

The Five Books

חמש מגילות

SPS Draft

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# The Five Books

# חמש מגילות

קהלת Kohelet

אסתר Ester

שיר השירים Shir HaShirim

רות Rut

איכה Eicha

*A new translation based on traditional and contemporary sources  
with full transliteration and notes  
by Irrev. Dr. Joe Lewis*

*The Singlish™ Publication Society  
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Hebrew text based on the Westminster Leningrad Codex, by the J. Alan Groves Center for Advanced Biblical Research*

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Distinguished rabbis of Venice endorsed Salomone Rossi's copyright when he published "The Song of Songs" in 1623, threatening any Jewish person who stole or bought stolen intellectual property with:

The decree of angels,

גִּזְרַת עִירִין

gezerat irin

the sentence of the holy ones,

וּמִימָר קָדִישִׁין

umeimar kadishin,

with the biting snake.

בָּנָחַשׁ הַנוֹּשֶׁךְ

banachash hanoshech

I am grateful to Professor Marty Herman for bringing this early copyright warning to my attention, and I hope that anyone who is tempted to copy this work without permission will think better of it! For a copyright violation is a bit like a snakebite: it may seem like nothing at first, but it can spread through the body and grow until it's out of control. So it is with the theft of intellectual property: by the time the author finds out it's happened, it's very difficult to stop. So please, if you want to copy part of this book, ask first. Thank you.

## Introduction

The Five Megillot, five “scrolls,” are five short books of Hebrew scripture that form part of Jewish seasonal liturgy.

Hebrew scripture in traditional manuscript form has no vowels or cantillation marks; these are in the Masoretic (“traditional”) version, which is the printed version. Sometimes the print version is changed for emendation or other reasons; we mark these changes in notes on the Hebrew text.

A manuscript has no verse or paragraph marks. Some lines are written with a gap, with more words on the same line; other lines are left blank after a few words. These are “closed” and “open” divisions, also noted in the Hebrew text.

We read the Speaker’s Book (usually known as Ecclesiastes) first during our year, on the Shabbat of Sukkot, sated with the harvest festival’s abundance and wondering after all the struggles to make a living whether there’s any point to it all. Depression can follow great effort and achievement; we sometimes question the value of all our toil and wonder if we can repeat success. In an agricultural society, there’s an extra dimension: farmers know that success depends on factors beyond human ability—weather, soil and the mysterious fertility of nature. The limit of human influence, the valuation of human achievement, these are themes of the Speaker’s Book.

At Purim, in early spring, we read the Book of Ester (usually written as Esther), a story of Persian Jews saved from hatred. God is not mentioned in the book, but just as the unseen force of fertility prepares to display its seasonal splendor, so (we may say) does God’s invisible influence underlie the deliverance of the Jews.

The Best Song (usually known as The Song of Songs) is a springtime poem; we read it on the Shabbat of Pesach, when nature is roused to profusion. The story of the Exodus displays God’s

love and faithful commitment to the Hebrew people for all the world to see, and this book of erotic poems publicizes the love and commitment of a young couple. Small wonder that our tradition views this book as an allegory of God’s love for us, and may our love for God be as fervent and steadfast!

In the height of summer, at Shavuot, we read the story of Rut (usually spelled Ruth), a pastoral idyll. Shavuot is often considered the time when we received the Torah and when we who were delivered from Egypt finally became Jews. Rut herself joins the Jewish community, and she becomes the progenitor of King David.

Later in the summer, as we mourn the destruction of the First and Second Temples on the Ninth of Av, we read the book of Lamentations. This ancient book is one of the saddest tales in literature. Some of the scenes it describes are harshly inhuman, hard for tender souls to comprehend, but such are the consequences of war. If we learn from our tradition that divisive factions among own people brought about our national disaster, perhaps we will heed the lesson and work for Jewish unity.

The translation is new, and I’m happy when it offers an alternative interpretation to standard translations. Translators make the best sense they can out of the original, and though some translations are enshrined by hoary tradition or admired for fidelity to new understanding of ancient language or cherished for their beauty, I think fresh possibilities can deepen understanding of the Hebrew text.

A more capable person would have made a better book, but I’ve done my best. I’ll be well rewarded if this book helps someone understand, enjoy and participate in Jewish tradition.

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The Speaker's Book

קָהָלָת

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## The Speaker's Book • קָהָלֶת • Kohelet

The book takes its name from the word for congregation, so it's often translated as preacher, and we use Speaker. One can readily assume that Kohelet is the type of person who gathers a group (congregation) in order to address them with words of guidance, inspiration, admonition, and so on. However, it's hard to know how such a person fits the social context of Biblical times; maybe it's someone like one of the prophets.

The book is difficult to understand. I presume its idioms are lost to modern language. Its imagery must have been natural for those who practiced agriculture and commerce in ancient times, but parts of the book have long been considered allegory, and for us the flow and intention of the verses is often difficult. I have translated as best I could, but I look forward to future days when obscure points will become clearer.

The theme of the book is that all human activity is pointless since it ends in death; it's hard to argue with that, eh? The writer's advice is less embarrassing than advice from your (loving but clueless) parents, and the less palatable parts are open to interpretation; that must be why this book is a winner. (Oh, and for everyone who grew up in the 60s, there's the Pete Seeger song and the reference in *The Waste Land*.) Read this book and ponder the meaning and purpose of life, as if you were reading *Hamlet*.

We read this book on the Shabbat of Sukkot, which we think of as a harvest festival. Perhaps it warns proud harvesters that all their work leads to the grave; and perhaps it reflects the emotional slump that sometimes follows a grand achievement.

Scholars often consider this book part of ancient Wisdom literature, a genre popular for several centuries at the end of the Biblical period. Writers personified Wisdom to different degrees; in this book, wisdom is an ideal (often spurned by the ignorant); in Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy*, she is fully personified and visits the prisoner to bring him comfort. Wisdom is a personal ideal that can appeal to those who lead a contemplative life rather than running a business or a farm or a town.

I hope this version will help people who wish to study this book supply this version's deficiencies with their own better understanding.

<sup>1</sup> Here are the topics<sup>1</sup> of Speaker,<sup>2</sup> son of David, king in Jerusalem.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Pointless,<sup>4</sup> just pointless (says Speaker); Pointless, just pointless, it's all pointless.

<sup>3</sup> What is the benefit for a person, for all the work he does under the sun?

<sup>4</sup> One age passes, another comes, while the land stays *the same* forever.

<sup>5</sup> The sun rises, the sun sets, eager *to return* to the place from which it shone.

<sup>6</sup> *The wind* heads south, then turns to the North, whirling, whirling goes the wind; whirling, the wind returns *to its start*.

<sup>7</sup> All rivers flow to the sea, but the sea is not filled. Toward the place where the rivers flow, there they return to flow *again*.

## Chapter 1

דְּבָרִי קָהֶלֶת  
בָּן־דָּוִד מֶלֶךְ בִּירוּשָׁלָם  
הַבָּל הַכְּלִים אָמַר קָהֶלֶת  
הַבָּל הַכְּלִים הַכָּל הַבָּל  
מַה־יִתְרֹן לְאָדָם  
בְּכָל־עַמְלׁוֹ  
שִׁיעַמְלָל תְּחַת הַשָּׁמֶן  
הַדָּר הַלְּכָד וְרוֹר בָּא  
וְהַאֲרַץ לְעוֹלָם עַמְרָת  
וּזְרָח הַשָּׁמֶן וּבָא הַשָּׁמֶן  
וְאַל־מָקוֹמוֹ שׁוֹאֵי  
זֹרֶךְ הָוָא שָׁם  
הַלְּכָד אַל־דָּרוֹם  
וְסֹוֶּבֶב אַל־צָפֹן  
סֹוֶּבֶב | סֹבֶב הַוְּלָךְ הַרְיוֹת  
וְעַל־סְבִיבָתָיו שָׁב הַרְיוֹת  
כָּל־הַנְּחָלִים הַלְּכִים אַל־נָהָם  
וְהַנָּם אַיִּנְיָה מְלָא  
אַל־מָקוֹם שְׁהַנְּחָלִים הַלְּכִים  
שָׁם הָם שְׁבִים לְלָכַת

Divrei Kohelet  
ben David, melech bIrushala'im.  
Havel havalim, amar Kohelet;  
havel havalim, hakol havel.  
Mah yitron la'adam  
bechol amalo  
sheya'amol tachat hashames?  
Dor holech vedor bah,  
veha'aretz le'olam omadet.  
Vezarach hashemesh uva hashemesh,  
ve'el mekomo sho'ef  
zore'ach hu sham.  
Holech el darom  
vesovev el tzafon,  
sovev, sovev, holech haru'ach,  
ve'al seivotav shav haru'ach.  
Kol han'chalim hol'chim el hayam  
vehayam einenu maleh;  
el mekom shehan'chalim hol'chim,  
sham hem shavim lalachet.

<sup>1</sup> The Hebrew word **דבר** means word or matter or thing or topic.

<sup>2</sup> From the Hebrew for assembly or congregation; if it's a noun, it has a feminine ending, and if it's a name it means something like "one who organizes a rally." Translators often use the word "Preacher" because public preachers can draw a crowd (to see this today, try London's Hyde Park Corner).

<sup>3</sup> "King in Jerusalem" may refer to David or to his son (usually thought to be Solomon).

<sup>4</sup> The Hebrew **הַבָּל** is a noun, pointlessness or futility, but the adjective "pointless" seems the most straightforward translation into English.

<sup>8</sup> Every topic is exhausted.

Nobody has anything to say,  
nobody can see it satisfactorily  
and nobody can hear it through to the end.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>9</sup> What happened, that's what will happen;  
what has been done, that's what will be done;  
there's nothing new under the sun.

<sup>10</sup> Take a topic of which someone claims,  
"Look at this; it's new."

*No!* It's been around forever;  
it happened *long* before us.

<sup>11</sup> There's no remembering the old times;  
and even the later times that are to come,  
there will be no memory of them  
along with what comes *still* later.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>12</sup> I'm the Speaker.

I was king over Israel,  
in Jerusalem.

<sup>13</sup> I devoted my thoughts<sup>3</sup>  
to investigating and exploring wisdom,  
through everything that's done  
under the sun.  
It's a tough task that God has given  
for humanity to work on.<sup>4</sup>

**כָּל־תְּדָבְּרִים יָגִיעַם**  
**לֹא־יַכְלֵל אִישׁ לִדְבָּר**  
**לֹא־חָשַׁב עַיִן לְרָאֹת**  
**וְלֹא־תִּמְלֵא אָזְנוֹ מִשְׁמָעַ**  
**מַה־שְׁהַיָּה הוּא שִׁיחָה**  
**וּמַה־שְׁנַעֲשָׂה הוּא שִׁיעָשָׂה**  
**וְאֵין כָּל־תְּדָבְּרִים תְּחַשֵּׁשׁ**

Kol hadvarim yege'im;  
lo yuchal ish ledaber,  
lo tisbah ayim lirot  
velo timaleh ozen mishmo'ah.  
Mah shehayah, hu sheyiheyah;  
umah shena'asah hu sheye'aseh,  
ve'ein kol chadash tachat hashamesh.  
Yesh davar sheyomar,  
"Re'eh zeh; chadash hu."  
Kevar hayah le'olamim,  
asher hayah milfanenu.  
Ein zichron larishonim,  
vegam la'acharonim sheyiheyu  
lo yiheyeh lahem zikaron  
im sheyiheyu la'acharonah.

**ב**

**אָנָּי קְהַלָּת**  
**חִיִּיתִי מֶלֶךְ עַל־יִשְׂרָאֵל**  
**בִּירוּשָׁלָם**  
**וַנְתַּחֲזִי אֶת־לְבִי**  
**לִדְרוֹשׁ וְלִתְוֹר בְּחַכְמָה**  
**עַל כָּל־אָשֶׁר נָעַשָּׂה**  
**תְּחַת הַשְׁנִים**  
**הָוָה | עֲנָנוּ רֹעֶן נָתַן אֱלֹהִים**  
**לְבָנֵי הָאָדָם לְעָנוֹת בָּוּ**

Ani Kohelet;  
hayiti melech al Yisra'el  
bIrushala'im.  
Vanatati et libi  
lidrosh velatur bachochnah,  
al kol asher na'asah  
tachat hashamayim.  
Hu inyan rah natan Elohim  
livnei ha'adam, la'anot bo.

<sup>1</sup> Or, "All topics are wearying. A person cannot speak, an eye cannot satisfy (or satisfy itself) with seeing, and the ear cannot be filled with hearing." It's not clear whether the topics are exhausting because you can't get enough information or because you lack patience to hear it through.

<sup>2</sup> Oh, how the moderns are ignorant. They don't even know how to dial a rotary phone.

<sup>3</sup> "Heart," which the ancients thought was the seat of thinking powers.

<sup>4</sup> *לענונָת* (root *ענָה*) connotes "oppress" or "respond"; several translations would be possible.

<sup>14</sup> I examined all the achievements  
accomplished under the sun.

Look, it's all pointless  
and heartbreak.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Something twisted can't be straightened,  
and what's missing can't be counted.

<sup>16</sup> I said to myself,  
“Look, I increased  
and added wisdom,  
more than any that preceded me  
*as ruler* over Jerusalem”;  
my mind perceived  
great wisdom and knowledge.

<sup>17</sup> I devoted my thoughts to experiencing  
wisdom and knowledge,  
riddles and mystery<sup>2</sup>;  
I knew that this too  
*would be* grasping the wind.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>18</sup> For in much wisdom is much bother;  
more knowledge, more *headache*.<sup>4</sup>

רָאִיתִי אֶת־כָּל־הַמְּעֻשִׁים  
שְׁנַעֲשָׂו תַּחַת הַשְׁמֶשׁ  
וְהַנֶּה כָּל־הַבָּל  
וּרְעוּת רֹויָה  
מְעֻוָּת לְאִירּוּכָל לְתַחַן  
וְחִסְרָוָן לְאִירּוּכָל לְהַמְּנֹנוֹת  
דְּבָרְתִּי אֲנִי עַמְּלֵבִי לְאָמֵר  
אֲנִי הִנֵּה הַגְּדוּלָה  
וְהוֹסְפָתִי חִכְמָה  
עַל־כָּל־אֲשֶׁר־דָּגַיה לִפְנֵי  
עַל־יְרֻוּשָׁלָם  
וּלְבִּי רָאָה  
הַרְבָּה חִכְמָה וְדָעַת  
וְאַתָּה לְבִּי לְרַעַת  
חִכְמָה וְדָעַת  
הַוְּלִילוֹת וְשְׁבָלוֹת  
יְדָעַתִּי שְׁנַמְּדָה הָוָא  
רְעִיּוֹן רֹויָה  
כִּי בְּרַבּ חִכְמָה רְבָ-כָּעַס  
וּוּסִיף דָּעַת יוּסִיף מְכָאָב

Ra'iti et kol hama'asim  
shena'asu tachat hashamesh,  
vehineh hakol hevel  
ure'ut ru'ach.  
Me'uvat lo yuchal litkon,  
vechesron lo yuchal lehimanot.  
Dibarti ani im libi lemor,  
“Ani, hineh, higdalti  
vehoshafti chochmah  
al kol asher hayah lefanai  
al Yerushala'im.”  
Velibi ra'ah  
harbeh chochmah vada'at.  
Va'etnah libi lada'at  
chochmah veda'at,  
holelot vesichlut;  
yadati shegam zeh hu  
ra'yon ru'ach.  
Ki berov chochmah rav ka'as,  
veyosif da'at yosif mach'ov.

<sup>1</sup> The root רעה means tend, or associate with, or break, while רוח means wind, spirit or spacious; so many translations are possible for this phrase. I wouldn't pick "breaking wind" since I think it's an English idiom.

<sup>2</sup> Some translate "madness and folly," but שבלות seems related to שכל (common sense that confronts and perhaps unravels confusing or mysterious problems) so שבלות seems more likely to mean something like cleverness. The root היל means (among other things) "confound" so the plural noun can mean puzzles, enigmas, or posers.

<sup>3</sup> This translation derives רעה from the root רעה as in verse 14.

<sup>4</sup> "And one who adds knowledge will add aching."

## Chapter 2

<sup>1</sup> I said to myself,  
“Let’s see. I’ll try fun<sup>1</sup>  
and enjoy pleasure.”

See, this too is pointless.

<sup>2</sup> Amusements, I thought, were bizarre,  
and as for fun, what’s the point?<sup>2</sup>

<sup>3</sup> I finally thought<sup>3</sup>  
to apply myself to *drinking* wine<sup>4</sup>  
while my thoughts would head for wisdom  
and lay hold of mystery,<sup>5</sup>  
until I’d see  
how this could benefit human beings,  
who complete beneath the sky  
the number of their life’s days.

<sup>4</sup> I did great things:  
built myself houses,  
planted myself vineyards.

<sup>5</sup> I made myself gardens and orchards  
and planted in them trees of every fruit.

<sup>6</sup> I made myself pools of water  
with which to irrigate  
a forest sprouting trees.

**אָמַרְתִּי אֲנִי בְּלִבִּי**  
לְכַה־נָא אָסְכָה בְּשִׁמְךָ  
**וַיָּרַא בְּטוֹב**  
**וְהַנֶּה נִמְהֹוֹת הַכְּלָל**  
**לְשִׁׁזְׁקָעַק אָמַרְתִּי מַהְלָל**  
**וְלִשְׁמִיחָה מַה־זֹּה עֲשָׂה**  
**תְּרַתִּי בְּלִבִּי**  
**לִמְשׁׁוֹךְ בְּנֵינוֹ אֶת־בְּשָׁרִי**  
**וּלְבִּי נָהָג בְּחִכְמָה**  
**וּלְאָחָז בְּסִכְלָהָה**  
**עַד אֲשֶׁר־אָרֶה**  
**אִירְהָה טֹוב לְבִנֵּי הָאָדָם**  
**אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂל תְּחַת הַשְּׁמִים**  
**מִסְפָּר וּמֵחִיּוֹם**  
**הִנְדַּלְתִּי מַעַשָּׂה**  
**בְּנִיִּי לִי בָּתִים**  
**נָתַתִּי לִי כְּרָמִים**  
**עֲשִׂיִּי לִי גָּנוֹת וְפַרְדָּסִים**  
**וְנִמְעַתִּי בְּהַם עַזְּלָפָרִי**  
**עֲשִׂיִּי לִי בְּרִכּוֹת מַיִם**  
**לְהַשְׁקֹות מַהְם**  
**יָעַר צָוָמָח עַצְמָם**

Amarti ani belibi,  
“Lecha nah, anas’cha vesimcha  
ure’eh vetov.”  
Vehineh gam hu havel.  
Lis’chok amarti meholal.  
ulesimcha, mah zoh osah?  
Tarti velibi  
limshoch bayayin et besari,  
velibi noheg bachochmah  
vele’echoz besich’lut  
ad asher ereh  
ei zeh tov livnei ha’adam  
asher ya’asu tachat hashamayim  
mispar yemei chayeihem.  
Higdalti ma’asai,  
baniti li batim,  
natati li keramim.  
Asiti li ganot ufardesim  
vanatati vahem etz kol peri.  
Asiti li berechot mayim  
lehashkot mehem  
ya’ar tzome’ach etzim.

<sup>1</sup> “Go on, please. I’ll test the *experience* of fun ...”

<sup>2</sup> “What does this accomplish?”

<sup>3</sup> “I drifted in my thoughts/heart.”

<sup>4</sup> “To draw/attract to/with wine my flesh/body.”

<sup>5</sup> Some translate this as “folly.” I think it’s related to **שְׁכָל** (common sense) as in 1:17.

<sup>7</sup> I acquired male and female servants;  
I had house-born slaves,  
wealth in cattle and sheep, too.  
I had lots,

more than ever were before me in Jerusalem.<sup>1</sup>  
<sup>8</sup> I amassed gold and silver, too,  
royal treasure and provincial taxes;  
I made myself male and female singers,  
the delights of human beings,  
a wife<sup>2</sup> and mistresses.

<sup>9</sup> I became great and had more  
than all who preceded me in Jerusalem;  
my wisdom, too, stayed with me.

<sup>10</sup> Everything my eye fancied  
I didn't resist;  
I denied myself no pleasure  
as I rejoiced in all I accomplished;  
this was my reward for all my effort.

<sup>11</sup> I turned  
to all I had accomplished,  
all the effort I had expended,  
and see, it was all pointless, heartbreak,  
nothing gained under the sun.

קָנִיתִי עֲבָדִים וְשָׁפְרוֹת  
וּבְגִנְעָבִית דָּתָה לִי  
גַם מִקְנָה בְּקָר וְצָאן  
הַרְבָּה דָּתָה לִי

מִפְלָל שְׂתִּיו לְפָנֵי בִּירוּשָׁלָם

כָּנָסְתִּיו לִי גַם-כְּסָפָף וּזְהָבָב

וּסְגָלָת מֶלֶכִים וְהַמְּדִינּוֹת

עַשְׂתִּיו לִי שְׁעָרִים וּשְׁרוֹתָה

וְתַעֲנָוָת בְּנֵי הָאָדָם

שָׁהָה וְשָׁרוֹת

וְגִנְעָלָתִי וְהַוְּסָפְטוֹתִי מִכֶּל

שְׂתִּיו לְפָנֵי בִּירוּשָׁלָם

אֲפִכְמָנִי עַמְּדָה לִי

וְכָל אֲשֶׁר שָׁאַלְוָוּ עִזִּי

לֹא אָצַל תְּזִזִּי מַהְמָּה

לְאַמְנָעָתִי אַתְלָבִי מִכֶּל-שְׁמָחָה

קִילָבִי שְׁמָנִי מִכֶּל-עַמְלִי

וְזָהָדָה חֶלְקִי מִכֶּל-עַמְלִי

וּפְנִיתִי אָנִי

בְּכָל-מִיעָשִׁי שְׁעַשְׁיו יָדִי

וּבְעַמְלִי שְׁעַמְלִתִי לְעַשּׁוֹת

וְהַנָּהָה הַכָּל הַכָּל וּרְעֹוֹת דָּחַק

וְאַיִן יִתְרֹן פְּתַח הַשְּׁמַשׁ

<sup>1</sup> "More than all that were before me (before my time) in Jerusalem."

<sup>2</sup> The word שָׁדָה occurs only here in all of Tanach; its meaning is uncertain. If it's related to pleasures, we can imagine a progression from money to entertainment to consorts, and the word may be associated with breasts or perhaps she-demons. The word occurs a few times in the Talmud, where (according to Jastrow) it means box or chest, and Rashi says it's a fancy saddle or litter (litter is related to the French *lit*, a bed; it's an enclosure for transporting someone) like a covered wagon. The Alcalay Hebrew dictionary says it's a box or chest of drawers, or a pretty woman. If you think the speaker is King Solomon, you'll remember he had 700 wives and 300 concubines (1 Kings 11:3).

<sup>12</sup> I turned to examine  
wisdom, riddles and mystery.<sup>1</sup>  
What can anyone *accomplish*  
who comes after the king *has done it all?*  
*Only* what has already been done!

<sup>13</sup> I realized there's more *value*  
to wisdom than to folly,  
*just as* light is better than darkness.

<sup>14</sup> The wise one has eyes in his head  
while the fool walks in darkness;  
but I knew—yes, I—that the same thing  
happens to them all.

<sup>15</sup> I said to myself:  
What happens to the fool  
happens to me too,  
so why did I get so much extra wisdom?  
I thought, this *wisdom*, too, is pointless.

<sup>16</sup> The wise man is remembered  
no more than the fool, ultimately,<sup>2</sup>  
for the time is coming  
*when* all is forgotten;  
the wise one dies *just* like the fool.

<sup>17</sup> I hated living;  
I detested the work  
accomplished *here* under the sun,  
for it's all pointless, heartbreak.

וַיַּנִּיחַ אָנָּי לְרֹאֹת  
חִכְמָה וְהַוְלוֹת וְסְכָלוֹת  
כִּי | מֵהֶד הַאֲדָם  
שִׁיבְיוֹא אֲחָרֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ  
אֲחָת אֲשֶׁר־כָּבֵר עַשְׂוָה  
וּרְאִיתִי אָנָּי שִׁישׁ יִתְרֹן  
לְחִכְמָה מִן־הַסְּכָלוֹת  
כִּיְתַרְוֹן הַאֲוֹר מִן־הַחַשָּׁךְ  
הַחֲכָם עִינְיוֹ בְּרָאָשׁוֹ  
וְהַפְּסִיל בְּתַחַשׁ הַוְלוֹת  
וּוְרְעִצּוֹ נִמְ-אָנָּי שְׁמִקְרָה אַחֲרָה  
יִקְרָה אַתְ-כָּלָם  
וְאַמְרָתִי אָנָּי בְּלָבֵבִי  
כִּמְקָרָה הַפְּסִיל  
נִמְ-אָנָּי יִקְרָנוּ  
וּלְמַה חִכְמָתוֹ אָנָּי אֹזֵן יוֹתֵר  
וּדְקָרְתוֹ בְּלֹבֵבִי שְׁנָמָרָה הַבָּל  
כִּי אָזֵן זִכְרוֹן לְחָכָם  
עַם־הַפְּסִיל לְעוֹלָם  
בְּשֶׁקְבָּר הַיּוּמִים הַבָּאִים  
הַכָּל נִשְׁקָח  
וְאָז יִמּוֹת הַחֲכָם עַם־הַפְּסִיל  
וְשְׁנָאָתִי אֶת־הַחַיִם  
כִּי רֹעֵל הַמְּעָשָׂה  
שְׁנָעָשָׂה תְּחִתַּת הַשְּׁמָמָן  
כִּי־הַכָּל הַבָּל וּרְעִיתָה רְוֵית

Ufaniti ani lirot  
chochmah veholelot vesichlut;  
ki meh ha'adam  
sheyavo acharei hamelech?  
Et asher k'var asuhu.  
Vera'iti ani sheyesh yitron  
lechochmah min hasichlut  
keyitron ha'or min hachoshech.  
Hechacham, einav berosho,  
vehaksil bachoshech holech;  
veyadati, gam ani, shemikreh echad  
yikreh et kulam.  
Ve'amarti ani belibi:  
Kemikreh haksil  
gam ani yikreni,  
velamah chachamti ani az yoter?  
Vedibarti velibi shegam zeh havel.  
Ki ein zichron lechacham  
im haksil le'olam,  
beshek'var hayamim haba'im  
hakol nishkach,  
ve'eich yamut hechacham im haksil.  
Vesaneti et hachayim  
ki rah alai hama'aseh  
shena'asah tachat hashamesh  
ki hakol hevel ure'ut ru'ach.

<sup>1</sup> 1:17 explains our translation of these words.

<sup>2</sup> “For there is no remembering the wise one *in comparison* with the fool, forever.”

<sup>18</sup> I hated all my effort  
that I had expended under the sun  
since I would *have to* leave it to someone  
who will be *in my place* after I'm gone.

<sup>19</sup> Who knows  
whether he'll be wise or a fool, *the one*  
who gains control of all my hard work,  
my labor and wisdom  
under the sun?  
This too is pointless.

<sup>20</sup> I planned to stop caring  
about all the effort I had expended  
under the sun.

<sup>21</sup> There are people who strive  
with wisdom, knowledge and decency,  
yet to someone who never worked for it  
their achievement is given.

This too is pointless, really awful.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>22</sup> What does a person get  
for all the work and headache  
for which he toils under the sun?

<sup>23</sup> Every day brings pain  
and work is *but* frustration;  
even at night his mind can't rest.  
This too is pointless.

וְשָׁנָאֵתִי אָנִי אֶת-כָּל-עַמְלִי  
שְׁאָנִי עַמְלֵל תְּחִתַּת הַשְּׁמֶשׁ  
שְׁאַנְיִחְנוּ לְאָדָם  
שְׁהִנֵּה אֲחָרֵי  
וְנִי יוֹדֵעַ  
הַחֲכָם יִהְיֶה אָוֹ סָכָל  
וַיַּשְׁלַט בְּכָל-עַמְלִי  
שְׁעַמְלָתוֹ וְשְׁחַקְמָתוֹ  
תְּחִתַּת הַשְּׁמֶשׁ  
גַּמְ-זִיהַת הַבָּל  
וְסִבּוֹתִי אָנִי לִיאַש אֶת-לְבִי  
עַל כָּל-דְּעַמֵּל שְׁעַמְלָתוֹ  
תְּחִתַּת הַשְּׁמֶשׁ  
כִּי-יֵש אָדָם שְׁעַמְלָל  
בְּחֻכָּמָה וּבְרָעָת וּבְכָשָׁרוֹן  
וְלְאָדָם שְׁלָא עַמְלָבּוֹ  
וַתַּגְנִינוּ חֶלְקֹוּ  
גַּמְ-זִיהַת הַבָּל וּרְעָה רְבָה  
כִּי מִה-הָדוֹהָה לְאָדָם  
בְּכָל-עַמְלָלוֹ וּבְרָעָוֹן לְבָוֹ  
שְׁהָוָא עַמְלֵל תְּחִתַּת הַשְּׁמֶשׁ  
כִּי כָּל-יָמִינוֹ מִכְאָבִים  
וּכְעַס עַיִנָּוּ  
גַּמְ-בָּלְילָה לְאַשְׁכָּב לְבָוֹ  
גַּמְ-זִיהַת הַבָּל הוּא

<sup>1</sup> "This too is futility, a great evil."

<sup>2</sup> Many editors take the expected reading **לְבָוֹ** instead of **לְבָוֹן**.

<sup>24</sup> A person can't do better than eat and drink and find pleasure in his work.

I've seen this, too; but it's in God's power.

<sup>25</sup> Who can eat, who can be quick? I'm the only one.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>26</sup> To someone whom *God* finds good, *God* grants wisdom, knowledge and joy, while to the sinner *God* gives *hard* work to harvest and store away,<sup>2</sup> to give it to someone whom *God* finds good.<sup>3</sup> *But* this too is pointless and a headache.

<sup>1</sup> There's a *right* time for everything, a season for every thing beneath the sky:

<sup>2</sup> A time to give birth, a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot plants;

<sup>3</sup> a time to attack, a time to retreat,<sup>4</sup> a time to demolish and a time to build;

<sup>4</sup> a time to cry, a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance;

**אֵין־טוֹב בְּאָדָם**  
**שִׁיאָכֵל וְשַׁתָּה**  
**וְהַרְאָה אֶת־נַפְשׁוֹ טֹב בְּעַמְלָוֹ**  
**בְּזִיהָרְאַתִּי אַנְיָן**  
**כִּי מִיד הָאֱלֹהִים הִיא**  
**כִּי מֵיְאָכֵל וּמֵיְחַשֵּׁש**  
**חַזֵּן מִתְּנִיעָן**  
**כִּי לְאָדָם שְׁטוֹב לְפָנָיו**  
**נְתַנְּנָה חִכְמָה וְרוּחָה וְשְׁמָתָה**  
**וְלְחַזְטָא נְתַנְּנָה עִנְנוֹן**  
**לְאַסּוֹף וְלִכְנוֹס**  
**לְתַחַת לְטוֹב לְפָנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים**  
**נְסִירָה הַבָּל וְרוּחוֹת רִוָּת**

Ein tov ba'adam  
sheyochal veshatah  
veherah et nafsho tov ba'amalo.  
Gam zoh ra'iti ani  
ki miyad ha'Elohim hi.  
Ki mi yochal umi yachush  
chutz mimeni?  
Ki le'adam shetov lefanav  
natan chochmah veda'at vesimcha,  
velachoteh natan inyan  
le'esof velichnos,  
latet letov lifnei ha'Elohim.  
Gam zeh hevel ure'ut ru'ach.

### Chapter 3

**לְפָלֵל זָמָן**  
**וְעַתָּה לְכַלְּחַפֵּץ**  
**תַּחַת הַשְׁמָיִם**

Lakol zeman,  
ve'et lechol chefetz  
tachat hashamayim:

**עַתָּה לְלִדְרָת וְעַתָּה לְמוֹת**  
**עַתָּה לְטַבַּעַת וְעַתָּה לְעַקּוֹר נָטוּעַ**  
**עַתָּה לְהַרְוֹג וְעַתָּה לְרִפּוֹאָא**  
**עַתָּה לְפִרְזֵז וְעַתָּה לְבִנּוֹת**  
**עַתָּה לְבִכּוֹת וְעַתָּה לְשֹׁחֵךְ**  
**עַתָּה סְפּוֹד וְעַתָּה רְקוֹד**

et laledet ve'et lamut,  
et lata'at ve'et la'akor natu'ah;  
et laharog ve'et lirpoh,  
et lifrotz ve'et livnot;  
et livkot ve'et lis'chok,  
et sephod ve'et rekod;

<sup>1</sup> "Except for me."

<sup>2</sup> "Bring inside."

<sup>3</sup> "To give *it* to the good *person* in the presence of *God*."

<sup>4</sup> The root רָפָא can connote both "heal" and "weaken," so you can translate this as "a time to kill and a time to heal" or "a time to attack and a time to retreat (show weakness)."

<sup>5</sup> a time to throw rocks  
 and a time to gather rocks,  
 a time to hug and a time to avoid hugging;  
<sup>6</sup> a time to seek and a time to forsake,  
 a time to hold on and a time to let go;  
<sup>7</sup> a time to tear and a time to sew,  
 a time to be silent and a time to speak;  
<sup>8</sup> a time to love and a time to hate,  
 a time for war and a time for peace.

<sup>9</sup> What does one gain for working?<sup>1</sup> **מָה יִתְרֹן הַעֲוֹשָׁה בָּאָשָׁר הוּא עָמֵל**  
<sup>10</sup> I realized what *kind of* chore  
 God had given humanity  
 with which to burden them.

<sup>11</sup> *God* made everything  
 lovely in its time;  
 however, eternity *is what*  
*God* placed in *people's* thoughts,  
 yet nobody can comprehend  
 the work *God* performed  
 from *its* beginning to *its* end.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>12</sup> I realized there's no use in *visible things*<sup>3</sup>  
 except to find pleasure  
 and do *some* good during one's life.

**עַת לְהַשְׁלִיךְ אֲבָנִים**  
**וְעַת כְּנוֹס אֲבָנִים**  
**עַת לְחַבּוֹק וְעַת לִרְחֹק מְחַבֵּק**  
**עַת לְבָקֵשׁ וְעַת לְאָבֵד**  
**עַת לְשִׁמּוֹר וְעַת לְהַשְׁלִיךְ**  
**עַת לְקַרְוֹעַ וְעַת לְהַפּוֹר**  
**עַת לְחַשּׁוֹת וְעַת לְדַבֵּר**  
**עַת לְאַהֲבָה וְעַת לְשִׁנּוֹת**  
**עַת מְלֻחָּמָה וְעַת שְׁלֹום**

ס

**מָה יִתְרֹן הַעֲוֹשָׁה בָּאָשָׁר הוּא עָמֵל**  
**רָאִיתִי אֶת־הָעֵנִין**  
**אֲשֶׁר נָתַן אֱלֹהִים לְבָנֵי הָאָדָם**  
**לְעָנוֹת בָּוּ**  
**אֶת־הַכָּל עַשָּׂה**  
**יְפָה בְּעַתּוֹ**  
**גַּם אֶת־הָעוֹלָם**  
**נָתַן בְּלִבְבָּם**  
**מִבְּלִי אֲשֶׁר לְאִימְצָא הָאָדָם**  
**אֶת־הַמְּשֻׁשָּׁה אֲשֶׁר־עָשָׂה הָאֱלֹהִים**  
**מִרְאָשׁ וְעַד־סָוףּ**  
**יָדָתִי כִּי אֵין טֻוב בָּם**  
**כִּי אִם־לְשָׁמוֹת**  
**וְלֹעֲשׁוֹת טֻוב בְּחַיּוֹ**

Mah yitron ha'oseh ba'asher hu amel?  
 Ra'iti et ha'inyan  
 asher natan Elohim livnei ha'adam,  
 la'anot bo.  
 Et hakol asah  
 yafeh be'ito;  
 gam et ha'olam  
 natan belbam,  
 mibli asher lo yimtzah ha'adam  
 et hama'aseh asher asah ha'Elohim  
 merosh ve'ad sof.  
 Yadati ki ein tov bam  
 ki im lismo'ach  
 vela'asot tov bechayav.

<sup>1</sup> “What is the benefit for the doer, in that he toils?”

<sup>2</sup> I like to think this means *God* made the transitory world lovely, but spoiled it for us by letting us think of eternity. Who can enjoy the warmth of the sun knowing its life is short? The Hebrew root **עלם** means world, eternity, and hidden, so here is a literal translation: “Everything *God* made beautiful in its time; also/however the-world/eternity/hidden-mystery *God* granted in their hearts/minds, lest/more-than-without which not-may-find someone the thing-made which made *God* from top to end.” Well, Hebrew syntax is different from English, and we can interpret this verse as best we may.

<sup>3</sup> “In them” referring to things *God* made, mentioned at the beginning of verse 11.

<sup>13</sup> And anyone  
who can eat, drink  
and see *some* benefit for all his effort—  
this is a gift from God.

<sup>14</sup> I realized  
that everything God makes  
will last forever.  
You can't add to *God's work*  
nor subtract from *God's work*.<sup>1</sup>  
God made *it*  
so *people* will learn respect in *God's presence*.

<sup>15</sup> Whatever has been, existed earlier,  
and whatever is to be, existed earlier,  
and God will seek whatever is sought.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Again, I saw under the sun  
the court of justice—  
injustice was there—  
and the place of the innocent:  
there *too* was the guilty *person*.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>17</sup> I said to myself:  
Innocent and guilty,  
let God judge *them*.  
There's a time for every thing,  
and for every action taken there.

וְגַם כָּל־חָדָר  
שִׁיאָכָל וְשַׁתָּה  
וְרָאָה טֹוב בְּכָל־עַמְלָיו  
מִתְּחַת אֱלֹהִים הִיא  
יָדָעַתִּי  
כִּי כָל־אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה חָאָלָהִים  
הָוֹא וְהַיָּה לְעוֹלָם  
עַלְיוֹ אֵין לְהֹסֵף  
וּמִמְּנוֹ אֵין לְגַרְעֵץ  
וְהָאָלָהִים עַשָּׂה  
שִׁירְאָו מִלְפָנָיו  
מִהָּשְׁחִיתָה כְּבָר הָוֹא  
וְאֲשֶׁר לְהַיּוֹת כְּבָר הָיָה  
וְהָאָלָהִים יַבְקִשׁ אֶת־נִרְדָּף  
וְעַד רָאִיתִי פָּתָת הַשְּׁמֶשׁ  
מָקוֹם הַמִּשְׁפְּט  
שְׁמַה הַרְשָׁעָה  
וּמָקוֹם הַצְּדָקָה  
שְׁמַה הַרְשָׁעָה  
אָמְרָתִי אַנְּיִ בְּלַבִּי  
אֶת־הַצְּדִיקִים אֶת־הַרְשָׁעָה  
יַשְּׁפֹט הָאָלָהִים  
כִּי־עַת לְכָל־הַפְּצָחָה  
וְעַל כָּל־הַמִּעְשָׂה שָׁם

Vegam kol ha'adam  
sheyochal veshatah  
vera'ah tov bechol amalo—  
matat Elohim hi.  
Yadati  
ki kol asher ya'aseh ha'Elohim,  
hu yiheyeh le'olam.  
Alav ein lehosif  
umimenu ein ligro'ah,  
veha'Elohim asah  
sheyiru milfanav.  
Mah shehayah, k'var hu;  
va'asher liheyot, k'var hu;  
veha'Elohim yevakesh et nirdaf.  
Ve'od ra'iti tachat hashamesh  
mekom hamishpat—  
shamah hareshah—  
umekom hatzedek:  
shamah harashah.  
Amarti ani belibi:  
Et hatzadik ve'et harashah  
yishpot ha'Elohim,  
ki et lechol chefetz,  
ve'al kol hama'aseh sham.

<sup>1</sup> "Upon it there is not to add, and from it there is not to subtract."

<sup>2</sup> "And God will seek what is pursued/chased/sought." The line is ripe for interpretation. Perhaps God will require of us whatever material possessions we pursue during our lives.

<sup>3</sup> "The place of judgement. There was wickedness/injustice. And the place of the righteous/innocent/vindicated. There was the wicked/guilty one." Perhaps the writer questions whether the justice system is effective.

<sup>18</sup> I said to myself  
about people suing each other:  
It's God's way of making them see  
that they treat each other like animals!<sup>1</sup>

<sup>19</sup> What happens to people  
and what happens to animals,  
they *all* get the same fate:  
one's death is just like the other's,<sup>2</sup>  
and they all have the same breath.  
People are no better than animals,  
and it's all pointless.

<sup>20</sup> Everything goes to the same place;  
everything came from dust  
and everything returns to dust.

<sup>21</sup> Who knows about a person's spirit,  
whether it goes up,  
while an animal's spirit descends  
down to the dirt?

<sup>22</sup> I realized there's no better *way*  
than for a person to find joy in his work,  
which is his lot *in life*,  
for who can bring him to see  
into what will happen after he's gone?<sup>3</sup>

אמַרְתִּי אַנְּיִלְבָּבִי  
עַל־דְּבָרֶת בְּנֵי הָאָדָם  
לְבָרְם הָאֱלֹהִים וְלִרְאֹות  
שְׁחִים־בְּהַמָּה הַמָּה לָהּ  
כִּי מִקְרֵה בְּנֵי־הָאָדָם  
וּמִקְרֵה הַבְּהֵמָה  
וּמִקְרֵה אַחֲד לָהּ  
כְּמוֹת זֶה כֵּן מוֹת זֶה  
וּרוּחַ אַחֲד לְכָל  
כִּי הַכָּל הַכָּל  
הַכָּל הַוְּלֵד אֶל־מָקוֹם אַחֲר  
הַכָּל הַנָּהָר מִן־הַעֲפָר  
וְהַכָּל שֵׁב אֶל־הַעֲפָר  
מִי יוֹדֵעַ רُוח בְּנֵי הָאָדָם  
הַעַלְלָה הַיּוֹא לְמַעַלָּה  
וּרוּחַ הַבְּהֵמָה הַיּוֹרֶת הַיּוֹא  
לְמַטָּה לְאָרֶץ  
וּרְאִוִּיתִי כִּי אֵין טֻוב  
מַאֲשֶׁר יִשְׁמַח הָאָדָם בְּמַעַשׂ  
כִּי־הַוָּא חֶלְקָוּן  
כִּי מִי יִבְאָנוּ לְרוֹאֹת  
בְּמַה שִׁיחַיָּה אַחֲרֵיו

Amarti ani belibi  
al divrat benei ha'adam:  
levaram ha'Elohim velirot  
shehem behemah hemah lahem!  
Ki mikreh venei ha'adam  
umikreh hab'hemah,  
umikreh echad lahem.  
Kemot zeh, ken mot zeh,  
veru'ach echad lakol.  
Umotar ha'adam min hab'hemah ayin  
ki hakol havel.  
Hakol holech el makom echad;  
hakol hayah min he'afar  
vehakol shav el he'afar.  
Mi yode'ah ru'ach benei ha'adam,  
ha'olah hi lemalah,  
veru'ach hab'hemah hayoredet hi  
lemathah la'aretz?  
Vera'iti ki ein tov  
me'asher yismach ha'adam bema'asav,  
ki hu chelko,  
ki mi yevi'enu lirot  
bemeh sheyiheyeh acharav?

<sup>1</sup> The root **דבר** means a word, a thing, a matter, and can refer to a legal suit. "Said I to my heart concerning the suit of the children of humanity, *it's in order* to clarify, *by the agency of* God, and to see that they are beast them to them."

<sup>2</sup> "Like the death of this, so is the death of this."

<sup>3</sup> "Into what will be after him."

## Chapter 4

<sup>1</sup> I went back to study  
all the oppressed people  
who suffer<sup>1</sup> under the sun.  
There—the tears of the oppressed;  
they get no relief.  
Their oppressors have all the power,<sup>2</sup>  
but *the oppressed* get no relief.

<sup>2</sup> I praise the dead  
who are gone, more than the living  
who are still alive.

<sup>3</sup> Better than either  
is one who has never existed,  
who has not seen the evil deeds  
that are done beneath the sun.

<sup>4</sup> I studied all the toil,  
all the decency of labor;  
for this, one man envies another.  
This too is pointless, a heartbreak.

<sup>5</sup> The fool clasps his hands  
and eats his meat.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Better is a spoonful of serenity  
than fistfuls of toil and heartbreak.

<sup>7</sup> I went back and looked—  
futility under the sun.

