Jews in the whole world. I believe in the survival of our people. Jews will not be annihilated. We, the Jews of Poland, Czechoslovakia, Lithuania, Latvia, are the scapegoat for all Israel in all the other lands.

All rise.

Musician:

(shouting, waiting for a response, never getting one)

Teki'ah . . . shevarim teru'ah . . . teki'ah

Teki'ah . . . shevarim teru'ah . . . teki'ah

Teki'ah . . . shevarim teru'ah . . . teki'ah

Teki'ah . . . teru'ah . . . teki'ah

Teki'ah . . . teru'ah . . . teki'ah

Teki'ah . . . teru'ah . . . teki'ah gedolah!

Judge:

If a man does not judge himself, all things judge him, and all things become messengers of God.

Nurse:

O God of Compassion —
If God weren't so full of compassion,
The world could have some of it too.
I who gathered flowers at the foot of the mountain,
Who gazed steadily at all the valleys,
Who brought fallen bodies down from the hills,
Can swear that the world is devoid of compassion.

אֵל מְלֵא רַחֲמִים.
אֵלֶּמְלֵא הָאֵל מְלֵא רַחֲמִים
הִיוּ הַרְחָמִים בְּעוֹלָם וְלֹא רַק בּוֹ.
אֲנִי, שְׁקִטְפֹתִי פְּרָחִים בְּהַר
וְהִסְתַּכְּלֹתִי אֵל כָּל־הָעֵמֻקִּים,
אֲנִי, שֶׁהֵבֵאתִי גּוֹיּוֹת מִן הַגְּבָעוֹת,
יִוְדַע לְסִפֵּר שֶׁהָעוֹלָם רֵיק מִרַחֲמִים.

Witness:

The sun rose over a mount of corpses
And one, who witnessed it, asked:
“Are you not ashamed to rise, sun?”
He asked and received no reply,
For in that moment he said to himself:
“Are you not ashamed to live on?”
And he sat down opposite the mount,
And looked at the bodies as they lay,
Some face down to the ground
And some face upward to the sun.
And again he asked:
“Are you not ashamed to look at the sun?”
And in that moment he said to himself:
“Are you not ashamed to sit while they lie?”
And he lay down, like one of the dead,
Face up, and lay this way for hours.
While he lay there, a melody rose within him
That sang of his own shame,
And as the melody began to sing out from within,
He stood up
And allowed the melody to spread
And the mount of corpses
Picked up his melody
And answered with an echo
Like a resounding choir.

Philosopher:

I maintain my human contradiction. I establish my lucidity in the midst of what negates it. I exalt man before what crushes him, and my freedom, my revolt, and my passion come together then in that tension, that lucidity, and that vast repetition.

Everyone is seated.

Singer:

(sings in Yiddish)

Still, still. Let us be still. Graves grow here. Planted by the enemy, they blossom to the sky. All the roads lead to Ponar, and none returns. Somewhere father disappeared, disappeared with all our joy. Hush, my child, don't weep, my treasure, tears will do no good. Though our foes see our misfortunes, they are not understood. Rivers open into oceans, prison cells are not a world, but to our sorrow, there is no end, there is no light.

Shtiler, shtiler, lomir shvaygn,
Kvorim vaksn do.
S'hobn zey farflantst di sonim:
Grinen zey tsum blo.
S'firn vegn tsu Ponar tsu,
S'firt keyn veg tsurik,
Iz der tate vu farshvundn
Un mit im dos glik.
Shtiler, kind mayns, veyn nit, oytser,
S'helft nit keyn geveyn,
Undzer umglik veln sonim
Say-vi nit farshteyn.
S'hobn breges oykh di yamen,
S'hobn tfises oykhet tsamen,
Nor tsu undzer payn
Keyn bisl shayn,
Keyn bisl shayn.