וָשַׁבְתִּי אֲנוֹ וְאָרָאָה  
אֶת-כָּל-הַעֲשָׂרִים  
אֲשֶׁר נְעִשִּׂים תַּחַת הַשָּׁמֶן  
וְהַנֶּהָה | דִּמְעַת הַעֲשָׂרִים  
וְאָנוּ לְהָם מִנְחָם  
וּמִיּוֹד עַשְׂרָהֶם כִּי  
וְאָנוּ לְהָם מִנְחָם  
וְשָׁבְתִּי אֲנוֹ אֶת-הַמְּתִחִים  
שְׁכָבֵר מִתּוֹ מִנְתִּחִים  
אֲשֶׁר הַפָּה חַיִם עֲדָנָה  
וְטוֹב מִשְׁנוּתָם  
אֶת אֲשֶׁר-עָדָן לֹא הָיָה  
אֲשֶׁר לֹא-רָאָה אֶת-הַמְּעָשָׂה הַרְעָש  
אֲשֶׁר נְעִשָּׂה תַּחַת הַשָּׁמֶן  
וְרָאוּתוֹ אֲנוֹ אֶת-כָּל-עָמֵל  
וְאָתָּה כָּל-כִּשְׁרוֹן הַמְּעָשָׂה  
כֵּן הָיָה קָנָא-דִּירָא שְׁמַעַתָּה  
גָּמְדָה הַכְּלָל וּרְעוּתָה רָוָת  
הַכְּסִיל חַבְקָק אֶת-יִדָּיו  
וְאֶכְלָל אֶת-בְּשָׂרָוֹ  
טוֹב מִלְאָכָּה כְּפָנִים עָמֵל וּרְעוּתָה רָוָת  
וָשַׁבְתִּי אֲנוֹ וְאָרָאָה  
הַכְּלָל תַּחַת הַשָּׁמֶן

Veshavti ani va'ereh  
et kol ha'ashukim  
asher na'asim tachat hashamesh,  
vehineh dimat ha'ashukim;  
ve'ein lahem menachem.  
Umiyad oshkeihem ko'ach,  
ve'ein lahem menachem.  
Veshabe'ach ani et hametim  
shek'var metu, min hachayim  
asher hemah chayim adenah.  
Vetov mishneihem  
et asher aden lo hayah,  
asher lo ra'ah et hama'aseh harah  
asher na'asah tachat hashamesh.  
Vera'iti ani et kol amal  
ve'et kol kishron hama'aseh;  
ki hi kinat ish mere'chu.  
gam zeh hevel ure'ut ru'ach.  
Haksil chovek et yadav  
ve'ochel et besaro.  
Tov melo chaf nachat  
mimlo chofnayim amal ure'ut ru'ach.  
Veshavti ani va'ereh  
hevel tachat hashamesh.

<sup>1</sup> “Are made.”

<sup>2</sup> “And from the power/hand of their oppressors is power.”

<sup>3</sup> Perhaps the writer means it's a fool who sticks to his own concerns and ignores the needs of others.

<sup>8</sup> There is one, and no other,  
who has neither child nor brother,<sup>1</sup>  
with no end to his toil.

His eye is not satisfied with riches.  
“For whom do I labor  
and deprive myself of pleasure?”

This too is pointless; it's a bad thing.  
<sup>9</sup> Two are better than one;  
they get a fine reward  
for their labor.

<sup>10</sup> For if they fall down,  
one can help his partner stand up,  
but if the lone *worker* falls down  
there's no second to help him up.

<sup>11</sup> And if two go to bed,  
they can get warm.  
But how can a lone *sleeper* get warm?

<sup>12</sup> If one *attacker* can conquer a single *victim*,  
two can withstand him;  
and a triple cord  
isn't quickly snapped.

<sup>13</sup> Better a child *who is* poor but smart  
than a king old and foolish,  
who no longer knows how to be prudent.

<sup>14</sup> He rules by being irrelevant  
and anyone born in his realm is poor.<sup>3</sup>

יְשׁ אֶחָד וְאֵין שֶׁנִּי  
גַּם בֶּן וְאֵחָד אַיְזָלֶוּ  
וְאֵין קָז לְכָל-עַמְלֹו  
גַּם-עֲנִיוֹ לְאַחֲשָׁבָע עֲשָׂר  
וְלֹמְנִי אֲנִי עַמְלָל  
וּמְחַסֵּר אַחֲנָפְשִׁי מַטּוּבָה  
גַּם-זָהָה תְּבָל וְעַנְנָן רַע הַוָּה  
טוֹבִים הַשְׁנִים מִן-הָאֶחָד  
אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁלַחְתָּם שָׁכָר טָוב  
בְּעַמְלָלִם  
קַי אַם-יִפְלֹל  
הָאֶחָד יָקִים אַת-חַבְרוֹ  
וְאַיְלָוּ הָאֶחָד שְׁיִפְלֹל  
וְאֵין שְׁנִי לְחַקְיָמוּ  
גַּם אַם-יִשְׁכְּבּוּ שְׁנִים  
וְקַחְתָּם לְהָם  
וְלֹאָחָד אַיְדֵי יְחָם  
וְאַם-יִתְקְפֹּה הָאֶחָד  
הַשְׁנִים יַעֲמֹדְיָ גַּנְגָּדוֹ  
וְהַחֲוֹתָה הַמְשֻׁלָּש  
לֹא בְּמִתְהָרָה יַנְתָּק  
טוֹב יְלֵד מִסְכָּן וְחַכְמָה  
מַפְלָקָ זָקָן וּכְסִילָל  
אֲשֶׁר לְאִידָע לְהַזְהָר עֹז  
קִרְמַבִּית הַסּוּרִים יָצָא לְמַלְךָ  
קַי גַּם בְּמַלְכָוֹתָו נָלָד רַשׁ

Yesh echad, ve'ein sheni,  
gam ben va'ach ein lo,  
ve'ein ketz lechol amalo.  
Gam eino lo tisbah osher.  
“Ulemi ani amel  
umechaser et nafshi mitovah?”  
Gam zeh hevel, ve'inyan rah hu.  
Tovim hashnayim min ha'echad,  
asher yesh lahem sachar tov  
ba'amalam.

Ki im yipolu.  
ha'echad yakim et chavero,  
ve'ilu ha'echad sheyipol  
ve'ein sheni lahakimo.

Gam im yishkevu shnayim,  
vecham lahem;  
ule'echad eich yecham?  
Ve'im yitkefo ha'echad,  
hashnayim ya'amdu negdo;  
vehachut hamshulash  
lo vimherah yinatek.

Tov yeled misken vechacham  
mimelech zaken uchesil,  
asher lo yadah lehizaher od.

Ki mibeit hasurim yatzah limloch,  
ki gam bemal'chuto nolad rash.

<sup>1</sup> I.e., there's no-one like him.

<sup>2</sup> A manuscript has the spelling *יענוי* (“his eyes” instead of “his eye”).

<sup>3</sup> *בֵּית הַאֲסּוּרִים קְסֻרִים* could be taken as *בֵּית*, “the house of the ones who are bound/tied up,” a prison, or as “the house (source) of those who turn away/deviate,” avoiding the relevant topic. The verse can mean: “For from the house of the-bound/the-deviants has he come to rule, and also/even in his realm is born a poor person.”

<sup>15</sup> I watched all the living  
who walk around beneath the sun,  
with the succeeding boy  
who will take *the king's place*.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>16</sup> There's no limit to all the people,  
to all those whom *the king* led.<sup>2</sup>  
Later ones won't recall him with joy,  
for this too is pointless, heartbreak.

<sup>17</sup> Watch your step when you go  
to God's house.

*Staying* close to listen is *better*  
than fools offering sacrifices,  
for they don't even know *how* to do bad!<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Don't talk impulsively,<sup>5</sup>  
and don't rush to express speech<sup>6</sup>  
in front of God.

For God is in the sky  
while you are on the ground.  
So don't say much.<sup>7</sup>

רָאִיתִי אֶת-כָּל-הַחַיִם  
הַמְהַלְּכִים תַּחַת הַשָּׁמֶן  
עַם הַיּוֹלֵד הַשְׁנִי  
אֲשֶׁר יַעֲמֹד תְּחִתָּיו  
אַיִן קָצֵן לְכָל-דָּגָם  
לְכָל אֲשֶׁר-הָיָה לְפָנֵיכֶם  
בְּם הַאֲחָרוֹנִים לֹא יִשְׁמְחוּ בָּבוֹ  
כִּי-גַּם-זֶה הַכְּלָל וּרְאוּיָן רַוֵּת  
שְׁמֹר רְגָלֶךָ, כַּאֲשֶׁר תַּלְךְ  
אַל-בֵּית הָאֱלֹהִים  
וְקָרוּב לְשָׁמֵעַ  
מִתְתַּחַת הַכְּסִילִים זְבַח  
כִּרְאִים יוֹדְעִים לְעַשּׂות רְאֵעַ

## Chapter 5

אַל-חַבְבָּל עַל-פִּיךְ  
וְלֹמַד אַל-יִמְהַר לְהַצִּיא אֶת-דָּבָר  
לְפָנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים  
כִּי הָאֱלֹהִים בְּשָׁמַיִם  
וְאַתָּה עַל-הָאָרֶץ  
עַל-כֵּן יִהְיוּ דְּבָרֶיךָ מְעֻטִים

Al tevahel al picha,  
velibcha al yemaher lehotzi davar  
lifnei ha'Elohim,  
ki ha'Elohim bashamayim  
ve'atah al ha'aretz.  
Al ken yiheyu devarecha me'atim.

<sup>1</sup> This could mean that the silly king's ("succeeding" is also the word for "second") son will inherit his throne ("stand in his stead"). Rashi quotes a midrash that the bad king represents the generation of the Flood who are replaced by Noah and his sons.

<sup>2</sup> "To all before whom he (the king?) was."

<sup>3</sup> So if they do the right thing, it has no merit, since they can't tell good from bad. Alternatively, you can translate "they don't know that they do *something* bad." Many editors place this verse with the next chapter.

<sup>4</sup> A manuscript has the spelling רְגָלִים, which is plural, "your legs/feet."

<sup>5</sup> The Hebrew can mean panic: "Don't get overexcited in respect of your mouth."

<sup>6</sup> "And your heart/mind do not rush to express/bring-out word/matter."

<sup>7</sup> "Therefore let your words be few."

<sup>2</sup> A dream brings many a worry  
and a fool's talk many a care.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>3</sup> When you make a pledge to God  
don't delay to pay it,  
for there's no pleasure in fools;  
what you pledge, pay up!

<sup>4</sup> It's better not to pledge  
than to pledge and not to pay.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Let not your lips  
bring your body to sin,  
and don't tell the agent<sup>3</sup>  
it was *just* a mistake;  
why should God get angry  
at what you say  
and ruin what you're trying to do?<sup>4</sup>

<sup>6</sup> For in *so* much dreaming and wasting time  
and *so* many concerns *there is no point*;  
but God is *the one* you must respect.

<sup>7</sup> If oppression of the poor  
and perversion of justice and right  
*are what* you see in *your* country,  
don't be surprised at the matter,  
for *one* high *official* protects another  
and there are higher officials protecting them.

**כִּי בָּא הַחֲלוֹם בְּרֵב עֲנֵן**  
וְקֹול כְּסִיל בְּרֵב דְּבָרִים  
**כַּאֲשֶׁר תִּדְרֹן נְדָר לְאֱלֹהִים**  
**אַל-תִּאָחֶר לְשַׁלְמָנוּ**  
**כִּי אַיִן חַפֵּן בְּכִסְלִים**  
**אֵת אֲשֶׁר-תִּדְרֹן שְׁלָמָם**  
**טוֹב אֲשֶׁר לְאַתְּדֹר**  
**מִשְׁתְּדוּר וְלֹא תִּשְׁלַמָּם**  
**אַל-תִּתְּפַנֵּן אֶת-פִּיקָּךְ**  
**לְחַטָּאת אֶת-בְּשָׁרֶךְ**  
**וְאַל-הָאָמֵר לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ**  
**כִּי שְׁגָגָה הִיא**  
**לְפָהָה וַיַּקְצֵף הָאֱלֹהִים**  
**עַל-קְוָלָךְ**  
**חַבֵּל אֶת-מְעֵשָׂה יְדֶךָ**  
**כִּי בְּרֵב חֲלוֹמוֹת וְתַכְלִים**  
**וְדְבָרִים הַרְבָּה**  
**כִּי אַתְּ הָאֱלֹהִים יְהָא**  
**אָמֵשָׁק רָשׁ**  
**וְגַזֵּל מִשְׁפָט וְצִדְקָה**  
**תִּרְאָה בְּמִרְדִּנָּה**  
**אַל-תִּתְּמַהֵּן עַל-הַחֲפָץ**  
**כִּי גַּבְּהָ מַעַל גַּבְּהָ שָׁמָר**  
**וְגַבְּהִים עַלְיָהֶם**

Ki bah hachalom berov inyan  
vekol kesil berov devarim.  
Ka'asher tidor neder l'Elohim,  
al te'acher leshalmo,  
ki ein chefets baksilim;  
et asher tidor, shalem!  
Tov asher lo tidor  
mishetidor velo teshalem.  
Al titen et picha  
lachati et besarecha,  
ve'al tomar lifnei hamalach  
ki shegagah hi;  
lamah yiktzof haElohim  
al kolecha  
vechibel et ma'aseh yadeca?  
Ki verov chalomot vehavalim  
udevarim harbeh ...  
ki et haElohim yerah!  
Im oshek rash  
vegezel mishpat vatzedek  
tireh vamdinah,  
al titmah al hechefetz,  
ki gavo'ah me'al gavo'ah shomer,  
ugevohim aleihem.

<sup>1</sup> "For comes the dream with a lot of care and the voice of a fool with many a matter/concern/word/thing."

<sup>2</sup> "Better you should not make a pledge than that you should make a pledge and not pay up."

<sup>3</sup> Or "messenger"; contracts can be sealed through an empowered agent. Some think מלאך means angel, a messenger from or agent of God.

<sup>4</sup> Or, "and ruin the work of your hands"?

<sup>8</sup> But here's a bonus *for the country*:  
a king who is served by *working in the field*.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Someone who loves money,  
money will not satisfy,  
and someone who loves lots *of stuff*  
*even a whole harvest* will not satisfy.  
This too is pointless.

<sup>10</sup> With more good things  
come more hungry mouths,  
and what can the owners decently do  
but watch them?<sup>3</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Sweet is the worker's sleep  
whether he eats much or little,  
but the rich man's plenty  
never settles him down to sleep.

<sup>12</sup> There's a terrible sickness I've seen  
under the sun:  
riches hoarded for their owner's harm,  
<sup>13</sup> the wealth lost in a bad investment,  
leaving a penniless child.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>14</sup> As he came from his mother's womb,  
naked he returns, to go as he came,  
and for *all* his labor he can bring nothing  
to take with him.<sup>6</sup>

וַיַּתְרֹן אָרֶץ בְּכָל הָעוֹד  
מֶלֶךְ לְשָׁדָה נְעָבֵד  
אָהָב כְּסֵף  
לְאַיְשָׁבָע בְּסֵף  
וּמִי-אָהָב בְּדָמָנוֹן  
לֹא חִבּוֹא  
בְּמִזְזָה הַבָּל  
בְּרִכּוֹת הַטּוֹבָה  
רָבָע אָכְלִיהָ  
וּמַה-כְּשָׁרוֹן לְבָעֵלָה  
כִּי אִסְּדָרָאֹתִי עִינָיו  
מִתְוִקָּה שְׁנַת הַנְּבָדָר  
אִסְּמָעַט וְאִסְּדָרָבָה יַאֲכֵל  
וְהַשְּׁבָע לְעֵשֶׂר  
אַיִלָּנוּ מְנִיתָ לֹא לְשָׁוֹן  
וְשָׁרָעָה חֹלָה רָאִיתִי  
פְּתָחָה הַשְּׁמָשׁ  
עַשְׂרָה שְׁמָנוֹר לְבָעֵלָיו לְרַעַתָּה  
וְאָכֵר הַעַשְׂרָה הַחֹוֹא בְּעַנְנָן רָע  
וְהַוְּלִיד בֵּן וְאַיְוּ בֵּידָו מַאֲמָה  
כִּאֲשֶׁר יָצָא מִבְּטָן אַמְוֹן  
עֲרוֹם יְשֻׁוָּב לְלִכְתָּה כְּשַׁבָּא  
וּמְאֹמֶה לְאִישָׁא בְּעַמְלָיו  
שְׁוֵילָד בֵּידָו

Veyitron eretz bakol hu:  
melech lesadeh ne'evad.  
Ohev kesef  
lo yisbah kesef,  
umi ohev behamon  
lo tevu'ah.  
Gam zeh havel.  
Birvot hatovah  
rabu ochleha,  
umah kishron liv'aleha  
ki im re'ut einav?  
Metukah shenat ha'oved,  
im me'at ve'im harbeh yochel;  
vehasovah le'ashir  
einenu mani'ach lo lishon.  
Yesh ra'ah cholah ra'iti  
tachat hashamesh:  
osher shamur liv'alav lera'ato,  
ve'avad ha'osher hahu be'inyan rah,  
veholid ben, ve'ein beyado me'uma.  
Ka'asher yatzah mibeten imo,  
arom yashuv, lalechet keshebah,  
ume'umah lo yisah va'amalo  
sheyolech beyado.

<sup>1</sup> I.e., farmers are the source of a country's prosperity (especially in an agricultural society).

<sup>2</sup> A manuscript has the word **חִיא**, the feminine form of **הָאָה**; it's a pronoun referring to **וַיַּתְרֹן**; a masculine noun that takes the feminine plural (**קְהִלּוֹת**). Confusing, eh? “And-a-bonus country in-all it.”

<sup>3</sup> “As the good *produce* increases, so increase those who eat it up. And what is the decent thing for the owners? Only watching with his eyes.”

<sup>4</sup> A manuscript has the spelling **רָאִיתִ**.

<sup>5</sup> “And *the rich man* has given birth to a child, in whose hand is not a thing.”

<sup>6</sup> “That he can bring in his hand.”

<sup>15</sup> This too is painfully bad:  
everything, just as it came, so must it go;  
and what can anyone gain  
who works against the wind?

<sup>16</sup> All his days, he eats in the darkness  
with great anger, pain and frustration.

<sup>17</sup> Here's what I have seen:  
it's good to eat and drink well,  
to find good in all the labor  
at which one toils beneath the sun  
*for* the number of days of life  
God has granted him,  
for this is his lot.

<sup>18</sup> And anyone  
to whom God has given  
wealth and possessions  
and empowered him to enjoy them<sup>3</sup>  
and take his portion  
and find joy in his work—  
this is a gift from God!  
<sup>19</sup> He won't much remember  
the *painful* days of his life  
while God  
overwhelms him with inner joy.<sup>4</sup>

וְגַם־זֹהָרָה חֹלָה  
כָּל־עַמּוֹתִ שְׁבָא כָּנָן יַלְאָךְ  
וּמַה־יִתְרֹן לֹא  
שְׁעִמּוֹל לְרוּם  
גַּם כָּל־יָמָיו בְּתַשְׁךְ יַאֲכֵל  
וְכָעַס הַרְבָּה וְתַלְוָן וְקַאֲרָב  
הַנְּהָה אֲשֶׁר־אָתֵיתִי אָנָּי  
טוֹב אֲשֶׁר־יָפֵה לְאַכְול־וּלְשָׁתָה  
וְלִרְאוֹת טֹבָה בְּכָל־עַמּוֹל  
שְׁעִמּוֹל תְּחַת־הַשְּׁמֶשׁ  
מִסְפָּר יָמֵי־חַיִּים  
אֲשֶׁר־נָתַן לוֹ הָאֱלֹהִים  
כִּי־הִוא חֶלְקָה  
גַּם כָּל־הָאָדָם  
אֲשֶׁר נָתַן לוֹ הָאֱלֹהִים  
עַשֵּׂר וּמְכָסִים  
וְחַשְׁלִיטָה לְאֲכֵל מִמְנָנוֹ  
וְלִשְׁאָת אֶת־חֶלְקָה  
וְלִשְׁמָחָה בְּעַמּוֹל  
זֹה מִתְּחַת אֱלֹהִים הִיא  
כִּי לֹא הַרְבָּה יַזְכֵּר  
אֶת־יָמֵי חַיִּים  
כִּי הָאֱלֹהִים  
מִעֲנָה בְּשִׁמְחָה לְבוֹ

Vegam zo ra'ah cholah:  
kol umat shebah, ken yelech;  
umah yitron lo  
sheya'amol laru'ach?  
Gam kol yamavbachoshech yochel  
vecha'as harbeh vecholyo vakatzef.  
Hineh asher ra'iti, ani:  
tov asher yafeh le'echol velishtot  
velirot tovah bechol amalo  
sheya'amol tachat hashemesh  
mispar yemei chayav  
asher natan lo ha'Elohim,  
ki hu chelko.  
Gam kol ha'adam  
asher natan lo ha'Elohim  
osher unechasim  
vehishlito le'echol mimenu  
velaset et chelko  
velismo'ach ba'alomo:  
zoh matat Elohim hi!  
Ki lo harbeh yizkor  
et yemei chayav,  
ki ha'Elohim  
ma'aneh besimchah libo.

<sup>1</sup> Gordis (*Koheleth: The Man and His World*, 253) suggests the reading **כְּלַעַת**; this is more familiar Hebrew but doesn't change the sense.

<sup>2</sup> A manuscript has the spelling **חוּ**

<sup>3</sup> "Eat of it."

<sup>4</sup> "Joy of his heart."

## Chapter 6

<sup>1</sup> There's a problem I've seen  
under the sun,  
and it's widespread among people:  
<sup>2</sup> someone to whom God grants  
wealth, possessions and prestige—  
he lacks nothing  
he could wish for—  
but God doesn't empower him  
to enjoy them<sup>1</sup>  
for a foreigner enjoys them *instead*.  
This is pointless; it's a severe pain.  
<sup>3</sup> If someone has a hundred *children*  
and lives many years,  
a long, long life,<sup>2</sup>  
but he's not content with these good things  
(and he has no *proper* burial!),  
I'd say a stillborn child is better off than he,  
<sup>4</sup> a *child* who arrives in futility  
and leaves in obscurity,  
whose name is shrouded in darkness,  
<sup>5</sup> who has never even seen the sun  
or known *of it*:  
*there's more repose*  
for this *stillborn person* than for that *long-lived person*.

יש רעה אשר ראיתי  
תחת השמש  
ורבה היא על-האדם  
איש אשר יתן לו האלים  
עשרה ונכדים וכהן  
איןנו חסר לנפשו  
מכל אשר יתאהה  
ולא-ישלטו האלים  
לאכל ממנה  
כי איש נחריו יוכלו  
זה הבעל וחלי רע הוא  
אם-יולד איש מה  
ושניהם רבות יחה  
ורב שיחנו ימישנו  
ונפשׁ לא-תשׁבַע מין-הטובה  
ונם-קברה לא-היתה לו  
אם-הרי טוב ממנה הנפל  
כיר-הבעל בא  
ובחישך ילק  
ובחישך שמו יכפה  
נס-שםש לא-ראה  
ולא ידע  
נחת  
לזה מזה

Yesh ra'ah asher ra'iti  
tachat hashamesh,  
verabah hi al ha'adam:  
ish asher yiten lo ha'Elohim  
osher unechasim vechavod—  
ve' einenu chaser lenafsho  
mikol asher yitaveh—  
velo yashlitenu ha'Elohim  
le'echol mimenu  
ki ish nochri yochalenu.  
Zeh hevel, vecholi rah hu.  
Im yolid ish me'ah  
veshanim rabot yich'yeh,  
verav sheyiheyu yemei shanav,  
venafsho lo tisbah min hatovah  
(vegam kevurah lo haytah lo),  
amarti tov mimenu hanafel,  
ki vahevel bah  
uvachoshech yelech  
uvachoshech shemo yechusah,  
gam shemesh lo ra'ah  
velo yadah:  
nachat  
lazeh mizeh.

<sup>1</sup> “To eat of it.”

<sup>2</sup> “And many, which are the days of his years.”

<sup>6</sup> If he lived a thousand years  
twice over

and didn't see good, *well*,  
doesn't it all end up in one place?

<sup>7</sup> All a person's toil is to *feed* his mouth,  
but he's never fully satisfied.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>8</sup> How does the wise person top the fool?  
What does the pauper *really* have  
by knowing *how* to live among the living?<sup>2</sup>

<sup>9</sup> *Prizing* what you see is better than  
a restless spirit.<sup>3</sup>  
But even this is pointless, heartbreak.

<sup>10</sup> What's in the past already has a name;  
it's *well* known that you call this a "person,"  
and a *person* can't win  
against someone stronger than himself.

<sup>11</sup> When there's lots of talk  
there's lots of pointlessness;  
what else is there for human beings?<sup>5</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Who knows what is good for a person  
while living out his pointless days<sup>6</sup>  
and making them like a *passing* shadow?  
Who can tell a person what will happen,  
when he's gone, under the sun?

וְאָלֹו חַיָּה אֱלֹף שָׁנִים  
פְּעָמִים

וְטוֹבָה לֹא רָאָה  
הַלְּאָאָלְמָקּוֹם אֲחֵר הַכָּל הַוְלָךְ  
כָּל־עֲמָל הָאָדָם לְפִיהָו  
וּגְמַתְנֵפֶשׁ לֹא חַמְלָא

כַּי מַה־יּוֹתֵר לְחַקְמָם מִזְהַבְסָלִי  
מִהְדָּלָעָנִי  
יָוְדָע לְהַלְךְ נֶגֶד הַחַיִם  
טוֹב מִרְאָה עִינִים

מִמְהַלְךְ־נֶפֶשׁ  
גַּם־זֶה הַכָּל וְרֹעֲוֹת רִיתָ  
מִהְשָׁהָה כִּבְרָן־נִקְרָא שָׁמוֹ  
וּנוֹדָע אַשְׁר־הָיוֹא אָדָם  
וְלֹא־יָוְךְ לְדִין  
עַם שְׁתָקָרָה מִמְנָנוּ

כִּי יְשִׁידְרָבִים הַרְבָּה  
מִרְבִּים הַכָּל  
מִהְיִתְרַלְאָדָם  
כִּי מִירְיוֹנָעַ מִהְטָוֹב לְאָדָם  
בְּחַזְוִים מִסְפָּר יְמִידָה יְחִילָוּ  
וּוַעֲשֵׂם כְּאֵל  
אַשְׁר מִיְּנִינֵּד לְאָדָם מִהְיָה  
אַחֲרֵיו תַּחַת הַשְּׁמֶשׁ

Ve'ilu chayah elef shanim  
pa'amayim,

vetovah lo ra'ah,  
halo el makom echad hakol holech!  
Kol amal ha'adam lefihu,  
vegam hanefesh lo timaleh.

Ki mah yoter lechacham min haksil?  
Mah le'ani  
yode'ah lahhaloch neged hachayim?  
Tov mireh einayim  
mehalach nafesh.

Gam zeh hevel ure'ut ru'ach.  
Mah shehayah, k'var nikrah shemo  
venodah asher hu "adam,"  
velo yuchal ladin  
im shetakif mimenu.

Ki yesh devarim harbeh  
marbim havel;  
mah yoter la'adam?  
Ki mi yode'ah mah tov la'adam  
bachayim mispar yemei chayei hevlo  
veya'asem katzel?  
Asher mi yagid la'adam mah yiheyeh  
acharav, tachat hashamesh?

<sup>1</sup> "And also the personality is not filled."

<sup>2</sup> "Knowing *how* to walk/go/conduct-oneself in-face-of/against the living."

<sup>3</sup> "Better the seeing of the eyes than walking of spirit"; this may well mean that it's better to enjoy what is in sight, in one's grasp, than to keep wandering off after something else.

<sup>4</sup> A manuscript has the odd spelling *שְׁחַתְקִיעַ*.

<sup>5</sup> I.e., people are all talk.

<sup>6</sup> "During the living of the number of the days of the life of his pointlessness."

## Chapter 7

<sup>1</sup> A *good* reputation is better than fine lotion and a deathday better than a birthday.

<sup>2</sup> Better to visit a house in mourning than go to a party-house since *death* is everyone's end.

Let the living take note!

<sup>3</sup> Anger is better than joy because you can rejoice in *others'* frowns.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Wise people think of a house of mourning, while fools think of a party.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Better to listen to a rebuke from the wise than listen to a chorus of fools:<sup>3</sup>

<sup>6</sup> like *a fire of thorns crackling under a pot* is a fool's clowning—it's just pointless—<sup>4</sup>

<sup>7</sup> for compulsion upsets the wise and destroys the intention of a gift.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>8</sup> The end of a matter is better than its start, and patience is better than arrogance.

<sup>9</sup> Don't be quick to get angry for it's a fool who nurses anger!<sup>6</sup>

טוֹב שֵׁם מִשְׁמָן טֹוב וְיּוֹם הַפְּנִיטָה מִיּוֹם הַנְּלָדוֹ  
 טֹוב לְלַכְתָּא לְכִירָה-אָבֶל מַלְכָתָא אַל-בֵּית מִשְׁתָּה  
 בְּאַשְׁר הוּא סָופֵר כָּל-הָאָדָם וְהַנִּי יִתְּנַחַן אַל-לְבָבוֹ  
 טֹוב קָעֵס מִשְׁתָּה קִירְבָּעֵש פְּנִים יִתְּפַבֵּב לְבָבָךְ  
 לְבָב חִכְמִים בְּבֵית אָבֶל וְלְבָב כְּסִילִים בְּבֵית שְׂמְחָה  
 טֹוב לְשָׁמֵעַ גַּעֲרַת חָכָם מְאַיִשׁ שָׁמֵעַ שָׁר כְּסִילִים  
 כִּי כְּכֹל הַסִּירִים תַּחַת הַכִּיר בְּנֵן שְׁתַק הַכְּסִיל וְגַם-זֶה הַבָּל כִּי הַעֲשָׂק יְהוֹלֵל חָכָם וַיַּאֲבֹד אַתְּ-לְבָב מַתָּנָה  
 טֹוב אַתְּ-חַרְתִּית דְּבָר מַרְאָשָׁיו טֹוב אֶרְךְ-רֹוחַ מִגְבָּה-רֹוחַ  
 אַל-תַּבְהַל בְּרוּחָה לְכָעָס כִּי פָעֵס בְּחִיקָה כְּסִילִים יָנוּחָה

<sup>1</sup> “For in evil of the face shall-find-good the-heart.” This could mean that a period of dissatisfaction leads to a period of contentment in the same person, and it could also mean that the misery of others brings joy.

<sup>2</sup> “The heart of the wise *is* at the house of mourning and the heart of fools is at the house of celebration.”

<sup>3</sup> “Than *to be* someone who listens to the song of fools.”

<sup>4</sup> “Like the noise of *burning* thorns under the pot, so is the joking of the fool; this too is pointless.” Hebrew uses the same word for pot and for thorn/bramble, **סִיר**.

<sup>5</sup> Most translators agree that the root **חַלֵּל**, which often means praise, here means upset or confuse; however, most assume that the second part of the verse means “a bribe/gift destroys/corrupts the heart.”

<sup>6</sup> “For anger in the bosom of fools comes to rest.”

<sup>10</sup> Don't say,  
"How is it that the *good* old days  
were better than these?"  
It isn't smart to ask about this.

<sup>11</sup> Wisdom is better with an inheritance,  
*even more so* for anyone on earth.<sup>1</sup>  
<sup>12</sup> for *being* sheltered by wisdom  
*is like* *being* sheltered by money,  
but the benefit of knowing wisdom  
refreshes those who possess it.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Look at the works of God:  
who can fix what *God* has twisted?

<sup>14</sup> On a good day, be in good *spirits*,  
and on a bad day,  
know that this *bad* day to offset that *good* day  
God made

so that no-one can find  
any trace of it afterwards.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>15</sup> I've seen it all in my pointless days:  
there's a good man lost in his goodness;  
there's an evil man sustained in his evil.

**אַל-הָאמֶר** Al tomar,  
**מִנֶּה הָהָה שְׁהִימִּים תְּרַא שָׁנִים** "Meh hayah shehayamim harishonim  
**כַּיִן טוֹבִים נְאָלָה** hayu tovim me'eleh?"  
**כַּי לֹא מִחְכָּמָה שָׁאַלְתָּ עַל-זָה** Ki lo mechochmah sha'alta al zeh.  
**טוֹבָה חִכָּמָה עַמְּדָנְתָה** Tovah chochmah im nachalah,  
**וַיּוֹתֶר לְרַאֵי הַשְּׁמֶשׁ** veyoter lero'ei hashamesh.  
**כַּי בָּצֶל הַחִכָּמָה** ki betzel hachochmah  
**בָּצֶל הַכָּסֶף** betzel hakasef,  
**וַיִּתְרֹן דָּעַת הַחִכָּמָה** veyitron da'at hachochmah  
**חַתִּיתָ בְּעֵלִיתָ** techayeh ve'aleha.  
**רָאָה אֶת-מְעָשָׂה הָאֱלֹהִים** Re'eh et ma'aseh ha'Elohim:  
**כִּי מִי יַכְלֵל לְתַקֵּן אֶת אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂוּ** ki mi yuchal letaken et asher ivto?  
**בַּיּוֹם טוֹבָה הַיּוֹם בְּטוּבָה** Beyom tovah, heyeh vetov,  
**וּבַיּוֹם רָעָה** uveyom ra'ah,  
**רָאָה גַּם אֶת-זָהָה לְעַמְּתָה-זָהָה** re'eh gam et zeh le'umat zeh  
**עַשְׂתָּה הָאֱלֹהִים** asah Elohim  
**עַל-דִּבְרָתָ שְׁלָא וּמְצָא הָאָדָם** al divrat shelo yimtzah ha'adam  
**אַחֲרָיו מְאֹנֶה** acharav me'umah.  
**אֶת-הַכָּלְלָ רָאָיו בִּמְיַרְתָּ הַכָּלְלָ** Et hakol ra'iti bimei hevli:  
**יָשַׁ צָדִיק אָבֵד בָּצְדִּיקָוּ** yesh tzadik oved betzidko;  
**וַיָּשַׁ רָשָׁע מָאִירָד בְּרַעַתּוֹ** yesh rashah ma'arich bero'oto.

<sup>1</sup> "Good is wisdom with inheritance and more for those who see the sun." There are different ways to interpret this, and perhaps it's rather meaningless. However, it reminds me of a piece of wisdom I've heard from my neighbor Eddie: "Rich or poor, it's good to have money."

<sup>2</sup> "For in the shade/shadow/shelter of wisdom *is* in the shade/shadow/shelter of money, and the extra benefit of knowledge of wisdom brings alive its masters." Perhaps the poet means that both wisdom and money offer some protection, and wisdom offers a bit of an advantage.

<sup>3</sup> "On a day of good, be in the goodness; and on a day of bad, see that also this *bad* day offsetting that *good* day did God make, so that (lit., *upon the matter*) a-human-being won't find after-it anything (i.e., so that both types of day disappear without a trace)."

<sup>16</sup> Don't be especially good and don't make yourself extra smart; why make yourself crazy?

<sup>17</sup> Don't be especially bad, and don't be an idiot; why die when it's not your time?<sup>1</sup>

<sup>18</sup> It's good that you should hold on to this, not grasp on to something else, for someone who respects God will come out of the crowd.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Wisdom makes the wise stronger than ten commanders in the town.

<sup>20</sup> No-one on earth is so virtuous as to do *only* good and never lapse.

<sup>21</sup> Also, all the things people say, don't give them your attention, so you won't hear what nasty things your servant says about you!

<sup>22</sup> Since many a time you well know<sup>3</sup> you've said nasty things about others.

<sup>23</sup> I tested all this through wisdom: I said *to myself*, "I'll get wise, even if it's a stretch for me."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Whatever is far off and very deep, who can find it?

אֲלֵתָהִי צְדִיקָה הַרְבָּה  
וְאֲלֵתָהִי חַכְמָם יוֹתֵר  
לִמְהָתְשָׁוֵם  
אֲלֵתָהִי הַרְבָּה  
וְאֲלֵתָהִי סָכָל  
לִפְהָה תְּמֹוֹת בְּלֹא עַתֶּךָ  
טוֹב אֲשֶׁר תְּאַנוּ בָּהּ  
וְגַם מִזֶּה אֲלֵתָהִי אַתִּיךְ  
קִיְרָא אֱלֹהִים  
יֵצֵא אֲתִכְלָם  
הַחְכָּמָה תְּעַזֵּז לְחַכְמָם  
מַעֲשָׂרָה שְׁלִיטִים אֲשֶׁר קָיו בָּעֵיר  
כִּי אֶלְמָ אֵין צְדִיק בָּאָרֶץ  
אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֵׂה טָבוֹ וְלֹא יַחֲטֵא  
גַּם לְכָל-הַדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר יַדְבֵּר  
אֲלֵתָהִי לְבָד  
אֲשֶׁר לֹא-תַשְׁמַע  
אֲתִ-עַבְדָּךְ מַקְלֵךְ  
כִּי נִסְמְפָעִים רְבּוֹת יַדְעַ לְבָד  
אֲשֶׁר נִסְמְאָה קִילְלָת אַחֲרִים  
כָּל-זֶה נִסְתִּי בְּחַכְמָה  
אַמְרָתִי אַחֲרָמָה  
וְהִיא רְחוֹקָה מִמֶּנִּי  
רְחוֹק מִה-שְׁהָיָה וְעַמְקָם | עַמְקָם  
מִי מִצְאָנָה

Al tehi tzadik harbeh,  
ve'al tit'chakam yoter;  
lamah tishomem?  
Al tirshah harbeh  
ve'al tehi sachal;  
lamah tamut belo itecha?  
Tov asher te'echoz bazeh  
vegam mizeh al tanach et yadecha  
ki yereh Elohim  
yetzeh et kulam.  
  
Hachochmah ta'oz lechacham  
me'asarah shalitim asher hayu ba'ir.  
Ki adam ein tzadik ba'aretz  
asher ya'aseh tov velo yechetah.  
Gam lehol hadavarim asher yedaberu  
al titen libecha,  
asher lo tishmah  
et avdecha mekalelecha!  
  
Ki gam pe'amim rabot yadah libecha  
asher gam atah kilalta acherim.  
Kol zeh nasiti vachochmah.  
Amarti, "Echkamah,  
vehi rechokah mimeni."  
Rachok mah shehaya ve'amok amok,  
mi yimtza'enu?

<sup>1</sup> Perhaps the writer knew the fate of Darwin Award winners.

<sup>2</sup> "Good that you will seize on this and also away from this do not rest your hand for one who respects God will come out of them all."

<sup>3</sup> "For also many times has your heart/brain acknowledged ..."

<sup>4</sup> A manuscript has the word *את* instead of *אתה*.

<sup>5</sup> Or, "All this I tried/tested/proved through wisdom. I said, 'I shall be wise.' And it (wisdom) is far from me."

<sup>25</sup> I thought *it* over, to find out,<sup>1</sup>  
to rove and seek wisdom and reckoning,  
to understand the evil of folly,  
and the foolishness of crazy *ideas*.

<sup>26</sup> I find more bitter than death the woman **את־הָאִשָּׁה**  
whose mind is vetoes and restrictions,<sup>2</sup>  
her hands tied *from anything* good;<sup>3</sup>  
before God, let *a good man* escape from her  
and let a sinner be conquered by her.

<sup>27</sup> See, this is what I found, said Speaker,<sup>4</sup>  
*counting* one by one to find the answer.

<sup>28</sup> I kept seeking but couldn't find *it*: **אָשֶׁר־עָד־בְּקָשָׁה נַפְשִׁי וְלֹא־מִצְאָתִי**  
men—I found one in a thousand;  
women—I found not one among them all.  
<sup>29</sup> Only, look at this that I found:  
that God made  
humans<sup>5</sup> right,  
but they have looked for lots of problems.

**סְבֻחָתִי אָנָי וְלֹבִי לְדָעַת  
וְלֹתָרָה וּבְקָשָׁחַכְמָה וְחַשְׁבּוֹן  
וְלְדָעַת רְשֵׁעַפְּסָלַל  
וְהַכְּלָלָת הַוְּלָלוֹת  
אֲסֻרִים יְדֵיהָטוֹב  
וְחַוֹתָא לְכַדְּבָה**

**רְאֵה זֶה מִצְאָתִי אָמְרָה קַהְלָת  
אָתָה לְאָתָה לְמִצְאָתְהָבָן  
אָדָם אָחָד מַאֲלָפַ מִצְאָתִי  
וְאָשָׁה בְּכָל־אָלָה לֹא מִצְאָתִי  
לְבָדַר אָהָדָה מִצְאָתִי  
אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה הָאֱלֹהִים  
אֶת־הָאָדָם יְשָׁרָה  
וְהַמָּה בָּקָשָׁו חַשְׁבּוֹנָתִ רְבִים**

Saboti ani velibi lada'at  
velatur uvakesh chochma vecheshbon  
velada'at resha kesel  
vehasichlut holelot.

Umotzeh ani mar mimavet et ha'isha  
asher hi metzodim vecharamim libah,  
asurim yadeha tov;  
lifnei ha'Elohim yimalet mimenah,  
vechoteh yilached bah.

Re'eh zeh matzati, amrah Kohelet,  
achat le'achat limtzo cheshbon.  
Asher od bikshah nafshi velo matzati:  
adam—echad me'elef matzati;  
ve'ishah, vechol eleh lo matzati.  
Levad re'eh zeh matzati  
asher asah ha'Elohim  
et ha'adam yashar,  
vehemah vikshu chishvонot rabim.

<sup>1</sup> “I went around, I and my mind/heart, to know and to wander and *to* seek wisdom and reckoning.” The Hebrew would be easier if it were to read **בְּלֹבִי** (in/with my mind/heart) instead of **וְלֹבִי** (and my mind/heart) and **וּבְקָשָׁ** (the standard infinitive form, to seek) instead of **וּבְקָשָׁ**.

<sup>2</sup> “Defensive bulwarks and prohibitions.” The Hebrew words can connote traps and nets, and Biblical interpreters often think that Biblical writers suspected women of entrapment, but that’s not necessarily the writer’s implication since the next phrase implies that she’s restricted from any enjoyment of what’s good. Some people are so devoted to their own failings that neither they nor anyone around them can enjoy the good things in life.

<sup>3</sup> “Restricted/bound/tied her hands/power *from what is* good.”

<sup>4</sup> Speaker (קַהְלָת) is a feminine noun from the root for congregation. In 1:2 and 1:12 the word is used with masculine forms; here it’s used with a feminine form. This may simply be an instance where Biblical grammar isn’t as fixed about gender as modern grammar.

<sup>5</sup> “The human being/earthling.”

## Chapter 8

<sup>1</sup> Who is like a wise person?

Who knows how to understand something?

Human wisdom illuminates one's appearance  
and changes one's personal authority.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>2</sup> As for me, I watch the king's temper  
because of God's promise to aid the king.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Don't get flustered at his presence. Move on;  
don't stand by when there's trouble.

He can do anything he wants

<sup>4</sup> because the king's word is law,

and who can ask him, "What are you doing?"

<sup>5</sup> Keep the rules, stay out of trouble;

the wise know when and how to risk trouble.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>6</sup> For any wish, there's a time and a way,  
when a person's trouble is severe.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>7</sup> For a person can't know what will be—  
when it's coming, who can tell him?

מַיְ קְהַחַם?

Umi yode'ah pesher davar?

חָכְמַת אָדָם תָּאִיר פָּנָיו  
וְעֹז פָּנָיו יְשֻׁנָּא

אַנְיִי פִּרְמַלְךָ שְׁמֹר  
וְעַל דִּבְרָת שְׁבֻעָת אֱלֹהִים

אַל-חַבָּהָל מִפְנֵיו תַּלְךָ  
אַל-תַּעֲמֹד בְּרַבֵּר רַע

כִּי כָל-אָשָׁר יְחִפֵּץ יַעֲשֶׂה  
בְּאָשָׁר דִּבְרַמְלֵךְ שְׁלֹטָוֹן

וְמַיְ אָמַר-לֹא מִה-תַּעֲשֶׂה

שׁוֹמֵר מִצְוָה לֹא יַעֲדֶר דָּבָר רַע  
וְעַת וּמִשְׁפָט יַעֲשֶׂה לְבֵב חָכָם

כִּי לְכָל-חֶפֶץ יֵשׁ עַת וּמִשְׁפָט  
כִּי-רְעַת הָאָדָם רַבָּה עָלָיו

כִּי-אִינָנוּ יַדְעַ מִה-שִׁיחָה  
כִּי-כָאָשֵׁר יְהִי מֵי נִידָּה לֹא

Ki kol asher yachpotz ya'aseh

ba'asher devar melech shilton,

umi yomar lo, "Mah ta'aseh?"

Shomer mitzvah lo yedah devar rah,

ve'et umishpat yedah lev chacham.

Ki lechol chefetz yesh et umishpat,

ki ra'at ha'adam rabah alav.

Ki einenu yode'ah ma sheyiheyeh—

ki ka'asher yiheyeh, mi yagid lo?

<sup>1</sup> "And the power (hence 'influence' or 'authority') of one's face/appearance/presence will change."

<sup>2</sup> Literally, "I. King's mouth guard. And upon the matter (i.e., because) of the oath of God." When kings think they rule by divine right and promptly punish lèse majesté (offending the sovereign's dignity), subjects must watch their ruler's every mood.

<sup>3</sup> "One who observes the commandment will not know/experience a bad thing, and time/season and judgement/custom/manner will know the heart of the wise person," i.e., if you stick to the rules you'll stay out of trouble, and it's a wise person who can calculate when (the time) and the legal niceties (how) by which to skirt trouble.

<sup>4</sup> "For/when the trouble of a human being is great upon him."

<sup>8</sup> No one with the power to breathe can stop the breathing,<sup>1</sup> or have control over one's day of death; there's no release from *that kind of* battle, and evil can't save those who possess it.

<sup>9</sup> I have seen all this and paid attention to all work that is done under the sun.

Sometimes one person controls another to his *own* detriment.