שטילער, שטילער, לאָמיר שווייגן,
קבֿרים וואַקסן דאָ.
סיחאָבן זיי פֿאַרפֿלאַנצט די שונאים:
גרינען זיי צום בלאָ.
סיפֿירן וועגן צו פּאָנאַר צו,
סיפֿירט קיין וועג צוריק,
איז דער טאַטע וווּ פֿאַרשוונדן,
און מיט אים דאָס גליק.
שטילער, קינד מיינס, וויין ניט, אוצר,
סיחעלפֿט ניט קיין געוויין,
אונדזער אומגליק וועלן שונאים
סייִווי ניט פֿאַרשטיין.
סיחאָבן ברעגעס אויך די ימען,
סיחאָבן תּפֿיסות אויכעט צאַמען,
נאָר צו אונדזער פיין
קיין ביסל שיין,
קיין ביסל שיין.

Andantino



Shti-ler, shti-ler, lo-mir shvay-gn, Kvo-rim vak-sn do.



S'ho-bn zey far - flantst di so-nim; Gri-nen zey tsum blo.



S'fi-rn ve-gn tsu po-nar tsu, S'firt keyn veg tsu - rik,



Iz der ta - te vu far-shvun - dn Un mit im dos glik.



Shti-ler, kind mayns, veyn nit, oy-tser, S'helft nit keyn ge - veyn,



Un - dzer um - glik ve - ln so - nim Say - vi nit far - shteyn



S'ho-bn bre-ges oykh di ya-men, S'ho-bn tfi - ses oy-khet tsa-men,



Nor tsu un - dzer payn keyn bi-sl shayn, ___ Keyn bi-sl shayn.



קְרִיאָה / KERI'AH: READING OF THE SCROLL

The ḤAZZAN enters the center of the circle and sits down. Three readers are to be called to say the blessing over the scroll. They are chosen at random by the ushers, preferably not from among the Thirty-Six. The readers should remain in the center until the scroll has been completed. The ḤAZZAN chants from the scroll with the traditional Torah cantillation.

First Reader:

Va'immaltah rak ani levadi lehaggid lakh.

וְאִמְלַטָּה רַק אֲנִי לְבַדִּי לְהַגִּיד לָךְ.

All:

And I only am escaped alone to tell thee.

THE SCROLL OF HAPPENINGS

Hazzan:

And it came to pass in the days of the Great Destruction
that the army of Night
passed through the holy congregation of Nemirov.
There were a hundred fifty men there and all were killed.

And from there
the army passed through the holy congregation of Zhitov.
There were two hundred men there and all were killed.

And from there
it passed through the holy congregation of Berditshev.
There were five hundred men there and almost all were killed.

From there it came to the large city of Konstantin.
Over six hundred very wealthy men lived there.
An evil edict was passed against them
and six thousand men were killed.

And the army of night passed through Zhitomir
killing seven thousand men at once.

And from there
it passed through the holy congregation of Umman
killing all the inhabitants, ten thousand in all.

And passed from there to the holy congregation of Kiev,
the crown city of the east,
and killed two hundred thousand persons there.

And passed from there to the holy congregation of Minsk
killing thousands of men and their families.

And the army of night
descended upon the holy congregation of Vilna,
famous for its learning.

And it killed thousands upon thousands
in the prolonged night of terror.

They died cruel and terrible deaths
for the Sanctification of the Name.

Some were skinned alive and their flesh was thrown to the dogs.
Some had their hands and feet chopped off

and their bodies | thrown on the highway
to be trampled by wagons and crushed by horses;
some had wounds inflicted upon them and were thrown on the street
to die a slow death; others were buried alive.
The enemy slaughtered children in their mothers' arms.
They were sliced into pieces like fish.
They slashed the bellies of pregnant women,
removed their infants and tossed them in their faces.
Some women had their bellies torn open
and live cats placed in them. The bellies were then sewn up.
Some children were pierced with spears, roasted on the fire
and then brought to their mothers to be eaten.