<sup>10</sup> So too, I saw bad people buried—they used to come and go from the Temple<sup>2</sup> but were forgotten in the city where they did this.

This too is pointless.

<sup>11</sup> But the sentence isn't executed—the sentence for an evil action—quickly. That's why people's minds are filled with doing evil.

<sup>12</sup> A sinner can do a hundred wrongs yet live a long *life*,<sup>3</sup> still, I know that those who respect God will do well since they show respect in *God's* presence.

אֵין אָדָם שָׁלֵט בָּרוּךְ  
לְכַלּוֹא אֶת-הָרֹוחַ  
וְאֵין שְׁלֹטוֹן בְּיּוֹם הַמְּנוּתָה  
וְאֵין מִשְׁלָחָת בְּמַלְתָּחָת  
וְלֹא-יִמְלֹט רְשָׁע אֶת-בָּעָלָיו  
אֶת-כָּלָזָה רָאִיתִי נִנְתַּן אֶת-לְבָבִי  
לְכָל-מְעָשָׂה אֲשֶׁר נָעָשָׂה  
תַּחַת הַשְּׁמֶשׁ  
שַׁת אֲשֶׁר שָׁלַט הָאָדָם בְּאָדָם  
לְרֹעַ לוֹ  
וּבְכָנָן רָאִיתִי רְשָׁעִים קְבָרִים  
וּבָאָיו וּמִמְקָומָם קְדוּשָׁ יְהָלָכָו  
וַיַּשְׁתַּפְּחֹה בָּעֵיר  
אֲשֶׁר כּוֹעֲשָׂה  
גַּמְזָה הַבָּלֶל  
אֲשֶׁר אִירְאֵנָעָשָׂה פְּתָנָם  
מְעָשָׂה הַרְעָה מְהֵרָה  
עַל-כָּנָן מְלֹא לִבְנֵי-הָאָדָם בָּהָם  
לְעָשָׂות רָע  
אֲשֶׁר חֹטֵא עָשָׂה רָע מְאֹת  
וּמְאַרְיךָ לוֹ  
כִּי גַּם-יוֹדֵעַ אָנִי  
אֲשֶׁר יְהִי-טוֹב לִי-רָאֵי הָאֱלֹהִים  
אֲשֶׁר יִירְאֵי מַלְפִנִּיו

Ein adam shalit baruach  
lichloh et haru'ach,  
ve'ein shilton beyom hamavet  
ve'ein mishlachat bamil'chamah  
velo yemalet reshah et be'alav.  
Et kol zeh ra'iti, venaton et libi  
lechol ma'aseh asher na'asah  
tachat hashamesh.  
Et asher shalat ha'adam be'adam  
lerah lo.  
Uvechen ra'iti resha'im kevurim—  
vava'u, umimkom kadosh yehalechu  
veyishtak'chu va'ir  
asher ken asu.  
Gam zeh havel.  
Asher ein na'asah fitgam  
ma'aseh hara'ah meherah.  
Al ken maleh lev benei ha'adam bahem  
la'asot rah.  
Asher choteh oseh rah me'at  
uma'arich lo,  
ki gam yode'ah ani  
asher yiheyeh tov leyirei ha'Elohim  
asher yiru milfanav.

<sup>1</sup> Or, “There is no man *who* has control over the spirit to stop the spirit.” I think “breathing” makes more sense than “spirit” in this case, to say that even if you have impressive breath control, eventually you have to take a breath.

<sup>2</sup> “A holy site.”

<sup>3</sup> “And it is prolonged for him.”

<sup>13</sup> The evil person will not do well  
nor live long—like a *passing shadow*—  
since he doesn't show respect for God.

<sup>14</sup> There's pointless activity on earth:  
there are good people  
who suffer  
from the deeds of the bad  
and bad people  
who benefit  
from the deeds of the good.<sup>1</sup>

I'd say this too is pointless.

<sup>15</sup> So I praised cheerfulness  
since there's no good for anyone  
under the sun  
except to eat, drink and be happy:  
this can stay with him in his toil  
all the days  
God has granted him  
under the sun.

<sup>16</sup> When I devoted my attention  
to knowing wisdom  
and to seeing the anxiety  
that is dealt with on earth—  
oh, neither by day nor by night  
does a *person* find sleep for the eyes!

וַתּוּבְ לְאָרִיךְהָ לְרַשְׁעָה  
וְלֹאָרִיךְ יָמִים כַּפְצֵל  
אֲשֶׁר אִגְנָנוּ וְרָא מִלְפָנֵי אֱלֹהִים  
יִשְׁהַבֵּל אֲשֶׁר נַעֲשָׂה עַל-הָאָרֶץ  
אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁצְדִּיקִים  
אֲשֶׁר מִגְעָן אֱלֹהִים  
כְּמַעֲשָׂה הַרְשָׁעִים  
וַיִּשְׁרַעַל אֱלֹהִים  
שְׁמָגִיעַ אֱלֹהִים  
כְּמַעֲשָׂה הַצְדִּיקִים  
אֲמְרָתִי שְׁנָמָתָה הַבָּל  
וּשְׁבָחָתִי אָנָי אֶת-הַשְׁמָתָה  
אֲשֶׁר אִין-טוּב לְאָדָם  
תַּחַת הַשְׁמֶשׁ  
כִּי אִם-לְאָכָל וְלִשְׁתֹּוֹת וְלִשְׁמֹוחַ  
וְהַוָּא יַלְגַּע בְּעַמְלָוַי  
יָמֵי חַיָּוִי  
אֲשֶׁר נָתַן לוֹ הָאֱלֹהִים  
תַּחַת הַשְׁמֶשׁ  
כַּאֲשֶׁר נָתַתִּי אֶת-לְבָבִי  
לְדַרְעַת חִכּוּה  
וְלִרְאוֹת אֶת-הַעֲנִין  
אֲשֶׁר נַעֲשָׂה עַל-הָאָרֶץ  
כִּי גָם בַּיּוֹם וּבַלְילָה  
שְׁנָה בְּעִנְיָיו אִגְנָנוּ רָאָה

Vetov lo yiheyeh larashah  
velo ya'arich yamim—ketzel—  
asher einenu yareh milifnei Elohim.  
Yesh hevel asher na'asah al ha'aretz,  
asher yesh tzadikim  
asher magi'ah alehem  
kema'aseh harsha'im  
veyesh resha'im  
shemagi'ah alehem  
kema'aseh hatzadikim.  
Amarti shegam zeh havel.  
Veshibachti ani et hasimchah  
asher ein tov la'adam  
tachat hashemesh  
ki im le'echol velishtot velismo'ach,  
vehu yilvenu va'amalo  
yemei chayav  
asher natan lo ha'Elohim  
tachat hashamesh.  
Ka'asher natati et libi  
lada'at chochmah  
velirot et ha'inyan  
asher na'asah al ha'aretz—  
ki gam bayom uvalaylah  
shenah be'einav einenu ro'eh.

<sup>1</sup> “There's pointless activity on earth, in that there are righteous people who it-touches/affects to-them like-the-activity-of the-bad-people and-there-are bad-people who-it-touches/affects to-them like-the-activity-of the-good-people,” i.e., good people are affected by the bad, and vice versa.

<sup>17</sup> I saw all God's work,  
but nobody can  
discover the activity  
performed under the sun—  
though a person work hard to seek *it*,  
he cannot find *it*—  
and though a wise person claims to know *it*,  
he too cannot find *it*.

וְרִאֵיתִי אֶת-כָּל-מַעֲשָׂה הָאֱלֹהִים  
כִּי לَا יוּכָל הָאָדָם  
לִמְצֹא אֶת-הַמַּעֲשָׂה  
אֲשֶׁר נָעַשָּׂה תְּחִדְשָׂמֵשׁ  
בֶּשֶׁל אֲשֶׁר יַעֲמֵל הָאָדָם לְבַקֵּשׁ  
וְלֹא יִמְצָא  
וְגַם אִם-יֹאמֶר הַחֲכָם לְדַעַת  
לֹא יוּכָל לִמְצָא

Vera'iti et kol ma'aseh ha'Elohim,  
ki lo yuchal ha'adam  
limtzo et hama'aseh  
asher na'asah tachat hashemesh—  
beshel asher ya'amol ha'adam levakesh  
velo yimtzah—  
vegam im yomar hechacham lada'at,  
lo yuchal limtzo.

### Chapter 9

<sup>1</sup> I gave my attention to all this,  
to probe all of it—  
the good and the wise,  
and their labors,  
are in God's hands;  
*as for* both love and hate,

no-one knows everything before them.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>2</sup> The same fate awaits everything:<sup>2</sup>  
for the good person and the bad person,  
for the good and pure as well as the impure,  
for one who brings sacrifices  
and for one who doesn't bring sacrifices,  
for the good person as for the sinner,  
for the oath-taker as for one who avoids<sup>3</sup> oaths.

כִּי אֶת-כָּל-זֹה נָתָתִי אֶל-לִבִּי  
וְלִבְבוֹר אֶת-כָּל-זֹה  
אֲשֶׁר הַצָּדִיקִים וְהַחֲכָמִים  
וְעֲבָדִים  
בִּינְדָּהָאֱלֹהִים  
גַּם-אֶחָבָה גַּם-שְׁנָאָה  
אֵין יוֹדֵעַ הָאָדָם הַכָּל לְפִנֵּיהֶם  
הַכָּל כַּאֲשֶׁר לְכָל מִקְרָה אֶחָד  
לְצַדִּיק וּלְשָׁעַ  
לְטוֹב וּלְטַהּוֹר וּלְטַמֵּא  
וְלֹאַבָּה  
וְלֹאֲשֶׁר אִינְנוּ זֹבֶחֶם  
כְּטוֹב כְּחַטָּא  
הַנְּשֶׁבֶע כַּאֲשֶׁר שְׁבוּעָה וּרְאָה

Ki et kol zeh natati el libi  
velavur et kol zeh—  
asher hatzadikim vehachachamim  
va'avadeihem  
beyad ha'Elohim;  
gam ahavah gam sinah,  
ein yode'ah ha'adam hakol lifneihem.  
Hakol ka'asher lakol mikreh echad:  
latzadik velarashah,  
latov velatahor velatameh,  
velazove'ach  
vela'asher einenu zove'ach,  
katov kachoteh,  
hanishbah ka'asher shevu'ah yareh.

<sup>1</sup> Perhaps this means that nobody knows the sources of love and hate.

<sup>2</sup> “*For* everything, like everything, *there is* one thing that happens.”

<sup>3</sup> “Has respect for,” i.e., one who considers an oath a very serious matter and therefore avoids them.

<sup>3</sup> This is *what's* bad in all that's done under the sun,

for the same thing happens to them all.

What's more, people's minds are full of evil and folly is in their minds while they live, and after that *they go* to the dead.

<sup>4</sup> Anyone linked with all the living can feel self-assured.<sup>1</sup>

When it comes to a live dog, it's better off than a dead lion.

<sup>5</sup> The living know they will die, and the dead don't know anything—they get no more pay since they're no longer remembered.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Their love and their hate and their passion *are* already gone, they have no portion left forever in anything that's done under the sun.

<sup>7</sup> Go on, eat your food with joy and drink your wine with good cheer because God has already accepted what you have done.

<sup>8</sup> Always make sure your clothes are clean, and don't be stingy with the shampoo.<sup>4</sup>

זה רע בכל אשר-נעשה  
תחת השמש

כידמְקָרָה אַחֲרָה לְכָל

ונִמְלְאָה בְּבָנֵי-הָאָדָם מְלָא-רַע

וְהוֹלְלָתָה בְּלִבְכֶם בְּתִינִיתָם

וְאַחֲרָיו אַל-הַמְּתִים

כִּי-מֵי אֲשֶׁר יַחֲבֵר אֶל כָּל-הַחַיִם

יש בְּתַחַонָה

כִּי לְכָלְבָב חַי

הָוֹא שׁוֹב מִן-הָאָרֶיה הַמְּתִה

כִּי-הַחַיִם יוֹדְעִים שִׁמְתוֹ

וְהַמְּתִים אַיִם יוֹדְעִים מְאוֹתָה

וְאַיִן-עָזָד לְהַמְּשָׁרֶב

כִּי נִשְׁקַח זִכְרָם

כִּי אַהֲבָתָם נִסְמְשָׁנָה

גַּם-קִנְאָתָם כָּבֵר אָבָדָה

וְתַלְכֵד אַיִוְלָתָם עוֹד לְעוֹלָם

בְּכָל אֲשֶׁר-נָעַשָה תְּחִתַּה-הַשְׁמִינִית

לְזַד אֶכְלָבְשִׁמְחָה לְחַמְךָ

וְשַׁתָּה בְּלִבְכָרְתָּוּב יְיַחַךָ

כִּי כָּבֵר רָצָה הָאֱלֹהִים

אַתְּ-מַשְׁשִׁיךָ

בְּכָל-עַת יִתְהַוו בְּנֵידִיךָ לְבָנִים

וְשַׁמְן עַל-דְּאָשָׁה אַל-יִחְסַר

Zeh rah bechol asher na'asah  
tachat hashemesh

ki mikreh echad lakol,  
vegam lev benei ha'adam maleh rah,  
veholelot bilvavam bechayehim  
ve'acharav el hametim.

Ki mi asher yechubar el kol hachayim  
yesh bitachon,

ki lechelev chai  
hu tov min ha'aryeh hamet.  
Ki hachayim yodim sheyamtu,  
vehemetim einam yodim me'umah  
ve'ein od lahem sachar  
ki nishkach zichram.

Gam ahavatam, gam sinatam,  
gam kinatam kevar avadah,  
vechelelk ein lahem od le'olam  
bechol asher na'asah tachat hashamesh.  
Lech, echol besimchah lachmecha  
ushateh velev tov yeinecha  
ki chevar ratzah ha'Elohim  
et ma'asecha.

Bechol et yiheyu vegadecha levanim  
veshemen al rosh'cha al yechsar.

<sup>1</sup> “For such a person there is assurance.”

<sup>2</sup> A manuscript has *יבחר* with the two middle letters transposed. The accepted reading (*יחבר*) is from the root for joining together; the rejected reading (*יבחו*) would be from the root for choosing.

<sup>3</sup> “And not any more for them *is there* reward/pay/wages, for forgotten is their memory.”

<sup>4</sup> “At any time let your clothes be white, and oil on your head don't hold back.” I presume that “white” clothes means clean clothes since “raw” undyed fabric would be greyish—but you should wash off the mud so you look tidy. Brylcreem and other hair unguents have lost popularity, and what we put in our hair most often is scented shampoo.

<sup>9</sup> See this: the life with the wife whom you have loved all your pointless life that God has granted you under the sun, all your pointless days— this is your lot in life and in the toil at which you labor under the sun.

<sup>10</sup> Everything you can manage to do in your strength, do it; for there's no doing or figuring, knowledge or wisdom in the Unknown,<sup>1</sup> and that's where you're going!

<sup>11</sup> I returned to see under the sun that the race<sup>2</sup> does not go to the swift nor the war to the mighty nor even food to the wise nor wealth to the shrewd nor goodwill to the skilled,<sup>3</sup> but time and chance come to them all.

רְאֵה חַיִם עַמְּאָשָׁה  
אֲשֶׁר-אֶהָבָתָךְ  
כָּל-יְמֵי חַיִם הַכְּלָלָךְ  
אֲשֶׁר נָתַן לְךָ תְּחִתָּה הַשְּׁמֶשׁ  
כָּל-יְמֵי הַכְּלָלָךְ  
כַּי הִוָּא חַלְקָךְ בְּחַיִם  
וּבְעַמְּלָךְ אֲשֶׁר אַתָּה עַמְּלָךְ  
תְּחִתָּה הַשְּׁמֶשׁ  
כָּל אֲשֶׁר תִּמְצָא יָדֶךָ  
לְעַשׂוֹת בְּכָלָחָךְ עַשָּׂה  
כַּי אֵין מַעַשָּׂה וְחַשְׁבּוֹן  
וּרְעֵת וְחַכְמָה בְּשָׁאָלָל  
אֲשֶׁר אַתָּה הַלְּךָ שָׁמָה  
שׁ  
שְׁבַתִּי וַרְאָה תְּחִתָּה הַשְּׁמֶשׁ  
כַּי לֹא לִקְלָלִים הַמְּרוֹן  
וְלֹא לְגַבּוּרִים הַמְּלִחָמָה  
גָּנוּם לֹא לְחַכְמִים לִחְםָם  
וָנוּם לֹא לְנַבּוּנִים עַשְּׂרָר  
וָנוּם לֹא לִיְדָעִים חָןָן  
כִּי-עִתָּה וּפְנֵעַ יִקְרֵה אֶת-כְּלָם

Re'eh chayim im ishah  
asher ahavta  
kol yemei chayei hevlecha  
asher natan lecha tachat hashemesh,  
kol yemei hevlecha—  
ki hu chelkecha bachayim  
uva' amal'cha asher atah amel  
tachat hashamesh.  
Kol asher timtzah yadcha  
la'asot bechochacha, aseh;  
ki ein ma'aseh vecheshbon  
veda'at vechochmah biShe'ol  
asher atah holech shamah.

Shavti vera'oh tachat hashemesh  
ki lo lakalim hamerotz  
velo lagiborim hamil'chamah  
vegam lo lachachamim lechem  
vegam lo lanvonim osher  
vegam lo layodim chen;  
ki et vafegah yikreh et kulam.

<sup>1</sup> שָׁאָל is where people go after death. I like to think it's related to the root **אָל**, which gives us words like "ask" and "question." As Hamlet said, it's "the undiscovered country" (3.1.80) or the great unknown.

<sup>2</sup> The word for race is from the root for run.

<sup>3</sup> Presumably, you can be a top-quality carpenter, but some clients will still complain.

<sup>12</sup> A person doesn't know his time—  
like fish caught  
in a bad net  
or birds taken in a snare—  
people are trapped *just* like them  
at a bad time,  
when it comes upon them suddenly.

<sup>13</sup> This too I saw *as* wisdom  
under the sun;  
and it was *a great thing* for me.

<sup>14</sup> *There was* a small town, few people in it;  
a great king came and besieged it,  
building great siegeworks against it;

<sup>15</sup> *until someone* found there  
a poor *but* wise man,  
and he saved the city with his wisdom;  
and nobody remembered  
that poor man.

<sup>16</sup> I used to say  
*that* wisdom is better than power,  
but the poor man's wisdom is wasted  
and his words are never heard;

<sup>17</sup> *and that* wise men's words  
are heard in *peacetime*  
more than the shouting of a ruler among fools.

<sup>18</sup> *But the story of the poor, wise man shows that*  
wisdom is better than weapons,<sup>2</sup>  
while one sinner can destroy much good.

כִּי גָם לֹא יָדַע הָאָדָם אֶת־עַתָּה  
בְּדִקְנִים שְׁנָאָחוֹת  
בְּמִזְוֹדָה רָעָה  
וּבְצִפְרִים הָאָחוֹת בְּפָה  
כְּהָם יוֹקְשִׁים בְּנֵי הָאָדָם  
לְעֵת רָעָה  
כְּשַׁתְּפָלָל עַלְיָהֶם פְּתָאָם  
גַּמְ-זָה רָא'יתִי חָכָמָה  
תְּחַת הַשָּׁמֶשׁ  
וְגַדְוֹלָה הִיא אֶלְיָה  
עִיר קְטָנָה וְאָנָשִׁים בָּה מַעַט  
וּבָא-אֲלִיךְ מֶלֶךְ גָּדוֹל וְסִבְבָּה אֲרָה  
וּבְנָה עֲלָיָה מַצּוּרִים גָּדוֹלִים  
וּמְצָא בָּה  
אִישׁ מַסְפֵּן חָכָם  
וּמְלָטָה-הָוָא אֶת-הָעִיר בְּחַכְמָתוֹ  
וְאָדָם לֹא זָכָר  
אֶת-חָדֵישׁ הַפְּסָכוֹן הַהָוָא  
וְאַמְרִיךְ אַנְיָה  
טוֹבָה חָכָמָה מִגְוָרָה  
וְחַכְמָת הַמַּסְכָּן בּוֹיָה  
וְדָבָרָיו אַיִם נְשָׁמָעִים  
דְּבָרָיו חָכְמָיו  
בְּנָחַת נְשָׁמָעִים  
מוֹעֲקַת מוֹשֵׁל בְּכִסְּילִים

טֹבָה חָכָמָה מִכְלֵי קָרָב  
וְחוֹטָא אַחֲרֵי יָבֵד טֹבָה חָרָבָה

<sup>1</sup> The dagesh (dot) in the letter ה is unusual in standard grammar, and some editors omit it here.

<sup>2</sup> “Implements of the *battlefront*.”

## Chapter 10

<sup>1</sup> Flies on a dead *body* stink  
 so that even the perfumer's *embalming* oil reeks;<sup>1</sup>  
 someone valued for wisdom and honor  
 is made just as disgusting by a little folly.

<sup>2</sup> A wise person's mind<sup>2</sup> leans to the right;  
 a fool's mind leans to the left.

<sup>3</sup> When a fool goes out walking  
 his brain<sup>2</sup> is missing  
 so anyone can tell he's a fool.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>4</sup> If the boss gets angry with you  
 don't stick to your position<sup>5</sup>  
 for giving in<sup>6</sup> can placate grave errors.

<sup>5</sup> There's something bad I've seen  
 under the sun,  
 an error that proceeds  
 from the chief:  
<sup>6</sup> setting the fool in very high position  
 while the wealthy stay on the bottom.

<sup>7</sup> I've seen servants on horseback  
 while leaders walk like servants  
 on the ground.

זְבוּבִי מָוֵת וּבָאֵישׁ  
 נִבְיעַ שְׁמֵן רָoke'ach;  
 יָקָר מְחֻכָּמָה מִקְבָּד  
 סְכָלָות מַעַט  
 לְבָב חָכָם לִימִינוֹ  
 וּלְבָבְכִיל לְשָׁמָאלְךָ  
 וּגְמַדְבְּרָךָ קְשָׁפָל הַלְּבָב  
 לְבָבְךָ  
 וְאָמֵר לְכָל סְכָל הָא  
 אִם־רְוֵה הַמּוֹשֵׁל תַּעֲלֵה עַלְּיךָ  
 מְקוֹמֶךָ אֶל־תַּנְחֵה  
 קַי מְרַפְּאָא יָנִית חַטָּאִים גָּדוֹלִים  
 יְשַׁרְעָה רָאִיתִי  
 תָּחַת הַשָּׁמֶשׁ  
 כִּשְׁגָגָה שִׁיאָא  
 מְלֵבָנִי הַשְּׁלִילִים  
 נִתְנַהֲרָה הַסְּכָל בְּמַרְומִים רַבִּים  
 וּשְׁעַרְיִם בְּשָׁפֵל יְשָׁבוּ  
 רָאִיתִי עֲבָרִים עַל־סּוּסִים  
 וּשְׁרָדִים הַלְּכִים כַּעֲבָרִים  
 עַל־הָאָרֶץ

<sup>1</sup> “Flies of death (the flies buzzing on a decomposing body) make a stench, make the cosmetician's lotion stink.” Once we're dead we all stink the same, however much deodorant we used in our lives or however liberally the mortuary professionals apply perfumed embalming oil.

<sup>2</sup> The Hebrew word **לב** means “heart” but it's just as metaphorical as the “heart” in English. (A “heart” on the left is not a reliable sign of stupidity.) The Hebrew word refers to a person's thinking organ, the mind or brain.

<sup>3</sup> “And he says to everyone that he is a fool.”

<sup>4</sup> A manuscript uses the word **כְּשָׁפֵל**.

<sup>5</sup> Most translators understand this as “your-place/position do-not-leave” or don't quit your job. Leave can mean “depart from” or “leave unchanged.” If you're willing to change your (metaphorical) position, you can give in to your boss's point.

<sup>6</sup> The Hebrew root **רָפָא** may imply both healing and weakness (giving in).

<sup>8</sup> Someone who digs a pit will fall in;  
someone who breaches a fence,  
a snake will bite him.

<sup>9</sup> Someone who picks up rocks  
will be hurt by them;  
someone who chops wood  
will be in danger because of them.

<sup>10</sup> If the steel is blunt  
and he doesn't sharpen the edge,  
he'll have to press harder,  
but common sense makes it work better.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>11</sup> If the snake bites without muttering  
a person with a tongue has no advantage.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Words from a wise person's lips are welcome  
a fool's own lips will swallow him!

<sup>13</sup> His speech begins with folly,<sup>4</sup>  
and it ends with terrible craziness.

<sup>14</sup> A fool has lots of words;  
nobody knows what will be;  
and what will be after him,  
who can tell him?

<sup>15</sup> The toil of the foolish tires them out  
since they don't even know  
how to get to the town.

חֹפֵר גַּמְצֵץ בּוֹ יִפּוֹל Chofer gumatz bo yipol

וּפְרַץ גָּדֵר uforetz gader

יִשְׁכְּנֹו נַחַשׁ yishchenu nachash.

מַסְ'אָה אֲבָנִים Masi'ah avanim

יַעֲצֵב בָּהֶם ye'atzev bahem;

בּוּקָע עַזִּים boke'ah etzim

יַיְשָׁחֵן בָּם yisachen bam.

אַמְּדָקָה תְּבָרֵל Im kehah habarzel

וְהַוָּא לְאַפְנִים קְלָקָל venu lo fanim kilkal,

וְתִּחְלִים יְגָבֵר vachayalim yegaber,

וַיִּתְרֹנוּ הַכְּשֵׁרָה veyitron hachsher chochmah.

חַכְמָה

אִמְשָׁחֵד הַנְּחַשׁ בְּלֹא־לְחַשׁ Im yishoch hanachash belo lachash

וְאַנְיָ וַיָּרֹן לְכַעַל הַלְּשׁוֹן ve'in yitron leva'al halashon.

דִּבְרֵי פִּרְחָכֶם תָּן Divrei fi chacham chen

וְשִׁפְתּוֹתָה כְּסֵל תְּבָלָעֵנוּ vesifot kesil tevalenu.

תְּחִלָּתָה דְּבָרִרְפִּיו סְכִילָות Tehilat divrei fihu sicklut

וְאַחֲרִית פִּיהוּ הַוְלֵלָות רַעֲהָ ve'acharit pihu holelut ra'ah.

וְהַסְּכָל יְרַבֵּה דְּבָרִים Vehasachal yarbeh devarim;

לְאַרְיךָ הָאָדָם מִהְשִׁיחָה lo yedah ha'adam mah sheyiheyeh;

וְאַשְּׁר יִהְיֶה מַאֲחָרֵי va'asher yiheyeh me'acharav,

מַיִגְיד לֹו mi yagid lo?

עַמְלֵל הַכְּסִילִים תִּגְעַנְנֵי Amal haksilim teyagenu,

אֲשֶׁר לְאַרְיךָ asher lo yadah

לְלִכְתָּאָלְעֵיד lalechet el ir.

<sup>1</sup> “And-extra working-okay wisdom.” I think the writer means that if you’re sharp (pun alert!) you’ll sharpen the blade instead of leaving it blunt.

<sup>2</sup> A manuscript has the spelling **הכשיר**.

<sup>3</sup> I think this means that the snake accomplishes its work without language, so we can try to do the same.

<sup>4</sup> “The-beginning-of-the-words-of-his-mouth *are* folly, and-the-end-of-his-mouth *is* craziness bad.”

<sup>16</sup> Alas for you, country with a child for a king and princes who eat in the morning.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Happy are you, country whose king is descended from free people and whose princes eat at the *proper* time, for strength and not for drunkenness.

<sup>18</sup> From laziness the building collapses, and from idle hands<sup>2</sup> the house leaks.

<sup>19</sup> Food is made for enjoyment, wine brings pleasure to life, and money answers every *need*.

<sup>20</sup> Don't even think of criticizing a king nor even in private<sup>3</sup> criticize the rich

for a bird in the sky can carry *your* voice and a winged creature relate *your* words.

<sup>1</sup> Throw your food on the water, for in several days you'll find it.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Give a portion to seven *people*, even eight, for you don't know what evil will be on the earth.

אֵילָךְ אָרֶץ שְׁמַלְכָּה נָעָר וּשְׁרוּךְ בְּבָקָר יַאֲכֵל אָשְׁרְךָ אָרֶץ שְׁמַלְכָּה בְּנְחֹרִים וּשְׁרוּךְ בָּעֵת יַאֲכֵל כְּבָוָרָה וְלֹא בְּשָׁקָר בְּעַצְלָתִים וּמִקְּהַמְּקָרָה וּבְשְׁפָלָתִים יְהִי יוֹם יְדַלְּפָה תְּבִיתָ לְשֹׁחָק עַשְׁמָן לְחַם וּוּנוֹן יִשְׁפַּחַת חַיִם וְהַכְּסָרִי יִעֲנָה אֶת-הַכְּלָל גַּם בְּמִדְעָה מֶלֶךְ אֶל-תְּקַלֵּל וּבְחַדְרֵי מִשְׁכָּבָה אֶל-תְּקַלֵּל עַשְׁיר כִּי עַזְּזַת הַשְׁמָנוֹם וּלְוִיחָדָה אֶת-הַדָּخָל וּבְעַל כְּנָפִים נָעִיד דָּבָר

Iy lach, eretz shemalkech na'ar  
vesarayich baboker yochelu.  
Ashrech, eretz  
shemalkech ben chorim  
vesarayich ba'et yochelu,  
bigvurah velo vashti.  
Ba'atzaltayim yimach hamkareh  
uveshiflut yadayim yidlaf habayit.  
Lis'chok osim lechem,  
veyayin yesamach chayim,  
vehakesef ya'aneh et hakol.  
Gam bemada'acha melech al tekalel  
uvechadrei mishkav'cha  
al tekalel ashir  
ki off hashamayim yolich et hakol  
uva'al kenafayim yaged davar.

## Chapter 11

שְׁלַח לְחַמְּךָ עַל-פְּנֵי הַמִּינִים כִּי-בְּרַב הַיּוֹם הַמִּצְאָנוּ תְּנוֹחָלָק לְשָׁבָעָה וּגְנָם לְשִׁמְוֹנָה כִּי לֹא תְּרַע מִה-יְהָיָה רָעָה עַל-הָאָרֶץ

Shalach lachmecha al penei hamayim,  
ki verov hayamim timtza'enu.  
Ten lechem leshivah  
vegam lishmonah  
ki lo tedah mah yiheyeh ra'ah  
al ha'aretz.

<sup>1</sup> Perhaps this means that people should not eat until they've accomplished something for the day.

<sup>2</sup> <sup>2</sup>—“and through lowering of hands”; i.e., people standing round with hands in pockets!

<sup>3</sup> “And in the chambers of your lying/sleeping.”

<sup>4</sup> A manuscript has the word, *הַכְּנָפִים*, “the wings” instead of “wings.”

<sup>5</sup> Perhaps this means that if you discard your treasures, you'll be able to possess them all the more securely; the next verse may encourage generosity.

<sup>3</sup> If the clouds fill with rain,  
they empty *themselves* on the ground;  
and whether a tree falls in the south  
or in the north,

where the tree falls, there shall it lie.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>4</sup> A wind-watcher will not sow seed,  
and a cloud-viewer will not harvest.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Just as you don't know  
by what path the *fetus' spirit travels*,  
*or how its bones form* in the full womb,  
so *too* you don't know  
the work of God  
who does everything.

<sup>6</sup> In the morning, sow your seed,  
and at evening, don't leave your hands idle,  
since you don't know  
which *way* will work out well,  
*whether* this one or that one,  
or *even* if they're both equally good.

<sup>7</sup> Light is sweet:  
it's good for the eyes to see the sun.  
<sup>8</sup> If someone lives many years,  
let him enjoy them all  
but remember the days of darkness  
(for there will be *so* many!);  
everything that comes is pointless.

אִם־יִמְלָא־הָאָרֶץ־גַּשֵּׁם  
עַל־הָאָרֶץ־יָרִיקוּ  
וְאִם־יִפּוֹל־עַץ־בְּדָרוֹם  
וְאִם־בְּאֶפְוֹן  
מָקוֹם־שִׁיאִפּוֹל־הַעַץ־שֶׁם־יְהוָה  
שָׁמֵר־רִוח־לֹא־יָזַר  
וּרְאָה־בְּעָקִים־לֹא־יַקְצֹר  
כַּאֲשֶׁר־אַינְךְ־יָזְעַד  
מִה־דָּרְךְ־הָרָוֹת  
כַּעֲצָמִים־בְּבִטּוֹן־הַמְּלָאָה  
בְּכָהָלָא־תְּרַעַן  
אֶת־מְנֻשָּׂה־הַאֲלָלוֹת  
אֲשֶׁר־יַעֲשֶׂה־אֶת־הַכְּלָל  
בְּבָקֵר־זֶרֶע־אֶת־זָרַעַךְ  
וּלְעַרְבָּה־אֶל־פָּנֶה־יְהָה  
כִּי־אַינְךְ־יָזְעַד  
אֵי־זֶה־יַכְשַׁר  
הַזֶּה־אוֹ-זֶה  
וְאִם־שְׁנֵיהֶם־כְּאַחֲרֵי־טוֹבִים  
וּמְתוֹקֵחַ־הָאָוֹר  
וּטוֹב־לְעֵינָם־לְרָאֹות־אֶת־הַשְּׁמֶשׁ  
כִּי־אִם־שְׁנֵים־הַרְבָּה־יִחְיֶה־הָאָדָם  
בְּכָלְלָם־יַשְׁמַח  
וַיַּזְכֵּר־אֶת־יְמֵי־הַחַשֵּׁךְ  
קַיְדְּרַבָּה־יְהָה  
כָּל־שְׁבָא־הַבָּל

Im yimalu he'avim geshem,  
al ha'aretz yariku;  
ve'im yipol etz badarom  
ve'im batzafon,  
mekom sheyipol ha'etz, sham yehu.  
Shomer ru'ach lo yizrah,  
vero'eh be'avim lo yiktzor.  
Ka'asher eincha yode'ah  
mah derech haru'ach,  
ka'atzamim beveten hamle'ah,  
kacha lo tedah  
et ma'aseh ha'Elohim  
asher ya'aseh et hakol.  
Baboker zerah et zarecha,  
vela'erev al tanach yadecha,  
ki eincha yode'ah  
ei zeh yichshar,  
hazeh oh zeh,  
ve'im shneihem ke'echad tovim.  
Umatok ha'or;  
vetov la'einayim lirot et hashamesh.  
Ki im shanim harbeh yichyeh ha'adam,  
bechulam yismach  
veyizkor et yemei hachoshech  
(ki harbeh yiheyu);  
kol shebah havel.

<sup>1</sup> “In-the-place where-shall-fall the-tree, there shall-it-be.”

<sup>2</sup> If you keep looking for a good time to sow seed (so the wind won't blow it around), you'll never get around to sowing; and if you keep looking at the clouds so you're absolutely sure no rain is coming, you'll never get around to harvesting. In short, if you wait for the perfect moment, you'll never do what you want to do.

<sup>3</sup> One would expect this word to be spelled עַזְעַן, not עַזְעַעַן.

<sup>9</sup> Young man, celebrate your youth;  
be cheerful when you're young;  
follow your heart  
and your eyes<sup>1</sup>  
and know that for all these things  
God brings you to judgement.  
<sup>10</sup> Keep anger from your mind,  
and keep evil off your body,  
for childhood and youth<sup>2</sup> are pointless.

<sup>1</sup> Remember your creator  
as in the days of your youth—  
as long as the bad days don't come,  
when those years arrive in which you say,  
“I find no pleasure in them

<sup>2</sup> as long as the sun never darkens,  
nor the light nor the moon nor the stars,  
and the clouds return after the rain.”<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> On the day when the house guards tremble,  
the heroes bow *in fear*,  
the molars have fallen out and are useless<sup>4</sup>  
and women who peer through windows go dark,

שְׁמָחַ בְּתוּרָ בַּיִלְדּוֹתֶךָ  
וַיִּתְּבַּךְ לְבָקֶ בִּימֵי בְּחוּרוֹתֶךָ  
וְהַלְּבָדְכֶרְכִּי לְבָדְכֶרְכִּי  
וּבְמַרְאֵי עִינָּגָן  
וְרֹעֵי עַל-כָּל-אֱלֹהִים בְּמִשְׁפָט  
וְחַסְרֵר פָּעֵל מְלָבֶךָ  
וְהַעֲבֵר רַעַת מְבָשָׂרֶךָ  
קִי-הַנִּילּוֹת וְהַשְׁחָרוֹת הַכְּלָל

## Chapter 12

וּזְכֵר אֶת-בָּרוֹאֵיךְ  
בִּימֵי בְּחוּרוֹתֶךָ  
עַד אֲשֶׁר לְאִירְבָּאוּ יְמֵי הַרְשָׁה  
וְהַנִּיעוּ שָׁנִים אֲשֶׁר הָאָמֵר  
אַזְלֵל בְּהַם חַפְץ  
עַד אֲשֶׁר לְאַתְּחַשֵּׁה הַשְּׁמֵשׁ  
וְהַאֲוֹר וְהַיְרָחָ וְהַכּוֹכָבִים  
וּשְׁבִי הַעֲבָדִים אַחֲרַ הַגָּשָׁם  
בַּיּוֹם שִׁיאָזָעָ שְׁמֹרֵי הַבָּיִת  
וְהַתְּעוֹזָר אֲנַשֵּׁי הַקְּרִיל  
וּבְטַלּוּ הַטְּחָנוֹת קַי מַעֲטָו  
וְחַשְׁכּוּ הַרְאֹות בְּאַרְבּוֹת

Uzechor et borecha  
bimei bechurotecha  
ad asher lo yavo'u yemei hara'ah  
vehigi'u shanim asher tomar,  
“Ein li vahem chefetz  
ad asher lo techshach hashemesh,  
veha'or vehayare'ach vehakochavim  
veshavu he'avim achar hagashem.”  
Bayom sheyazu'u shomrei habayit,  
vehitavtu anshei hechayil  
uvatlu hatochanot ki mi'etu  
vechashchu haro'ot ba'arubot.

<sup>1</sup> “Go in the paths of your heart/mind and in the lookings of your eyes.”

<sup>2</sup> שְׁחָרוֹת is related to the Hebrew root שָׁחַר, which gives us “dawn” and “black”; here it refers to the early part of life, the dawn or the time before black hair turns grey.

<sup>3</sup> Perhaps these verses mean that all pleasure passes—the rain comes and goes, but it always comes again—but the sense of these verses seems difficult. The Talmud (BT Shabbat 151b et. seq.) interprets this section as a description of human decrepitude.

<sup>4</sup> “And-they-have-become-insignificant the-millers/grinders/molars for they-have-become-few/little.” Grinders could refer to people who use a mortar and pestle, cosmeticians or apothecaries, but Rashi says חַשִּׁים, which might mean the teeth; שְׁנִים (grinding teeth) means molars.

<sup>4</sup> and the market gates are closed  
as the noise of the mill<sup>1</sup> fades away;  
then one rises to the rooster's crowing<sup>2</sup>  
and all the song-girls are depressed.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>5</sup> They'll be afraid from a height,  
*fearing* terrors along the path;  
the almond has blossomed  
the grasshopper grown heavy<sup>4</sup>  
and appetite has failed,  
as the person goes to his eternal place.

But mourners<sup>5</sup> roam in the market

<sup>6</sup> as long as the silver cord is not frayed,  
nor the golden bowl broken  
nor the pitcher broken at the fountain  
nor the cover<sup>6</sup> cracked at the cistern  
<sup>7</sup> nor dust returned to the earth  
as it used to be  
nor the spirit returned to God  
who gave it.<sup>8</sup>

וְסָגָרוּ דְלִתָּם בְּשֹׁוק  
בְּשִׁפְלָה קֹול הַתְּחִנָּה  
וְזָקָם לְקֹול הַצּוֹפָר  
וְשָׁחוֹר בְּלִבְנָה הַשִּׁיר  
בְּמִגְבָּה וּרְאוֹת  
וְתִתְחַקֵּים בְּדָרֶךְ  
וְיָנָאץ הַשְׁקָדָר  
וְיִסְתְּבָל הַחַנְבָּד  
וְתִפְרֵר הַאֲבִינָה  
כִּי-הַלְּךָ הָאָרֶם אֶל-בֵּית עַזְלָמָה  
וְסָבָבוּ בְּשִׁוְקָה-סְפָרִים  
עַד אֲשֶׁר לְאִירְתָּהּ חַבֵּל הַכְּסָף  
וְתִרְצֵן גַּלְתָּה-זָהָב  
וְתִשְׁבַּר כָּר עַל-הַמְּפֹוּעָה  
וְנֶרֶץ הַגְּלָגָל אֶל-הַבָּוֹר  
וַיִּשְׁבַּב הַעֲפָר עַל-הָאָרֶץ  
כְּשַׁהְיָה  
וְהַרְוִיחַ תָּשִׁיב אֶל-הָאֱלֹהִים  
אֲשֶׁר נְתָנָה

<sup>1</sup> Or, “the sound of chewing (of the molars) fades away”; I think this is how Rashi understands the phrase but I find it hard to know what the writer intends.

<sup>2</sup> “And-he-will-rise for-the-sound/voice-of the-bird.” It’s a widespread myth that the rooster crows to begin the day, but in my experience they can crow all night, tantalizing the insomniac with false promises of dawn.

<sup>3</sup> “And-they-bow-down all-the-daughters/girls-of the-song/singing.” If we were to read the last word of the verse as **הַעִיר** instead of **הַשִּׁיר** we could translate “the town girls” or “the suburbs” instead of “the song-girls.”

<sup>4</sup> T. S. Eliot in *The Waste Land* interprets differently: “And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief.” He didn’t get that translation from the King James, Vulgate or Septuagint versions, so I wonder where he got it.

<sup>5</sup> Or “eulogizers,” perhaps professionals who deliver funeral orations.

<sup>6</sup> **גַּלְגָּל** often means wheel but in this case I suspect the writer is thinking of a round cover for a cistern or well. If it’s a wheel, perhaps it’s part of a pulley assembly to draw up a water bucket.

<sup>7</sup> A manuscript version has the word **רַחַק**.

<sup>8</sup> In verses 6 and 7 it’s hard to know when the negatives stop, from the silver cord down to the spirit returning. I understand that the (professional?) mourners of verse 5 roam the market because business is slow since the bowls are not breaking.

<sup>8</sup> Pointless, pointless, said Speaker,<sup>1</sup> it's all pointless.

<sup>9</sup> And more, since Speaker was wise he kept teaching knowledge to the people; he listened and probed and prepared many proverbs.

<sup>10</sup> Speaker sought to find acceptable words— honest writing, words of truth.

<sup>11</sup> The words of the wise are like goads, like spikes pounded in *to stir the audience*,<sup>2</sup> such orators are people who manage crowds, provided by a single leader.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>12</sup> More than these, child, beware: of making many books there is no end and much study will tire out *your* body.

<sup>13</sup> Finally, we can hear all *there is to say*: respect God and keep *God's* rules; this is *for* every person.

<sup>14</sup> For every action God will bring to judgement with everything that's secret, whether good or bad.

הַבְלָל הַבְלִים אָמַר הַקּוֹהֶלֶת  
הַכָּל הַכָּל

וַיֹּתֶר שְׁהַיָּה קַהְלַת חָכָם  
עוֹד לְמִדְרַעַת אֶתְהָעָם

וְאַנְךָ וְחַקֵּר

תָּקוּן מִשְׁלִים תְּרֵבָה

בְּקַשׁ קְוֹלָת לִמְצָא

דְּבָרִיחַפֵּץ

וְכַתּוֹב יוֹשֵׁר דְּבָרִי אֶמֶת

הַבְּרִי חָכָם בְּקָרְבָּנוֹת

וּכְמִשְׁמָרוֹת נְטוּיעִים

בָּעֵל אָסְפּוֹת

נִתְנַנוּ מֶרֶעָה אַחֲרָה

וַיֹּתֶר מִהְמָה בְּנֵי הַנָּהָר

עֲשָׂוֹת סְפָרִים תְּרֵבָה אֵין קָצֵן

וְלֹהֶג תְּרֵבָה וְגַעַת בָּשָׂר

סּוֹרֵךְ בָּרֵךְ הַכָּל נִשְׁמַע

אַתְּהָאֱלֹהִים וְרָא

וְאַתְּמִצְוָתָיו שְׁמֹור

כִּיּוֹתָה כָּל הָאָדָם

כִּי אַתְּכָלְלָמְעָשָׂה

הָאֱלֹהִים יָבָא בְּמִשְׁפָּט

עַל כָּל-גָּעָלִים

אַסְ-טוֹב וְאַסְ-רָעַ

Havel havalim, amar haKohelet, hakol havel.

Veyoter, shehayah Kohelet chacham od limad da'at et ha'am

ve'izen vechiker,

tiken meshalim harbeh.

Bikesh Kohelet limtzoh

divrei chefetz—

vechatuv yosher, divrei emet.

Divrei chachamim kadaronot

uchemasmerot netu'im

ba'alei asufot

nitnu mer'oeh echad.

Veyoter mehemah beni, hizaher:

asot sefarim harbeh ein ketz

velahag harbeh yegi'at basar.

Sof davar, hakol nishmah:

et ha'Elohim yerah

ve'et mitzvotav shemor;

ki zeh kol ha'adam.

Ki et kol ma'aseh

ha'Elohim yavi vemishpat

al kol nehlam,

im tov ve'im rah.

<sup>1</sup> The word for Speaker looks grammatically feminine but uses masculine verbs and adjectives.

<sup>2</sup> For those of us unfamiliar with a goad (דָּרְבָּן), it's something you sharpen with a file (1 Samuel 13:21), and then you poke your animal to get it moving. or משמר (the ש sounds like שׁ) is often translated nail, but I presume it could be like a tent spike, "planted" (שׂוּעִים) or pounded into the ground. No doubt ancient orators brought their audiences to tears, one way or another. Ouch!

<sup>3</sup> Crowds could be harvests (gatherings of one kind or another); leader could be shepherd, but it could refer to God—these orators are like the prophets, admonishing the people with a holy message of repentance.

SPS Draft

# The Book of Ester

אֶسְתֵּר

SPS Draft

## The Book of Ester • אֶسְתֵּר • Ester

This jolly tale recounts the near destruction of the Jewish communities spread among the towns and provinces of King Achashverosh, with the death of 75,811 non-Jews (800 in Shushan, over two days, 75,000 in the provinces, Haman's ten sons and Haman). God is not mentioned in the book, so some people like to say that even when we are not aware of divine guidance, it's there; they may go on to say that God's behind-the-scenes work at Purim is contrasted with the public display of divine power commemorated a month later at Pesach; and if the seasons cooperate, they can go on to say that the springtime revivication of nature is barely noticeable at Purim time but in full swing by Pesach, as those who suffer from seasonal allergies can attest.

The story is well constructed by modern standards, with the irony of Haman's greatest triumph just before his fall, though instances of repetition and ellipsis roughen the otherwise smooth surface of the story. The story is told so well that some doubt its accuracy and consider it semi-historical fiction; such people are often disappointed by the literary principles of ancient sacred literature.

This translation does not translate names; standard translations in English often use names derived from the early Greek and Latin translations, so I think you might as well just transliterate the source. However, the people and places in the story are usually associated as follows:

- **Ahashverosh** is usually translated as Ahasuerus and identified (for those who don't think the world was created just a moment ago, with all its fossils, and humans with all their memories) as the historical figure Artaxerxes or Xerxes. His name in Hebrew begins with a Persian (I presume) prefix denoting royalty, for the same prefix is used in the words for provincial premiers (3:12, 8:9, 9:3) and royal stables (8:10, 9:14). His rule extended from **Hodu** (usually India) to **Kush** (usually Ethiopia), a pretty extensive realm. He seemed to have an efficient system of communication involving riders on horseback to deliver decrees to all his provinces.
- **Haman** is a descendant of **Agag**, the Amalekite king whom Saul failed to kill in I Samuel 15. Some people trace the ancestry of many enemies of the Jews back to the Biblical Amalekites, while others cite the Talmud (Berachot 28a) to argue that such nations can no longer be identified, to which others rejoin that Amalekitism is no longer a genetic but a spiritual ailment.
- **Ester** (usually Esther with a silent h. You want a silent h? Hherhe yhou ahre; enjhoy.) is an orphan girl raised by her uncle **Mordochai** (usually Mordechai). Some writers associate them with Ishtar and Marduk, ancient deities with characteristics rather different from those of Ester and Mordochai. Ester is also called Hadassah, a Hebrew word for myrtle, rather a nice name in my opinion. In Hebrew scripture, Mordochai was exiled with Zerubbavel (Ezra 2:2, Nechemiah 7:7), and in the Mishnah (Shekalim 5:1) he was in charge of taking donations for bird sacrifices in the Second Temple. Isn't it nice to think that he was able to return to Israel and witness the Temple sacrifices reinstated?
- **Shushan** (usually Susa) is mentioned in Hebrew scripture in Nechemiah and Daniel, but if it's historical it's an ancient town mentioned in Sumerian, Greek and other sources, and today its site is the Iranian town of Shush.
- **Faras** or **Paras** and **Madai**, usually translated as Persia and Media, ancient empires in today's Iran. Faras and Paras are the same; in ancient languages such as Hebrew and Greek, our letters F and P are closely related. You can feel this if you say F using your lips and not your teeth; it's like a P without letting the lips touch.

The Talmud and Mishna add background to the text.

- Before his rise to power, Haman was once a barber (Megillah, 16a), and Ahasuerus was of low birth (Megillah 12b) but married royalty—Vashti was the granddaughter of Nebuchadnezzar (Megillah 10b). Aware of their humble beginnings, both men were sensitive to insults.
- Ahasuerus praised Vashti's lineage and beauty to his drinking partners. “Wanna see?” he asked them, “Sure,” they said, “but without her fine clothes and jewelry. Bring her in stark naked” (Megillah 12b). That was his request, and it's easy to see why Nebuchadnezzar's granddaughter would refuse!
- King Oshiah once consulted the prophetess Huldah (II Kings 22:14) instead of Jeremiah, who had gone on a successful mission to rescue the Ten Lost Tribes (Megillah 14b). Perhaps this explains why Mordochai and Esther were authorized to decree laws for the Jewish people (Esther 9:29).
- The Mishnah tells us an image of Shushan was over the Eastern gate of the Temple (Middot 1:3)—perhaps to thank the rulers who allowed us to rebuild the Temple, perhaps to warn us that wherever we feel successful and accepted, our fortunes can change suddenly if a Haman appears.

## Chapter 1

<sup>1</sup> This happened in the time of Achashverosh,  
the Achashverosh who ruled  
*all the way* from Hodu to Kush,  
one hundred and twenty-seven provinces.

<sup>2</sup> In those days,  
when King Achashverosh sat  
on his royal throne,  
which was in the city<sup>1</sup> of Shushan,  
<sup>3</sup> in the third year of his reign  
he held a drinking binge  
for all his officials and servants,  
the army of Faras and Madai,  
with the leaders and provincial chiefs  
in his presence,<sup>2</sup>

וַיְהִי בִּימֵי אַחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ  
הַוָּא אַחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ הַמֶּלֶךְ  
מִקְּדָשׁוֹ וְעַדְפּוֹשׁ  
שְׁבַע וּשְׁנָרִים וּמֵאָה מְדִינָה  
בִּימֵים הַהִם  
כִּשְׁבַתְהוּ הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ  
עַל כִּסֵּא מְלָכִיתוֹ  
אֲשֶׁר בְּשֻׁשָׁן הַבִּירָה  
בְּשִׁנְתָּה שָׁלֹשׁ לְמֶלֶךְ  
עֲשָׂה מִשְׁתָּה  
לְכָל-שָׂרִי וּבְדָרִי  
חַילְוָה פָּרָס וּמָדָי  
הַפְּרַתְמִים וּשְׁנִי הַמְּדִינּוֹת  
לְפָנָיו

Vayehi bime'i Achashverosh,  
hu Achashverosh hamolech  
meHodu ve'ad Kush,  
sheva ve'esrim ume'ah medinah.  
Bayamim hahem,  
keshevet hameleh Achashverosh  
al kiseh mal'chuto  
asher beShushan habirah,  
bishnat shalosh lemol'cho  
asah mishteh  
lechol sarav va'avadav,  
cheil Paras uMadai,  
hapartemim vesarei hamedinot,  
lefanav.

<sup>1</sup> Some translate the word **כִּירָה** as palace, fortress or castle, a bit like a modern gated community.

<sup>2</sup> Rule 1 for a king in ancient times: exterminate threats to your throne, such as family members or high-ranking officials with children. Rule 2: keep powerful people close by, where you can watch them (Louis XIV practiced this wisdom).

<sup>4</sup> while he displayed the opulence of his royal glory and the treasure of his splendid greatness for many days, 180 days,

<sup>5</sup> and when these days were completed the king held (for all the residents of the city of Shushan, from eminent to inconsequential) a seven-day drinking binge, outside, in the king's palace garden.

<sup>6</sup> On display were white, green and blue *hangings* fastened with cords of fine linen and purple on rings of silver, and alabaster pillars, couches of gold and silver, on a floor of red and white and pearl marble,<sup>1</sup>

<sup>7</sup> with drinking in golden goblets and fresh cups,<sup>2</sup> and lots of top-quality wine as the king could afford.

**בְּהַרְאָתָו אֲתַ-עֲשָׂר'**  
**כְּבָדָ מַלְכָוָתָו**  
**וְאַתְּדִּיקָר הַפְּאָרָת נְדוּלָתָו**  
**יָמִים רַבִּים**  
**שְׁמוּנִים וּמִאַת יוֹם**  
**וּמִלְוָאת הַיּוֹם הַאֲלָה**  
**עַשָּׂה הַפְּלָלָה לְכָל-הָעָם**  
**הַנְּמַצְאִים בְּשִׁוְשָׁן הַבִּירָה**  
**לְמִגְדָּול וּעֲדָקָתָן**  
**מִשְׁתָּחָה שְׁבָעָת יוֹמִים**  
**בְּחַצְרָה גְּנַת בִּתְן הַמֶּלֶךְ**  
**תַּוְרָה כְּרָפָס וְתַכְלִית**  
**אֲחָזוֹ בְּחַכְלִיל-בְּזִוְין וְאַרְגָּמָן**  
**עַל-גִּלְעָדִילָה בְּסָפָר**  
**וְעַמְוֹדִי שֶׁשָּׁ**  
**מִטּוֹת זָהָב וְצָהָב**  
**עַל רַצְפָּת בְּהַתְּנוּשָׁשׁ**  
**וְדַר וְסְחָרָתָה**  
**וְהַשְׁקוֹת בְּכָלְיוֹ זָהָב**  
**וְכָלִים מַכְלִים שׁוֹנִים**  
**וְיָיִן מַלְכִיָּה רַבָּה**  
**כִּינָּד הַמֶּלֶךְ**

Beharoto et osher  
kevod mal'chuto  
ve'et yekar tiferet gedulato  
yamim rabim,  
shmonim ume'at yom,  
uvimlot hayamim ha'eleh  
asah hamelech (lechol ha'am  
hanimtze'im beShushan habirah,  
lemigadol ve'ad katan)  
mishteh shivat yamim  
bachatzar ginat bitan hamelech.  
Chur, karpas utechelet  
achuz bechavlei vutz ve'argaman  
al gelilei chesef,  
ve'amudei shesh,  
mitot zahav vachesef,  
al ritz'fat bahat vashesh  
vedar vesocharet,  
vehashkot bichlei zahav  
vechelim mikelim shonim,  
veyein mal'chut rav  
keyad hamelech.

<sup>1</sup> Colors are always hard to translate; those who think the ancients had no word for blue sometimes suggest the ancients used words of texture and substance rather than color, so pearl or marble could be white (or any other marble color). The floor could be inlaid with color, or a mosaic, or made of tiles. It was supposed to impress.

<sup>2</sup> "And utensils from different utensils." This may mean that the goblets were unusual or that drinkers got a fresh goblet for each toast ("Long live the king" [drink; toss gold goblet over shoulder]; "Long live the queen!" [drink, etc.]; "Nice fabrics!" [drink, etc.]; "Super floor, wow!" [drink]; and so on).

<sup>8</sup> The drinking was under control;  
there was no pressure *to drink*  
for the king had instituted *a rule*  
for all his numerous household,  
to let each man do as he wished.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Vashti, the queen, also held  
a ladies' drinking binge,  
in the royal residence  
which belonged to King Achashverosh.

<sup>10</sup> On the seventh day,  
when the king was merry with wine,  
he told Mehuman, Bizta, Charbona,  
Bigta and Avagta, Zeter and Charkas,  
the seven eunuchs<sup>2</sup>  
who served the presence  
of King Achashverosh  
<sup>11</sup> to bring Queen Vashti  
before the king with *her* royal crown,  
*in order* to show the people and chiefs  
her beauty, for she was a lovely sight.

וְהַשְׁתִּיה כְּהַת  
אֵין אָנוֹס  
כִּירְכָּן וְיִסַּד הַמֶּלֶךְ  
עַל כָּל־כָּבֵד בֵּיתוֹ  
לְעַשְׂוֹת כְּרִצּוֹן אִישׁ־וְאִישׁ  
בָּם וְשָׁׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ  
עַשְׂתָּה מִשְׁתָּה נְשָׁמָה  
בֵּית הַמֶּלֶכְתָּה  
אֲשֶׁר לְמֶלֶךְ אַחֲשְׁוֹרוֹשׁ

בְּיּוֹם הַשְׁבִּיעֵשׁ  
כְּטוּב לְכָהַמֶּלֶךְ בֵּין  
אָמֵר לְמַהוּפָן בְּזֹאת חַרְבּוֹנָא  
בְּנָחָא וְאַבְנָחָא וְתָרָא וְכַרְפָּס  
שְׁבָעַת הַפְּרִילִים  
הַמְּשֻׁרְתִּים אַתְּ־פָנָן  
הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחֲשְׁוֹרוֹשׁ  
לְהַבָּא אֲתָּה־שָׁקֵן הַמֶּלֶכְתָּה  
לְפָנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ בְּכָתֵר מִלְכָוֹת  
לְהַרְאֹת הַעֲמִים וְהַשְׁרִים  
אַתְּ־יִפְיָה כִּירְטוֹבָת מִרְאָה חִיאָה

ס

Bayom hashvi'i,  
ketov lev hamelech bayayin,  
amar liMehuman, Bizta, Charbona,  
Bigta va'Avagta, Zeter veCharkas,  
shivet hasarism  
ham'shertim et penei  
hamelech Achashverosh  
lehavi et Vashti hamalkah  
lifnei hamelech becheter mal'chut,  
leharot ha'amim vehasarim  
et yofyah, ki tovat mareh hi.

<sup>1</sup> At ancient banquets the diners, it seems, felt obliged to keep up with the drinking. Some believe Tycho Brahe died of a bladder obstruction; at a royal banquet, he needed to relieve himself but feared to break protocol by leaving the royal presence. In an earlier time, the cannon would roar approval when the King of Denmark drained his goblet, a custom "more honored in the breach than the observance" (*Hamlet* 1.4.16).

<sup>2</sup> A king could rarely trust family members or anyone with a family, so eunuchs might hold positions of trust such as supervising the harem or being attendants to the king's bedchamber and other very personal needs, not to mention trusted advisors in other matters of state. Since eunuchs might rise to positions of power, the Hebrew word **סְרִיס** may refer to a high official, not necessarily a castrated man. This practice of ancient times seems shocking today, but neutering and spaying animals is routine for pet owners, and many a modern person chooses to become infertile.

<sup>12</sup> Queen Vashti refused to come at the king's command, conveyed by the eunuchs, so the king got very angry, and his anger smoldered within him.

<sup>13</sup> The king spoke to the experts who could predict the future<sup>1</sup>— for such was the king's practice toward all who knew learning and law—

<sup>14</sup> while near him were Karshena, Shetur, Admata, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena, and Memuchan the seven chiefs of Faras and Madai who were admitted to the king's presence<sup>2</sup> and were placed first in the kingdom,

<sup>15</sup> “Legally, what can be done with this Queen Vashti, since she didn't carry out the command of King Achashverosh conveyed by the eunuchs?”

וְתִמְאֵן הַמֶּלֶךְ וְשָׁתֵּי לְבוֹא  
בְּרַכְרַךְ הַמֶּלֶךְ  
אֲשֶׁר בַּנִּיד הַסְּרִיסִים  
וְנִקְאֹזֶף הַמֶּלֶךְ מֵאָד  
וְתִמְחֹזֶה בְּעַרְוָה כֹּו  
וַיִּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ לְחַכְמִים  
וְדַעַי הַעֲתָקִים  
כִּי-כֵן דָּבָר הַמֶּלֶךְ לִפְנֵי  
כָּל-יֹדְעֵי דָת נִידֵן  
וְהַקְרֵב אַלְיוֹן  
כִּרְשָׁנָא שָׁתָר אַרְמָתָא תְּרַשִּׁישׁ  
מְרָס מְרָסָנָא מִמוֹכוֹן  
שְׁבָעָת שְׁרוּרָא פְּרָס וּמְרוֹי  
רָאֵי פְּנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ  
הַיְשָׁבִים רָאשָׁה בְּפָלְכוֹת  
כְּרָת מָה-לְעָשָׂוֹת  
בְּמֶלֶכֶת וְשָׁתֵּי  
עַל | אֲשֶׁר לְאַעֲשָׂה  
אַת-מְאָמָר הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחֲשְׁוֹרֹשׁ  
בַּנִּיד הַסְּרִיסִים

Vatma'en hamalkah Vashti lavo  
bidvar hamelech  
asher beyad hasarism,  
vayiktzof hamelech me'od,  
vachamato ba'arah vo.  
Vayomer hamelech lachachamim  
yodei ha'itim—  
ki chen devar hamelech lifnei  
kol yodei dat vadin—  
vehakarov elav  
Karshena, Shetur, Admata, Tarshish,  
Meres, Marsena, Memuchan,  
shivet sarei Paras uMadai  
ro'ei penei hamelech,  
hayoshvim rishonah bamal'chut,  
“Kedat, mah la'asot  
bamalkah Vashti  
al asher lo astah  
et ma'amar hamelech Achashverosh  
beyad hasarism?”

ס

<sup>1</sup> “Who knew the times/seasons”; maybe they were royal weather forecasters.

<sup>2</sup> You couldn't just show up to see the king without an invitation, as Ester points out later.

<sup>16</sup> Memuchan said to the king and chiefs, “Not only against the king has Vashti transgressed, but against all the chiefs and all the people who are in all the provinces of King Achashverosh.

<sup>17</sup> For the queen’s action will get to all women, *encouraging them* to view their men with scorn and tell them, ‘King Achashverosh ordered Queen Vashti brought to him, and she didn’t come.’

<sup>18</sup> When that happens,<sup>2</sup> they’ll talk *the same way*— the chief ladies of Paras and Madai who have heard of the queen’s action—to all the king’s chiefs, causing disrespect and anger.

<sup>19</sup> If the king approves, let a royal proclamation be made<sup>3</sup> and written in the laws of Faras and Madai in perpetuity, that Vashti can never come before King Achashverosh, and let the king bestow her royalty on someone else, better than she!

וַיֹּאמֶר מִמְּחָנָן  
לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהַשְׂרִים  
לֹא עַל-הַמֶּלֶךְ לִבְדוֹ  
שׁוֹתָה נְשָׁתִי הַמֶּלֶךְ  
כִּי עַל-כָּל-הַשְׁרִים  
וְעַל-כָּל-הַעֲמִים  
אֲשֶׁר בְּכָל-מִדְנִינּוֹת  
הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲחַשְׁוֹרֹשׁ  
קִרְיָצָא דְּבָר-הַמֶּלֶךְ  
עַל-כָּל-הַגָּנְשִׁים  
לְהַבְּכוֹת בְּעַלְיָהוּ בְּעִינֵיכֶם  
בְּאָמָרָם  
הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲחַשְׁוֹרֹשׁ אָמַר  
לְהַבְּיאָ אֶת-זָנָתִי הַמֶּלֶךְ לִפְנֵי  
וְלֹא-אָבָה  
וְהַיּוֹם הַזֶּה תָּמַרְנָה  
שְׁרוֹתָ פְּרָסִיזָמָרִי  
אֲשֶׁר שָׁמַעַל אֶת-דְּבָר הַמֶּלֶךְ  
לְכָל שָׂרוֹי הַמֶּלֶךְ  
וּכְרוֹי בְּזִיּוֹן וּקְאַרְבָּן  
אַמְ-עַל-הַמֶּלֶךְ טָוב  
וְצָא דְּבָר-מְלֹכּוֹת מִלְּפָנֵי  
וַיַּקְתֵּב בְּדָתִי פְּרָסִיזָמָרִי  
וְלֹא יַעֲבֹר  
אֲשֶׁר לְאַתְּהָבָא וְשָׁרוֹ  
לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲחַשְׁוֹרֹשׁ  
וּמְלֹכּוֹת יְתִן הַמֶּלֶךְ  
לְרַעַתָּה הַטוֹּבָה מִמֶּנָּה

Vayomer Memuchan lifnei hamelech vehasarim, “Lo al hamelech levado avtah Vashti hamalkah, ki al kol hasarim ve’al kol ha’amim asher bechol medinot hamelech Achashverosh. Ki yetzeh devar hamalkah al kol hanashim, lehavzot ba’aleihen be’eineihen, be’omram, ‘Hamelech Achashverosh amar lehavi et Vashti hamalkah lefanav, velo va’ah.’ Vehayom hazeh tomarnah sarot Paras uMadai asher shamu et devar hamalkah lechol sarei hamelech, uchedai bizayon vakatzef. Im al hamelech tov, yetzeh devar mal’chut milfanav veyikatev bedatei Faras uMadai, ve’lo ya’avor, asher lo tavo Vashti lifnei hamelech Achashverosh, umal’chutah yiten hamelech lir’utah hatovah mimenah.

<sup>1</sup> A manuscript would read מומכן.

<sup>2</sup> “And that day.”

<sup>3</sup> “If for the king *it seems* good, let-there-go-out word-of-kingdom (i.e., a royal decree) from his presence”

<sup>20</sup> This will be heard—the king's decree that he will make for all his kingdom, which is very extensive—and all the women will show respect for their men, from eminent to inconsequential.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>21</sup> This seemed a good plan to the king and the chiefs, and the king did what Memuchan said.

<sup>22</sup> He<sup>2</sup> sent letters to all the king's provinces in each province's script, and in each people's language, that every man should be master of his house—proclaiming *this* in the local language.<sup>3</sup>

וְנִשְׁמַע פָּתָגָם הַמֶּלֶךְ  
אֲשֶׁר-יִעַשׂ הַבְּכָל-מֶלֶכִותָ  
כִּי רַבָּה דָּיָא  
וְכָל-הַנְּשָׁמָן  
וַתְּנִעַן יִקַּר לְבָעֵלָיו  
לְמִפְּדוֹל וְעַד-קָטָן  
וַיַּיְתַּבְּהַר הַרְבָּר  
בְּעֵנִי הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהַשָּׁרִים  
וַיַּעֲשֵׂה הַמֶּלֶךְ כִּדְבָּר מְמוּכָן  
וַיַּשְׁלַׁח סְפָרִים  
אֶל-כָּל-מְדִינּוֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ  
אֶל-מְדִינָה וּמְדִינָה כְּכֹתֶבֶת  
וְאֶל-עַם וְעַם כְּלִשְׁוֹנוֹ  
וְהַיּוֹתָה כָּל-אִישׁ  
שָׁרֵר בְּבִתּוֹ  
וּמְדִבָּר כָּל-שָׁוֹן עָמוֹ

ב

## Chapter 2

אַחֲרַ הַדְּבָרִים הָאֶלָּה  
כִּשְׁחַד חֲמַת  
הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחַשְׁוֶרֹשׁ  
זָכָר אֶת-וָשָׁתִי  
וְאַתָּה אֲשֶׁר-עָשָׂתָה  
וְאַתָּה אֲשֶׁר-גִּנְזַר עֲלֶיךָ

<sup>1</sup> After all this, when the anger subsided (*the anger of King Achashverosh*), he thought of Vashti and what she had done and what had been decided about her.

<sup>1</sup> Memuchan has a long speech, and it's a shame he can't give more practical advice.

<sup>2</sup> In my opinion, this probably refers to Memuchan, but it could refer to the king.

<sup>3</sup> “In the language of its people” (the local language) or “in the language of his people” (his own language).

<sup>2</sup> Then said the king's page-boys,<sup>1</sup>  
his personal servants,  
“Somebody get the king  
some pretty girls;<sup>2</sup>  
<sup>3</sup> let the king appoint officers  
in all the provinces of his kingdom  
to collect every girl  
who is pretty  
and bring her to the city of Shushan,  
to the harem, in charge of Hegeh,  
the king's eunuch, supervisor of the women,  
and give each one her cosmetics;<sup>3</sup>  
<sup>4</sup> and the girl who suits  
the king's fancy,<sup>4</sup>  
let her rule instead of Vashti.”

This plan pleased the king,  
so that's what he did.

וַיֹּאמֶר נְעָרִים הַמֶּלֶךְ  
מִשְׁרָתָיו  
וּבְקָשׁוּ לְמֶלֶךְ  
נְעָרוֹת בְּתַלְוֹת טֻבוֹת מֶלֶךְ  
וַיַּפְקַד הַמֶּלֶךְ פְּקִידִים  
בְּכָל־מִדְנִינָה מַלְכוֹתָה  
וַיַּקְבְּצּוּ אֶת־כָּל־נְעָרָה בְּתוּלָה  
טוֹבָת מֶלֶךְ  
אַל־שׁוֹשָׁן הַבִּירָה  
אַל־בֵּית הַנְּשִׁים אַל־יָד הָנָא  
סְרִיס הַמֶּלֶךְ שָׁמֵר הַנְּשִׁים  
וְנִתְנוּ תָּמְרוּקִיָּהוּ  
וְהַנְּעָרָה אֲשֶׁר תִּיטְבַּשׁ  
בְּעִינֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ  
הַמֶּלֶךְ בְּתַחַת נְשִׁתִּי  
וַיְיַצֵּב חֲדָבָר בְּעִינֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ  
וַיַּעֲשֵׂה כֵּן

Vayomru na'arei hamelech,  
meshartav,  
“Yevakshu lamelech  
ne'arot betulot tovot march,  
veyafked hamelech pekidim  
bechol medinot mal'chuto  
veyikbetzu et kol na'arah vetulah  
tovat mareh  
el Shushan habirah,  
el beit hanashim el yad Hegeh  
seris hamelech, shomer hanashim,  
venaton tamrukeihen,  
vehana'arah asher titav  
be'einei hamelech  
timloch tachat Vashti.”

vayitav hadavar be'einei hamelech,  
vaya'as ken.

ס

<sup>1</sup> The Hebrew root נָעַר usually means something like lad or young man, but in this context it may well refer to servants or court-appointed pages or page boys. I'd guess that they were probably thought too young to interfere with the women. Such trappings of royalty retain seductive appeal even for leaders in a democratic republic, so the U.S. has its Congressional Page Program, and the first Senate page was a nine-year-old boy named Grafton Hanson. Another servant in a royal household was a groom; this too might be a young male servant. In the time of Henry VIII, the Groom of the Stool had menial tasks but immense influence since he was with his majesty at the most private times (to pooh-pooh the proposals of rival courtiers).

<sup>2</sup> Or “pretty virgins,” probably unmarried girls (assuming the king would not steal someone's wife).

<sup>3</sup> This may have been something to scrub with in the bathhouse, soap or a brush.

<sup>4</sup> “The girl who is good in the eyes of the king.”

<sup>5</sup> There was a Jewish man in the city of Shushan; his name was Mordochai, son of Ya'ir, son of Shimi, son of Kish, a man of integrity,

<sup>6</sup> who was exiled from Jerusalem with the exile driven out with Yechonyah king of Judah<sup>2</sup> whom Nevuchadnetzar exiled, king of Babylon.

<sup>7</sup> He was Hadasah's guardian—that's Ester, his uncle's daughter—for she had no mother or father, and this girl had a lovely figure and was pretty *too*.

When her father and mother died,  
Mordochai had taken her as his *own* daughter.

<sup>8</sup> When the news got around  
of the king's proclamation and commandment,<sup>3</sup>  
when lots of girls were collected  
to the city of Shushan  
in charge of Hegai,<sup>4</sup>

Ester was taken to the king's quarters in charge of Hegai, who supervised the

אִישׁ יְהוּדִי הָיָה	Ish Yehudi hayah
בֶּשְׁוּשָׁן הַבִּירָה	beShushan habirah,
וְשֵׁמוֹ מְרֹדְכָּי	ushemo Mordochai,
בֶּן יָאִיר בֶּן שִׁימָעִי	ben Ya'ir ben Shimi
בֶּן קִישׁ אִישׁ יְמִינִי	ben Kish, ish yemini

אֲשֶׁר הִנֵּה מִירוּשָׁלָם	Asher hoglah mIrushalayim
עַמְּדָה גָּלָה אֲשֶׁר הִנֵּה תָּה	im hagolah asher hogletah
עַמְּ יְבִנָה מֶלֶךְ יְהוּדָה	im Yechoniyah melech Yehudah,
אֲשֶׁר הִנֵּה נָבוּכְדְּנָאָר	asher heglah Nevuchadnetzar,
מֶלֶךְ בָּבֶל	melech Bavel.

וַיֹּאמֶן אַתְּ בְּרִרְפָּה  
הִיא אָסָתָר בְּתְדָדוֹ  
כִּי אִין לְהָאָב וְאָם  
וְהַנְּעָרָה יִפְתַּח תְּאֵר  
וְטוּבָת מִרְאָת

ובְּמֹת אָבִיכָה וְאָמֵה  
לְקַחַת מְרֹדְכַי לֹו לְבָת

וַיְהִי בַּהֲשִׁמָּעָה  
דְּבָרַרְתָּ הַמֶּלֶךְ וְדָתוֹ  
וּבְהַקְבִּץ נְשָׂרוֹת רְבָות  
אֶל־שָׁוֹשָׁן הַבִּירָה  
אֶל־יָד הַגֵּי

וַתַּלְקֹחַ אֶسְתֵּר אֶל-בֵּית הַמֶּלֶךְ  
אֶל-יָד הַנִּי שָׁמֵר הַנְּשָׁמָה vatilakach Ester el beit hamelech,  
el yad Hegai, shomer hanashim.

<sup>1</sup> The congregation says this verse, and the leader repeats it.

<sup>2</sup> Or Yehoyachin, exiled to Babylon in 597 BCE.

<sup>3</sup> “And it came to pass when there was heard the matter of the king and his commandment ...”

<sup>4</sup> In verse 3 it's Hegeh, either a different eunuch with almost the same name, or the same person with a slightly different name, like Jim and Jimbo.

<sup>9</sup> Hegai favored this girl,<sup>1</sup> Ester, and she earned his kindness;<sup>2</sup> right away, her cosmetics and *other* supplies he gave her,<sup>3</sup> along with the seven suitable *servant* girls to be assigned to her<sup>4</sup> from the king's quarters; he singled out<sup>5</sup> her and her maids for the best *treatment* in the harem.

<sup>10</sup> Ester didn't mention her people and her lineage since Mordochai had instructed her not to say anything *about it*.

<sup>11</sup> Every day, Mordochai would stroll in front of the harem's plaza<sup>6</sup> to find out how Ester was, and what was happening to her.

וְקִיטָּב הַנְּעָרָה בְּעִינֵּי  
וְתִשְׁאַחֲסֵד לְפִנֵּי  
וַיַּבְהֵל אֶת-תִּמְרֹוקְתָּה  
וְאֶת-מְנוּתָה לְתַתְּלָה  
וְאֶת שֶׁבַע הַנְּעָרֹות הָרָאִות  
לְתַתְּלָה  
מִבֵּית הַמֶּלֶךְ  
וַיָּשָׁנֵה וְאֶת-גַּעֲרוֹתָה  
לְטוֹב בֵּית הַנְּשִׁים  
לְאֶת-גִּנְדָּה אֶסְתֵּר  
אֶת-עַמָּה וְאֶת-מְוִילָתָה  
כִּי מְרֹדְכָּי צָוָה עַלְיָה  
אֲשֶׁר לְאַתָּנִיד  
וּבְכָל-יּוֹם וּלֹטֶם  
מְרֹדְכָּי מִתְהַלֵּךְ  
לְפָנֵי חַצֵּר בֵּית-הַנְּשִׁים  
לְדַעַת אֶת-שְׁלֹום אֶסְתֵּר  
וּמְה-יִעַשֶּׂה בָּה

Vatitav hana'arah be'einav,  
vatisah chesed lefanav;  
vayevahel et tamrukeha  
ve'et manoteha latet lah,  
ve'et sheva hane'arot hare'uyot  
latet lah  
mibeit hamelech;  
vayeshaneha ve'et na'aroteha  
letov beit hanashim.  
Lo higidah Ester  
et amah ve'et molad'tah,  
ki Mordochai tzivah aleha  
asher lo tagid.  
Uvechol yom vayom,  
Mordochai mit'halech  
lifnei chatzar beit hanashim  
lada'at et shelom Ester  
umah ye'aseh bah.

<sup>1</sup> “And the girl was good in his eyes”; i.e., he liked her.

<sup>2</sup> “And she carried grace in his presence.”

<sup>3</sup> “And he hurried, her cosmetics and portions to give her.” For other girls, he might drag his feet.

<sup>4</sup> “To give to her”; presumably each of the candidate girls was given an entourage of seven maids from the harem. The number of women in the harem must have been huge, so I hope we're all impressed by the king's wealth, though not by his treatment of women.

<sup>5</sup> “He gave her different treatment.”

<sup>6</sup> חַצֵּר can mean a courtyard or open space, so it might have been a courtyard inside the harem gate or a plaza outside the gate.

<sup>12</sup> As each girl got her turn<sup>1</sup> to visit King Achashverosh— after she had (by women's custom) twelve months *to prepare*— this is how *they* completed their period of cosmetic *preparations*: six months with myrrh oil and six months of spices and women's cosmetics,<sup>2</sup>

<sup>13</sup> and with this *outfit* would the girl come to the king— with anything she specified; it would be given to accompany her from the harem to the king's quarters.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>14</sup> At evening she would come and in the morning she would return to the second harem supervised by Sha'ashgaz the king's eunuch, supervisor of the *king's* mistresses.<sup>4</sup> She would never come to the king again unless the king wanted her and she was mentioned by name.

וְבַהֲגִיעַ תָּרַגְנֵלָה וְגַעֲלָה  
 לְבָוָא | אֶל-הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶחָשְׁוֹרֶשׁ  
 מִקְצֵה הַיּוֹם לְהַכְּרִת הַנְּשָׁמָה  
 שְׁנִים עָשָׂר חֶדְשָׁת  
 כַּי כָּנוּ יִמְלָאוּ  
 יְמֵי מַרְוקִיָּה  
 שְׁשָׁה חֶדְשִׁים בְּשָׁמְןָה הַמֶּרְכָּז  
 וְשְׁשָׁה חֶדְשִׁים בְּבָשְׁלִים  
 וּבְתַמְרוּקִי הַנְּשָׁמָה  
 וּבְכָה הַנְּעָרָה  
 בְּאָה אֶל-הַמֶּלֶךְ  
 אָהָ כָּל-אֲשֶׁר תָּמַר  
 יִנְתַּן לְהָ לְבָוָא עַמָּה  
 מִבֵּית הַנְּשָׁמָה עַד-בֵּית הַמֶּלֶךְ  
 בְּעֶרֶב | קֵיא בָּאָה  
 וּבְבָקֵר קֵיא שָׁבָה  
 אֶל-בֵּית הַנְּשָׁמָה שְׁנִי  
 אֶל-יָד שְׁעַשְׁנִי  
 סְרִיס הַמֶּלֶךְ  
 שְׁמָר הַפִּילָגְשִׁים  
 לְאָחָבָה עוֹד אֶל-הַמֶּלֶךְ  
 כַּי אִם-חָפֵץ בָּהּ הַמֶּלֶךְ  
 וּנְקָרָאת בָּשָׁמָה

Uvehagi'ah tor na'arah vena'arah  
 lavo el hamelech Achashverosh  
 (miketz heyot lah, kedad hanashim,  
 shneim asar chodesh),  
 ki ken yimle'u  
 yemei merukeihen:  
 shishah chodashim beshemen hamor  
 veshishah chodashim bab'samim  
 uvetamrukei hanashim,  
 uvazeh hana'arah  
 ba'ah el hamelech—  
 et kol asher tomar  
 yinaten lah lavo imah  
 mibeit hanashim ad beit hamelech.  
 Ba'erev hi va'ah  
 uvaboker hi shavah  
 el beit hanashim sheni  
 el yad Sha'ashgaz  
 seris hamelech,  
 shomer hapilagshim.  
 Lo tavo od el hamelech  
 ki im chafetz bah hamelech  
 venikre'ah veshem.

<sup>1</sup> “And when it arrived, the turn of *one* girl and *another* girl.”

<sup>2</sup> Imagine how some of these pretty country girls smelled when they arrived, if it took a year to spice them up!

<sup>3</sup> Each candidate could ask for any fancy outfit or jewelry or cosmetics for her interview with the king.

<sup>4</sup> Presumably a mistress (or concubine, from con+cubare, “lie with”) was a woman reserved for the king, not a wife but not free to marry anyone else. He kept virgins in one harem and maintained a separate harem for the deflowered. One can admire his wealth if not his humanity (perhaps he's better than Shahryar of the Arabian Nights, who executed each virgin after his night with her).

<sup>15</sup> When the time came for Ester (the daughter of Avichayil, Mordochai's uncle, whom he had taken as his daughter) to visit the king, she asked for nothing except whatever Hegai advised (the king's eunuch, women's supervisor); but Ester carried the goodwill of all who saw her.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Ester was brought to king Achashverosh, to his royal quarters, in the tenth month, the month of Tevet, in the seventh year of his reign.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>17</sup> The king loved Ester more than all the *other* women; she enjoyed his grace and kindness, more than any of the *other* girls; he placed the royal crown on her head and made her queen instead of Vashti.

<sup>18</sup> The king arranged a huge drinking binge for all his chiefs and servants—Ester's Drinking Binge; he declared a holiday in the provinces and distributed gifts as *only* the king could.<sup>3</sup>

וְבָהַנִּיעַ תָּרַא אֲסֵתֶר  
בַּת אַבְיכַּיִל רֵד מְרוֹדוֹכָאֵל  
אֲשֶׁר לְקַח־לָו לְבָת  
לְבָוָא אֶל־הַמֶּלֶךְ  
לֹא בְּקַשָּׁה דָּבָר  
כִּי אִם אֲתָא־אֲשֶׁר יֹאמֶר הָנִי  
סְרִיס־הַמֶּלֶךְ שְׁמַר הַנְּשָׁאָת חָנָן  
וְתַחֲנִין אֲסֵתֶר נֹשֶׁת חָנָן  
בְּעִינֵי כָּל־רַאֲיהָ  
וְתַחֲלִיךְ אֲסֵתֶר  
אֶל־הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶחָשְׁוֶרֶשׁ  
אֶל־בֵּית מְלָכָתוֹ  
בְּחַדְשָׁה עֲשִׂירִי  
הַוְּאֶתְרָדָשׁ טָבָת  
בְּשַׁנְתַּר־שְׁבָעׁ לְמֶלֶכְתוֹ  
וַיַּאֲהַב הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶת אֲסֵתֶר  
מִכָּל־הַנְּשָׁאָת  
וְחַשְׁאָתָן וְחַסְדָּה לְפָנָיו  
מִכָּל־הַבְּתוּלָה  
וַיַּשְׂמַח כָּתֶר־מְלָכָות בְּרָאָשָׁה  
וַיִּמְלִיכֵה פְּתַתְּחָת וְשָׁקֵי  
וַיַּעֲשֵׂה הַמֶּלֶךְ מִשְׁתָּחָת וְגֹדֵל  
לְכָל־שָׂרֵי וְעַבְרָיו  
אֶת מִשְׁתָּחָת אֲסֵתֶר  
וְהַנְּחָה לְמִרְגִּינּוֹת עָשָׂה  
וַיִּתְן מִשְׁאָת כַּיְד הַמֶּלֶךְ

Uvehigi'ah tor Ester  
bat Avichayil dod Mordochai  
asher lakach lo levat  
lavo el hamelech,  
lo vikshah davar  
ki im et asher yomar Hegai,  
seris hamelech, shomer hanashim,  
vat'hi Ester noset chen  
be'enei kol ro'eha.  
Vatilakach Ester  
el hamelech Achashverosh  
el beit mal'chuto  
bachodesh ha'asiri,  
hu chodesh Tevet,  
bshnat sheva lemal'chuto.  
Vaye'ehav hamelech et Ester  
mikol hanashim;  
vatisah chen vachesed lefanav  
mikol habtulot;  
vayasem keter mal'chut beroshah  
vayamlicheha tachat Vashti.  
Vaya'as hamelech mishteh gadol  
lechol sarav va'avadav,  
et Mishteh Ester,  
vahanachah lamdinot asah,  
vayitem maset keyad hamelech.

<sup>1</sup> “And Ester was carrying grace in the eyes of all who saw her.”

<sup>2</sup> The banquet at which Vashti fell from grace was in the king's third year (1:3).

<sup>3</sup> something to carry, perhaps like a goody bag; “according to the power of the king.”

<sup>19</sup> When the girls were assembled again<sup>1</sup> and Mordochai was in position by the palace gate,<sup>2</sup>

<sup>20</sup> even then Ester didn't declare her lineage or her people as Mordochai instructed her, and Ester acted on Mordochai's advice just as when he was her guardian.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>21</sup> At that time, Mordochai would stay by the palace gate; Bigtan<sup>4</sup> and Teresh got angry, two of the king's eunuchs, entrance guards; they wanted to lay a hand on King Achashverosh, to kill him.

<sup>22</sup> The plot became known to Mordochai, who told Ester the queen, and Queen Ester told the king, giving credit to Mordochai.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>23</sup> The matter was investigated and discovered, the two of them hanged on a wood gallows,<sup>6</sup> and the incident recorded in the chronicle book in the king's presence.

וְבַהֲקֵבֵץ בְּתוּלֹת שְׁנִיָּה  
וּמְרֹדְכָּי יוֹשֵׁב  
בְּשַׁעֲרֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ  
אֵין אָסָלָר מִנְדָּה  
מוֹלַדְתָּה וְאֵת עַמָּה  
כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה עַלְיהָ מְרֹדְכָּי  
וְאֵת דִּמְאָמָר מְרֹדְכָּי אָסָלָר עַשְׂתָּה  
כַּאֲשֶׁר הִיְתָה בְּאִמְנָה אָתָה

ס

בִּימִים הַהֵם  
וּמְרֹדְכָּי יוֹשֵׁב  
בְּשַׁעֲרֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ  
קָצָף בְּגֹנְן וְתָרֵשׁ  
שְׁנֵי סָרִיסִי הַפְּלָקָר  
מִשְׁׁמָרִי הַסְּפָר  
וַיַּבְקַשׁ לְשִׁלְחָה יְדָךְ  
בְּמַלְךְ אֲחַשְׁוּרָשׁ  
וַיַּנוֹּעַ הַקָּבָר לְמְרֹדְכָּי  
וַיַּגַּד לְאָסָלָר הַמֶּלֶךְ  
וַתַּחֲמַר אָסָלָר לְמַלְךְ  
בְּשֵׁם מְרֹדְכָּי  
וַיַּבְקַשׁ הַקָּבָר וַיִּמְצָא  
וַיַּתְלִל שְׁנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ עַל־עַץ  
וַיַּכְתֵּב בְּסֶפֶר דְּבָרֵי הַיּוֹם  
לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ

ב

<sup>1</sup> Why were the girls gathered a second time? Maybe to tell them that Ester was the winner.

<sup>2</sup> “The king's gate,” presumably outside the entrance to the king's quarters.

<sup>3</sup> “As when she was in guardianship with him,” before she left his household to try out for the queen's job.

<sup>4</sup> Maybe this is the Bigta of 1:10, a prominent leader.

<sup>5</sup> “In the name of Mordochai.”

<sup>6</sup> Some translators think people were impaled on a spike rather than hanged on a gallows as punishment.

<sup>1</sup> After all this  
King Achashverosh raised  
Haman<sup>1</sup> son of Hamdata the Agagite,<sup>2</sup>  
promoted him, and placed his rank  
above all the *provincial* chiefs  
who had *governed* with him.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> All the king's subjects  
at the palace gate  
would bow and prostrate themselves  
before Haman,  
for so had the king commanded *them*;  
but Mordochai would neither bow  
nor prostrate himself.

<sup>3</sup> The king's servants said  
(*the servants* at the palace gate)  
to Mordochai,  
“Why do you flout  
the king's command?”

<sup>4</sup> As they spoke to him day after day  
but he didn't listen to them,  
they told Haman *about* Mordochai;  
*they wanted* to see  
if Mordochai's position would last.  
He had told them he was Jewish.<sup>4</sup>

### Chapter 3

אַחֲרֵי הַדְּבָרִים הָאֶלְהָה  
גַּדֵּל הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחַשְׁוֹרֹשׁ  
אֶת-הָמָן בֶּן-הַמֶּלֶךְ הָאָגָּגִי  
וַיַּגְשֵׁאָהוּ וַיַּשְׁם אֶת-כָּסָאָו  
מְעַל כָּל-הַשָּׂרִים  
אֲשֶׁר אָתָּו  
וְכָל-עַבְדֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ  
אֲשֶׁר-בַּשְׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ  
כְּרֻעִים וּמִשְׁתְּחוּם  
לְהָמָן  
כִּי-כֵן אָזְהָלָו הַמֶּלֶךְ  
וּמְרַדְּכֵי לֹא יְכַרְעַ  
וְלֹא יִשְׁתַּחַווּ  
וַיָּמְרֹר עַבְדֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ  
לְמַרְדּוֹכָי  
מִדּוּעַ אַתָּה עֹזֶב  
אֶת-מִצְוֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ  
וַיֹּהֵי כְּאָמָרָם אֶלָּיו יוֹם וָיּוֹם  
וְלֹא שָׁמַע אֶל-הָם  
וַיַּגְעִיד לְהָמָן  
לְרֹאֹת  
הַנּוּמָדָר דְּבָרֵי מַרְדּוֹכָי  
כִּי-הָנִיד לְהָם אֲשֶׁר-הָוּ יְהוּדִי

Achar hadvarim ha'eleh  
gidal hamelech Achashverosh  
et Haman ben Hamdata ha'Agagi,  
vayenasehu, vayasem et kiso  
me'al kol hasarim  
asher ito.  
Vechol avdei hamelech  
asher besha'ar hamelech  
kor'im umishtachavim  
leHaman,  
ki chen tzivah lo hamelech;  
uMordochai lo yichrah  
velo yishtachaveh.  
Vayomru avdei hamelech  
asher besha'ar hamelech  
leMordochai,  
“Madu'ah atah over  
et mitzvat hamelech.”  
Vayehi ke'omram elav yom vayom  
velo shamah aleihem,  
vayagidu leHaman  
lir'ot  
haya'amdu divrei Mordochai  
ki hu higid lahem asher hu Yehudi.