And the army of night passed through Lvov and Lublin,
through Warsaw and Lodz, Bialystok, | Kovno, Cracow,
Chenstokhov, Riga, Vitebsk, Kalish,
Belz, Kotsk, and Tarnopol, Vurke and Ger,
Tomashov and Zamoshch, Mezritsh, Kremenets, Brod, Lublin. . . .
And there were three million men and women and children there
and all were killed.

Second Reader:

Va'immaltah rak ani levadi lehaggid lakh.

וְאִמְלַטְהָ רַק אֲנִי לְבַדִּי לְהַגִּיד לְךָ.

All:

And I only am escaped alone to tell thee.

Hazzan:

But Adonai rained down brimstone and fire upon Sedom and Amora
coming from Adonai from the heavens.

He overturned those cities and all of the plain
all those settled in the cities and the vegetation of the soil.

Now his wife gazed behind him, and she became a pillar of salt.

And Avrahām . . . looked down upon the face of Sedom and Amora
and upon the whole face of the plain-country

and saw:

here, the dense-smoke of the land ascended
like the dense-smoke of a furnace!

Third Reader:

Va'immaltah rak ani levadi lehaggid lakh.

וְאִמְלֹטָה רַק אֲנִי לְבַדִּי לְהַגִּיד לְךָ.

All:

And I only am escaped alone to tell thee.

Hazzan:

And it came to pass when Moshe descended from the Mount
that a pillar of fire consumed the tribes of Israel
that stood at the foot of the Mount.
And six million of the children of Israel went up in smoke.

And all that remained was a pillar of smoke
that ascended to the uppermost heaven
and can be seen to this very day.
And when Moshe saw that his people had been made into smoke
he cast the tablets out of his hands
and broke them beneath the Mount.
And he raised a great and terrible shout:

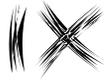
THE PEOPLE!

WHERE ARE THE PEOPLE?

THE WHOLE WORLD HAS GONE CRAZY!

קְרִי'עָה / KERI'AH: RITUAL OF TEARING

The Hazzan rips a piece of his or her clothing as is customary when mourning the dead.



Dreamer:

It is a dream within a dream, varied in details, one in substance. I am sitting at a table with my family or with my friends, or at work, or in the green countryside: in short, in a peaceful environment, apparently without tension; yet I feel a deep and subtle anguish, the definite sensation of an impending threat. And in fact, as the dream proceeds, slowly or brutally, each time in a different way, everything collapses and disintegrates around me, the scenery, the walls, the people, while the anguish becomes more intense and more precise. Now everything has changed to chaos; I am alone in the center of a grey and turbid nothing, and now, I know what this thing means, and I also know, that I have always known it. I am in the *Lager* once more, and nothing is true outside the *Lager*. All the rest was a brief pause, a deception of the senses, a dream: my family, nature in flower, my home. Now this inner dream, this dream of peace, is over and in the outer world, which continues, gelid, a well-known voice resounds: a single word, not imperious, but brief and subdued. It is the dawn command at Auschwitz, a foreign word, feared and expected: Get up, “Wstawách.”

Hazzan:

רבונו של עולם, אני שלך וחלומותי שלך; חלום חלמתי ואיני יודע מה הוא. יהי רצון מלפניך, יי אלהי ואלהי אבותי, שיהיו כל-חלומותי עלי ועל כל-ישראל לטובה, בין שחלמתי על עצמי ובין שחלמתי על אחרים ובין שחלמו אחרים עלי; אם טובים הם, חזקם ואמצם, ויתקומו בי ובהם כחלומות של יוסף הצדיק. וכשם שהפכת את-קללת בלעם הרשע מקללה לברכה, כן תהפך כל-חלומותי עלי ועל כל-ישראל לטובה, ותשמרני ותחנני ותרצני. אמן.