<sup>1</sup> Haman's not mentioned as one of the king's close advisors in 1:10. We'll find out that he has a family, which should have disqualified him from any position of royal trust; see Rule 1 on page 2.

<sup>2</sup> Presumably descended from Agag, the Amalekite king. Saul failed to kill him, so Samuel did it (1 Samuel 15).

<sup>3</sup> “Lifted/supported him and set his seat/throne/rank above all the chiefs that had been with him.”

<sup>4</sup> Since he was Jewish, it seems, they knew he couldn't assume a position of worship before a human.

<sup>5</sup> A manuscript has **בְּאָמָרָם**; the difference in meaning is too subtle for me.

<sup>5</sup> Haman realized that Mordochai would not bow nor prostrate himself before him, and Haman became filled with fury.

<sup>6</sup> He scorned to strike Mordochai alone: since he'd been told Mordochai's people, Haman sought to destroy all the Jews anywhere in Achasverosh' realm, Mordochai's *entire* people.

<sup>7</sup> In the first month, the month of Nisan, in the twelfth year of King Achashverosh' *reign*, a "Pur" was cast (that's a *kind of* die)<sup>2</sup> before Haman *to check* day after day and month after month, *until they settled on* month twelve, the month of Adar.

וַיַּרְא הָמָן כִּי־אֵין מְרֹדֶבֶל  
בְּרִיעַ וּמִשְׁתַּחַווֹתָה לֹא  
וַיַּמְלֹא הָמָן חֶמֶת  
וַיַּבְוֹא בְּעִזּוֹן לְשַׁלְחָה יָד  
בְּמְרֹדֶבֶל לְבָדוֹן  
כַּי־הָנִינְדוּ לֹא אַתְּ עַם מְרֹדֶבֶל  
וַיַּבְקַשׁ הָמָן לְהַשְׁמִיד  
אֶת־כָּל־הָיִהוּדִים  
אֲשֶׁר בְּכָל־מִלְכּוֹת אַחֲשְׁוֹרוֹשׁ  
עַם מְרֹדֶבֶל  
בְּחַדְשָׁה הָרָאשׁוֹן  
הַוְאָדָחָדָשׁ נִיְסָן  
בְּשִׁנְתָּה שְׁתִים עֶשֶׂרָה  
לְפָלָךְ אַחֲשְׁוֹרוֹשׁ  
הַפִּילְבּוֹר הָוָא הַגּוֹרָל  
לְפָנֵי הָמָן  
מִיּוֹם | לִיּוֹם  
וְמִחְדֵשׁ לְחַדְשָׁה  
שְׁנַנִּים־עַשֶּׂר הַוְאָדָחָדָשׁ אֲדָר

Vayar Haman ki ein Mordochai kore'ah umishtachaveh lo, vayimaleh Haman chemah. Vayivez be'einav lishloch yad beMordochai levado ki higidu lo et am Mordochai, vayevakesh Haman lehashmid et kol haYehudim asher bechol mal'chut Achasverosh, am Mordochai. Bachodesh harishon, hu chodesh Nisan, bishnat shtem esreh lamelech Achashverosh, hipil Pur (hu hagoral) lifnei Haman miyom leyom umechodesh lechodesh, shneim asar, hu chodesh Adar.

ס

<sup>1</sup> לְשַׁלְחָה looks like it should be לְשַׁלְחָה, but the Leningrad Codex copyist wrote לְשַׁלְחָה.

<sup>2</sup> Presumably "Pur" is a Persian term for divination by throwing down (casting) some special object (such as a die), and this is the method Haman used to determine an auspicious day for his plan. I assume that Jews would be familiar with gambling equipment such as dice but would never admit familiarity with divination equipment.

<sup>8</sup> Haman told King Achasverosh, “There is one people scattered and dispersed among the peoples in all the provinces of your realm with different laws than all other people. They don’t follow the king’s laws, so it’s not right for the king to leave them *in peace*.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>9</sup> If the king approves, let it be in writing: *a decree* to destroy them. And ten thousand talents<sup>2</sup> of silver I’ll weigh out for the administrative officers<sup>3</sup> to bring to the king’s treasuries.

<sup>10</sup> The king took his ring off his hand and gave it to Haman, son of Hamdata the Agagite, the Jews’ enemy.

<sup>11</sup> The king said to Haman, “The silver is yours, and that people, to do with them as you see fit.”<sup>4</sup>

וַיֹּאמֶר הָמָן  
**לַמְלֶךְ אַחֲשְׁוֹרֹשׁ**  
 יְשִׁנָּנוּ עַם־אֶחָד  
**מְפָרָר וּמְפָרָר**  
**בֵּין הָעָמִים**  
**בְּכָל מְדִינּוֹת מַלְכּוֹתָךְ**  
**וְרַחֲיוֹתָם שְׁנָוֹת מִכְלָעָם**  
**וְאַתְּ־רַקֵּת הַמֶּלֶךְ אַיִּם עֲשִׂים**  
**וְלַמְלֶךְ אַיִּשְׁשָׂה**  
**לְהַנִּיחָם**  
**אִם־עַל־הַמֶּלֶךְ טָוב**  
**וְכִחְבֵּב אֶפְרָם**  
**וְעַשְׁרַת אֶלְפִּים כְּפֶרֶ-כֶּסֶף**  
**אַשְׁקָוֹל**  
**עַל־יְהִי עָשֵׂי הַמֶּלֶךְ**  
**לְהַבְּיאָא אֶל־גִּנְזֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ**  
**וַיִּסְרֵר הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶת־טְבַעַתּוֹ מַעַל יָדוֹ**  
**וְיוֹתָה לְהַמְּנוֹ בְּרַהֲמֶרֶחָ**  
**הָאָנוֹן צָרֵר הַיְהוּדִים**  
**וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ לְהַמְּנוֹ**  
**תְּכָסֵף נָתַן לְךָ וְתַּחַטֵּם**  
**לְעַשְׂוֹת בָּו כְּטוּב בְּעִנִּיקָה**

Vayomer Haman  
 lamelech Achashverosh,  
 “Yeshno am echad  
 mefuzar umeforad  
 bein ha’amim  
 bechol medinot mal’chutecha,  
 vedateihem shonot mikol am,  
 ve’et datei hamelech einam osim,  
 velamelech ein shoveh  
 lehanicham.  
 Im al hamelech tov  
 yikatev le’abdam,  
 va’aseret alafim kikar kesef  
 eshkol  
 al yedei osei hamlachah  
 lehavi el ginzei hamelech.  
 Vayasar hamelech et tabato me’al yado  
 vayitnah leHaman ben Hamdata  
 ha’Agagi, tzorer haYehudim.  
 Vayomer hamelech leHaman,  
 “Hakesef natun lach veva’am,  
 la’asot bo katov be’einecha.”

<sup>1</sup> “And for the king it’s not doing the level thing to leave them *in peace*.”

<sup>2</sup> A talent of silver is variously valued at nine man-years of skilled work; the weight of a person; enough to pay a trireme crew of 200 men for a month, or about 30 kilograms. That’s a lot of precious metal.

<sup>3</sup> “Over the hands of those who perform the creative activity”; into the charge of those who do the actual work (of weighing out all that silver), or into the charge of those who do any kind of work for the state.

<sup>4</sup> “The silver is given to you (i.e., don’t put the silver in my treasuries but use it as you see fit), and the *Jewish* people, to do with it as *is* good in your eyes.”

<sup>12</sup> The king's scribes were summoned in the first month, on its thirteenth day, and all Haman's instructions were written to the king's premiers and governors<sup>1</sup>

who administered every province, to the chiefs of all the peoples, to every province in its *local* script and every people in their language, in the name of King Achashverosh, written and sealed with the king's ring.

<sup>13</sup> Letters were sent by courier<sup>2</sup> to all the king's provinces *with instructions* to destroy, murder and annihilate every Jew, young and old, babies and women, on a single day, the thirteenth *day* of the twelfth month—that's the month of Adar—and to ransack *their homes*<sup>3</sup> for plunder.

<sup>14</sup> A copy of the written *decree* was to be presented as law in every province, publicized to everybody,<sup>4</sup> so they would be ready for the day.

וַיָּקָרְאָוּ סִפְרֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ  
בְּחַדְשֵׁשׁ הַרְאָשׁוֹן  
בְּשֶׁלְשׁוֹנָה עֲשֵׂר יוֹם בּוֹ  
וַיַּכְתִּבְכָּל אֲשֶׁר-צִוָּה הַמֶּן  
אֶל אַחַשְׁדָרְפּוֹנְיַהְמֶלֶךְ  
וְאֶל-הַחֲפֹחוֹת  
אֲשֶׁר | עַל-מִדְיָנָה וּמִדְיָנָה  
וְאֶל-שְׂרֵי עַם וְעַם  
מִדְיָנָה וּמִדְיָנָה בְּכִתְבָּה  
וְעַם וְעַם כְּלִשּׁוֹנוֹ  
בְּשֵׁם הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחַשְׁוֹרֶשׁ  
נִכְתֵּב וּנִחְתַּמֵּם בְּטַבַּעַת הַמֶּלֶךְ  
וְנִשְׁלֹחוּ סִפְרִים בַּנְּקָרְאָם  
אֶל-כָּל-מִדְיָנּוֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ  
לְהַשְׁמֵיד לְהַרְגֵּן וְלַאֲבֹד  
אֶת-כָּל-הָיּוֹדִים  
מִנְעָר וְעַד-זָקֵן טָרֵף וּנוֹשִׁים  
בְּיּוֹם אֶחָד בְּשֶׁלְשׁוֹנָה עֲשֵׂר  
לְחַדֵּשׁ שְׁנִים-עֲשֵׂר  
הַוְאָדָר  
וְשְׁלָלָם לְבּוֹ  
פְּתַחְשָׁוֹן הַכְּתָב  
לְהַגְּתָן דָּת  
בְּכָל-מִדְיָנָה וּמִדְיָנָה  
גָּלוּי לְכָל-הָעָםִים  
לְהִיּוֹת עֲתָדִים לִיּוֹם הַזֶּה

<sup>1</sup> The word for premier isn't Hebrew; it's related to satrap (see the SH-D-R-P?), a Persian provincial leader. The word for governor might be Persian too, meaning a lesser leader than the premier. (In modern Hebrew this word means "less," though this may simply be a linguistic coincidence.)

<sup>2</sup> "runners"

<sup>3</sup> "to ransack them"; i.e., everyone had permission to kill the Jews and take all their stuff.

<sup>4</sup> "to all the peoples."

<sup>15</sup> The couriers were hurried away<sup>1</sup> on the king's business; the new law was presented in the city of Shushan, while Haman and the king set to drinking, but the city of Shushan was at a loss.<sup>2</sup>

הָרְצִים יָצָאוּ דְּחֻפִים  
בְּדָבָר הַמֶּלֶךְ  
וְהַדָּת נִתְנָה  
בְּשֻׁשָׁן הַבִּירָה  
וְהַמֶּלֶךְ וְהָמָן יָשַׁבּוּ לְשִׁתּוֹת  
וְהַעֲיר שִׁוְעָן נִבּוֹכָה

ב

## Chapter 4

<sup>1</sup> Mordochai knew all that was happening; Mordochai tore his clothes *in mourning* and put on sack cloth and ashes; he went into the center of the city and cried out with a great and bitter cry.

<sup>2</sup> He reached the palace gate, though nobody was *allowed* to come to the palace gate dressed in sack cloth.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> In every province, *any* place where the king's mission and rule could reach, the Jews were plunged into mourning,<sup>4</sup> fasting, weeping and wailing;<sup>5</sup> sackcloth and ashes were laid out for all.

וּמְרֹדֶכַי יָדָע  
אֶת־כָּל אֲשֶׁר נִעֶשָּׂה  
וַיַּקְרַב מְרֹדֶכַי אֶת־בְּנֵי  
וַיַּלְבַּשׁ שָׂק וְאֶפְרַע  
וַיַּצֵּא בְּתוֹךְ הָעִיר  
וַיַּזְעַק זָעַקה גָּדוֹלָה וּמָרָה  
וַיַּבָּא עד לִפְנֵי שַׁעַר־הַמֶּלֶךְ  
כִּי אֵין לְבֹיא  
אֶל־שַׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ בְּלִבּוּשׁ שָׂק  
וּבְכָל־מִדְיָנָה וּמִדְיָנִיתָה  
מָקוֹם אֲשֶׁר  
דְּבָרַת־הַמֶּלֶךְ וְרָתָן מִגְעָן  
אֲכָל גָּדוֹל לִיְהוּדִים  
וְצָוָם וּבְכִי וּמִסְפָּדָה  
שָׂק וְאֶפְרַע יִצְעַל לְרָבִים

<sup>1</sup> They left on this mission “pressed/dechufim”

<sup>2</sup> The word *בָּוֹכָה* isn't common. Its root is used in Ex 14:3, where the Egyptians are tricked into thinking the Hebrews are “lost” in the desert. It's in the title of Maimonides' *Guide for the Perplexed* (Moreh Nevuchim).

<sup>3</sup> Officially, everyone was supposed to be happy and prosperous so the king could congratulate himself on his wise and beneficent method of ruling.

<sup>4</sup> “*There was* great mourning for the Jews.”

<sup>5</sup> Today, the word *מִסְפָּדָה* is associated with funeral eulogies, so it can mean lamentation and wailing.

<sup>4</sup> Ester's maidservants came, with her eunuchs, and they told her *the news*<sup>1</sup>. The queen was shaken, horrified,<sup>2</sup> and sent garments to clothe Mordochai and get his sack cloth off him, but he didn't accept it.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>5</sup> So Ester called for Hatach, one of the king's eunuchs whom he had assigned to *serve her* and instructed him regarding Mordochai to find out, "What is this, why is this?"

<sup>6</sup> Hatach went out to Mordochai, to the town square in front of the palace gate.

<sup>7</sup> Mordochai told him all that had happened to him and the whole story<sup>5</sup> of the silver that Haman had promised to deposit into the king's treasuries for destroying the Jews.<sup>6</sup>

וְתַבּוֹאֵנָה<sup>3</sup> נְעָרֹת אֶسְתֵּר וְסִרְיִסְתָּה<sup>4</sup> נִיְגִידָה לְהָ וְתַחַתְּחַלְלָה הַמְּלָכָה מֵאָד וְתַשְׁלִיחָה בְּנָדִים לְהַלְבִּישָׁ אֶת-מְרָכָבִי וְלְהַסִּיר שָׁקוֹ מַעַלְיוֹ וְלֹא קָבֵל וְתַקְרָא אֶסְתֵּר לְהַחַד מִסְרִיסִי הַמְּלָכָה אֲשֶׁר הַעֲמִיד לְפָנָה וְתַצְוָהוּ עַל-מְרָכָבִי לְדָעַת מַה-זֶּה וְעַל-מַה-זֶּה וְנִצְאָה הַחַד אֶל-מְרָכָבִי אֶל-רְחֹוב הַשָּׁעָר אֲשֶׁר לְבַנֵּי שָׁעַר-הַמְּלָכָה וַיַּגְדִּלָּו מְרָכָבִי אֶת כָּל-אֲשֶׁר קָרָהוּ וְאֵת פָּרָשַׁת הַכָּסֶף אֲשֶׁר אָמַר חָמָן לְשִׁקְוֹל עַל-גִּנְזֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ בִּיהָוִידִים<sup>7</sup> לְאָבָדָם

<sup>1</sup> They probably said, "Guess what, your majesty: that fellow Mordochai is out there in sack cloth. Boy, is he going to be in trouble!" They might not bother to mention that all the Jews were to be killed, because they had no reason to think this regulation would affect her.

<sup>2</sup> <sup>לְחַל</sup>—the root is **חַל**, meaning tremble, and it's doubled for intensity, and reflexive to suggest that it's an internal, emotional reaction: "The queen shuddered-shuddered-herself very much."

<sup>3</sup> The word is spelled with an extra letter **וְ**, **וְתַבּוֹאֵנָה**.

<sup>4</sup> She thinks Mordochai needs clothes and doesn't realize why he's chosen to wear mourning.

<sup>5</sup> Or "the exact amount" or "the explanation."

<sup>6</sup> "Regarding the Jews, to destroy them."

<sup>7</sup> A manuscript would spell this word in an unusual manner, **בִּיהָוִידִים**

<sup>8</sup> The copy of the legal decree to destroy them, proclaimed in Shushan, Mordochai gave Hatach to show Ester, so Hatach could tell her—direct her—to go to the king to beg him for mercy and plead with him for her people.

<sup>9</sup> Hatach went and told Ester what Mordochai said.

<sup>10</sup> Ester spoke to Hatach and directed him to *explain* to Mordochai:

<sup>11</sup> “All the king’s servants and people in the king’s provinces know that any man or woman who wants to come to the king, to the inner courtyard, and has not been summoned is liable to the sentence of death<sup>1</sup> unless the king extends to him the golden scepter: then he can live. I haven’t been summoned to visit the king for the last thirty days.”

<sup>12</sup> Mordochai was told what Ester had said.

וְאַתָּה-פְּתַשְׁגֵּן כְּתָבְ-הַדָּקָת  
 אֲשֶׁר-נִתְן בְּשׁוֹשָׁן לְהַשְׁמִידָם  
 נִתְן לֹו  
 לְהַרְאֹת אֶת-אָסְתָּר  
 וְלֹהֲנִיד לְהָ וְלֹצְנֹוֹת עַלְיָה  
 לְבָבָא אֶל-הַמֶּלֶךְ לְהַתְחִנּוּלָו  
 וְלֹבָקֵש מִלְפָנָיו עַל-עַמָּתָה  
 וְיַבְּוֹא תְּהָהָ נִינְד לְאָסְתָּר  
 אֲתָה דְּבָרֵי מְרֻדָּכָי  
 וְנִתְּאַמֵּר אָסְתָּר לְהַדָּקָת  
 וְחַצְוֹהוּ אֶל-מְרֻדָּכָי  
 כָּל-עַבְדֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ  
 וְעַם-מְדִינּוֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ  
 יוֹדְעִים אֲשֶׁר כָּל-אִישׁ וְאִשָּׁה  
 אֲשֶׁר יַבְּוֹא אֶל-הַמֶּלֶךְ  
 אֶל-הַחֲצֵר הַפְּנִימִיתָה  
 אֲשֶׁר לְאִיְקָרָא  
 אַחֲתָה דָּתָה לְהַמִּוֹתָה  
 לְבַד מֵאֲשֶׁר יוֹשִׁיט לְוַלְוָה הַמֶּלֶךְ  
 אֲתָה-שְׁרִבֵּיט הַזֹּהָב וְתִנְחָה  
 וְאָנוּ לֹא נִקְרָאָתִי  
 לְבָבָא אֶל-הַמֶּלֶךְ  
 זֶה שְׁלֹשִׁים יוֹם  
 וַיַּגִּידוּ לְמְרֻדָּכָי  
 אֲתָה דְּבָרֵי אָסְתָּר

ב

<sup>1</sup> “One is his law, to put *him/her* to death.”

<sup>13</sup> Mordochai told *Hatach* to answer Ester, “Don’t imagine *you alone* can escape in the palace, *you alone* of all the Jews.”  
<sup>14</sup> “If you keep quiet right now, relief and rescue will arise for the Jews from another quarter, while you and your father’s line will perish. And who knows? Maybe it’s just for the sake of this *threat* that you came to *your position of royalty*.”

<sup>15</sup> Ester said to answer Mordochai: <sup>16</sup> “Go, assemble all the Jews that live in Shushan so they can fast with me. Let them neither eat nor drink for three days, night and day. I and my maids will fast too, and so I’ll go to the king despite the regulations, and if I’m done for, I’m done for.”  
<sup>17</sup> So Mordochai went and did exactly as Ester instructed him.

וַיֹּאמֶר מָרְדֹּכַי לְהַשִּׁיב אֶל-אָסֵתֶר אֶל-תְּדָמִי בְּנֶפֶשֶׁךָ לְהַפְּלֹט בֵּית-הַמֶּלֶךְ מִכָּל-יְהוּדִים כִּי אִם-הַחֲרֵשׁ תַּחֲרִישִׁי בְּעֵת הַזֹּאת רָנוֹת וְהַצְלָה יָעִמְדוּ לַיְהוּדִים מִמְּקוּם אַחֲרֵי וְאַתָּה וּבֵית-אָבִיךָ תָּבִרְךָ וְנִיְּוָדָע אִם-לְעֵת כֹּזֶת הַנְּעָתָה לְמִלְכֹות וְתֹאמֶר אֶשְׁתַּר לְהַשִּׁיב אֶל-מָרְדֹּכַי לְכָנוֹס אֶת-כָּל-יְהוּדִים הַנְּמַצְאִים בְּשָׁשָׁן וְצַוְנוּ עַל-וְאַל-הַאֲכָלוֹ וְאַל-תִּשְׁתַּחַטְשׁו שֶׁלְשֶׁת יְמִים לְלִילָה וְיוֹם נִסְמָחָנִי וּנוֹעֲרָתִי אַתָּה וּבְכָל אֶבֶן אֶל-הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲשֶׁר לְאַכְרָתָה וּכְאֲשֶׁר אָבְרָתִי אָבְרָתָה וַיַּעֲבֹר מָרְדֹּכַי וְעַשׂ כָּל-אֲשֶׁר-צִוָּתָה עַלְיוֹ אָסֵתֶר

ס

## Chapter 5

<sup>1</sup> On the third day

Ester donned her royal regalia and waited in the inner palace courtyard across from the king's apartments, while the king was enthroned on his royal throne in the palace, across from the palace gate.

<sup>2</sup> When the king saw

Queen Ester waiting in the courtyard, he was pleased to see her<sup>1</sup> and the king offered to Ester the gold scepter in his hand. Ester approached and touched the tip of the scepter.

<sup>3</sup> The king asked her,

“How are you, Queen Ester, and what is your request? Up to half the kingdom, and it's yours!

<sup>4</sup> Ester said,

“If your majesty approves, let the king and Haman come today to a drinking binge I've prepared for him.”

וַיְהִי בַּיּוֹם הַשְׁלִישִׁי  
וְתַלְבֵּשׁ אֲסֵתֶר מֶלֶכְתָּה וְקָעֵמֶד  
בְּחַצֵּר בֵּית-הַמֶּלֶךְ הַפְּנִימִית  
נִכְחַ בֵּית הַמֶּלֶךְ  
וְהַמֶּלֶךְ יוֹשֵׁב  
עַל-כְּסֵא מֶלֶכְתָּה  
בְּבַיּוֹת הַמֶּלֶכְתָּה  
נִכְחַ פֶּתַח הַבִּיטָּה  
וְהַיְּן כָּרָאוֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ  
אַתְּ-אֲסֵתֶר הַטְּלִכָּה  
עַמְּדָת בְּחַצֵּר  
נִשְׁאָה חֵן בְּעִינָיו  
וַיַּשְׁטֵת הַמֶּלֶךְ לְאֲסֵתֶר  
אַתְּ-שָׁרְבִּיט הַזָּהָב אֲשֶׁר בֵּינוֹ  
וַתִּקְרַב אֲסֵתֶר  
וַתִּגְעַש בְּרַאשׁ הַשְּׁרָכִיט

Vayehi bayom hashlishi  
vatilbash Ester mal'chut vata'amod  
bachatzar beit hamelech hapnimit,  
nochach beit hamelech,  
vehamelech yoshev  
al kiseh mal'chuto  
beveit hamal'chut,  
nochach petach habayit.  
Vayehi chirot hamelech  
et Ester hamalkah  
omedet bechutzer  
nasah chen be'einav,  
vayoshet hamelech le'Ester  
et sharvit hazahav asher beyado,  
vatikrav Ester  
vatigah berosh hasharvit.

ס

וַיֹּאמֶר לֵאל הַמֶּלֶךְ  
מַה-לָּךְ אֲסֵתֶר הַטְּלִכָּה  
וּמַה-בְּקָשָׁתְךָ  
עַד-חַצֵּי הַמֶּלֶכְתָּה וַיַּגְתֵּן לְךָ  
וַיֹּאמֶר אֲסֵתֶר  
אִם-עַל-הַמֶּלֶךְ טֻוב  
יָבוֹא הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהַמְּן דַּיּוֹם  
אֶל-הַמְּשִׁיחָה אֲשֶׁר-עָשָׂיתִי לְךָ

Vayomer lah hamelech,  
“Mah lach, Ester hamalkah,  
umah vakashatech?  
Ad chatzi hamalchut veyinaten lach.”  
Vatomer Ester,  
“Im al hamelech tov,  
yavo hamelech veHaman hayom  
el hamishteh asher asiti lo.”

<sup>1</sup> “She bore grace in his eyes”; he thought she looked nice.

<sup>5</sup> The king said,  
“Make Haman hurry up  
to comply with Ester’s proposal.”  
So the king came with Haman  
to the drinking binge  
that Ester prepared.

<sup>6</sup> The king said to Ester  
at the wine party,  
“Ask for something, and it’s yours.  
What would you like?  
Up to half the kingdom? Done!”

<sup>7</sup> In reply, Ester said,  
“Here’s what I want, my request:

<sup>8</sup> If the king grants me a favor  
and if the king approves  
to grant my wish  
and accede to my request,  
let the king come with Haman  
to the drinking binge I’ll make for them,  
and tomorrow I’ll do as the king says.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>9</sup> That day, Haman left  
happy and content,  
but when Haman saw Mordochai  
at the palace gate,  
not standing up or moving out of his way,  
Haman was filled  
with hatred of Mordochai.

וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ מַהְרָו אֶת-הַמִּן לְעֹשֹׂת אֶת-דְּבַר אֲסֵתֶר וַיָּבֹא הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהַמִּן אֶל-הַמִּשְׁתָּה אֲשֶׁר-עָשָׂה אֲסֵתֶר וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ לְאָסֵתֶר בְּמִשְׁתָּה הַזֹּאת מַה-שְׁאָלָתךְ וְנִתְּנוּ לְךָ וּמַה-בְּקָשָׁתְךָ עַד-חָצֵי הַמְּלָכָות וְתַעֲשֵׂה וְתַעֲשָׂו אֶת-מְצָאָתוֹ הַן בְּעֵין הַמֶּלֶךְ וְאֶמְעַל-הַמֶּלֶךְ טוֹב לְהַת אֶת-שְׁאָלָתוֹ וְלְעֹשֹׂת אֶת-בְּקָשָׁתְךָ יָבֹא הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהַמִּן אֶל-הַמִּשְׁתָּה אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה לְהָם וְמַהְרָא אֲשֶׂה כְּדַבֵּר הַמֶּלֶךְ וְנִצְאָה הַמִּן בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא שְׁמָח וְטוֹב לְבָבָךְ וְכָרָאוּת הַמִּן אֶת-מְרַחְלִי בְּשֻׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ וְלֹא-קָם וְלֹא-זָע מִפְנֵי נִימְלָא הַמִּן עַל-מְרַחְלִי חַמָּה

Vayomer hamelech,  
“Maharu et Haman  
la’asot et devar Ester.”  
Vayavo hamelech veHaman  
el hamishteh  
asher astah Ester.  
Vayomer hamelech le’Ester  
bemishteh hayain,  
“Mah she’elatech veyinaten lach,  
umah bakashatech?  
Ad chatzi hamal’chut vete’as!”  
Vata’an Ester vatomar,  
“She’elati uvakashati:  
Im matzati chen be’einei hamelech  
ve’im al hamelech tov  
latet et she’elati  
vela’asot et bakashati,  
yavo hamelech veHaman  
el hamishteh asher e’eseh lahem,  
umachar e’eseh kidvar hamelech.”  
Vayetze Haman bayom hahu  
same’ach vetov lev;  
vechirot Haman et Mordochai  
besha’ar hamelech,  
velo kam velo zah mimenu,  
vayimaleh Haman  
al Mordochai chemah.

<sup>1</sup> Presumably she means that at tomorrow’s binge she’ll reveal her real request.

<sup>10</sup> Haman mastered his rage and got home; he sent *servants* to bring his friends and Zeresh, his wife;

<sup>11</sup> Haman reported to them

the glory of his wealth and number of his sons, all about how the king had promoted him and raised him above *other* chiefs and royal servants.

<sup>12</sup> And Haman said,

“But Queen Ester didn’t invite *anyone* with the king to the drinking binge she made, except only me. Tomorrow, too, I’m invited to visit her with the king.

<sup>13</sup> But none of this means anything to me<sup>1</sup> whenever I see that Jew Mordochai stationed at the palace gate.”

<sup>14</sup> His wife Zeresh said to him (*and so did* all his friends), “Get a gallows made, 50 cubits high, and tomorrow morning talk to the king to have Mordochai hanged on it.<sup>2</sup> Go to the drinking binge with the king cheerfully.”

Haman thought this was a good idea so he made the gallows.

וַיַּחֲפֹק הַמָּן וַיָּבֹא אֶל-בַּיּוֹת  
וַיִּשְׁלַח וַיָּבֹא אֶת-אֶתְבָּיו

וְאֶת-זֶרֶש אֲשֶׁר  
וַיִּסְפֶּר לָהֶם דָּמָן

אֲתִכְבּוֹד עַשְׂרוֹ וְרַב בָּנָיו  
וְאַתְּ כָּל-אֲשֶׁר גִּדְלֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ

וְאַתְּ אֲשֶׁר נִשְׂאוּ עַל-הַשָּׂרִים  
וְעַבְדֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ

וַיֹּאמֶר הַמָּן  
אָפָּל אֶת-הַבִּיאָה אֲסִטֵּר הַמֶּלֶךְ

עַמְּדַה-מֶלֶךְ אֶל-הַמִּשְׁתָּה  
אֲשֶׁר-עִשְׂתָּה קַי אֶם-אָוָן

וּנְמַלְמַחֵר אֲנִי קְרוֹא-לָה  
עַמְּדַה-מֶלֶךְ

וּבְלִזְהָא אַיִלְגָּו שָׁהָה לִי  
בְּכָל-עַשְׂרֵה אֲשֶׁר אַנְּנִי רָאָה

אֲתִמְרָכְכִּי הַיְהוּדִי  
וַיַּשְׁבֵּט בְּשַׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ

וַתָּמַר לֹאַרְש אַשְׁתָּוֹ  
וּכְלָא-הַבָּיו

יַעֲשֹׂר-עִין גַּבְהָה חַמְשִׁים אַמְתָּה  
וּבְבָקָר | אָמֵר לְמֶלֶךְ

וַיְתַלְוּ אֲתִמְרָכְכִּי עַל-וּ  
וּבְאַעַם-הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶל-הַמִּשְׁתָּה

שְׁמָחָה  
וַיְיַתְבֵּחַ דָּבָר לְפָנֵי הַמָּן  
וַיַּעֲשֵׂה דְּבָרָן

Vayit’apek Haman vayavo el beito; vayishlach, vayaveh et ohavav ve’et Zeresh ishto,

vayesaper lahem Haman et kevod oshro verov banav, ve’et kol asher gidlo hamelech ve’et asher niso al hasarim ve’avdei hamelech.

Vayomer Haman, “Af lo hevi’ah Ester hamalkah im hamelech el hamishteh asher asatah ki im oti. Vegam lemachar ani karu lah im hamelech.

Vechol zeh einenu shoveh li bechol et asher ani ro’eh at Mordochai haYehudi yoshev besha’ar hamelech.

Vatomer lo Zeresh ishto vechol ohavav, “Ya’asu etz gavo’ah chamishim amah, uvaboker emor lamelech veyitlu et Mordochai alav, uvo im hamelech el hamishteh same’ach.” Vayitav hadavar lifnei Haman, vaya’as he’etz.

ב

<sup>1</sup> “And all this doesn’t seem fair to me” or “isn’t right to me.”

<sup>2</sup> “Let them make a wood/tree/stick/gallows, 50 cubits high, and in the morning speak to the king, and they will hang Mordochai upon it.” A cubit is usually reckoned to be 18 inches, so this would be 75 feet high. Some think

## Chapter 6

<sup>1</sup> That night sleep eluded the king so he ordered his journal brought, the events of each day, and this was read before the king.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>2</sup> In the book was found written how Mordochai had informed on Bigtan and Teresh, two of the king's eunuchs, entrance guards, who sought to attack King Achashverosh.

<sup>3</sup> The king said, "What has been done, of value and dignity<sup>2</sup> to reward Mordochai for this?"

The king's page-boy attendants said, "Not a thing was done for him."

<sup>4</sup> The king said, "Who's out there?" Haman had just come to the outer palace courtyard to tell the king to hang Mordochai on the gallows he had prepared for him.

<sup>5</sup> The king's page-boys told him, "Here's Haman waiting outside." The king said, "Let him in!"

בְּלִילָה הַהְוָא נָרְדָה שְׁנַת הַמֶּלֶךְ  
וַיֹּאמֶר לְהַבְּא אֶת-סְפִר הַזְּכָרוֹנֹת  
דְּבָרֵי הַיּוֹם  
וַיֹּהְיוּ נִקְרָאִים לְפָנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ  
וַיִּמְצָא כָּחָוב  
אֲשֶׁר חִידָּה מִרְחָבָלִי  
עַל-בָּנְתָנָא וְתֶרֶשׁ  
שְׁנֵי סְרִיסִי הַמֶּלֶךְ  
מִשְׁמָרֵי הַסְּפִר  
אֲשֶׁר בְּקִשׁוּ לְשִׁלְחָה יְדָךְ  
בַּמֶּלֶךְ אֶחָשְׁוֶרֶשׁ  
וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ מָה נָעַשָּׂה  
יָקֵר וְגַדְולָה  
לִמְרָכֶבֶת עַל-זֶה  
וַיֹּאמֶר נָעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ מִשְׁרָתִי  
לְאָנָשָׂה עַמּוֹ דָּבָר  
וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ נָנוּ בְּחַצְרָה  
וְהַמָּן בָּא  
לְחַצְרָה בֵּית-הַמֶּלֶךְ הַחִיצוֹנָה  
לְאָמֶר לְפָלָק לְתַלּוֹת אֶת-מְרָכֶבֶת  
עַל-דָּעַז אַשְׁר-הַכִּין לוֹ  
וַיֹּאמֶר נָעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶלְיוֹן  
הַנָּה הַמָּן עַמְּדָה בְּחַצְרָה  
וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ יָבֹא

Balaila hahu nadeda shnat hamelech  
vayomer lehavi et sefer hazichronot,  
divrei hayamim,  
vayiheyu nikra'im lifnei hamelech.  
Vayimatzeh chatuv  
asher hidig Mordochai  
al Bigtana vaTeresh,  
shnei sarisei hamelech  
mishomrei hasaf,  
asher bikshu lishlo'ach yad  
bamelech Achashverosh  
Vayomer hamelech, "Mah na'asah  
yekar ugedulah  
leMordochai al zeh?"  
Vayomru na'arei hamelech meshartav,  
"Lo na'asah imo davar."  
Vayomer hamelech, "Mi vechutzer?"  
VeHaman bah  
lachatzar beit hamelech hachitzonah  
lemor lamelech litlot et Mordochai  
al ha'etz asher hechin lo.  
Vayomru na'arei hamelech elav,  
"Hineh Haman bechutzer."  
Vayomer hamelech, "Yavo."

people were hung on a gallows, others think they were stuck on a pole, either to execute them or just to put them on display after they were executed. In the time of the Tudors, visitors to London Bridge would see as many as 34 heads of executed criminals or traitors on display.

<sup>1</sup> "On that night the king's sleep wandered off, and he said to bring the book of memories, the events of the days, and these were read aloud before the king."

<sup>2</sup> Or "dearness and greatness."

<sup>6</sup> Haman entered and the king asked him,  
“What’s to be done for the man  
whom the king values dearly?”<sup>1</sup>  
Haman said to himself,  
“Whom would the king cherish,  
to show *his* esteem, more than me?”  
<sup>7</sup> Haman told the king,  
“Someone whom the king values dearly,  
<sup>8</sup> let there be brought royal garments  
that the king *himself* has worn,  
and a horse the king has ridden  
with the royal crest on its headdress,<sup>2</sup>  
<sup>9</sup> and the garments and horse delivered  
by one of the king’s top chiefs;  
let the man be dressed  
(whom the king values dearly)  
and placed on the horse, to ride  
through the town,<sup>3</sup>  
with cryers before him,<sup>4</sup>  
“This is done for the man  
whom the king values dearly.”

וַיָּבֹא הָמָן וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא הַמֶּלֶךְ  
מִה-לְעָשׂוֹת בָּאִישׁ  
אֲשֶׁר הַמֶּלֶךְ חָפֵץ בֵּיקָרָו  
וַיֹּאמֶר הָמָן בְּלֹבֶד  
לְמַיִּינָה חָפֵץ הַמֶּלֶךְ  
לְעָשׂוֹת יְקָרָר יוֹתֵר מִמְּנִי  
וַיֹּאמֶר הָמָן אֶל-הַמֶּלֶךְ  
אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר הַמֶּלֶךְ חָפֵץ בֵּיקָרָו  
יָבִיאֵי לְבוֹשׁ מַלְכָוֹת  
אֲשֶׁר לְבָשָׁבוֹ הַמֶּלֶךְ  
וְסֹס אֲשֶׁר רַכֵּב עַלְיוֹן הַמֶּלֶךְ  
וְאֲשֶׁר נִתְן בְּתַר מְלֻכָּות בְּרָאָשׁוֹ  
וּנְתַנוּן הַלְּבָשׁ וְהַסּוֹס  
עַל-יָד-אִישׁ מִשְׁרֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ קְפָרְתָּמִים  
וְהַלְּבִישׁוּ אֶת-הָאִישׁ  
אֲשֶׁר הַמֶּלֶךְ חָפֵץ בֵּיקָרָו  
וְהַרְכִּיבָהוּ עַל-הַסּוֹס  
בְּרַחֲבוֹ הַשִּׁיר  
וְקָרָא לְפָנָיו  
בְּכָה יַעֲשֵׂה לְאִישׁ  
אֲשֶׁר הַמֶּלֶךְ חָפֵץ בֵּיקָרָו

Vayavo Haman vayomer lo hamelech,  
“Mah la’asot ba’ish  
asher hamelech chafetz bikaro?”  
Vayomer Haman belibo,  
“Lemi yachpotz hamelech  
la’asot yekar yoter mimeni?”  
Vayomer Haman el hamelech,  
“Ish asher hamelech chafetz bikaro,  
Yavi’u levush mal’chut  
asher lavash bo hamelech,  
vesus asher rachav alav hamelech  
va’asher nitan keter mal’chut berosho,  
venaton halevush vehasus  
al yad ish misarei hamelech hapartemim  
vehilbishu et ha’ish  
asher hamelech chafetz bikaro  
vehirkivuhu al hasus  
bir’chov ha’ir,  
vekaru lefanav,  
“Kachah ye’aseh la’ish  
asher hamelech chafetz bikaro.”

<sup>1</sup> Or, “cherishes for his value/cherishes in his estimation.”

<sup>2</sup> Wow, a chance to wear an authentic Elvis outfit, only better! “With the royal crest on its headdress” is literally “and which has been given the crown of royalty on its head,” presumably something highly decorative like the feathered plumes in a parade headdress or the elaborate horse headdresses of Pazyryk culture.

<sup>3</sup> “Through the width/street/open space of the town/city.”

<sup>4</sup> “And let them cry out before him”

<sup>10</sup> The king said to Haman, “Quick! Get the garments and the horse as you said, and do this for Mordochai the Jew who stays at the palace gate. Don’t leave out a *single* thing of all that you said.”

<sup>11</sup> Haman took the garments and horse and dressed Mordochai and got him to ride through the town, calling out before him: “This is done for the man whom the king values dearly.”

<sup>12</sup> Then Mordochai went back to the palace gate while Haman hurried<sup>1</sup> home in misery, ashamed to show his face.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Haman told Zeresh his wife and all his friends all that had happened to him. His advisors and his wife Zeresh said, “If he’s of Jewish stock, *this* Mordochai before whom you have begun to fall, you can’t beat him. You’ll fall right down in front of him.”

וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ לְהַמְּנָן מַהְרָה  
 קְחַת-הַלְּבָשׁ וְאַת-הַסּוּס  
 כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבְרָתָךְ  
 וַיַּעֲשֵׂה כָּן לְמֹרְדֹּכָּי הַיְהוּדִי  
 הַיֹּוֹשֵׁב בְּשַׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ  
 אֶל-חַפְלָל דָּבָר  
 מַכְלֵל אֲשֶׁר דִּבְרָתָךְ  
 וַיַּקְחַת הַמְּנָן  
 אֶת-הַלְּבָשׁ וְאַת-הַסּוּס  
 וַיַּלְבִּשֵּׂה אֶת-מֹרְדֹּכָּי  
 וַיַּרְכִּיבֵהוּ בְּרַחֲבוֹת הַשִּׁיר  
 וַיַּקְרַא לִפְנֵי  
 בָּכָה יְעַשֵּׂה לְאִישׁ  
 אֲשֶׁר הַמֶּלֶךְ חָפֵץ בִּיקָּרוֹ  
 וַיַּשְׁבַּט מֹרְדֹּכָּי  
 אֶל-שַׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ  
 וְהַמְּנָן נִדְחָה אֶל-בֵּיתוֹ אֶבֶל  
 וְחַפְעִי רָאשׁ  
 וַיַּסְפֵּר הַמְּנָן לִזְרֶשׁ אֲשֶׁר  
 וְלִכְלָל-אֲהָבָיו  
 אֵה כָּל-אֲשֶׁר קָרָהוּ  
 וְאֹמְרוּלָו חֲכָמָיו וּזְרָשָׁוֹת  
 אֲשֶׁר  
 אֵם מִזְרָע נְיִהּוֹרִים מִרְקָדָי  
 אֲשֶׁר הַחֲלֹות לִנְפָלָל לִפְנֵי  
 לְאַתּוֹכֶל לֹא  
 כִּי-נְפָלָל תְּפָלָל לִפְנֵי

<sup>1</sup> “Haman was hurried”; the verb is passive, so perhaps people pushed him around since he’d been humiliated.

<sup>2</sup> “And covered of head,” with his head covered—presumably so people wouldn’t see his humiliation.

<sup>14</sup> They were still speaking to him when the king's eunuchs arrived and rushed Haman off<sup>1</sup> to the drinking binge that Ester made.

<sup>1</sup> The king went with Haman to drink with Queen Ester.

<sup>2</sup> The king said to Ester again, on the second day of drinking wine, "Ask for something, Queen Ester, and it's yours. What would you like? Up to half the kingdom? Done!"

<sup>3</sup> In response, Queen Ester said: "If you would grant me a favor, king,

and if the king approves— let my life be granted me when I ask *for it* and my people at my request.

<sup>4</sup> For we've been sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, murdered and annihilated.

<sup>5</sup> If like male and female slaves we had been sold, I wouldn't have said anything, but this injury isn't worth the damage to the king.<sup>2</sup>

עֹדָם מְדֹבְרִים עַמּוֹ  
וְסִרִּיסִי הַמֶּלֶךְ הַגָּנוּעַ  
וַיַּבְּהַלְוּ לְקַבְּרָא אֶת־הָמָן  
אֶל־הַמִּשְׁתָּה אֲשֶׁר־עָשָׂתָה אֶسְתֶּר

## Chapter 7

וַיַּבְּאֵה הַפְּלַךְ וְהַפְּנִים  
לְשִׁׁירָה עַמּ-אֶסְתֶּר הַמֶּלֶךְ  
וַיֹּאמֶר הַפְּלַךְ לְאֶסְתֶּר נָמֵם  
בַּיּוֹם הַשְׁנִי בְּמִשְׁתָּה הַיּוֹם  
מוֹה-שְׁאַלְתָּךְ אֶסְתֶּר הַמֶּלֶכְתָּךְ  
וְתַגְנִין לְךָ וּמִה-בְּקַשְׁתָּךְ  
עַד-חַצִּי הַמֶּלֶכְתָּךְ וְרַעַשְׁתָּךְ  
וְתַעֲנִן אֶסְתֶּר הַמֶּלֶכְתָּךְ וְתַאֲמֵר  
אַמְ-מַצְאָתִי חַן בְּעִינֵיךְ  
הַפְּלַךְ  
וְאַמְ-עַל-הַמֶּלֶךְ טֻוב  
תַגְנִין-ךְ נְפֵשִׁי בְשָׁאַלְתִּי  
וּמְעַמֵּד בְּבַקְשָׁתִי  
קַי נְמַכְרָנוּ אַנְיָ וְעַמְיָ  
לְהַשְׁמִיד לְהַרְגֵן וּלְאַבֵּד  
וְאַלְוָ לְעַבְלִים וּלְשִׁפְחוֹת  
נְמַכְרָנוּ  
תְּחִרְשָׁתִי  
קַי אַיְן הַאֲרֵ שְׂוָה  
בְּנֵזֶק הַפְּלַךְ

Vayavo hamelech veHaman lishtot im Ester hamalkah. Vayomer hamelech le'Ester gam bayom hasheni bemishteh hayainin, "Mah she'elatech, Ester hamalkah, vetinaten lach. Umah bakashatech? Ad chatzi hamal'chut vete'as! Vata'an Ester hamalkah vatomer, "Im matzati chen be'einecha, hamelech, ve'im al hamelech tov, tinaten li nafshi bish'elati ve'ami bevakashati. Ki nimkarnu, ani ve'ami, lehashmid, laharog ule'abed. Ve'ilu la'avadim velishfachot nimkarnu hecherashti, ki ein hatzar shoveh benezek hamelech.

ס

<sup>1</sup> "Hurried to bring Haman."

<sup>2</sup> "For not the trouble/enemy is level/even-with the injury/damage of/to the king." She seems to argue that Haman's plan is not in the king's interest. The money Haman pays doesn't match the damage the king will suffer by killing off so many subjects—he'll lose the money he could have made selling them into slavery, or he'll lose their tax revenue, etc.

<sup>5</sup> King Achashverosh said—  
he said to Queen Ester—

“Who is it, where is he  
who has determined<sup>1</sup> to do this?”

<sup>6</sup> Ester said, “A pest, an enemy!  
This evil Haman!”

Then Haman felt terrified  
before the king and queen.

<sup>7</sup> In his anger, he stood up  
from the wine party *and went*  
into the palace garden,  
while Haman stayed to beg for his life  
from Queen Ester,  
for he realized  
that he'd get no mercy  
from the king.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>8</sup> The king came back from the palace garden  
to the wine party.

Haman had collapsed on the couch<sup>3</sup>  
where Ester was.

The king said,  
“Would you even force the queen  
with me *standing right here*?<sup>4</sup>

The words came from the king's mouth  
so they covered Haman's face.

וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲחַשְׁוֹרֹשׁ  
וַיֹּאמֶר לְאֲسֵתֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ

מַיְהֵא זֶה וְאַזְּהָה הוּא  
אֲשֶׁר מֶלֶךְ אָשֶׁר אִישׁ צָר וְאוֹיֵב

הַפְּנֵן דָּרָע תָּזַה

וְהַמְּנוֹן נְבָעַת

מַלְכֵנוּ הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהַמֶּלֶךְ

וְהַמֶּלֶךְ קָם בְּחַמְתָּו

מִמְשִׁתָּה תְּזִין

אַל-גִּנְתָּה הַבִּתְּן

וְהַמְּנוֹן עָמָד לְבַקֵּשׁ עַל-נַפְשׁוֹ

מְאַסְתֵּר הַמֶּלֶךְ

כִּי רָאָה

כִּירְכְּלָתָה אֶלְיוֹן הַרְעָה

מַאֲתַת הַמֶּלֶךְ

וְהַמֶּלֶךְ שֶׁב מִגְּנַת הַבִּתְּן

אַל-בֵּית | מִשְׁתָּה תְּזִין

וְהַמְּנוֹן נִפְלֵל עַל-הַמִּתָּה

אֲשֶׁר אֲסֵתֶר עַלְיָה

וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ

הָנָם לְכַבּוֹשׁ אֶת-הַמֶּלֶךְ

עַנְיִן בַּבָּיּוֹת

הַדָּבָר יְצָא מִפְּנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ

וּפְנֵי הַמְּנוֹן חַפֹּז

Vayomer hamelech Achashverosh,  
vayomer le'Ester hamalkah,

“Mi hu zeh, ve'ei zeh hu  
asher mela'o libo la'asot ken?”

Vatomer Ester, “Ish tzar ve'oyev!  
Haman harah hazeh!”

VeHaman nivat

milifnei hamelech vehamalkah.

Vehamelech kam bachamato  
mimishteh hayayin

el ginat habitan,  
veHaman amad levakesh al nafsho

me'Ester hamalkah,  
ki ra'ah

ki chaltah elav hara'ah  
me'et hamelech.

Vehamelech shav miginat habitan  
el beit mishteh hayayin

veHaman nofel al hamitah  
asher Ester aleha.

Vayomer hamelech,  
“Hagam lichbosh et hamalkah  
imi babayit?”

Hadavar yatzah mipi hamelech  
ufenei Haman chafu.

ס

<sup>1</sup> “Who filled his heart,” so he'd do it whole-heartedly.

<sup>2</sup> “That determined/finalized toward him *was* evil from the king.” Haman saw there was no point asking the king for mercy so he tried the queen.

<sup>3</sup> The ancients ate and drank in a reclining position (you can try this at home in your own recliner).

<sup>4</sup> “Also to subdue/overcome/rape the queen, with me in the house/building?” The king sees Haman on Ester's couch and assumes he's trying to kill her or rape her.

<sup>9</sup> Charvonah said (he was one of the king's eunuchs), "And there's the gallows Haman made for Mordochai—who spoke *so* well to *save* the king—standing at Haman's house, fifty cubits high." The king said, "Hang him on it." <sup>10</sup> So they hanged Haman on the gallows he prepared for Mordochai, and the king's anger subsided.

וַיֹּאמֶר חֹרְבֹּנָה  
אֶחָד מִן-הַסְּרִירִים לְפָנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ  
בְּשָׁם הַנְּגָדָעַן  
אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה הַמֶּן לְמַרְדּוֹכָי  
עַמְּדָר דְּבָר-טוֹב עַל-הַמֶּלֶךְ  
עַמְּדָר בְּבֵית הַמֶּן  
גָּבְהָתָחָמִשִּׁים אַמָּה  
וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ תְּלֻחוּ עַלְיוֹן  
וַיַּתְלִלוּ אֶת-הַמֶּן עַל-הַעַץ  
אֲשֶׁר-הָכַינוּ לְמַרְדּוֹכָי  
וְחַמְתָּה הַמֶּלֶךְ שָׁכָךְ

ב

## Chapter 8

<sup>1</sup> The same day, King Achashverosh gave to Queen Ester the house of Haman, the Jews' enemy, while Mordochai was admitted to the king's presence, for Ester told how they were related.<sup>1</sup> <sup>2</sup> The king took back his ring, *the one* he had transferred to Haman,<sup>3</sup> from Haman, and gave it to Mordochai, and Ester placed Mordochai in charge of Haman's house.

בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא  
נִתְן הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶחָשְׁוֹרֶשׁ  
לְאֶسְתֶּר הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶת-בֵּית הַמֶּן  
צָרֵר הַיְהוּדִים<sup>2</sup>  
וּמַרְדּוֹכָי בָּא  
לְפָנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ  
כִּי-הִגִּידָה אֶסְתֶּר מָה הַוְאֵלֶּה  
וַיַּסַּר הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶת-טְבַעַתּוֹ  
אֲשֶׁר הַעֲבִיר מַהְמָּן  
וַיַּתְנַהֵּל מַרְדּוֹכָי מַהְמָּן  
וְתַשְׁם אֶסְתֶּר אֶת-מַרְדּוֹכָי  
עַל-בֵּית הַמֶּן

ב

<sup>1</sup> "What he was to her."

<sup>2</sup> A manuscript reads הַיְהוּדִים

<sup>3</sup> To Haman, in 3:10.

<sup>3</sup> Ester resumed speaking in front of the king. She collapsed at his feet and wept, begging him to renounce the evil *decree* of Haman the Agagite and the scheme he designed against the Jews.

<sup>4</sup> The king extended to Ester his golden scepter, so Ester rose and stood before the king.

<sup>5</sup> She said, “If the king approves, if I have won his favor, if this seems proper to the king, and *if* I seem good to him, rescind in writing the written decree<sup>1</sup> *publicizing* the scheme of Haman son of Hamdata the Agagite that he wrote, to destroy the Jews in all the king’s provinces.

<sup>6</sup> How could I *bear to* witness the catastrophe that threatens<sup>2</sup> my people; how could I *bear to* witness the ruin of my family?”<sup>3</sup>

וַתָּסַף אֲסֵתֶר  
וַתֹּדֶבֶר לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ  
וַתִּפְלֶל לִפְנֵי רַגְלָיו וַתְּבַךְ  
וַתְּחִנְנֶלְוּ לְהַעֲבֵיר  
אַתְּ רְדֻעַת חָמָן הָאֲגָגִי  
וְאַתְּ מַחְשָׁבָתוֹ  
אֲשֶׁר חָשַׁב עַל־הָיִתּוֹ  
וַיַּוְשַׁט הַמֶּלֶךְ לְאַסְתֶּר  
אַתְּ שָׁרְבַת הַזָּבֵב  
וַתָּקַם אֲסֵתֶר  
וַתַּעֲמֹד לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ  
וַתָּהִמֵּר אֶמְעָלַת הַמֶּלֶךְ טֻוב  
וְאַסְמָמָצָא תְּחִנְנֶלְוּ  
וְכָשֵׁר הַדָּבָר לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ  
וְטוֹבָה אֲנֵי בְּעִינֵי  
יִכְתַּב לְהַשִּׁיב אֶת־הַסְּפָרִים  
מַחְשָׁבַת הָמָן  
בֶּן־הַמְּדָרָחָא הָאֲגָגִי  
אֲשֶׁר כָּתַב לְאָבֶד אֶת־הָיִתּוֹ  
אֲשֶׁר בְּכָל־מְדִינּוֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ  
כִּי אִיכְכָּה אָוֶל  
וְרָאִיתִי בְּרָעָה  
אֲשֶׁר־יִמְצָא אֶת־עַמִּי  
וְאִיכְכָּה אָוֶל  
וְרָאִיתִי בְּאָבָרְנוּ מַולְךָי

ס

<sup>1</sup> “Let it be written to recall the scrolls.”

<sup>2</sup> “That will find/attain to.”

<sup>3</sup> Or “the ruin of the place where I was born.”

<sup>7</sup> King Ahashverosh said to Queen Ester and to Mordochai the Jew, “Look, I gave Haman’s house to Ester, and he was hanged on the gallows for attacking the Jews.

<sup>8</sup> So you should write to the Jews as you see fit, in the king’s name, and seal *it* with the king’s ring.” For a decree written in the king’s name and sealed with the king’s ring can’t be rescinded.<sup>2</sup>

וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶחָשְׁוֹרֶשׁ  
**לְאֲסֵתֶר הַמְלָכָה**  
**וּלְמַרְדּוֹכָי הַיְהוּדִי**  
**הַנֶּה בַּיּוֹתְרָהּ מִנְתַּחַי לְאָסָהָר**  
**וְאַתָּה תְּלֻל עַל-הָעָץ**  
**עַל אֲשֶׁר-שָׁלַח יְדוֹ בִּיהוּדִים**  
**וְאַתָּם כְּחַבּוּ עַל-הַיְהוּדִים**  
**כְּטוּב בְּעַיִנְיכֶם**  
**בְּשָׁם הַמֶּלֶךְ**  
**וְחַתְמָוּ בְּטֻבָּעַת הַמֶּלֶךְ**  
**כִּירְכַּתְבּוּ אֲשֶׁר-נִכְתַּבּ**  
**בְּשָׁם-הַמֶּלֶךְ**  
**וְנִחְתְּנוּמָוּ בְּטֻבָּעַת הַמֶּלֶךְ**  
**אֵין לְהַשִּׁיבָן**

Vayomer hamelech Ashashverosh le’Ester hamalkah uleMordochai haYehudi, “Hineh, beit Haman natati le’Ester, ve’oto talu al ha’etz al asher shalach yado baYehudim. Ve’atem kitvu al haYehudim katov be’eineichem beshem hamelech, vechitmu betaba’at hamelech.” Ki chetav asher nichtav beshem hamelech venachtom betaba’at hamelech ein lehashiv.

<sup>1</sup> A manuscript spells this word in an unusual manner, **בִּיהוּדִים**.

<sup>2</sup> The king could never admit a mistake, it seems, so he could not rescind Haman’s evil decree. Instead, the king now gives the Jews permission to defend themselves.

<sup>9</sup> The king's scribes were summoned promptly, in the third month, the month of Sivan, on its twenty-third day. Mordochai's orders were all written,<sup>1</sup> for the Jews, to the premiers and governors and provincial chiefs who *governed* from Hodu to Kush, one hundred and twenty-seven provinces, in each province's *local* script, and in each people's language, and to the Jews in their script and their language.

<sup>10</sup> He wrote the *decree* in the name of King Achashverosh and sealed *it* with the king's ring. He sent the proclamations by means of couriers on horseback riding swift steeds from the royal stables, bred from swift mares<sup>2</sup>

וַיַּקְרָא סִפְרֵי-הַמֶּלֶךְ בְּעַת-הַחִיא בְּחַדְשׁ הַשְׁלִישִׁי  
 הַוְאַ-חֲדַשׁ סְנִוָּן בְּשִׁלְשָׁה וּבְעָשָׁרִים בָּוּן  
 וַיְכַתֵּב כָּכָל אֲשֶׁר-צִוָּה מְרֻדָּכָי אֶל-יְהוּדִים  
 וְאֶל-הַאֲחַשְׁדָרְפָנִים וְהַפָּחוֹת וְשָׁרֵי הַמִּדְינּוֹת  
 אֲשֶׁר-מֵהָדוּ וּמֵעַד-כּוֹשָׁבָן שְׁבָע וּבְעָשָׁרִים וּמֵאָה מִדְינָה  
 מִדְינָה וּמִדְינָה כְּכַתְבָּה וּעַם וּעַם כְּלִשְׁנוֹן  
 וְאֶל-יְהוּדִים כְּכַתְבָּם וּכְלִשְׁנוֹן וַיְכַתֵּב בְּשֵׁם  
 הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶחָשְׁוֶרֶשׁ נִיחָתָם בְּטַבַּעַת הַמֶּלֶךְ  
 וְשִׁילָחָה סְפָרִים בְּנֵי הַרְצִים בְּפָסָלִים רַכְבֵּי הַרְכָּשָׁה אֶחָשְׁתְּרִים  
 בְּנֵי הַרָּאָכִים

Vayikaru sofrei hamelech  
 ba'et hahi, bachodesh hashlishi,  
 hu chodesh Sivan,  
 bishlosah ve'esrim bo,  
 vayikatev kechol asher tziva Mordochai  
 el haYehudim  
 ve'el ha'achashdarpenim vehapachot  
 vesarei hamedinot  
 asher meHodu ve'ad Kush,  
 sheva ve'esrim um'e'ah medinah,  
 medinah umedinah kichtavah,  
 ve'am va'am kilshono,  
 ve'el haYehudim  
 kichtavam vechilshonam.  
 Vayichtov beshem  
 hamelech Achashverosh  
 vayachtom betaba'at hamelech.  
 Vayishlach sfarim  
 beyad haratzim basusim,  
 rochvei harechesh ha'achashteranim  
 benei haramachim

<sup>1</sup> "And there was written according to all that Mordochai instructed"

<sup>2</sup> Apart from the horses, the animals are uncertain: some combination of mules, post horses, royal horses, swift horses, mares, camels and dromedaries. The King James translation has a variety of animals (maybe they used everything they could lay hands on to get the word out quickly) whereas others stress the speed of the horses (one can assume that the king kept the fastest horses in his stables, and that couriers on a royal mission moved very fast).

<sup>11</sup> to announce that the king allowed the Jews in every town

to assemble to defend their lives, to destroy, kill and annihilate any provincial or clan army that attacked them, children and women, and to ransack their homes<sup>1</sup> for plunder

<sup>12</sup> on a single day in all the provinces of King Achasverosh, on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the month Adar.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>13</sup> A copy of the written decree was to be presented as law in every province, publicized to all the people, for the Jews to be ready for that day, to exact revenge from their enemies.

אֲשֶׁר נָתָן הַמֶּלֶךְ לַיְהוּדִים  
אֲשֶׁר בְּכָל־עִיר־נָעִיר

לְהַקְהֵל וְלִעְמֹד עַל־נַפְשָׁם  
לְהַשְׁמִיד וְלִהְרֹג וְלְאֶבֶד

אֶת־כָּל־חַיִל עַם וּמִדְינָה  
הַאֲרָרִים אֶתְמָם טָרֵף וְנִשְׁאָרִים

וְשְׁלָלָם לְבָזָז

בַּיּוֹם אֶחָד

בְּכָל־מִדְינָה

הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ

בְּשִׁלּוֹשָׁה עָשָׂר

לְחַדֵּשׁ שְׁנַיִם עָשָׂר

הַוְּאַחֲרִישׁ אַדָּר

פָּתְשֵׁגָן הַקְּתָבָה

לְהַבְּמָנוּ דָת

בְּכָל־מִדְינָה וּמִדְינָה

גָּלְיוּ לְכָל־חָעֲמִים

וְלִיהְוֹת הַיְהוּדִים עַתִּידִים<sup>3</sup>

לִיּוֹם הַזֶּה

לְתַגְקָם מְאַיְבֵיכֶם

asher natan hamelech laYehudim  
asher bechol ir va'ir

lehikahel vela'amod al nafsham,

lehashmid velaharog ule'abed

et kol cheil am umedinah

hatzarim otam, taf venashim,

ushelalam lavoz

beyom echad

bechol medinot

hamelech Achashverosh,

bishlosah asar

lechodesh shneim asar,

hu chodesh Adar.

Patshegen haktav

lehinaten dat

bechol medinah umedinah

galui lechol ha'amim,

veliheyot haYehudim atidim

layom hazeh,

lehinakem me'oyveihem.

<sup>1</sup> “To ransack them”; now the Jews had permission to kill their enemies and take their stuff. Cf.3:13.

<sup>2</sup> You'd think anyone could legally defend himself, but not under Achashverosh. Since he had decreed anyone could kill Jews, self-defence would be illegal. This new decree legalized their self-defence but limited it to a single day. (This is another reason not to pine for the glorious past.)

<sup>3</sup> A manuscript has the unusual spelling הַיְהוּדִים.

<sup>4</sup> A manuscript has the unusual spelling עַתִּידִים.

<sup>14</sup> The couriers, riding swift steeds from the royal stables, galloped off at top speed<sup>1</sup> on the king's mission, and the *new* law was proclaimed in the town of Shushan.

הַרְצִים רַכְבֵּי הַרְכֵשׁ  
הַאֲחַשְׁתְּרָנִים  
יָצָא מִבְּקָלִים וּדְחִוּפִים  
בְּדָבָר הַמֶּלֶךְ  
וְהַדָּת נִתְנָה  
בְּשֻׁשָׁן הַבִּירָה

ב

<sup>15</sup> Mordechai left the king's presence in royal robes of blue and white, a great crown of gold and a garment of fine linen and purple,<sup>2</sup> while the town of Shushan was relieved and joyful.

וּמְרֹדְכָּאי יָצָא  
מִלְּפָנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ  
בְּלִבְשׂוֹן מְלָכָות וְחוֹרָב  
וְעַטְרָתְּ זָהָב גְּדוֹלָה  
וְתְּכִירָה בּוֹזֵן וְאַרְגָּמָן  
וְהַעֲרֵיר שׁוֹשָׁן  
אַחֲלָה וְשְׁמַחָה

<sup>16</sup> The Jews enjoyed light and joy, delight and honor

לְיְהֻדִּים הִיְתָה  
אוֹרָה וְשְׁמַחָה וְשׁוֹשָׁן וִיקָּר

<sup>17</sup> In every province and every town, any place where the king's decree and law reached, the Jews enjoyed joy and gladness, drinking and festival, and many of the local people joined the Jews,<sup>3</sup> because fear of the Jews fell upon them. כִּרְנָפֶל פְּחַד־חִיהִוִּים עַלֵּהֶם

וּבְכָל־מְדִינָה וּמִדִּינָה  
וּבְכָל־עִיר וּבָרְאֵר מִקּוֹם אֲשֶׁר  
דְּבָרָה־הַמֶּלֶךְ וְדָרָתְּ מִנְעָשָׂה  
שְׁמַחָה וְשְׁשָׁן לְיְהֻדִּים  
מִשְׁתָּחָה וּנוֹם טֹב  
וּרְבָּבִים מַעֲמִן הָאָרֶץ  
מִתְּחִידָהִים  
קִרְנָפֶל

<sup>1</sup> "Went out in haste and driven hard"

<sup>2</sup> Perhaps the royal robes were his outer garment, first mentioned because first seen, and the other garment of fine material with the purple (reserved for royalty in some cultures) was under the royal robes.

<sup>3</sup> The root of this word is *יהד*, related to *חוֹרָב*, Judean or Jew. The word is reflexive so it signifies making oneself Jewish or becoming Jewish.

<sup>1</sup> In the twelfth month, that's the month of Adar, on its thirteenth day, when *time* came

for the king's decree and law to be executed, when the Jews' enemies expected to have *the Jews* in their power—but *their plan* was overturned

as the Jews had their enemies in their power, hating them—

<sup>2</sup> the Jews gathered in their towns in all the provinces of King Achashverosh to attack those who sought their harm, and no one could withstand them because fear of *the Jews* fell on all the peoples.

<sup>3</sup> All the provincial leaders, premiers and governors and officers of the king's regime supported the Jews out of fear of Mordochai<sup>1</sup>

<sup>4</sup> since Mordochai was influential in the king's household and his reputation reached every province and this man Mordochai became more and more influential.

## Chapter 9

וּבְשְׁנִים עַשֶּׂר חֶדֶשׁ

הַוְאָדָר שָׁאָר

בְּשֶׁלֹּשֶׁה עַשֶּׂר יוֹם בּוֹ

אֲשֶׁר הִגִּיעַ

הַבְּרִכָּמֶל וְדָרְתָו לְהַעֲשָׂות

בְּיוֹם אֲשֶׁר שִׁבְרוּ אַיִבִי הַיְהוּדִים

לְשִׁלְוחֹת בָּהֶם

וּנְהַפּוֹךְ דָוָא

אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁלַׂטוּ תְּיִהוּדִים הַמֶּה

בְּשְׁנִיאָרֶהֶם

נִקְהָלָיו תְּיִהוּדִים בְּעִירִים

בְּכָל־מִדְנָנוֹת

הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ

לְשִׁלְוחֹת ذֶ בְּמִבְּקָשֵׁי רַעַתָּם

וְאִישׁ לֹא־עָמַד לְפִנֵּיהם

קִינְנָפֶל פְּחַדְםָ

עַל־כָּל־הָעָםִים

וְכָל־שָׁרֵי הַמִּדְינּוֹת

וְהַאֲחַשְׁדָרְפָּנִים וְתִפְחָותִים

וְעַשְׂיִים הַמְלָאָכָה אֲשֶׁר לְמֶלֶךְ

מְנָשָׂאִים אֶת־תְּיִהוּדִים

קִינְנָפֶל פְּחַד־מְרָאָכִי עַלְיָהֶם

קִינְנָפֶל מְרָאָכִי

בְּבֵית הַמֶּלֶךְ

וְשֶׁמְעוֹן הַוְלֵךְ בְּכָל־הַמִּדְינוֹת

קִינְנָפֶל מְרָאָכִי

הַוְלֵךְ וְגַדּוֹל

Uvishneim asar chodesh,

hu chodesh Adar,

bishlosha asar yom bo,

asher higi'ah

devar hamelech vedato lehe'asot,

bayom asher sibru oyvei haYehudim

lishlot bahem,

venahafoch hu,

asher yishletu haYehudim hemah

besoneihem—

nikhalu haYehudim be'areihem

bechol medinot

hamelech Achashverosh

lishlo'ach yad bimvakshai ra'atam,

ve'ish lo amad lifneihem

ki nafal pachdam

al kol ha'aimim.

Vechol sarei hamedinot

vaha'achashdarpenim vehapachot

ve'osei hamlachah asher lamelech

menasim et haYehudim

ki nafal pachad Mordochai aleihem

ki gadol Mordochai

beveit hamelech

veshamo holech bechol hamdinot

ki ha'ish Mordochai

holech vegadol.

כ

<sup>1</sup> “For terror of Mordochai had fallen upon them.”

<sup>5</sup> The Jews struck all their enemies with sword strokes, death and destruction and dealt with their enemies as they wished.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>6</sup> In Shushan town the Jews killed and destroyed five hundred people.

<sup>7</sup> Parshandata and Dalfon and Aspata  
<sup>8</sup> and Porata and Adalya and Aridata  
<sup>9</sup> and Parmashta and Arisai and Aridai and Vaizata

<sup>10</sup> the ten sons of Haman, son of Hamdata, the Jews' enemy, they killed, but they didn't touch any spoil.

<sup>11</sup> That day the count was brought—those killed in Shushan town—to the king's attention.

**וַיָּקֹם הַיְהוּדִים בְּכָל־אֶבְיוֹנָם**  
**מִפְתָּחָרֶב וְהַרְגֵּג וְאַבְדָּן**  
**וְעִשּׂוֹ בְּשָׂנָאָתָם**  
**כְּרִצּוֹנָם**  
**וּבְשִׁוּשָׁן הַבִּירָה**  
**הָרְגוּ הַיְהוּדִים וְאָבֵד**  
**חַמְשׁ מֵאוֹת אִישׁ**  
**וְאַתָּה | פְּרַשְׁנָדָתָא**  
**וְאַתָּה | דָּלְפָן**  
**וְאַתָּה | אַסְפָּתָא**  
**וְאַתָּה | פּוֹרָתָא**  
**וְאַתָּה | אַדְלָיאָא**  
**וְאַתָּה | אַרְידָתָא**  
**וְאַתָּה | פְּרִמְשָׁתָא**  
**וְאַתָּה | אַרְיִסִּי**  
**וְאַתָּה | אַרְדָּי**  
**וְאַתָּה | וַיְזָתָא**  
**עֲשָׂרֶת בְּנֵי הָמָן בְּרַחַם הַמֶּלֶךְ**  
**צִדְרָה הַיְהוּדִים הָרָגָנוּ**  
**וּבְבָזָה לֹא שָׁלַחֲוּ אֶת־יָדָם**  
**בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא בָּא מִסְפָּר**  
**הַהֲרָגִים בּוֹשְׁעָן הַבִּירָה**  
**לְפָנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ**

Vayaku haYehudim bechol oyveihem makat cherev vehereg ve'avdan vaya'asu vesoneihem kirtzonam.  
UveShushan habirah hargu haYehudim ve'abed chamesh me'ot ish.  
Ve'et Parshandata ve'et Dalfon ve'et Aspata ve'et Porata ve'et Adalya ve'et Aridata ve'et Parmashta ve'et Arisai ve'et Aridai ve'et Vaizata  
aseret benei Haman ben Hamdata, tzorer haYehudim, haragu, uvabizah lo shal'chu et yadam.  
Bayom hahu bah mispar haharugim beShushan habirah lifnei hamelech.

ס

<sup>1</sup> As the enemies wanted to treat the Jews or as the Jews wished to treat their enemies, or both.

<sup>12</sup> The king said to Queen Ester, “In Shushan town the Jews killed and destroyed five hundred people and Haman’s ten sons. In the other royal provinces, what have they done?

What is your request? It’s yours! Whatever else you want will be done.”

<sup>13</sup> Ester said, “If the king approves let tomorrow too be granted to the Jews in Shushan to continue today’s regulation,<sup>1</sup> and as for Haman’s ten sons, let them hang them on a gibbet.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>14</sup> The king ordered this to be done, the regulation was delivered in Shushan and they hanged up Haman’s ten sons.

<sup>15</sup> The Jews assembled, those in Shushan, also on the fourteenth of the month of Adar and killed in Shushan three hundred *more* people, but they didn’t touch any spoil.

וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ לְאֶسְתֵּר הַמֶּלֶךְ  
 בְּשִׁשְׁׁן הַבִּירָה  
 קָרְנוֹן הַיְהוּדִים וְאֶבֶן  
 חַמֵּשׁ מֵאוֹת אִישׁ  
 וְאֶת עֲשָׂרֶת בְּנֵי-חָמָן  
 בְּשַׁאֲרַ מְדִינּוֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ  
 מִתְּהַעַשׂ  
 וּמִה-שָׁאַלְתָּךְ וַיַּגְּתָן לְךָ  
 וּמִה-בְּקַשְׁתָּךְ עַד וְתַעֲשֶׂ  
 וַיֹּאמֶר אֶסְתֵּר אֶם-עַל-הַמֶּלֶךְ טוֹב  
 נִתְּנָהּ גַּם-מַחַר  
 לִי-יְהוּדִים אֲשֶׁר בְּשִׁשְׁׁן  
 לְעַשְׂוֹת כְּדַת הַיּוֹם  
 וְאֶת עֲשָׂרֶת בְּנֵי-חָמָן  
 יִתְּלַעֲלֵל-הַעַץ  
 וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ לְהַעֲשֹׂות כֵּן  
 וַיַּגְּתָן הַתְּבִשּׁוֹן  
 וְאֶת עֲשָׂרֶת בְּנֵי-חָמָן תָּלֻ  
 וַיַּקְהַלְלֵי הַיְהוּדִים  
 אֲשֶׁר-בְּשִׁשְׁׁן  
 נִסְמָה בְּיּוֹם אַרְבָּעָה עָשָׂר  
 לְתַהְרֵשׁ אֶדֶר  
 וַיַּהֲרֹגֵן בְּשִׁשְׁׁן  
 שְׁלֹשׁ מֵאוֹת אִישׁ  
 וּבְבָזָה לֹא שָׁלַחַ וְאֶת-יְהוּדִים

Vayomer hamelech leEster hamalka, “BeShushan habira hargu haYehudim ve’abed chamesh me’ot ish ve’et aseret benei Haman. Bish’ar medinot hamelech meh asu? Umah she’elatech, veyinaten lach, umah bakashatech od, vete’as.” Vatomer Ester, “Im al hamelech tov yinaten gam machar laYehudim asher beShushan la’asot kedat hayom, ve’et aseret benei Haman yitlu al ha’etz.” Vayomer hamelech lehe’asot ken vatinaten dat beShushan ve’et aseret benei Haman talu. Vayikahalu haYehudim asher beShushan gam beyom arba’ah asar lechodesh Adar vayahargu veShushan shelosh me’ot ish, uvabizah lo shal’chu et yadam.

<sup>1</sup> The Jews had authority to defend themselves only on a single day (8:10-12).

<sup>2</sup> I assume a gallows is for hanging someone as capital punishment, while a gibbet is for displaying the body of an executed person. We don’t know if Haman’s sons were complicit in his evil, but Rule 1 for a king is to eliminate threats, and male children hungry for revenge would be a threat. Sorry, lads. “Let them hang them” could mean that someone not mentioned would handle the hanging or it could mean that the Jews are going to hang them up, despite the Torah’s command to bury a criminal in Israel before dark (Deut. 21:23).

<sup>3</sup> A manuscript would have the unusual spelling הַיְהוּדִים.

<sup>16</sup> The rest of the Jews  
in the king's provinces  
assembled for their own defense<sup>1</sup>  
and *for* respite from their enemies  
and killed of their adversaries  
seventy-five thousand—  
but they didn't touch any spoil—  
<sup>17</sup> on the thirteenth day of *Adar*.  
They stopped on the fourteenth  
and made it a day of drinking and joy.<sup>2</sup>  
<sup>18</sup> But the Jews of Shushan  
assembled on the thirteenth of *Adar*  
and on the fourteenth of *Adar*  
and stopped on its fifteenth day  
and made it a day of drinking and joy.  
<sup>19</sup> That's why the dispersed Jews  
who live in scattered towns  
make the fourteenth day  
of the month of *Adar*  
joy and drinking, a festive day,  
and sharing food with neighbors.<sup>4</sup>

וְשָׂאָר הַיְהוּדִים  
אֲשֶׁר בִּמְדִינּוֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ  
נִקְהָלוּ וְעָמַד עַל-נַּפְשָׁם  
וְנוֹחַ מִאֲבִיהֶם  
וְהָרָג בְּשָׂאִירֶם  
חָמִשָּׁה וְשָׁבָעִים אֱלֹפֶת  
וּבְבָזָה לֹא שָׁלַח אֶת-יְדָם  
בַּיּוֹם-שְׁלַשָּׁה עָשָׂר לְחַדְשָׁ אָדָר  
וְנוֹחַ בְּאַרְבָּעָה עָשָׂר בּוֹ  
וְעַשְׂתָּה אָתָּו יּוֹם מִשְׁתָּחָה וִשְׁמִיחָה  
וְהַיְהוּדִים אֲשֶׁר-בְּשׁוֹשָׁן  
נִקְהָלוּ בְּשְׁלַשָּׁה עָשָׂר בּוֹ  
וּבְאַרְבָּעָה עָשָׂר בּוֹ  
וְנוֹחַ בְּחָמִשָּׁה עָשָׂר בּוֹ  
וְעַשְׂתָּה אָתָּו יּוֹם מִשְׁתָּחָה וִשְׁמִיחָה  
עַל-כֵּן הַיְהוּדִים הַפְּרָזִים  
הַיּוֹשְׁבִים בְּעִירֵי הַפְּרָזּוֹת  
עָשִׂים אָתָּו יּוֹם אַרְבָּעָה עָשָׂר  
לְחַדְשָׁ אָדָר  
שִׁמְחָה וּמִשְׁתָּחָה וּיּוֹם טּוֹב  
וּמִשְׁלֹוחָה מְנוֹת אִישׁ לַרְעָשוֹ

ב

<sup>1</sup> “they assembled and standing up for their lives.” In this section the Hebrew uses some gerunds or infinitive forms where we would use verbs—“standing” for “they stood,” “killing” for “they killed,” “resting” for “they stopped.”

<sup>2</sup> Only in Shushan were the Jews allowed to continue the killing, as Ester requested in verse 13..

<sup>3</sup> A manuscript would have the unusual spelling **וְהַיְהוּדִים**.

<sup>4</sup> “And sending portions of *food* to their neighbors/friends.” They may have sent some delicacy from their festive table to the next door neighbor, with much less preparation than the widespread custom today.

<sup>5</sup> A manuscript would have the unusual spelling **הַפְּרָזִים**.

<sup>20</sup> Mordochai wrote these matters and sent letters to all the Jews in all the provinces of King Achashverosh, near and far, <sup>21</sup> to establish that they should observe the fourteenth day of Adar and its fifteenth day year after year

<sup>22</sup> as the days when they found relief, the Jews, from their enemies and the month which was changed for them from misery to joy, mourning to festival; to observe them as days of drinking and joy and sharing food with neighbors and donations to the poor.

<sup>23</sup> The Jews accepted as an obligation what they had started to do and what Mordochai wrote to them, <sup>24</sup> that Haman the son of Hamdata the Agagite, a menace to all Jews, plotted against the Jews, to destroy them, and had “Pur” tossed—that’s like a die—<sup>1</sup> to alarm and destroy them,

וַיַּכְתֵּב מְרֹדְכָּי אֶת־הַדְּבָרִים הָאָלֶה וַיַּשְׁלַח סִפְרִים אֲלֵל־יְהוּדָה וְהַקְּרֹבוֹת וְהַרְחֹקִים לְקִינּוֹם עַלְיָהֶם לְהִנּוֹת עַשְׁיוֹת לְאַתְּ יוֹם אַרְבָּעָה עַשְׁר לְחַדֵּשׁ אָדָר וְאַתְּ יוֹם־חַמִשָּׁה עַשְׁר בָּבוֹ בְּכָל־שָׁנָה וְשָׁנָה כִּינּוֹמִים אֲשֶׁר־לָהוּ בְּהָמָם תְּנִיהּוּדִים מִאָוְיִהְבָּם וְהַחְדֵשׁ אֲשֶׁר נְהַפֵּךְ לָהֶם מִינּוֹן לְשִׁמְחָה וּמִאָבֵל לִיּוֹם טֹב לְעַשְׂוֹת אָוָתָם יְמֵי מִשְׁתָּה וְשִׁמְחָה וּמִשְׁלֹחוֹת מְנוֹת אִישׁ לְרַעְיוֹן וּמִתְּנִנוֹת לְאַכְיוֹנוֹם וּקְבִּיל הַיְהוּדִים אַתְּ אֲשֶׁר־קָתַב מְרֹדְכָּי אֶלְيָהֶם וְאַתְּ אֲשֶׁר־קָתַב מְרֹדְכָּי אֶלְיָהֶם כֹּה מִן בּוֹהַמְּרֹחָה הָאָנָגִי צָרֵר כָּל־יְהוּדִים חָשַׁב עַל־יְהוּדִים לְאַבְדָּם וְהַפִּיל פּוֹרְקָה הַגּוֹרָל לְהַקְּפָם וּלְאַבְדָּם

Vayichtov Mordochai et hadvarim ha'eleh vayishlach sfarim el kol haYehudim asher bechol medinot hamelech Achashverosh, hakrovim veharechokim, lekayem alehem liheyot osim et yom arba'ah asar lechodesh Adar ve'et yom chamishah asar bo bechol shana veshana kayamim asher nachu vahem haYehudim me'oyveihem vehachodesh asher nehpach lahem miyagon lesimchah ume'evel leyom tov; la'asot otam yemei mishteh vesimchah umishlo'ach manot ish lere'chu umatanot la'evyonim. Vekibel haYehudim et asher hechelu la'asot ve'et asher katav Mordochai aleihem ki Haman ben Hamdata ha'Agagi, tzorer kol haYehudim, chashav al haYehudim le'abdam, vehipil Pur—hu hagoral—lehumam ule'abdam,

<sup>1</sup> “And had thrown Pur, that is lot.” The lot (goral/וּרְלִי) is something small used for making decisions. Aaron cast a lot to choose between the two goats on Yom Kippur; the land of Israel was to be divided by lot. Some people think the ancients used small pebbles somehow. Maybe Haman had a calendar and had his augury

<sup>25</sup> but when *Ester* came<sup>1</sup> before the king the king said about the letter of *Haman*, “Let his evil plot come right back—that he plotted against the Jews—on his head,” so they hanged *Haman* and his sons on the gallows.

<sup>26</sup> That’s why they named these days “Purim,” using the word “Pur.” So in view of all the matters *recorded* in this letter and *in view of* what they saw of *the matter* and what happened to them, <sup>27</sup> the Jews established and accepted for themselves and their descendants and anyone who joined their community<sup>2</sup>—and this won’t expire—to spend<sup>3</sup> these two days as *the instructions* were written and on the exact dates every year.

ובבָאָתֶל פְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ  
**אָמַר עַמְּדָה פֶּרֶר**  
**יִשְׁבֵּב מַחְשַׁבְתּוֹ הַרְעָה**  
**אֲשֶׁר-חָשַׁב עַל-יְהוּדִים**  
**עַל-רָאשׁוֹ**  
**וַתַּלְוְא אֹתוֹ וְאֶת-בָּנוֹ**  
**עַל-הַעַזְזָעָה**  
**עַל-כֵּן קָרָא לִיְלִים הָאֶלָּה**  
**פּוּרִים עַל-שֵׁם הַפּוֹרֶר**  
**עַל-כֵּן עַל-כָּל-דָּבָרִי**  
**הַאֲגָרָת הַזֹּאת**  
**וּמְהַרְאָא עַל-פְּכַחָה**  
**וּמְהַגֵּעַ אֶל-הָם**  
**קִימּוֹ וּקְבִּילּוֹ הַיְהוּדִים**  
**עַל-הָם וּעַל-זָרָם**  
**וּעַל-כָּל-תְּנִלְבִּים עַל-הָם**  
**וְלֹא יַעֲבֹר**  
**לְהֻנּוֹת עַשְׁים**  
**אַתְּ שְׁנֵי הַיּוֹמִים הָאֶלָּה**  
**כְּכַתְבֵּם**  
**וּכְזִמְנֵם**  
**בְּכָל-שָׁנָה וּשָׁנָה**

uvevo’ah lifnei hamelech,  
amar im hasefer,  
“Yashuv machashavto hara’ah  
asher chashav al haYehudim  
al rosho!”  
Vetalu oto ve’et banav  
al ha’etz.  
Al ken karu layamim ha’eleh  
Furim, al shem haPur.  
Al ken al kol divrei  
ha’igeret hazot  
umah ra’u al kachah  
umah higi’ah aleihem  
kimu vekiblu haYehudim  
aleihem ve’al zaram  
ve’al kol nilvim aleihem,  
velo ya’avor,  
liheyot osim  
et shnei hayamim ha’eleh  
kich’tavam  
vechizmanam  
bechol shanah veshanah.

experts toss a pebble to pick a propitious date for destroying Jews. The closest thing today would be one of a pair of dice, often tossed with fervent prayers to Lady Luck, a notoriously fickle divinity.

<sup>1</sup> The Hebrew says “and when she came” without mentioning *Ester* by name, a rather surprising omission by modern standards of storytelling.

<sup>2</sup> “All who accompanied them.”

<sup>3</sup> “To be doing”

<sup>4</sup> A manuscript has the reading וּקְבִּיל, singular instead of plural, as in verse 23.

<sup>28</sup> These days *are to be* commemorated and observed in every generation, every family, every province, and every town, and *observance* of these Purim days will never pass away from among the Jews, and their commemoration will not cease for their descendants.

<sup>29</sup> Queen Ester wrote (Avichayil's daughter), and Mordochai the Jew, with all *their* authority, to confirm this second Purim letter.

<sup>30</sup> He sent letters to all the Jews, to the 127 provinces of Achashverosh' realm, matters of peace and truth, <sup>31</sup> to establish these days of Purim on their exact dates as they established for these *days*— Mordochai the Jew and Queen Ester—and as *all the Jews* confirmed for themselves and their descendants, matters of fasting and their wailing.<sup>1</sup>

וְהַיָּמִים הָאֶלָּה  
נוֹכְלִים וּנוּשָׂמִים  
בְּכָל־דָּוָר וּדָוָר  
מִשְׁפָחָה וּמִשְׁפָחָה  
מִדִּינָה וּמִדִּינָה  
וּשְׂעִיר וּשְׂעִיר  
וַיְמִי הַפּוּרִים הָאֶלָּה  
לֹא יָבֹרֶךְ  
מוֹתוֹךְ הַיְהוּדִים  
וּזְכָרְם  
לְאִיסּוֹף מִזְרָעָם

Vehayamim ha'eleh  
nizkarim vena'asim  
bechol dor vador,  
mishpacha umishpacha,  
medina umedina  
ve'ir va'ir,  
vimei haPurim ha'eleh  
lo ya'avru  
mitoch haYehudim,  
vezichram  
lo yasuf mizaram.

וְתַכְתֵּב אֲסֵתֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ  
בְּתַאֲבִיכָּתְּיַל  
וּמְרֹדְכָּי הַיְהוּדִי  
אֶת־כָּל־תַּקְפָּה לְקֹנֶם  
אֶת אָנֹרֶת הַפּוּרִים הָזֹאת הַשְׁנִית  
וַיַּשְׁלַח סְפָרִים אֶל־כָּל־הָיְהוּדִים  
אֶל־שְׁבֻעָה וּשְׁשָׁרִים וּמֵאָה מִדִּינָה  
מִלְכּוֹת אַחֲשְׁוֹרֹשׁ  
הַבָּרִי שָׁלֹם וְאֶמֶת  
לְקֹנֶם אֶת יְמִי הַפּוּרִים הָאֶלָּה  
בָּזְמַנֵּיהֶם  
כַּאֲשֶׁר קִיּוּם עַל יְהָוָה  
מְרֹדְכָּי הַיְהוּדִי  
וְאֲסֵתֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ  
וְכַאֲשֶׁר קִימֵי  
עַל נַפְשָׁם וּעַל זָרָעָם  
הַבָּרִי הַצְּמֹת וּזְקָתָם

Vatichtov Ester hamalkah  
vat Avichayil  
uMordochai haYehudi  
et kol tokef, lekayem  
et igeret haPurim hazot hashenit.  
Vayishlach sfarim el kol haYehudim,  
el sheva ve'esrim ume'ah medina  
mal'chut Achashverosh,  
divrei shalom ve'emet,  
lekayem et yemei haPurim ha'eleh  
bizmaneihem,  
ka'asher kiyam aleihem  
Mordochai haYehudi  
ve'Ester hamalkah,  
vecha'asher kimu  
al nafsham ve'al zaram,  
divrei hatzomot veza'akatam.

<sup>1</sup> What? You thought it was all about drinking and merriment? Finally we're told to remember the distress that preceded the relief.

<sup>32</sup> Ester's announcement confirmed these matters of Purim, and it was written in a book.<sup>1</sup>

וּמְאָמֵר אֲסֵתֶר קָיָם  
דְּבָרָיו הַפָּרִים הַאֲלָהָה  
וּנְכַתֵּב בְּסִפְרָה

פ

## Chapter 10

וַיַּשְׂמַח הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲחַשְׁוֹרוֹשׁ  
מִסְעַל-הָאָרֶץ וְאֵiyִ חַיִם  
וְכָל-מִעֵשָׂה  
תָּכְפֹּן וְגַבְרוֹתָו  
וּפְרִשְׁתָּגְדִּלָת מְרֻדָּלִי  
אֲשֶׁר נִדְלָו הַמֶּלֶךְ  
בְּלוֹא-הַמְּכֹנֶם בְּתוּבִים  
עַל-סִפְרָה דְּבָרָיו הַיָּמִים  
לְפָלֵלִי מָדָי וּפְרָסָה

Vayasem hamelech Achashverosh mas al ha'aretz ve'iyei hayam. Vechol ma'aseh tokpo ugevurato, ufarashat gedulat Mordochai asher gidlo hamelech, halo hem ketuvim al sefer diei hayamim lemal'chei Madai uFaras?