Lord of the Universe, I am yours and my dreams are yours. I have dreamt a dream and I do not know what it is. May it be your will, Lord my God and God of my fathers, to confirm all good dreams concerning myself and all the people of Israel for happiness; may they be fulfilled like the dreams of Joseph. Even as you did turn the curse of Balaam the evil into a blessing, may you turn all my dreams into happiness for myself and for all Israel. Protect me; be gracious to me and favor me. Amen.

All:

AMEN.

Messenger:

Now it came to pass in the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, in the fifth day of the month, as I was among the captives by the river Chebar, that the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God.

The hand of the Lord held me transported and spirited my spirit and set me down in the fell of a valley filled with bones. The Lord caused me to compass the bones in the open valley. They were very dry.

And then He addressed me:

Magician:

בְּ-אָדָם הַתְּחַיֶּינָה הַעֲצָמוֹת הָאֵלֶּה?

You, human! Can these bones live?

Messenger:

Lord, I answered, You alone know.
And then He addressed me:

Magician:

הַנְּבֵא עַל הָעֲצָמוֹת הָאֵלֶּה וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵיהֶם
הָעֲצָמוֹת הַיְבֹשׁוֹת שְׁמְעוּ דְבַר יי.

Proffer this prophecy over these bones:
O dry bones! Welcome the Word.

Messenger:

Thus spoke my Lord to these bones.

Magician:

הִנֵּה אָנִי מְבִיא בָכֶם רוּחַ וְחַיִּיתֶם.
וְנָתַתִּי עֲלֵיכֶם גִּידִים וְהִעֲלֵתִי עֲלֵיכֶם בָּשָׂר
וְקָרַמְתִּי עֲלֵיכֶם עוֹר וְנָתַתִּי בָכֶם רוּחַ וְחַיִּיתֶם
וַיִּדְעֻתֶם כִּי־אָנִי יי.

I will let breath enter in you and you will live.
I will make you muscle and lend you flesh,
settle you with skin, bring you breath,
and you will live and know your Lord.

Messenger:

So I proffered the prophecy commanded of me and as I uttered it a clacking clattered and bone came bone to bone. And I saw sinews, flesh, skin, come up and cover them. But yet no breath.

And then He addressed me:

Magician:

הַנְּבִיא אֶל־הַרוּחַ
הַנְּבִיא בְּנֹאֲדָם וְאָמַרְתָּ אֶל הַרוּחַ
כֹּה אָמַר אֲדֹנָי אֱלֹהִים
מֵאַרְבַּע רוּחוֹת בְּאֵי הַרוּחַ
וּפְחִי בַהֲרוּגִים הָאֵלֶּה וַיְחִיּוּ.

Prophet, the breath!
You, human! Address the breath!
Say: “God says: I summon you, breath,
from the four quarters
to breathe in these slain that they may live.”

Messenger:

So I uttered the summons commanded of me and the breath entered and then they lived. And then they stood, an immense army.

And then He addressed me:

Magician:

בְּנֵי-אָדָם הָעֲצָמוֹת הָאֵלֶּה כָּל-בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל הֵמָּה
הִנֵּה אֹמְרִים יִבְשׁוּ עֲצָמוֹתֵינוּ
וְאֶבְדָּה תִקְוַתְנוּ נִגְזְרְנוּ לָנוּ.

You, human! These bones are the host of all the Chosen. The cry they utter is:

Our bones are dry,
our hope is drained,
we are cut off.

Musician:

Bring near the day, which is neither day nor night.
Most High!
Make known that yours is day and yours is night!
Set guards about your city, all the day and all the night.
Make light as day the dark of night.

קָרַב יוֹם אֲשֶׁר הוּא לֹא יוֹם וְלֹא לַיְלָה.
רַם הוֹדַע כִּי לַךְ הַיּוֹם אִף לַךְ הַלַּיְלָה.
שׁוֹמְרִים הַפְקֵד לְעִירְךָ כָּל-הַיּוֹם וְכָל-הַלַּיְלָה.
תְּאִיר כְּאוֹר יוֹם חֲשֻׁכַת לַיְלָה.