<sup>3</sup> For Mordochai the Jew was second to King Achashverosh, a great man among the Jews and well received by most of<sup>4</sup> his fellow-Jews, seeking the welfare of his people with a message of peace for all its members.<sup>5</sup>

כִּי אִ מְרֻדָּכִי הַיְהוּדִי  
מִשְׁנַה לְמֶלֶךְ אֲחַשְׁוֹרוֹשׁ  
וּגְדוֹלֵל לְיְהוּדִים  
וְרַצְ�חֵי לְרַב אֲחָיו  
דָּרְשׁ טֹב לְעַמּוֹ  
וּדְבָרָ שְׁלֹום לְכָל-זָרָעוֹ

Ki Mordochai haYehudi mishneh laMelech Achashverosh vegadol laYehudim veratzui lerov echav, doresh tov le'amo vedover shalom lechol zaro.

<sup>1</sup> In ancient times, when writing was more laborious than in these days of cut and paste, the written word was regarded with much greater respect. This wasn't always good since people were reluctant to discard disproven ideas.

<sup>2</sup> Did we mention taxation as one of the rules of government?

<sup>3</sup> A manuscript has the unusual spelling אֲחַשְׁרֹשׁ.

<sup>4</sup> Or "by the multitude of," but "most of" seems more believable since eminence attracts detractors, even among us Jews.

<sup>5</sup> "And speaking peace to all its (or his) seed/descendants."

The Best Song

שיר השירים

SPS Draft

## The Best Song • שיר השירים • Shir HaShirim

This poem is a conversation between two lovers. The translation uses this font for the “male” voice, this font for the “female” voice, and this font for other voices. “Male” and “female” are in quotation marks because Jewish tradition understands this poem as an expression of love between God and the Jewish people, perhaps a wise reminder that physical and emotional desire are part of love but only part.

### Chapter 1

<sup>1</sup>The best song of all, by Solomon:<sup>1</sup>

<sup>2</sup>Let him kiss me, kisses from his lips,  
since your love is better than wine.

<sup>3</sup>For fragrance your lotions are prized—  
like such a lotion, out pours your name—  
that’s why women desire you.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>4</sup>Take me with you, let’s run.  
(The king has brought me to his rooms—  
he says, “Let’s have fun and play with you.”)  
Let’s speak of your love more than wine;  
they love you honorably.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>5</sup>I’m dark, but lovely,  
daughters of Jerusalem,  
like the tents of Kedar<sup>4</sup>  
like the fabrics of Solomon.

שיר השירים אשר לשלמה

ישקני מנסיקות פיהו

קי טובים לך מיאין

לרי'ח שמניך טובים

שמנן טורק שמאח

על-ken עלנות אהבה

משכני אחראך נרטזה

הכיאני הפלך חדראוי

נגילה ונשמחה בך

נזקירה דליך מיאין

מיישרים אהבה

שchorah ani venavah

benot Yerushalayim

ke'oholei Kedar

כיריעות שלמה

Shir hashirim, asher liShlomo:

Yishakeni minshikot pihu

ki tovim dodecha miyayin.

Lere'ach shemanecha tovim,

shemen turak shemecha;

al ken alamot ahevecha.

Mashcheni acharecha, narutzah

(hevi'ani hamelech chadarav—

“nagilah venismechah bach.”)

Nazkirah dodecha miyayin;

meisharim ahevacha.

Shechorah ani venavah,

benot Yerushalayim,

ke'oholei Kedar,

kayeri'ot Shelomo.

<sup>1</sup> “The song of songs, which *is* for/by Solomon.” “Song of songs” could simply be a superlative, like “wonder of wonders, miracle of miracles” in *Fiddler on the Roof*. Solomon is usually thought to be the author, but maybe someone wrote it for him or dedicated it to him; the Hebrew allows any of these. Was this Solomon the famous wise king who impressed the Queen of Sheba? Maybe he would have had more sense than to write this down. Imagine you had an Uncle Sol who wrote this kind of stuff; you’d never be able to eat your auntie’s cooking without wondering what the two of them had been doing before you showed up.

<sup>2</sup> “For the smell your oils *are* fine—*like such* oil is-poured-out your name—for which marriageable-girls love you.” There’s a pun on name/shem and oil/shemen. In this verse, she says he’s known for being hot, hot, hot!

<sup>3</sup> Line 1 is addressed to a male, line 3 to a female (though Biblical Hebrew is looser about gender than modern English), and “they” in line 5 might refer to the women who find this guy so hot.

<sup>4</sup> Ishmael’s son, Gen. 25:13. Since sources for fabric such as wool are whitish, getting them dark takes effort and presumably raises their value. In the same way, the poet says, white skin is no particular prize.

<sup>6</sup>Don't stare at me because I'm black,  
because the sun has scorched me;  
my mother's children were irked at me,  
so they made me tend the vineyards.  
My own vineyard I haven't tended.

<sup>7</sup>Tell me, my heart's desire,  
where will you graze,  
where lie down at noon;  
why should I be  
like someone who covers *herself*  
because of your friend's flocks?<sup>1</sup>

<sup>8</sup>If you don't know *the way*,  
lovely lady,  
follow the tracks of the flock  
and pasture your *flock of kids*  
by the shepherds' huts.

<sup>9</sup>To my *fine* mare, *fit* for Pharaoh's chariots,<sup>2</sup>  
have I likened you, my love.

<sup>10</sup>Lovely as doves<sup>3</sup> are your cheeks,  
your neck as *pearl* necklaces.

<sup>11</sup>We shall make you golden ropes  
with silver spangles,

אַל-תְּרַאַנִי שָׁאַנִי שְׁחַרְחֹרֶת  
שְׁשֵׁזְפָתַנִי הַשְׁמֵשׁ  
בְּנֵי אֲמִי נְחָרָבִי  
שָׁמַנִי נְטוֹרָה אַתְּהַכְּרָמִים  
כְּרָמִי שְׁלֵי לֹא נְטָרָתִי  
הַגִּידָה לְיִשְׁאָהָבָה נְפָשִׁי  
אִיכָּה תְּרַלָּה  
אִיכָּה תְּרַבְּצִין בְּאַחֲרִים  
שְׁלָמָה אֲדִיָּה  
כְּעַטְפָה  
עַל עֲדָרִי תְּבִרְךִּיךְ  
אִם-לֹא תְּדַעַי לְךָ  
תִּנְפַּח בְּנִשְׁים  
צְאַיְלָךְ בְּעַקְבִּי הַצָּאן  
וּרְעֵי אַתְּהָרִי תְּוֹךְ  
עַל מִשְׁכְּנֹות הַחֲרִיעִים  
לְסָסְתִּי בְּרַכְבִּי פֶּרֶשָׁה  
הַמְּרוֹזִיךְ רַעֲנִין  
נָאָנוּ לְחַנִּיךְ בְּתָרִים  
צְנוֹאָרָךְ בְּחַרְוּיִים  
תּוֹרֵי וְהַבְּנֵשָׁה-לְךָ  
עַם נְקֻדּוֹת הַכְּסִיף

Al tiruni she'ani shecharchoret,  
sheshezafatni hashamesh.  
Benei imi nicharu vi,  
samuni noterah et hakramim.  
Karmi sheli lo natarti.  
Hagidah li, she'ahavah nafshi,  
eicha tireh?  
Eicha tarbitz batzohorayim?  
Shalamah eh'yeh  
ke'otyah  
al edrei chaveracha?  
Im lo ted'i lach,  
hayafah banishim,  
tze'i lach be'ikvei hatzon  
ure'i et gediyotayich  
al mishkenot haro'im.  
Lesusati berichvei Faro  
dimitich, rayati.  
Navu lechayayich batorim,  
tzavarech bacharuzim.  
Torei zahav na'aseh lach,  
im nekudot hakasef.

<sup>1</sup> “Tell me, whom my soul/person loves, where you will graze, where lie down at noon; for why should I be like one who covers (or wraps *myself*) because of (or upon) the flocks of your friend?” This verse seems difficult. Presumably, she wants him to graze on her; if someone else's “flock” shows up to graze, she'll cover up.

<sup>2</sup> Often translated as “a company of horses among Pharaoh's chariots,” סְעִתִי seems to mean “my female horse,” while בְּרַכְבִּי פֶּרֶשָׁה means “in/with/among the chariots/conveyances of Pharaoh.” Presumably, Egyptian horses were prized in ancient times, and that's why the Torah forbids a king of Israel from collecting them (Deut 17:16). Mares, more manageable than stallions, might have drawn chariots.

<sup>3</sup> תַּרְ is often translated as a row (“strings of jewels”), so that both images in the verse are of strings of jewels, and this meaning is in verse 10. However, most agree that in 2:12 תַּרְ means dove. Maybe in this verse the cheeks are praised for being soft like doves, the neck for being unimproved by adornment.

<sup>12</sup> until the king is within his circle of friends,  
and my perfume yields its fragrance.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>13</sup> To me, my beloved is a bundle of myrrh,  
to spend the night between my breasts.

<sup>14</sup> To me, my beloved is a cluster of henna<sup>2</sup>  
in the vineyards of Ein Gedi.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>15</sup> You are beautiful, my love,  
beautiful with eyes that are doves.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>16</sup> You are beautiful and kind  
and our bed is luxuriantly green.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Cedar trees are the beams of our house,  
and our rafters are fir trees.

<sup>1</sup> I am the rose of the Sharon region,  
lily of the valleys.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Like a lily among thorns,  
so is my love among the other girls.

**עד-שְׁהָמֶלֶךְ בְּמִסְבּוֹן**  
גְּרָדִי נָתָן רֵיחַ  
**צְרוֹר הַמָּר | דָׂדִי לִי**  
בֵּין שָׁדָי לִי  
**אַשְׁכָּל הַכְּפָר | דָׂדִי לִי**  
בְּכַרְמֵי עֵין גֶּדִי  
הַנֶּאָה יָפָה רַעֲוָתִי  
הַנֶּאָה יָפָה עִינָּךְ יוֹנִים  
הַנֶּאָה יָפָה דָׂדִי אָרָה  
נָעַם אַרְעָשָׂנוּ  
רַעֲנָנוּ  
**קָרוֹת בְּתִינָה אַרְזִים**  
רַהַתְנוּ בְּרוֹתִים

Ad shehamelech bimsibo,  
nirdi natan reicho.  
Tzeror hamor dodi li;  
bein shadai yalin.  
Eshkol hakofer dodi li  
becharmei Ein Gedi.  
Hinach yafah, rayati;  
hinach yafah, einayich yonim.  
Hinach yafeh, dodi, af na'im;  
af arsenu ra'anana.  
Korot bateinu arazim,  
rahiteinu betorim.

## Chapter 2

**אָנָּי חַבְצֵלָת הַשָּׁרוֹן**  
שׁוֹשָׁנָת הַעֲמָקִים  
**כְּשׁוֹשָׁנָה בֵּין הַחֹוֹתָם**  
כֵּן רַעֲתָנוּ בֵּין הַבָּנוֹת

Ani chavatzelet haSharon,  
shoshanat ha'amakim.  
Keshoshanah bein hachochim,  
ken rayati bein habanot.

<sup>1</sup> The “king” and “circle,” the “perfume” and “fragrance” are all perhaps erotic symbols.

<sup>2</sup> Or “camphire,” another name for the plant from which cosmetic henna is derived. The word כְּפָר/kofer elsewhere means the odorous substance “pitch,” such as Noah used on his ark (Gen 6:14), or “ransom” (Ex 30:12).

<sup>3</sup> “Spring (water source) of the goat-kid” is a possible meaning for this place name.

<sup>4</sup> Dove-like eyes? Perhaps they are soft and kind, as we imagine doves to be; perhaps she has eyelashes that flutter like feathers; perhaps the whites of her eyes are white as doves.

<sup>5</sup> A bed such as Donne imagined in “The Ecstasy”: “Where, like a pillow on a bed / A pregnant bank swell’d up to rest / The violet’s reclining head, / Sat we two, one another’s best.”

<sup>6</sup> The “rose” may be a crocus or a saffron flower, the “lily” may be a rose. Unfortunately, it’s hard to be sure of the flowers mentioned.

<sup>3</sup>Like a fragrant fruit<sup>1</sup> among the forest trees,  
so is my love among the boys.

In his shade I took delight and found rest,  
and his fruit was sweet to my taste.

<sup>4</sup>He took me to the wine-bar,<sup>2</sup>  
and his banner<sup>3</sup> above me was love.

<sup>5</sup>Revive me with fruit bars,<sup>4</sup>  
sustain me with fragrant fruit,<sup>5</sup>  
for I am languishing for love.

<sup>6</sup>His left hand is beneath my head  
while his right hand embraces me.

<sup>7</sup>I've made you promise,  
daughters of Jerusalem,  
by the gazelles or the wild stags,<sup>6</sup>  
not to disturb or rouse  
my love until it's eager.

<sup>8</sup>The sound of my love; here he comes,  
leaping over the mountains,  
jumping over the hills.

**קְתַפְתִּי בְעֵצֵי הַעֲרָר**  
**כִּי דָוִדִּי בֵּין הַבָּנִים**

**בְּצִלּוֹ חִמְדָתִי וַיְשַׁבְּתִי**  
**וּפְרִיוֹ מַתּוֹקֶלֶתִי**

**הַבָּאָנוֹ אֶל-בֵּיתִ הַיּוֹן**  
**וּרְנוֹלֹעַ עַלְיָהָהָה**

**סְמָלְנוּ בְאֲשִׁישׁוֹת**  
**רַפְדָּנוּ בְּתַפְוּחִים**

**כִּי-חֹלְלָתִ אַהֲבָהִי**  
**שְׁמָלוֹלֶתֶרֶת לְרָאשִׁי**

**וַיְמִינֵנוּ תְּחַבְּקָנִי**  
**הַשְׁבָּעָתִי אֶתְחָלֵם**

**בְּנָנוֹתִי יְרוּשָׁלָם**  
**בְּצַבָּאָותִי אָוֶן בְּאַיּוֹלּוֹתִ דְשָׂדָה**

**אִם-תְּקַרְרֹוּן וְאִם-תְּעַרְרֹוּן**  
**אֶת-הַאֲתָבָה עַד שְׁתַחַפֵּץ**

**קָולֶ דָוִדִי הַנְּדִזָה בָא**  
**מְדָלֶג עַל-הַחֲרִים**

**מְקַפֵּץ עַל-הַגְּבָעוֹת**  
**וַיְמִינֵנוּ תְּחַבְּקָנִי**

Ketapu'ach ba'atzei haya'ar,  
ken dodi bein habanim.

Betzilo chimadti veyawshavti,  
ufiryo matok lechiki.

Hevi'ani el beit hayayin,  
vediglo alai ahavah.

Sam'chuni ba'ashishot,  
rapduni batapuchim,

ki cholat ahavah ani.  
Semolo tachat leroshi

vimino techabkeni.  
Hishbati et'chem,

benot Yerushalayim,  
bitzva'ot o ve'aylot hasadeh,

im ta'iru ve'im te'orera  
et ha'ahavah ad shetechpatz!

Kol dodi, hineh zeh bah!  
Medaleg al heharim,

mekapetz al hagva'ot.

<sup>1</sup> “Fragrant fruit” is usually translated “apple” but the Hebrew root suggests fragrance. See note on 7:9.

<sup>2</sup> “House of wine.”

<sup>3</sup> What kind of banner was he waving? Perhaps it's whatever distinguished him from others.

<sup>4</sup> Perhaps cakes of pressed grapes or raisins, or cakes of flour—like modern protein bars. The Authorized Version translates as “flagons of wine.”

<sup>5</sup> Or, “support me with grape-cakes, spread me with fragrant fruit” (“fragrant fruit” is usually translated “apple” but the Hebrew root suggests fragrance). Perhaps she imagines herself recumbent and rendered fragrant below and above.

<sup>6</sup> The animals mentioned are uncertain.

<sup>9</sup> My love is like a gazelle,  
or a young deer.

Look, he stands behind our fence,  
peering through the gaps,  
glimpsed through the lattice.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>10</sup> My love spoke and told me,  
"Up, my dear, my beauty, and come

<sup>11</sup> "For see, winter is past,  
the rain is over and gone;

<sup>12</sup> sprouts appear on the ground,  
birdsong time has arrived,  
the dove's cooing<sup>2</sup> is heard in our land;

<sup>13</sup> the fig tree is ripening its unripe figs  
and the vine blossoms yield their aroma;  
up, my dear, my beauty, and come."

<sup>14</sup> My dove, in the clefts of the rock,  
in the secret *parts* of the *cliff* steps,  
show me your face  
and let me hear your voice,  
for your voice is pleasant  
and your appearance is lovely.

<sup>15</sup> Seize those foxes for us—  
little foxes  
destroy vines—  
for our vines are in blossom.

<sup>16</sup> My love is mine; I am his,  
as he grazes among the lilies.

דָׁמֶה דָׁדֵי לִצְבֵּי  
אוֹ לְעֵפֶר הַאַיִלִים

הַנְּהִזָּה עֹמֶד אַחֲרֵי קְתַלְנוֹ  
מְשֻׁנֵּת מִן-הַחֲלָנוֹת

מְצִיעֵז מִזְרָחָרְבִּים

עֲנָה דָׁדֵי וְאָמֵר לֵי

קַיְמֵי לְךָ רַעַיְוִי יָפֵתִי וְלִכְיַלְךָ

כִּירְהָנָה הַסְּטוּוֹן עַבְרָר

הַשְּׁשָׁם חַלָּף הַלָּךְ לֹוּ

הַנְּאָנָים נְרָאִי בָּאָרֶץ

עַתְּ הַזָּמִיר הַגְּנִיעֵץ

וְקוֹל הַתּוֹר נְשִׁמְעָה בָּאַרְצָנוּ

הַחֲנָה חַנְשָׁה פָּנִיה

וְהַגְּפִינִים סְמָדָר נְתָנוּ רִיחָה

קַיְמֵי לְךָ רַעַיְוִי יָפֵתִי וְלִכְיַלְךָ

יְוָנָה בְּחִנְנִי הַסְּלָעָה

בְּסָתָר הַמְּדֻרָּה

הַרְאִינִי אַתְּ-מַרְאִינִי

הַשְּׁמִיעִינִי אַתְּ-קַולְךָ

כִּי-קַולְךָ עַרְבָּה

וּמְרָאִיךָ נָאוּהָ

אַחֲזָזְלָנֶל שְׁוּעָלִים

שְׁוּעָלִים קְטָנִים

מְחַבְּלִים כְּרָמִים

וּכְרָמִינוּ סְמָדָר

דָׁדֵי לִי וְאָנִי לֹוּ

הַרְעָה בְּשֹׁשְׁנִים

Domeh dodi litzvi  
o le'of'er ha'ayalim.

Hineh zeh omed achar kotlenu,  
mashgi'ach mi hachalonot,  
metzitz min hacharakim.

Anad dodi ve'amar li,  
"Kumi lach, rayati, yafati, ulechi lach

"Ki hineh hastav avar,  
hageshem chalaf, halach lo;  
hanitzanim nir'u va'aretz,  
et zamir higi'ah,

vekol hator nishmah be'artzenu;  
hate'enah chan'tah fageha  
vehagfanim smadar natnu re'ach.

kumi lach, rayati, yafati, ulechi lach."

Yonati, bechagvei haselah,  
beseter hamadregah,

harini et marayich,  
hashmi'ini et kolech  
ki kolech arev

umarech naveh.

Echezu lanu shu'alim—  
shu'alim ketanim

mechablim keramim—  
ucheramenu semadar.

Dodi li va'ani lo,  
haro'eh bashoshanim.

<sup>1</sup> Presumably, a gazelle or deer is skittish, hard to bring inside the garden and not easy to see. The fence could be a wall; the gaps could be windows; "glimpsed" is probably related to the Hebrew root יָצַר, a fringe or plant shoot, something sticking out.

<sup>2</sup> "Sound," but the sound of a dove is cooing (or wing-flapping).

<sup>17</sup>Until day comes  
and shadows flee,  
turn, be like a gazelle, my love,  
or *like* a young deer  
on the ridge.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>On my bed at night  
I sought him whom I love;  
I sought him but did not find him.  
<sup>2</sup>Let me get up and go around town.  
Through the markets and streets  
I'll seek the one I love;  
I have sought him and not found him.  
<sup>3</sup>The guards found me—  
they go around town.  
“Have you seen him whom I love?”  
I had barely left them  
when I found the one I love.  
I held him and won't let go  
until I get him to my mother's house,  
into my mother's room.<sup>2</sup>  
<sup>5</sup>I've made you promise,  
daughters of Jerusalem,  
by the gazelles or the wild stags,<sup>3</sup>  
not to disturb or rouse  
my love until it's eager.

עד שיפוחה הַיּוֹם  
ונסוחצְלִים  
סְבִּדְמַהְלָקְדִּי לְצַבְּבִּי  
אוֹלְעֵפֶר הַאֲיָלִים  
עַל-הַגְּרִינְבָּתְרִי

Ad sheyafu'ach hayom  
venasu hatzlalim,  
sov, demeh lecha, dodi, litzvi  
o le'ofe ha'ayalim  
al harei vater.

### Chapter 3

עַל-מִשְׁקָבֵי בָּלִילּוֹת  
בְּקַשְׁתִּי אֶת שְׁאַהֲבָה נְפָשִׁי  
בְּקַשְׁתִּיו וְלֹא מַצְאָיו  
אֲקֻמָּה נָא וְאָסּוּבָה בְּעִיר  
בְּשִׁקְוּם וּבְרַחֲבוֹת  
אֲבַקְשָׁה אֶת שְׁאַהֲבָה נְפָשִׁי  
בְּקַשְׁתִּיו וְלֹא מַצְאָיו  
מַצְאָנוּ הַשּׁוֹמְרִים  
הַסְּבָכִים בְּעִיר  
אֶת שְׁאַהֲבָה נְפָשִׁי רְאִיתָם  
בְּנָעַט שֻׁעְבָּרְתִּי מֵהֶם  
עד שְׁמַמְצָאָתִי אֶת שְׁאַהֲבָה נְפָשִׁי  
אֲחַזְתִּיו וְלֹא אַרְפְּנִי  
עַד-שְׁהַבְּיִתְאַתִּי אֶל-בֵּית אַמְּרִי  
וְאֶל-חִדְרָה הַוְּרָתִי  
הַשְּׁבָעָתִי אֶתְכֶם  
בְּנוֹת יְרוּשָׁלָם  
בְּצָבָאות אוֹ בְּאַיּוֹת הַשְּׁדָה  
אִם-תְּעִירָוּ וְאִם-תְּעִרְרָוּ  
אֶת-הַאֲהָבָה עַד שְׁחַטְפֵּי

Al mishkavi baleilot  
bikashti et she'ahavah nafshi;  
bikashtiv velo metzativ.  
Akumah nah va'asovevah va'ir.  
Bash'vakim uvar'chovot  
avakshah et she'ahavah nafshi;  
bikashtiv velo metzativ.  
Metza'uni hashomrim  
hasovevim ba'ir.  
“Et she'ahavah nafshi re'item?”  
Kimat she'avarti mehem  
ad shematzati et she'ahavah nafshi.  
Achaztiv velo arpenu  
ad shehavetiv el bet imi  
ve'el cheder horati.  
Hishbati et'chem,  
benot Yerushalayim,  
bitzva'ot o be'aylot hasadeh,  
im ta'iru ve'im te'orera  
et ha'ahavah ad shetechpatz!

<sup>1</sup> בָּתָר can be related to a root for “divide,” and the hills that divide a landscape would be a ridge. Some understand בָּתָר to be a place, Bether (“the hills of Bether”) or the idea of distance (“the distant hills”).

<sup>2</sup> “And to the chamber of my parent/motherhood/pregnancy”; perhaps it means “the room where I'll get pregnant.”

<sup>3</sup> The animals mentioned are uncertain.

<sup>6</sup>Who is this, coming up from the desert  
looking like columns of smoke  
but perfumed with myrrh and frankincense,  
more *fragrant* than all merchants' powders.

<sup>7</sup>Look at his bed, *as fine as* Solomon's,  
surrounded by sixty warriors,  
*chosen* from the warriors of Israel.

<sup>8</sup>They all grasp their swords,  
schooled in war,  
each with his sword at the ready<sup>1</sup>  
for night-terrors.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>9</sup>King Solomon made himself a litter  
of Lebanon wood.

<sup>10</sup>Its uprights he made of silver,  
its base of gold,  
its throne of purple,  
its interior tiled with love  
from the daughters of Jerusalem.

<sup>11</sup>Daughters of Zion, come out and look  
at King Solomon  
in the crown his mother placed on him  
on his wedding day  
and on the day of his happiness.<sup>3</sup>

מֵזֹאת עָלָה מִן-הַמִּדְבָּר  
כְּתִימָרוֹת עָשָׁן  
מִקְטָרָת מָוֶר וְלִבְנוֹנָה  
מִכָּל אַבְקָת רֹכֶל  
הַגָּה מִתְחָתוֹ שְׁלִלְמָה  
שְׁשִׁים גִּבְּרִים סְכִיבָּה  
מִגְּבָרְיוֹ וְשִׁרְאָל  
כָּלָם אַחֲנוֹ חֶרֶב  
מַלְמָדִי מִלְ'חָמָה  
מִפְּחָד בְּלִילּוֹת  
אַפְּרִיּוֹן עָשָׁה לוֹ חַמְלָךְ שֶׁלְמָה  
מַעֲשֵׂי הַלְּבָנוֹן  
עַמּוֹדְיוֹ עָשָׁה כְּסֵף  
רְפִידָתָנוֹ זָהָב  
מַרְכָּבוֹ אַרְגָּמָן  
תוֹכוֹ רְצִוָּת אַהֲבָה  
מִבְּנָוֹת וּרְוֹשָׁלָם  
צְאַנְהָה וּוּרְאַנְהָה בְּנֹות צִיּוֹן  
בְּמַלְךְ שֶׁלְמָה  
בְּעַתְרָה שְׁעַטְרָה-לֹו אָמוֹן  
בְּיּוֹם חַתְנָה  
וּבְיּוֹם שְׁמִיחָה לְבּוֹ

Mi zot olah min hamidbar  
ketimarot ashan,  
mekuteret mor ulevonah  
mikol avkat rochel.  
Hineh mitato sheliShelomo:  
shishim giborim saviv lah  
migiborei Yisra'el.  
Kulam achuzei cherev,  
melumdei mil'chamah;  
ish charbo al yerecho  
mipachad baleilot.  
Apiryon asah lo hamelech Shelomoh  
me'atzei haLevanon.  
Amudav asah kesef,  
refidato zahav,  
merkavo argaman,  
tocho ratzuf ahavah  
mibnot Yerushalayim.  
Tzena urena, benot Tziyon,  
baMelech Shelomoh,  
ba'atarah she'itrah lo imo  
beyom chatunato  
uveyom simchat libo.

<sup>1</sup> “On his thigh”

<sup>2</sup> “From the fear of the nights”; a fear we often consider childish today was taken for granted in ancient times.

<sup>3</sup> Maybe she's talking about King Solomon or maybe she thinks her lover is as grand as King Solomon.

<sup>1</sup> You are beautiful, my love, beautiful.  
 Your eyes are doves,  
 peeping from your locks;  
 your hair like a flock of goats  
 skittering down Mount Gilead;

<sup>2</sup> Your teeth like a flock of sheared *sheep*  
 that came up from the washing station,  
 every one pregnant with twins,  
 none of them barren.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Like a scarlet thread are your lips  
 and your speech delightful;  
 your cheek is like a slice of pomegranate  
 covered by your hair.

<sup>4</sup> Like the Tower of David is your neck,  
 built of gleaming stones;  
 a thousand shields hang from it,  
 each for a warrior's armor.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Your two breasts are like two young fawns,  
 a pair of gazelles  
 browsing on lilies.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Until day breaks  
 and shadows have fled  
 I'll roam the mound of myrrh  
 and the hill of frankincense.<sup>4</sup>

## Chapter 4

הִנְחַ יָפָה רַעֲתִי הִנְחַ יָפָה  
 עַיְנַי כְּנָזִים  
 מִבְּעֵד לְצִפּוֹנָה  
 שָׁעֵרֶךְ כְּעֵדֶר הַעֲזִים  
 שְׁגָלְשָׁי מַהֲרֶךְ גַּלְעֵד  
 שְׁנַיְךְ כְּעֵדֶר הַקְּצָבוֹת  
 שְׁעָלָי מַוְּהָרָחְצָה  
 שְׁקָלָם מַתְאָמוֹת  
 וְשְׁכָלָה אֵין בָּהָם  
 כְּחַוטָּה שְׁנֵי שְׁפָתָיוֹת  
 וּמְרַבְּרִיךְ נָאָה  
 כְּפָלָח הַרְמֹן רַקְתָּה  
 מִבְּעֵד לְצִפּוֹנָה  
 כְּמַגְדָּל דָּוִיד צְוֹאָרָה  
 בְּנֵי לְתַלְפִּוּת  
 אֶלְף הַמְּגַנֵּן תְּלֵי עַלְיוֹ  
 כָּל שְׁלֵטִי הַגְּבוּרִים  
 שְׁנֵי שְׁדָךְ כְּשַׁנֵּי עֲבָדִים  
 הַאוּמֵי צְבִיה  
 הַרְוִוִּים בְּשֹׁוּשִׁים  
 עַד שְׁיִפּוֹתְּ הַיּוֹם  
 וְגַסְוִי הַצְלָלִים  
 אֶלְךְ לִי אֶלְעָגָר הַמּוֹר  
 וְאֶלְגַּבְעַת הַלְבּוֹנָה

Hinach yafah, rayati, hinach yafah.  
 Einayich yonim  
 miba'ad letzamatech;  
 sarech ke'eder ha'izim  
 shegalshu meHar Gilad.  
 Shinayich ke'eder haktzuvot  
 she'alu min harachtzah,  
 shekulam matimot  
 veshakulah ein bahem.  
 Kechut hashani siftotayich  
 umidbarech naveh  
 kefelach harimon rakatech  
 miba'ad letzamatech.  
 KeMigdal David tzavarech,  
 banui letalpiyot;  
 elef hamagen talui alav,  
 kol shiltei hagiborim.  
 Shenei shadayich kishnei ofarim,  
 te'umei tzeviya  
 haro'im bashoshanim.  
 As sheyafu'ach hayom  
 venasu hatzlalim  
 elech li el har hamor  
 ve'el givat halvonah.

<sup>1</sup> The idea of hair cascading down a mountainside—maybe that's okay. The teeth like pregnant sheep fresh from the sheep dip—well, maybe the romance isn't all a woman might wish, but the lover's fantasy is as fertile as can be.

<sup>2</sup> He loves every inch of her neck, and the necklace that adorns it.

<sup>3</sup> Soft, fair, fragrant and a little bouncy, I guess.

<sup>4</sup> A delicate way of saying he'll spend all night enjoying his fragrant beloved.

<sup>7</sup> You are altogether beautiful, my dear;  
you are flawless.

<sup>8</sup> O my bride—with me away from Lebanon,  
with me away from Lebanon—come!  
View from the summit of Amanah,  
from the summit of Snir and Hermon,<sup>1</sup>  
from the lions' haunts,  
the leopards' heights.

<sup>9</sup> You've stolen my heart, my partner,<sup>2</sup> my bride,  
you've stolen my heart with one of your eyes,  
with one twist of your neck.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>10</sup> How lovely are your breasts,<sup>4</sup>  
my partner, bride,  
how much better are your breasts than wine,  
and your creamy fragrance  
than any perfume.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Your lips drop honey, O bride;  
honey and cream *lie* under your tongue  
and your clothes  
have Lebanon's fragrance!<sup>6</sup>

**כָּלָח יָפָה רְעוּתִי**  
וּמְוּמָם אַיִן בָּךְ  
**אֲקִי מִלְכָבְנָוָן כְּלָה**  
**אֲקִי מִלְכָבְנָוָן תְּבָאָוָא**  
**תְּשֻׁוֹרִי וּמְרֻאָשׁ אַמְנָה**  
**מְרֻאָשׁ שְׁנוּר וְחַרְמָוָן**  
**מְפַעֲנָוָתִי אַרְיוֹתִים**  
**מְהָרָרִי נְמֵרִים**  
**לְבָבְתִּנִי אַחֲתִי כְּלָה**  
**לְבָבְתִּנִי בְּאַחַתִּי מְעִינִיִּךְ**  
**בְּאַחַד עַנְקִי מְצִוְרָנִיִּךְ**  
**מְהָרָפִי דָּדִיִּךְ**  
**אַחֲתִי כְּלָה**  
**מְהָדָבְבּוֹ דָּדִיִּךְ מִיָּין**  
**וּרְיִתְשְׁמַנִּיִּךְ**  
**מְכַלְבְּשָׁמִים**  
**נְפַת תִּטְפְּנָה שְׁפָתָוִיךְ כְּלָה**  
**דְּבָשׁ וְחַלְבִּבְתָּחָת לְשׂוֹנֶךְ**  
**וּרְיִתְשְׁלָמָוִיךְ**  
**כְּרִיחַ לְבָנָוָן**

Kulach yafah, rayati,  
umum ein bach.  
Iti miLevanon, kalah,  
iti miLevanon tavoi;  
tashuri merosh Amanah  
merosh Snir veChermon,  
mimonot arayot,  
meharerei nemerim.  
Libavtini, achoti, chalah,  
libavtini be'achat me'enayich,  
be'achad anak mitzavronayich.  
Mah yafu dodayich,  
achoti chalah,  
mah tovu dodayich miyayin  
verei'ach shmanayich  
mikol besamim.  
Nofet titofnah siftotayich, kallah;  
devash vechalav tachat leshonech,  
verei'ach salmotayich  
kerei'ach Levanon.

<sup>1</sup> Are these names allegorical? Amanah could be related to the word for truth or the Ammonite people; Snir may mean “glacier,” or it’s the Amorite name for Mount Hermon; Chermon could remind one of **חרם**, the word for excommunication.

<sup>2</sup> Or, “My sister,” with whatever meanings it might connote in this context.

<sup>3</sup> עַנְקִי is giant or necklace or neck chain or torque (twisting), so translations of this phrase differ. Perhaps he means she gave him a single nod and he fell for her at once.

<sup>4</sup> Or, “loves.”

<sup>5</sup> “And the fragrance of your oils/creams above all spices.”

<sup>6</sup> “And the fragrance of your clothes/raiment *is* like the fragrance of Lebanon.” Lebanon is famous for cedars, so you may think she got her best duds from the cedar closet, but this probably means that everything about her smells good.

<sup>12</sup> A locked garden is my partner, bride,  
a covered well, a sealed-up fountain.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Your buds are an orchard of pomegranates  
with delicious fruit,  
*fragrant* camphire and spikenard.

<sup>14</sup> Spikenard and saffron,  
cannabis and cinnamon,  
with every *kind* of aromatic wood;<sup>2</sup>  
myrrh and aloes,  
with all the best spices.

<sup>15</sup> A garden spring, a well of fresh water,  
and streams from Lebanon.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Wake up, north *wind*; come, south *wind*;  
breathe upon my garden,  
let its perfumes drift,  
let my lover come to his garden  
and feast on its delicious fruit.

גָּן | גַּעֲלָל אֲחֹתָיו כְּלָהָה  
גָּלָל גַּעֲלָל מְעָנוֹן חֲתָום  
**שְׁלַחְאֵיכָה פָּרְדָּס רְמָנוֹנִים**  
עַם פְּרִי נְגָדִים  
כְּפָרִים עַסְפָּנוֹרְקִים  
נְהָרָד | וְכָרְלָם  
קָנְהָה וְקָבְמָנוֹן  
עַם כָּלְעַצְיָה לְבָנוֹנָה  
מָרָן אַהֲלָוֹת  
עַם כָּלְרָאשִׁי בְּשָׁמִים  
מְעָנוֹן גָּנוֹם בְּאֵר מַיִם חַיִּים  
וְנוֹלִים מִןְלָבָנוֹן  
עַוְרִי צָפָוָן וּבָוָא תִּימָן  
הַפְּרִיחָה גָּנִי  
יִזְלָו בְּשָׁמָנוֹן  
יְבָא דּוֹדִי לְנָנוֹ  
וַיָּאֵכל פְּרִי מְגָדָיו

Gan na'ul achoti chalah,  
gal na'ul, mayan chatum.  
Shelachayich pardes rimonim  
im peri megadim,  
kefarim im neradim.  
Nehrd vecharkom,  
kaneh vekinamon,  
im kol atzei levonah;  
mor va'ahalot  
im kol rashei vesamim.  
Mayan ganim, be'er mayim chayim,  
venozlim min Levanon.  
Uri, tzafon, uvo'i, teiman;  
hafichi gani.  
yizlu vesamav,  
yavo dodi legano  
veyochel peri megadav.

<sup>1</sup> גָּל often refers to a heap of stones, and I presume it could refer to the stone wall around a well. The Hebrew word is also related to words for round things such as wheels (and cycles in time, such as reincarnation), as well as waves of the sea.

<sup>2</sup> Or, “trees of frankincense.” I presume the poet uses frankincense (the gum of the tree) as the model for all aromatic types of wood.

<sup>3</sup> Streams or drops or distillation or waters—presumably, water from Lebanon is prized because it could be fragrant with the aroma of cedars.

<sup>1</sup> I reached my garden, partner, bride;  
 I added myrrh to my perfume  
 ate honeydrops with my honey  
 drank wine with my cream.<sup>1</sup>  
 Friends, *come and eat*;  
 drink and get drunk, my dears.

<sup>2</sup> I'm sleeping but my mind is awake;  
 my love's voice knocks *at my door*;  
 "Open up, my partner, my dear,  
 my dove, my innocent,  
 for my head is filled with dew,  
 my locks with the dewdrops of night."

<sup>3</sup> I've taken off my dress;  
 how could I put it on *again*?  
 I've washed my feet;  
 how could I get them dirty *again*?<sup>2</sup>

<sup>4</sup> My lover moved his hand  
 from the door-latch  
 and my body ached for him.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>5</sup> I stood up to open for my lover;  
 my hands dripped myrrh,  
 my fingers delightful myrrh,  
 on the bolt-handle.<sup>4</sup>

## Chapter 5

**בָּאתִי לְגַןִי אַחֲתִי כָּלָהּ**  
 Bati legani, achoti chalah,  
**אֲרִיתִי מוֹרִי עַמְּדָבְשָׁמִי**  
 ariti mori im besami,  
**אֲכַלְתִּי יְעִירִי עַמְּדָבְשָׁי**  
 achalti yari im divshi,  
**שָׁתַּתִּי יְינִי עַמְּדָחָלָבִּי**  
 shatiti yeini im chalavi.  
**אֲכַלְוּ רְעִיםּ**  
 Ichlu, re'im,  
**שְׁתַּעֲוֵה וְשִׁכְרֵוּ דָּוְדִיםּ**  
 sh'tu veshichru, dodim.  
**אֲנִי יְשֵׁנָה וְלִבִּי עָרָ**  
 Ani yeshenah, velibi er;  
**קָוָלְוּ דָּוְדִי דָּוְפָּקְ**  
 kol dodi dofek:  
**בְּחַרְדְּלִי אַחֲתִי רָעִיתִי**  
 "Pit'chi li, achoti, rayati,  
**יוֹנָתִי חַמְפָּתִי**  
 yonati, tamati,  
**שְׁרָאָשִׁי נִמְלָאָתִלִּ**  
 sheroshi nimlah tal,  
**קָוָעָזְתִּי רִיסְקָסִיסִי לִילָּהּ**  
 kevutzotai resisei laylah."

**פָּשָׁתְתִּי אַתְּכַתְּנִי**  
 Pashat'ti et kutanti;  
**אַיְכָה אַלְבְּשָׁנָהּ**  
 eichecha elbashenah?  
**רָחַצְתִּי אַתְּרָגְלִי**  
 Rachatzti et raglai;  
**אַיְכָה אַטְנָפֶםּ**  
 eichecha atanfem?  
**דָּוְדִי שָׁלָחַ יָדוּ**  
 Dodi shalach yado  
**מִןְ-הָחָרָ**  
 min hachor  
**וְמַעַי הַמַּוְעָלָיו**  
 ume'ai hamu alav.  
**קָמָתִי אָנִי לְפָנָתִי לְדוֹרוֹ**  
 Kamti ani lifto'ach ledodi;  
**וַיְדַי נִטְפּוּ-מָוֵר**  
 veyadai natfu mor,  
**וְאַצְבָּעָתִי מוֹר עַבְרָ**  
 ve'etzbe'otai mor over,  
**עַל כְּפֹתָה הַמְּנֻעָלִ**  
 al kapot hamanul.

<sup>1</sup> "I gathered myrrh with my spice/perfume, ate dripping honey with my honey, drank my wine with my milk/cream"; I already had something delicious, and I added to it—myrrh to perfume, dripping honey to honey, and wine with cream. It's as if he had ice cream on pie or a cherry on whipped cream. Yum.

<sup>2</sup> She's in bed, and she's not getting up again.

<sup>3</sup> רַחַ/chor is usually a hole; here some kind of opening for the "door." מַעַי/me'ai often means "guts," a part of the body where feelings can be strongest—"and my guts/bowels/innards yearned for it/him."

<sup>4</sup> "Upon the concave parts (some kind of handle) of the locking mechanism (bolt)."

<sup>6</sup>I opened for my lover,  
but my lover had turned around and gone.  
Oh, my heart leaped when he spoke;<sup>1</sup>  
I went after him but could not find him,  
called him but he did not answer me.  
<sup>7</sup>The guards found me—  
they go around town.  
They struck me, wounded me;  
they lifted my veil,  
the wall-guards.  
<sup>8</sup>I've made you promise,  
daughters of Jerusalem:  
if you find my love,  
what are you to tell him?  
That I'm sick with love!  
<sup>9</sup>"How is your love better than another,  
lovely lady?  
How is your lover better than another,  
that you made us give such a promise?"<sup>2</sup>  
<sup>10</sup>My love is bright and red;  
he stands out in a crowd.<sup>3</sup>  
<sup>11</sup>His head is gleaming gold,<sup>4</sup>  
his locks are curly,  
black like a raven.

**פָתַחְתִּי אֲנִי לְדוֹדִי** Patachti anu ledodi,  
**וְדוֹדִי חָמָק עָבָר** vedodi chamak avar.  
**נֶפֶשִׁי יָצָא בְּרַבָּרוֹ** Nafshi yatzah vedabro;  
**בְּקַשְׁתָּהָה וְלֹא מַצְאָהָהוּ** bikashtihu velo metzathihu,  
**קָרָאתָהוּ וְלֹא עָנוּנוּ** kerativ velo anani.  
**מַצְאָהָה הַשּׁׂמְרִים** Metza'uni hashomrim  
**הַטְּבִיבִים בָּעֵיר** hasovevim ba'ir.  
**הַקּוֹנוֹ פְּצַעֲנוּנוּ** Hikuni, fetza'uni;  
**נִשְׁאָו אֶתְדָּרְדִּי מַעַלִּי** nasu et redidi me'alai,  
**שְׁמָרֵי הַחֲמֹתָה** shomrei hachomot.  
**הַשְּׁבָעָתִי אֶתְכֶם** Hishbati et'chem,  
**בְּנָוֹת יְרוּשָׁלָם** benot Yerushalayim,  
**אֶם הַמְּמָצָא אֶתְדָּרְדִּי** im timtze'u et dodi,  
**מַהְתְּגִידָה לֹוּ** mah tagidu lo?  
**שְׁחֹלָתָה אַהֲבָה אֲנִי** Shecholat ahavah ani.  
**מַהְדָּדְךָ מִדְוד** "Mah dodech midod,  
**הַיִּפְחָה בְּנָשִׁים** hayafah banashim?  
**מַהְדָּדְךָ מִדְוד** Mah dodech midod,  
**שְׁכָכָה הַשְּׁבָעָתָנוּ** shekachah hishbatanu?"  
**דוֹדִי צָה וְאַדְוָם** Dodi tzach ve'adom,  
**דָּגַל מַרְבָּבָה** dagul merevovah.  
**רָאשָׁוּ כְּתָם פָּז** Rosho ketem paz,  
**קְוִצְוָתוֹ תַּלְתָּלִים** kevutzotav taltalim  
**שְׁחֹרֹתָה כְּעֹרֶב** shechorot ke'orev.

<sup>1</sup> "My-soul/self went-out at-his-speaking."

<sup>2</sup> Presumably, this verse is spoken by the daughters of Jerusalem: "In what way is your lover *different* from *someone else's* lover, O beautiful among women? *In what way* is your lover *different* from *someone else's* lover, that in this manner you have made us make a promise?"

<sup>3</sup> Bright could mean white or clear or hot like a hot wind. He is "flagged more than a myriad": perhaps he's conspicuous (for his beauty) in a huge crowd; perhaps he is as impressive to see as a huge troop with banners waving.

<sup>12</sup> His eyes are like doves  
upon streams of water,  
bathed in milk,  
fastened *like gems* in their setting.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>13</sup> His cheeks are like a bed of herbs,  
mounds of fragrant spices are his lips,  
roses dropping sweet myrrh.

<sup>14</sup> His hands bear rings of gold  
set with topaz;<sup>2</sup>  
his belly is like carved ivory<sup>3</sup>  
overlaid with sapphires.