Hazzan:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּקִדְּשָׁתוֹ שֶׁל אַהֲרֹן
וְצִוָּנוּ לְבָרֵךְ אֶת-עַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּאַהֲבָה.

Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the universe, who has sanctified us with the holiness of Aaron, and commanded us to bless your people Israel with love.

Hazzan:

(loudly, slowly, with “otherworldly” voice)

HADDESH!

חֲדָשׁ!

All:

Renew in us the will to live.

Hazzan:

YAMENU!

יָמִינוּ!

All:

The dreams of day and not the dreams of night.

Hazzan:

KEKEDEM!

כְּקֵדָם!

All:

As in the days before the Great Destruction.

All:

*(led by Ḥazzan, singing traditional melody from “Ets Ḥayyim Hi”
or “Hashivenu”)*

*Hashivenu adonal eilekha venashuvah,
Ḥaddesh yamenu kekedem.*

הַשִּׁיבֵנוּ יי אֵלֶיךָ וְנִשׁוּבָה
חֲדָשׁ יָמֵינוּ כְּקֵדֶם.

Turn us back to you, O Lord,
Renew our days as of old.



יְזִכּוֹר / YIZKOR: REMEMBRANCE

Woman:

The solemn moment has arrived when we remember those who are no longer with us. Even those who have finished their prayers come in at this time to be with everyone else as they wait for the words. “We recite *Yizkor*.”

And he who has survived and lives and who approaches this place, let him bow his head and, with anguished heart, let him hear those words and remember his names as I have remembered mine—the names of those who were destroyed.

At the end of the prayer in which everyone inserts the names of members of his family there is a passage recited for those who have no one to remember them and who, at various times, have died violent deaths because they were Jews. And it is people like those who are now in the majority.

Poet:

(reads very slowly)

Count by ones to six million, a number each second. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
. . . you will be here all April,* all May, and part of June . . .

*Enumerate 3 months, beginning with the current month

8, 9, 10, 11, 12 . . . not even naming names, each person a number . . .
13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22 . . . The Germans always started
over again, after 200,000 . . . 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32,
33 . . .

(continues counting until the Inscription of the Camps)

Mute:

There is none like You among the dumb,
Keeping silence and being still in the face of those who aggrieve us.
Our foes are many; they rise up against us,
As they take counsel together to revile us.
“Where is your King?” they taunt us.
But we have not forgotten You nor deceived You.
Do not keep silence!

Isaac:

They made ready to slay their children,
Intending the blessing of sacrifice.
“Hear O Israel, the Lord is our God,
The Lord is One.” Let us proclaim His Unity!
For His Name’s holiness are we slain,
Our wives and children are falling by the sword.
Do not keep silence!

Child:

As priests for the slaughter of their holocaust,
They bound the children and their mothers;
And, in the fire, they burned their skins,
Sprinkling the blood of sisters and brothers,
Offering as sweet savored sacrificial portions
The head and severed parts of flesh.
Do not keep silence!

Citizen:

A charred and overflowing pile,
Like an oven both uncovered and unswept;
All Israel weeps for the burning.
But those falling in God's fire
Are destined for His initiates' abode,
Like Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah.
Do not keep silence!

Storyteller:

The foe was strutting with his sword,
Destroyed my precious ones, made them to nought.
And he slew all who did my eye delight.

The year: one thousand nine hundred and forty-two
When trouble closely followed trouble,
And, for my feet, they set a snare.
Do not keep silence!

Doctor:

Make our remnants Your own once again.
Among crowds show us Your wonders.
Establish peace upon us!
Pity, O our Holy One, those whom You have dispersed;
Let a willing spirit uphold us.
Arise for our help, and redeem us!
Do not keep silence!

Abraham and Isaac:

Do not keep silence . . .

Mute:

(shouts)
Do not keep silence!
(Everyone stands.)

THE INSCRIPTION OF THE CAMPS

Soldier:

And so it was, when the deluge had passed, that a child stepped out on the breast of the earth. Amidst the rubble and the ruin, it found, scattered in a thousand pieces, the shards of a stone tablet. With painstaking care the child pieced the shards together. On the tablet was inscribed:

All:

Mima'amakim karati yah.
Westerbork. Warsaw.

From the depths have I called out to thee.
Vilna. Theresienstadt.

Halleluyah.
Trawniki. Treblinka.

Le'olam va'ed.
Stutthof. Skarzhyisko.

Kadosh.

Sobibór. Sachsenhausen.

Kadosh.

Ravensbrück. Pustkow.

Kadosh.

Ponar. Plaszow.

Adonai tseva'ot.

Oranienberg. Natzweiler.

Melo khol ha'arets kevodo.

Neuengamme. Maidanek.

God's presence fills the earth.

Mauthausen. Lichtenberg. Lida.

Adonai is one.

Lvov. Janowska. Gross-Rosen.

His name is one.

Drancy. Dora. Dachau.

There is none

Chelmno. Buchenwald.

but God

Bergen-Belsen. Belżec [Belzhetz].

alone.

Babi Yar. Auschwitz.

All:

יִתְגַּדֵּל וַיִּתְקַדֵּשׁ שְׁמֵהּ רַבָּא בְּעֵלְמָא דִּי בְּרָא כְרַעוּתָהּ, וַיִּמְלִיךְ מַלְכוּתָהּ
בְּחַיִּיכוֹן וּבְיוֹמֵיכוֹן וּבְחַיֵּי דְכָל־בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל, בְּעֵגְלָא וּבְזָמַן קָרִיב, וְאָמְרוּ
אָמוּן.

יְהֵא שְׁמֵהּ רַבָּא מְבָרַךְ לְעָלְמָא וּלְעָלְמֵי עָלְמֵינָא.

יִתְבָּרַךְ וַיִּשְׁתַּבַּח וַיִּתְפָּאֵר וַיִּתְרוֹמֵם וַיִּתְנַשֵּׂא וַיִּתְהַדָּר וַיִּתְעַלֶּה וַיִּתְהַלַּל
שְׁמֵהּ דְקָדְשָׁא בְּרִיךְ הוּא, לְעֵלְא מוֹ כָּל־בְּרַכְתָּא וְשִׁירְתָּא תִּשְׁבַּחְתָּא
וְנִחְמַתָּא דְאָמִירוֹן בְּעֵלְמָא, וְאָמְרוּ אָמוּן.

יְהֵא שְׁלָמָא רַבָּא מוֹן שְׁמֵינָא וְחַיִּים עָלֵינוּ וְעַל כָּל־יִשְׂרָאֵל, וְאָמְרוּ אָמוּן.

עוֹשֶׂה שְׁלוֹם בְּמִרוֹמָיו, הוּא יַעֲשֶׂה שְׁלוֹם עָלֵינוּ וְעַל כָּל־יִשְׂרָאֵל, וְאָמְרוּ
אָמוּן.

*Yitgadal veyitkadash shmei rabba be'alma di vera khir'utei,
veyamlakh malkhutei be'haveikhon uvyomeikhon
uv'havei dekhil beit yisra'el ba'agala uvizman kariv,
ve'imru amen.*

Yehei shemei rabba mevarakh le'alam ul'almei 'almaya.

*Yitbarakh veyishtabbah veyitpa'ar veyitromam veyitnassei
veyithaddar veyit'aleh veyithallal shemei dekudsha
berikh hu
le'eila min kol birkhata veshirata tushbe'ata venehemata
da'amiran be'alma,
ve'imru amen.*

*Yehei shelama rabba min shemaya ve'haveyim
'aleinu ve'al kol yisra'el,
ve'imru amen.*

*Oseh shalom bimromav hu ya'aseh shalom
'aleinu ve'al kol yisra'el,
ve'imru amen.*

At the appropriate time, the ushers begin sorting out the shoes.