<sup>15</sup> His legs are pillars of marble  
set into sockets of gold;  
he looks like Lebanon,<sup>4</sup>  
prized for *its* cedars.

<sup>16</sup> His mouth is sweetness itself—  
everything about him is delightful.<sup>5</sup>  
This is my love, this my dear friend,  
daughters of Jerusalem.<sup>6</sup>

עֵינָיו כְּיוֹנִים  
עַל־אֲפִיקָוּ מַיִם  
רְחִצּוֹת בְּחַלָּב  
יֹשְׁבּוֹת עַל־מַלְאָת  
לְחִינּוֹ בְּעַדְוָנָת הַבָּשָׂם  
מְנֻדְלּוֹת מְרֻקָּתִים שְׁפָתוֹתִיו  
שְׁוֹשָׁנִים נְטָפּוֹת מַוְרָעָבָר  
יָדָיו גָּלִילִי זָהָב  
מְמֻלָּאִים בְּתַרְשִׁישׁ  
מְשֻׁעָר עַשְׂתָּשָׁן  
מְעַלְּפָת סְפִירִים  
שָׂוקָיו עַמּוֹדִי שֶׁשׁ  
מְיֻסָּדִים עַל־אֲדַנְּיָפָו  
מְרָאָהוּ כְּלָבָנוֹן  
בָּחוּר קָאָרָזִים  
חָכָוּ מִמְתָּקִים  
וְכָלָו מִחְמָדִים  
זֶה דָׂודִי וְזֶה רָשִׁי  
בְּנוֹת יְרוּשָׁלָם

Einav keyonim  
al afikei mayim,  
rochatzot bechalav,  
yoshvot al mileit.  
Lechayav ka'arugat habosem,  
migdelot merkachim siftotav,  
shoshanim notfot mor over.  
Yadav gelilei zahav  
memula'im batashish;  
me'av eshet shen  
me'ulefet sapirim.  
Shokav amudei shesh,  
meyusadim al adnei faz;  
mareihu kaLevanon,  
bachur ka'arazim.  
Chiko mamtakim  
vechulo machamadim.  
Zeh dodi, vezeh re'i,  
benot Yerushalayim.

<sup>4</sup> תְּכַטְּמָה and זָהָב can both mean gold; together perhaps they mean specially fine gold. Since his hair is black, what is gold? Maybe he's wearing a fancy hat.

<sup>1</sup> She's not excited simply because his eyes don't pop out, but because his eyes are like jewels in the glorious setting of his beautiful face.

<sup>2</sup> The exact identity of this precious stone is up for discussion. The Hebrew phrase could mean "set in Tarshish (Tarsus; or, in *Moby Dick*, Cadiz, Spain)," if the jewelers of that town were notably skilled.

<sup>3</sup> Carved ivory could be "fabricated tooth," or elephant tusk, or something that looks like it, such as marble.

<sup>4</sup> "His appearance is like Lebanon."

<sup>5</sup> "And all of him is delights."

<sup>6</sup> After this detailed description, who could fail to identify him?

<sup>7</sup> Some read מִחְמָדִים instead of מִחְמָדִים.

## Chapter 6

<sup>1</sup> Where did your lover go,  
lovely lady,

Which way did your lover turn?  
We'll look for him with you.

<sup>2</sup> My lover went down to his garden,  
to the fragrant *garden* beds,  
to graze in the *gardens*  
and gather lilies.

<sup>3</sup> I am my lover's; my lover is mine  
as he grazes on the lilies.

<sup>4</sup> Darling, you are as beautiful as you can wish,<sup>1</sup>  
lovely as Jerusalem,  
splendid like *a throng* of flag-waving women.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Turn your eyes from me,  
for they have dazzled me.

Your hair is like a flock of goats  
skittering down Mount Gilead,

<sup>6</sup> your teeth like a flock of ewes  
that came up from the washing station,  
every one pregnant with twins,  
none of them barren.

<sup>7</sup> Your cheek is like a slice of pomegranate  
covered by your hair.

<sup>8</sup> Sixty they are, *all* queens,  
and eighty mistresses,  
and damsels beyond number—<sup>3</sup>

אֲנָה הַלְּכָה דָּוְדֶךָ  
חַיָּה בְּנָשִׁים

אֲנָה פָּנָה דָּוְדֶךָ  
וַנְבָקְשָׁנוּ עַמְּךָ

דָּוְדִי יָרָד לְנָנוֹ  
לְעַרְגּוֹת חֲבֵשָׁם

לְרַעֲוֹת בְּנָנִים  
וְלִלְקֹט שׁוֹשָׁנִים

אֲנִי לְדוֹדִי וְדוֹדִי לִי  
הַרְעָה בְּשׁוֹשָׁנִים

יָפָה אַתְּ רַעִיטִי כְּתַרְצָה  
נָאוֹה כְּרוּשָׁלָם

אִימָה כְּנִיגְדָּוָת  
הַסְּבִּי עַיִּינָךְ מִנְגָּדִי

שְׁהָם הַרְחִיבָּנוּ  
שְׁעָרָךְ כְּעֹדָר הַעֲזָם

שְׁגָלְשָׁה מִן הַגִּלָּאָד  
שְׁנוֹךְ כְּעֹדָר הַרְחָלִים

שְׁעָלָיו מִזְהָרְחָצָה  
שְׁכָלָם מִתְאָמוֹת

וְשְׁכָלָה אֵין בָּהָם  
כְּפָלָח הַרְמָוֹן רַקְתָּה

מִבָּעֵד לְצַמְתָּךְ  
שְׁשִׁים הַפָּה מַלְכָוֹת

וְשְׁמָנוֹנִים פִּילָגְשִׁים  
וְעַלְמָוֹת אֵין מִסְפָּר

<sup>1</sup> Or, “as Tirzah.” This is the name of one of Zelofehad’s daughters (Num 27:1-11), notable for character, not appearance.

<sup>2</sup> כְּנִיגְדָּוָת, “like females who are flagged,” i.e., women equipped with flags or banners.

<sup>9</sup> but my dove, my flawless *beloved*, is unique,  
she's her mother's *only* one,  
favorite of the one who gave her birth;  
girls saw her and wished her happiness,  
queens and mistresses praised her.

<sup>10</sup> Who is this, glimpsed like the dawn,  
fair as the moon, favored as the sun,  
splendid like *a host* of women waving banners?

<sup>11</sup> I went down to the nut grove  
to see the fruits in the valley,  
to see if the vine was in bloom,  
if the pomegranate *was* in blossom.

<sup>12</sup> Suddenly, I felt I was *dashing along*  
like Aminadiv's chariots!<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Come back, come back, Shulamite girl,  
come back, come back, so we can see you.

What will you *all* see in the Shulamite girl?

*She's as lovely to see as a country dance!*<sup>2</sup>

**אחת היא יונתי תטוח** achat hi yonati, tamati,  
**אחת היא לאַיְמָה** achat hi le'imah,  
**בראה היא לוֹלְדָתָה** barah hi leyoladtah;  
**ראַעה בְּנוֹת וַיְאַשְׁרָה** ra'aha vanot vay'ashruha,  
**מְלָכֹות וְפִילָגְשִׁים וִיתְלָלוֹה** melachot ufilagshim vayhaleluha.  
**מיְזָאת הַנְּשָׁקֶפֶת כְּמוֹשָׁחָר** Mi zot hanishkafah kemo shachar,  
**יְפָה כְּלָבָנָה בְּרִיהַ כְּחַפּוֹה** yafah chalvana, barah kachama,  
**איְמָה כְּנִידְגָּוֹלֹת** Ayuma kanidgalot?  
**אלְגִּנְתָּא אָנוֹ זָרְדָתִי** El ginat egoz yaradti  
**לְרָאוֹת בָּאֵבִי הַנְּחָלָל** lir'ot beibei hanachal,  
**לְרָאוֹת הַפְּרָחָה הַפְּנִים** lir'ot hafarcha hagefen,  
**הַנְּצֹוֹ הַרְמִינוֹם** henetzu harimonim.  
**לֹא יָדַעְתִּי נְפֵשׁ שְׁמַתְנִי** Lo yadati nafshi samatni  
**מְרַכְבּוֹת עַמִּינְדִּיבָּ** markevot ami nadiv.

## Chapter 7

**שׁוּבִי שׁוּבִי הַשּׁוּלָמִית** Shuvi, shuvi, haShulamit,  
**שׁוּבִי שׁוּבִי וְנִתְחִזְבָּךְ** shuvi, shuvi venechezeh bach.  
**מַה-תְּצִהּוּ בְשׁוּלָמִית** Mah techezu baShulamit?  
**כְּמִתְלָלָת הַמְּתָנִים** Kimcholot hamachanayim.

<sup>3</sup> The mistresses could be concubines (a step down from wives) and the damsels could be virgins or maidservants (sexual partners or scullery maids, or both).

<sup>1</sup> "I did not know: my mind placed me: the chariots of Aminadav"; or "Before I knew it, my mind/soul placed me *like* Aminadav's chariots." Suddenly, the speaker was overcome by a feeling of being part of an onrushing army. Aminadav may mean "my people *are* magnanimous" or "my magnanimous people," or it may refer to someone who had a Lamborghini for a chariot.

<sup>2</sup> "Looking at the Shulamite girl is like looking at the dance of two camps"; this could refer to the clash of two armies, or a dance with two groups, a line of men and a line of women facing each other as in a country dance. This might be a fine sight in an 18<sup>th</sup>-century ballroom, but I wonder what it might look like in Biblical times. Incidentally, this verse ends Chapter 6 for many editors.

<sup>2</sup> How fair are your sandaled steps,  
princess;  
your thigh-curves *shimmy*  
like necklaces,  
the work of an expert artisan.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Your navel is like a round goblet—  
fill it with wine!<sup>2</sup>  
Your belly is *like* a sheaf of wheat  
surrounded by lilies.

<sup>4</sup> Your breasts are like two fawns,  
twin gazelles.

<sup>5</sup> Your neck is like an ivory tower,  
your eyes *like* ponds in Cheshbon,<sup>3</sup>  
above the entrance to a crowded suburb,<sup>4</sup>  
your nose is like the Tower of Lebanon  
with a view *all the way* to Damascus.

<sup>6</sup> Your head is like Carmel,  
your cascading hair<sup>5</sup> *like* prized purple,  
royalty captured in *your* tresses.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>7</sup> How lovely you are, how delightful,  
*my* love, among *all other* pleasures.

**מַה יָּפֹו פָּעֵמִיךְ בְּנַעֲלִים**  
**בַּת נָדִיב**  
**חָמֻקְוָי יְרֵכְיִיךְ**  
**כָּמוֹ חְלָאִים**  
**מַעֲשָׂה יְדֵי אֲמָן**  
**שָׁרֵךְ אָגָן הַסְּהָר**  
**אַלְיָחָסֶר הַמָּזָג**  
**בְּתְּנֵךְ עֲרֵמָתְ חִטִּים**  
**סְוָנָה בְּשָׁׁשְׁנִים**  
**שְׁנֵי שָׁרֵךְ כְּשָׁנֵי עֲפָרִים**  
**תָּאָמֵן צְבִיה**  
**צְנוֹאָרֶךְ כְּמִגְדָּל הַשָּׁנָן**  
**עַיְינָךְ בְּרִכּוֹת בְּחַשְׁבּוֹן**  
**עַל־שָׁעָר בְּתִרְבָּבִים**  
**אַפְּךְ כְּמִגְדָּל הַלְּבָנוֹן**  
**צָוֹפָה פְּנֵי דָמָשָׁק**  
**רַאֲשָׁךְ עַלְיָךְ כְּפָרְמָלֶל**  
**וּרְקַתְתָּ רַאֲשָׁךְ כְּאַרְבָּנוֹן**  
**מֶלֶךְ אֲסֹור בְּרַחְטִים**  
**מַה יָּפֹית וּמַה נָּעַמְתָּ**  
**אַהֲבָה בְּתַעֲנוֹגִים**

Mah yafu fe'amayich ban'alim,  
bat nadiv;  
chamukei yerechayich  
kemo chala'im,  
ma'sah yedei aman.—  
Sharerech agan hasahar—  
al yechsar hamazeg!  
Bitnech aremat chitim,  
sugah bashoshanim.  
Shenei shadayich kishnei ofarim,  
ta'omei tzeviyah.  
Tzavarech kemigdal hashen,  
einayich berechot beCheshbon,  
al sha'ar bat rabim;  
apech keMigdal haLevanon,  
tzofeh penei Damashek.  
Roshech alayich kaKarmel  
ve dalat roshech ke'argaman;  
melech asur barhatim.  
Mah yafit umah na'amt,  
ahavah, bata'anugim.

<sup>1</sup> “How beautiful are your steps in shoes, daughter of a magnanimous one; your thighs’ hollows/hidden parts/movements are shiny like jewels *or* shaking like necklaces”; I translated as if he admires her dancing.

<sup>2</sup> “Let not the mixed *wine* be lacking”; the ancients diluted wine with water.

<sup>3</sup> Cheshbon can mean reason or thinking, or it may be a town famous for its ponds.

<sup>4</sup> Or, “over/next to a gate for daughter/suburb-of-many (or a gate for a place called Batrabim).” If there’s a crowded suburb, the cool ponds may offer notable relief. **בַת** usually means daughter, but in connection with a town it can mean a suburb, a dependent village on the town outskirts.

<sup>5</sup> “What comes down from your head.”

<sup>6</sup> “A king, confined to or banned from, watering-troughs or locks of hair. If watering troughs hold running water, which reduces the labor filling them, then they might suggest flowing locks of hair. The King James version follows the Septuagint and translates, “the king is held in the galleries.”

<sup>8</sup> Your figure is like a palm tree  
and your breasts *like dangling clusters of grapes*.  
<sup>9</sup> I said, “I’ll scale a palm-tree,  
I’ll seize its *pendulous boughs*;  
your breasts shall be like  
clusters of the vine  
and the scent of your breath like fragrant fruit.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Your mouth *tastes* like fine wine  
that flows smoothly for my beloved,  
bringing speech to the lips of the slumbering.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>11</sup> I am my beloved’s,  
and I’m the one he desires.

<sup>12</sup> Come, my love, let’s go out to the country  
and stay in the villages.

<sup>13</sup> We’ll wake early *to enjoy* the vineyards,  
see if the vines are in flower,  
*if* the buds are open,  
*if* the pomegranates bloom;  
there shall I give you my love.

<sup>14</sup> The mandrakes yield *their* aroma;  
as we open *ourselves* to each other  
*there is* every delight,<sup>3</sup>  
both new and old,  
my love, which I have stored up for you.

זאת קומתך דמתה לחתם  
ושׂריך לאשקלות  
אםרתוי אעללה בתמר  
אהזה בסנסני  
וירירנא שׂריך  
כאשקלות הנפּן  
וრח אפק כהפקחים  
וחכלך קיון בטוב  
הוֹלֵךְ לְדוֹדֵי לְמִישָׁרִים  
דוֹבֵב שְׁפֵתִי יְשָׁנִים  
אַנְּיָן לְדוֹדֵי  
וְעַלְּיָה תְּשׁוּקָה  
לְכָה דּוֹדֵי נַצְּא הַשְּׁךָה  
נְלִינָה בְּכַפְרִים  
נְשָׁקִים לְבָרְמִים  
נְרֹאָה אָם פָּרָחָה הַנְּפּוֹן  
בְּפִתְחָה הַסְּמִדָּר  
הַנְּצָו הַרְמוֹנִים  
שָׁם אַתָּנוּ אֶתְדָּרֵי לְךָ  
הַדּוֹדָאִים גַּתְנִירִים  
וְעַלְּפִתְחָה יְהִינוּ  
כָּלְמִינְרִים  
חַדְשִׁים גַּם יְשָׁנִים  
דוֹדֵי צְבָנָתִי לְךָ

Zot komatech damtah letamar  
veshadayich le’eshkoliyot.  
Amarti, “E’eleh vetamar,  
ochazah besansinav.”  
Veyiheyu-nah shadayich  
ke’eshkelot hagefen  
vere’ach apech katapuchim.  
Vechikech keyayim hatov,  
holech ledodi lemesharim,  
dovev siftei yeshenim.  
Ani ledodi  
ve’alai teshukato.  
Lecha, dodi, netzeh hasadeh,  
nalinah bakfarim.  
Nashkimah lakramim,  
nireh im par’chah hagefen,  
pitach hasmadar,  
henetz harimonim;  
sham eten et dodai lach.  
Haduda’im natnu rei’ach,  
ve’al petacheinu  
kol megadim,  
chadashim gam yeshanim,  
dodi, tzafanti lach.

<sup>1</sup> “The odor of your nose”; the smell of what comes from her nose is the aroma of her breath. In modern Hebrew “תפוח/tapu’ach” means apple, but the word may suggest the wafting aroma of the blossoms. The root נפּח refers to blowing, inflating, breathing, etc., or swelling (since fruit swells as it ripens).

<sup>2</sup> He wakes her with kisses, which she enjoys, and then she tells him so.

<sup>3</sup> Or, “And at our gates are all delights.” The root פִתָח means opening—a door, a budding flower, a loving self.

## Chapter 8

<sup>1</sup>I wish you were like my brother,  
who suckled at my mother's breasts;  
if I met you in public,<sup>1</sup> I could kiss you,  
and nobody would criticize me.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup>I would lead you, bring you  
into my mother's house  
where she would teach me  
to give you to drink the spiced wine  
of the juice of my pomegranate.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup>His left arm is beneath my head  
while his right arm embraces me.

<sup>4</sup>I made you promise,  
daughters of Jerusalem,  
so why do you rouse and waken  
love before it's willing?<sup>4</sup>

<sup>5</sup>Who is this, coming up from the desert,  
leaning on her lover?  
Under the fragrant fruit tree I roused you;  
there your mother birthed<sup>5</sup> you,  
there your birth-mother gave birth.

מִי יִתְנַחַךְ בְּאָחָת לִי  
יְוָנֵק שְׁדֵי אַמְּנִי  
אִמְצָא כִּבְחֹזֶן אַשְׁקָה  
גַּם לְאִירְבּוֹזֶוּ לִי  
אֲנָהָנָךְ אֶבְאָחָת  
אַלְבָּיתָה אַמְּנִי  
תְּלַמְּדָנִי  
אַשְׁקָד מִיָּעֵן חֶרְקָה  
מַעֲסֵס רַמְּנִי  
שְׁמָאַלְוָה תְּחַת רַאֲשָׁוֹן  
וַיְמִינֵו תְּחַבְּקֵנִי  
הַשְּׁבָעָהוּ אֶחָדָם  
בְּנָוֹת יְרוּשָׁלָם  
מִהְדָּתְעִירָוּ וּמִהְדָּתְעָרָרָוּ  
אַתְּדָה אַהֲבָה עַד שְׁתַחְפָּצָן  
מַיְיָ אָתָה עַלְהָ מִן-הַמִּדְבָּר  
מוֹתְרָבָה עַל-הַדָּבָר  
תְּחַת הַחֲפֹתָה עַוְרָתָיוֹ  
שָׁמָה חִבְלָתָחָ אַפְּקָה  
שָׁמָה תְּבֵלָה יְלֹנָתָה

Mi yitnech ke'ach li,  
yonek shdei imi;  
emtza'acha vachutz, eshak'cha,  
gam lo yavuzu li.  
Enhagacha, avi'acha  
el beit imi;  
telamdeni  
ashkecha miyayin harekach  
me'asisim rimoni.  
Semolo tachat roshi  
vimino techabkeni.  
Hishbati et'chem  
benot Yerushalayim:  
mah ta'iru, umah te'orera  
et ha'ahavah, ad shetechpatz.  
Mah zot olah min hamidbar,  
mitrapeket al dodah?  
tachat hatapu'ach orarticha;  
shamah chiblat'cha imecha,  
shamah chiblah yeladat'cha.

<sup>1</sup> “If I found you outside.”

<sup>2</sup> “Also, they would not scorn me.”

<sup>3</sup> I suspect we may let our imagination run wild here. Do you picture Gina Lollobrigida seducing Yul Brynner by offering the juice of her pomegranate?

<sup>4</sup> Or, “before he wants it,” before he's ready to reciprocate her love.

<sup>5</sup> The root חַבֵּל for birth is related to the word for rope, perhaps because labor pangs can cause twisting and writhing, and perhaps because you see an umbilical cord, and perhaps because you tie off the umbilical cord.

<sup>6</sup>Set me as an *indelible* mark<sup>1</sup> on your heart,  
like an *indelible* mark on your arm,  
for love is strong as death,  
passion as unyielding as the grave;  
its sparks are sparks of fire, blazing.

<sup>7</sup>Even lots of water could not  
quench love,  
no rivers drown it.  
If someone devoted  
all the resources at his command  
*in a vain attempt to quench* love,  
people would ridicule him.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>8</sup>We have a young sister  
and she has no breasts yet;  
what shall we do for our sister  
on the day when she is spoken for?  
<sup>9</sup>If she is a wall,  
let's build a silver rampart upon her;  
if she is a door,  
let's board her up with cedar planking.  
<sup>10</sup>I am a wall; my breasts are like towers;  
so to him I've become  
like one who projects *her* maturity.<sup>3</sup>

שִׁמְנִי כְּחֹתֶם עַל־לִבְךָ כְּחֹתֶם עַל־זָרוּעַ כַּי־עַזָּה כְּמֹתָת אַהֲבָה קָשָׁה בְּשָׁאֹל קִנְאָה רְשִׁיחָה רְשִׁיחָה אֲשֶׁר שָׁלַחֲתִיה מַיִם רַבִּים לֹא יוּכְלֹו לְכַבּוֹת אֶת־הַאַהֲבָה וְגַהְרוֹת לֹא יוּשְׁטְפּוּ אַמְּרִיתָן אִישׁ אַת־כָּל־דָּzon בֵּיתוֹ בְּאַהֲבָה בּוֹז יַבְיוּ לֹא אֲחֹתָה לֹנוּ קְטָנָה וּשְׁרִים אֵין לָהּ מַה־נְעַשֵּׂה לְאַחֲתָנוּ בְּיוֹם שְׁיַרְבָּה אַמְּרִיתָה הִיא נְבָנָה עַלְיָה טִירָת כְּסֶף וְאַמְּדִינָה תְּרִיא נְצֹר עַלְיָה לִימָם אֲרֵז אַנְיָחָמָה וְשָׁדֵר כְּמַגְדָּלוֹת אָז הִיִּתִי בְּעִינֵי כְּמַמְצֵאת שָׁלוֹם

ב

<sup>1</sup> “Seal”—but who uses a seal nowadays, except as an animal to watch at the zoo?

<sup>2</sup> “If a man were to give away (or devote) all the wealth of his house (or family) in love, scorning they would scorn him.”

<sup>3</sup> “Like one who projects/finds completion/peace/welcome.” I think it means he can see she’s old enough for marriage, unlike the young sister.

<sup>11</sup> Solomon had a *prized* vineyard;  
he was master of riches;<sup>1</sup>  
he gave the vineyard to guards;  
someone would bring  
a thousand silver *pieces to pay* for his fruit.

<sup>12</sup> My vineyard is before me.  
*You can* keep your thousand, Solomon,  
and two hundred for the guards, with its fruit.

<sup>13</sup> She who dwells in gardens—  
friends listen to her voice—  
let me hear her *too*!

<sup>14</sup> Run away, my dear,  
be like a deer  
or a frisky hart  
on the fragrant hills.

**כֶּרֶם הַיָּה לְשִׁלְמָה**  
**בֶּבֶעַל הַמּוֹן**  
**נָתַן אֶת-הַכֶּרֶם לְנוֹטָרִים**  
**אִישׁ בְּבָא**  
**בְּפִרְיוֹ אֱלָף כָּרֶב**  
**כִּרְמִי שְׁלֵי לְפָנָי**  
**הַאֱלָף לְכָל שְׁלֹמָה**  
**וּמְאַתָּם לְנוֹטָרִים אֶת-**  
**פִּרְיוֹ**  
**הַיּוֹשֵׁבַת בְּגָנְיוֹם**  
**חֲבָרִים מַקְשִׁיבִים לְקוֹלָךְ**  
**הַשְׁמִיעִינִי**  
**בְּרָחָה | דָׂדָרִי**  
**וּרְמָה-הַלְּךָ לְאַבְּרִי**  
**אוֹ לְעַפְרָה הַאֲיָלִים**  
**עַל חָרֵי בְּשָׁמִים**

Kerem hayah liShlomoh  
beVa'al Hamon;  
natan et hakerem lanotrim;  
ish yavi  
befiryo elef kaf.  
Karmi sheli lefanai.  
Ha'elef lecha, Shelomoh,  
umatayim lenotrim et piro!  
Hayoshev baganim—  
chaverim makshivim lekolech—  
hasmi'ini!  
Brach, dodi,  
udemeh lecha litzvi  
o le'ofar ha'ayalim  
al harei vesamim.

<sup>1</sup> “As a master of abundance” or a place name, Ba’al Hamon.

SPS Draft

# The Book of Rut

רֹותָה

SPS Draft

SPS Draft

## The Book of Rut • רות • Rut

What is this story about?

For one thing, it's about a time in Israel's history when people were nice. It beats reading the historical books with war and murder, sin and politics, with occasional public works.

Ruth seems to be accepted into the Jewish community even though Moabites are not invited, so maybe it's a book about the possibility of "conversion"—even for excluded groups—before the process was made formal.

Ruth is an ancestor of King David, so perhaps the story is about the great king's humble origins. By matrilineal standards, you can question whether he was Jewish.

It's also a story about family. First, if a man dies childless, his brother (if he has one) is expected to marry the widow; this perpetuates the legacy of the deceased and protects widows, who need not return to their former family or go begging. Naomi alludes to this practice in 1:13. Second, Leviticus 25:25 says that when someone in poverty has to sell land, close family should buy it back. This keeps land in the family and shows how family should help each other. Boaz assumes this responsibility.

The story could be allegorical; perhaps the names hint at some mystery:

- BetLechem—"House of Bread" could refer to a granary or barn or food bank, perhaps the last place to feel a famine (until the cupboard is bare) or perhaps the first (since people with bare cupboards flock to the food bank).
- Elimelech—"My God is King"; perhaps he was a devout Jew, or perhaps a rather confident apostate.
- Naomi—"My Delight"; perhaps her husband loved her.
- Machlon—could be from the root מְלֹחָה, a word we use when imploring God to annul or forget our sins on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, so perhaps his name means Excuser or Annulor; perhaps it implies that he neglected his religious duty or, on the other hand, that he was kind and forgiving.
- Chilyon—the word appears in Deuteronomy 28:65 meaning some kind of ruin or failure, so perhaps his name means Failure.
- Mo'av—Moabites were given a presumably shameful ancestry as progeny of incest (Gen 19:30-38) and excluded from the community of Israel because they wouldn't supply food and water to, and hired Bilam to curse, the travelling Israelites (Deut 23:4).
- Rut (usually spelled with a silent h)—possibly related to the Hebrew word רַתָּה, gentle.
- Orpah—possibly related to the Hebrew root נַחַזְתָּ, meaning the back of the neck (hence, break a neck or decapitate, or turn one's back on), or leak/drip. You could turn her name into an insult. But maybe it was a lovely name in the language of the Moabites of Biblical times.
- Boaz—meanings for this name escape me.
- Efrat (1:2, 4:12)—a place name, perhaps related to the word for dust, or associated with Ephraimites.
- Oved—from the Hebrew for labor, slave or serve.
- Yishai—meaning uncertain though I've seen some confident interpretations.
- Peretz—from the Hebrew for rupture.
- Chetzron—from the Hebrew for a public square, the area of town outside the house.
- Ram—from the Hebrew for high.
- Aminadav—from the Hebrew for "My people are magnanimous."
- Nachshon—from the Hebrew for snake or copper, perhaps meaning shiny.
- Salmah—from the Hebrew for an outer garment.
- David—related to the Hebrew for beloved or uncle.

I won't interrupt your speculations on what these names could mean by offering my own, so I wish you joy of the hidden profundities you may discover.

## Chapter 1

<sup>1</sup> This happened when judges governed.<sup>1</sup>

There was famine in the land

so a man left the granary in Judah *district*<sup>2</sup> **וַיָּמָלֵךְ אִישׁ מִבֵּית לְחֵם יְהוּדָה**

to live in the fields of Moab,

he and his wife and his two sons.

<sup>2</sup> The man's name was Elimelech,

his wife's name was Naomi,

and the names of his two sons were

Machlon and Chilyon,

people of Efrat,

from the food bank in Judah.

They arrived in the fields of Moab,

and that's where they were.

<sup>3</sup> Naomi's husband Elimelech died;

she and her two sons were left.

<sup>4</sup> They married Moabite women,

one named Orpah

and the other named Rut.

There they lived for about ten years.

<sup>5</sup> Then they both died,

Machlon and Chilyon,

and *Elimelech's* wife was left, *bereaved*

of her two children and her husband.

**וַיָּרַد בִּימֵי שִׁפְטִים הַשְּׁפְטִים**

**וַיָּמָלֵךְ בָּאָרֶץ**

**וַיָּלַךְ אִישׁ מִבֵּית לְחֵם יְהוּדָה**

**לְנָרָב בְּשָׂרֵי מוֹאָב**

**הַוָּא וְאַשְׁתָּו וְשָׁנֵי בָּנָיו**

**וְשֵׁם חָאשָׁשׁ אַלְמָלָךְ**

**וְשֵׁם אַשְׁתָּו נָעָמָן**

**וְשֵׁם שְׁנֵי בָּנָיו**

**מַחְלָוָן וְכִילָוָן**

**אֶפְרָאִים**

**מִבֵּית לְחֵם יְהוּדָה**

**וַיָּבֹא שְׁרֵידָמוֹאָב**

**וַיָּהִי יוֹשֵׁם**

**וַיָּמָת אַלְמָלָךְ אַיִשׁ נָעָמָן**

**וְתַשְׁאֵר הַיָּא וְשָׁנֵי בָּנָיו**

**וַיִּשְׁאָא לְחֵם נְשִׁים מִאָבִיוֹת**

**שֵׁם הַאָחָת עֲרָבָה**

**וְשֵׁם הַשְׁנִינָה רֹות**

**וַיָּשֶׁבּוּ שֵׁם כְּעֹשֵׁר שָׁנִים**

**וְלֹוֹרָו נִמְשְׁנִינָם**

**מַחְלָוָן וְכִילָוָן**

**וְתַשְׁאֵר הָאִשָּׁה**

**מוֹשְׁנֵי יְלִדָּה וְמַאֲיָשָׁה**

Vayehi bimei shefot hashoftim,

vayehi ra'av ba'aretz,

Vayelech ish mibet lechem Yehudah  
lagur bisdei Mo'av,

hu ve'ishto ushnei vanav.

Veshem ha'ish Elimelech,

veshem ishto Na'omi,

veshem shenei vanav

Machlon veChilyon,

Efratim

mibet lechem Yehudah,

vayavo'u sedei Mo'av,

vayiheyu sham.

Vayamat Elimelech ish Na'omi,

vatisha'er hi ushenei vaneha.

Vayisu lahem nashim Mo'aviyot,

shem ha'achat Orpah

veshem hashenit Rut,

vayeshvu sham ke'eser shanim.

Vayamutu gam sheneihem,

Machlon veChilyon,

vatisha'er ha'ishah

mishnei yeladeha ume'ishah.

<sup>1</sup> "And it happened in the days of the judging by the judges." Judges were political and military leaders for the Israelite community before they had a king. Their leadership rarely deserved admiration but with few exceptions they were not as bad as the kings.

<sup>2</sup> "And there went a man from the house of food/bread (or Bethlehem or food bank or grain barn) in the district of Judah"; Beit Lechem could simply be the name of a place, or it may mean that during the famine this man lived at the grain storehouse and left the place for some reason.

<sup>6</sup> She arose<sup>1</sup> with her daughters-in-law and returned from the fields of Moab, for she heard in the fields of Moab that God had taken note of *God's* people, granting them food *after the ten-year famine*.

<sup>7</sup> She left the place she had been with her two daughters-in-law, and they took the road to return to the district of Judah.

<sup>8</sup> Naomi told her two daughters-in-law, “Go on, go back, each *of you* to her mother’s house. May God treat you *as* kindly

as you have treated the dead, and me. *וְעַמְדָה*”

<sup>9</sup> May God grant you—may you find rest, as a wife in her husband’s house.”<sup>3</sup>

She kissed them, and they *all* wept aloud.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>10</sup> They answered her, “But we’ll go back with you to your people!”

<sup>11</sup> Naomi said, “Go back, my daughters. Why would you go with me? Do I still have sons in my womb who can become your husbands?

**וְתָקַם הִיא וְכָלְתִּיקָה**  
**וְתָשַׁב מִשְׁנֵי מוֹאָב**  
**כִּי שָׁמַעַת בְּשָׂדָה מוֹאָב**  
**כִּי-בָקַר וְהֹהֶה אֶת-עַמּוֹ**  
**לְתַתְתָּה לְהַם לְחַם**  
**וְהַצָּא מִן-הַמָּקוֹם**  
**אֲשֶׁר חִיְּתָה שָׁמָה**  
**וְשַׁטִּוְתִּי כְּלַחְתִּה עַמּוֹ**  
**וְתַלְכַּנָּה בְּבָרֶךָ**  
**לְשִׁיבָה אֶל-אָרֶץ יְהוּדָה**  
**וְתֹאמֶר נָעַמְיָה לְשִׁיטֵּר כְּלַתִּיקָה**  
**לְכָנָה שְׁבָנָה**  
**אָשָׁה לְבִתָּה אַפְתָּה**  
**יְעַשֵּׂה יְהוָה עַמְּכֶם חֶסֶד**  
**כִּאֲשֶׁר עֲשָׂתָם עִם-הַמְּפֹתִים וְעַמְּדָה**  
**וַתִּתְּנוּ יְהוָה לְכֶם**  
**וּמִצְאָן מִנוּחָה**  
**אָשָׁה בֵּית אִישָׁה**  
**וְתִשְׁחַק לְתִנְךָ**  
**וְתִשְׁאַנְהַרְךָ קָלָן וְתִבְקִנָה**  
**וְתִאְמְרַנָה לְהָלָה**  
**כִּי-אַתָּךְ נִשְׁׁבָּב לְעַמְּךָ**  
**וְתֹאמֶר נָעַמְיָה שְׁבָנָה בְּנָתִי**  
**לְקָהָה תְּלַכְּנָה עַמּוֹ**  
**הַשׁׁוֹדֶלְכִי בְּנִים בְּמַשְׁיָה**  
**וְהַזְּלָקָם לְאָנְשִׁים**

Vatakam hi vechaloteha  
vatashav misdei Mo'av  
ki shamah bisdei Mo'av  
ki fakad Adonai et amo,  
latet lahem lachem.  
Vatetzeh min hamakom  
asher haytah shamah,  
ushtei chaloteha imah,  
vatalachnah vaderech  
lashuv el eretz Yehudah.  
Vatomer Na'omi lishtei chaloteha,  
“Lechnah, shovnah,  
ishah leveit imah;  
ya'as Adonai imachem chesed  
ka'asher asitem im hametim ve'imadi.  
Yiten Adonai lachem  
umetzena menuchah,  
ishah beit ishah.”  
Vatishaklahen,  
vatisena kolan, vativkenah.  
Vatomarna lah,  
“Ki itach nashuv le’amech!”  
Vatomer Na'omi, “Shovnah, venotai.  
Lamah telachnah imi?  
Ha'od li vanim beme'ai  
vehayu lachem la'anashim?

<sup>1</sup> Today Jewish mourners sit on low chairs and “rise from mourning” when the most intense period of mourning (Shivah) is concluded. Perhaps Na'omi rose from mourning in a similar fashion.

<sup>2</sup> A manuscript version would have the spelling *יעשָׂה*, which would not change the meaning significantly.

<sup>3</sup> Na'omi wishes them the security of a new husband.

<sup>4</sup> “They raised their voices and wept.”

<sup>12</sup> Go back, my daughters, go on,  
for I'm too old to be with a man.  
If I could say I had *any* hope  
that even tonight I'd be with a man  
and *that* I'd even bear sons,  
<sup>13</sup> would you wait around for them<sup>1</sup>  
until they were grown?  
Would you keep yourselves for them,  
and not be with *any other* man?<sup>2</sup>  
Don't *do it*, my daughters.  
I feel terrible for you<sup>3</sup>  
that God's power has *so* affected me.<sup>4</sup>  
<sup>14</sup> They wept aloud, again;  
Orpah kissed her mother-in-law  
while Rut clung to her.  
<sup>15</sup> Naomi said,  
“Look, your sister-in-law went back  
to her people and her gods.  
Go back *too*, after your sister-in-law.”

שָׁבַנָּה בְּנֹתִי לְכָן  
כִּי זָקַנְתִּי מִהְנֹתָה לְאִישׁ  
כִּי אִמְרָתִי יִשְׁלַׁי חִקּוֹתָה  
גַּם הִיְתִּי הַלְּלָלָה לְאִישׁ  
וְנִם יַלְּרָתִי בְּנָנִים  
הַלְּהָנָן תִּשְׁבְּרָנָה  
עַד אֲשֶׁר יִגְדָּל  
הַלְּהָנָן תִּעְנָנָה  
לְבַלְּקָרְבָּן חִנּוֹת לְאִישׁ  
אֶל בְּנָנָה  
כִּי-מְרָדְלִי מָאָד מִכְּמָם  
כִּי-דָצָאָה בַּי יְדִיָּה  
וְתִשְׁנָה קּוֹלָן וְתִבְכִּינָה עוֹד  
וְתִשְׁקַח עַרְפָּה לְחַמּוֹתָה  
וְרוֹת דָבְקָה בָה  
וְתָאָמֵר  
הִנֵּה שָׁבָה יְבִמְעֵד  
אֶל עַמָּה וְאֶל אֶלְהָה  
שׁוּבֵי אֶחָתָה יְבִמְתַךְ

Shovnah, venotai, lechnah  
ki zakanti mihyot le'ish  
ki amarti yesh li tikvah  
gam hayiti halaylah le'ish  
vegam yaladti vanim,  
halahen tesabernah  
ad asher yigdal?  
Halahan te'agenah  
levilti heyot le'ish?  
Al, benotai,  
ki mar li me'od mikem  
ki yatzah vi yad Adonai.”  
Vatisenah kolan vativkenah od;  
vatishak Orpah lachamotah  
veRut davkah bah.  
Vatomer,  
“Hineh shavah yevimtech  
el amah ve'el eloheha;  
shuvi acharei yevimtech.”

<sup>1</sup> Some say לְהָן means “therefore” not “for them,” because it’s normally the feminine form of “for them.” However, the word appears again in this verse and pretty obviously means “for them,” referring to the sons that Naomi can’t have. In addition, Naomi sometimes uses masculine pronouns for the women (לְכָם in 1:11) so feminine pronouns for men seem part of her language. Maybe it’s something she learned during ten years in Moab, and maybe Moabites were less particular about gender than modern grammarians.

<sup>2</sup> All the women seem very familiar with the Jewish institution of levirate marriage: if Naomi had another son, he’d be obliged to marry the childless widows of his deceased brothers. Naomi feels bad that her sons are gone and her daughters-in-law have no ready marriage prospect. The root נָשׁ (hold, or keep) in נָשָׁנָה is the root for agunah, a woman who is not free to marry, either because her estranged husband refuses to grant a divorce and rabbinical authorities decline to intervene, or because her husband has disappeared.

<sup>3</sup> “For bitter to me very much from you”; i.e., I feel rotten because of your situation.

<sup>4</sup> “That it has gone out against me, the hand of God.”

<sup>16</sup> Rut replied,  
“Don’t make me leave you  
or go back from following you,  
for where you go, I will go;  
where you lodge, I will lodge;  
your people *will be* my people;  
your God *will be* my God.

<sup>17</sup> Where you die, I *too* will die,  
and there will I be buried;  
may God make it so, now and in the future, <sup>וְהִי יָסִיף</sup> *and* *only* death  
that *only* death may part me from you.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Naomi realized  
that *Rut* was determined to go with her,  
so she gave up persuading her *to leave*.

<sup>19</sup> They both went on  
until they reached the food bank.  
When they arrived at the food bank,  
the whole town was surprised at them  
and wondered, “Is this Naomi?”

<sup>20</sup> She told them,  
“Don’t call me Naomi,  
call me Marah<sup>2</sup>  
for the Almighty has given me great bitterness.

<sup>21</sup> I was full when I left  
but God sent me back empty.  
Why would you call me Naomi

וַיֹּאמֶר רָות  
אַל-תִּפְגַּע-בִּי לְעֵזֶב  
לְשׁוֹב מֵאַחֲרֵיךְ  
כִּי אַל-אֲשֶׁר תֵּלֶךְ אֶלָּךְ  
וּבְאַשֶּׁר תָּלִין אַלְיָן  
עַמְּךָ עַמְּךָ  
וְאֶלְיָהִיךְ אֶלְיָהִיךְ  
בְּאַשֶּׁר תִּמְוֹתִי אָמוֹת  
וְשָׁם אַקְבָּר  
כִּי יְשַׁהַה יְהוָה לִי וְהִי יָסִיף  
כִּי הַמְּמוּת יִפְרִיד בֵּינִי וּבֵינֶךָ  
וְתָרָא  
כִּירְמַתְמַצֵּאת הִיא לְלַכְתָּא אַתְּ  
וַתִּחְנַל לְדָבֵר אֱלֹהִים  
וַתִּלְכַּדְתָּה שְׂתִּיהם  
עַד-בָּאָנָה בֵּית לְחָם  
וַיָּהִי כְּבָאָנָה בֵּית לְחָם  
וְתִתְהַמֵּם כָּל-דָּשָׂר עַלְיָהָן  
וְתִתְמַרֵּן הַזֹּאת נָעָמִי  
וַיֹּאמֶר אַלְיָהִיךְ  
אַל-תִּקְרְאָנָה לִי נָעָמִי  
קְרָבָן לִי מָרָא  
כִּירְהַמֵּר שְׁדֵי לִי מָאָר  
אָנָי מֶלֶאָה חַלְכָּלִי  
וְרִיקָם הַשִּׁבְבָּנִי יְהוָה  
לְמֹה תִּקְרְנָאָה לִי נָעָמִי

Vatomer Rut,  
“Al tifge’i vi le’ozvech,  
lashuv me’acharayich,  
ki el asher tel’chi elech,  
uva’asher talini alin,  
amech ami  
vElohayich Elohai.  
Ba’asher tamut amut  
vesham ekaver;  
ko ya’aseh Adonai li vecho yosif,  
ki hamavet yafrid beini uveinech.”

Vatereh  
ki mitametzet hi lalechet itah,  
vatechdal ledaber eleha.  
Vatelachna shteihem  
ad bo’ana Beit Lachem,  
vayehi kevo’ana Beit Lechem  
vatehom kol ha’ir aleihen  
vatomarna, “Hazot Na’omi?”  
Vatomer aleihen,  
“Al tikrena li Na’omi,  
kerena li Marah  
ki hemar Shadai li me’od.  
Ani mele’ah halachti  
vereikam heshivani Adonai.  
Lamah tikrena li Na’omi

<sup>1</sup> “So may God do for me and so continue, that *only* death will make a division between me and you.”

<sup>2</sup> Na’omi from “delight,” Marah from “bitter.” Na’omi uses the femimine plural imperative so she’s talking to women. Hebrew speakers would probably say מָרָה, not מָרָא; they’d both sound the same in modern pronunciation, but perhaps the writer wants to show that Na’omi’s speech became a bit foreign.

since God has spoken against me  
and the Almighty treated me badly?”

<sup>22</sup> Naomi returned;  
Rut the Moabite woman,  
her daughter-in-law, was with her;  
she returned from the fields of Moab;  
they arrived at the food bank  
at the beginning of the barley harvest.

<sup>1</sup> Naomi had a friend of her husband’s,  
a powerful man of wealth  
from Elimelech’s family.  
His name was Boaz.

<sup>2</sup> Rut the Moabite woman said  
to Naomi,  
“May I go to the *harvest* field  
and gather *fallen stalks* among the sheaves  
following a *reaper* who is kind to me.”<sup>22</sup>

She said to her, “Go on, my daughter.”  
<sup>3</sup> Off she went and arrived at the field  
and gleaned *fallen stalks* in the field  
following behind the reapers,  
and it just happened that  
the section of field belonged to Boaz,  
who was of Elimelech’s family.

וַיֹּאמֶר עָנָה בָּי  
וְשָׁדַי תְּרַעֵלִי  
וְתַשְׁבֵן עַמּוֹנֵי  
וְרָוֵת הַמּוֹאֲבִיה  
כָּלָתָה עַמָּה  
הַשְׁבָּה מִשְׁדֵּי מוֹאָב  
וְהַמָּה בָּאָ בֵּית לְחֵם  
בְּתַחְלַת קָצֵר שָׁעַרִים

וְלֹעֲנֵמִי מוֹדָעִי לְאִישָׁה  
אִישׁ גָּבוֹר חַיִל  
מִמִּשְׁפָּחַת אֶלְמָלֵךְ  
וְשָׁמוּ בָּעֵז  
וְתָאָמֵר רֹות הַמּוֹאֲבִיה  
אַלְנָעֵמִי  
אַלְכָה-נָא הַשְׁדָּה  
וְאַלְקָטָה בְּשָׁבְּלִים  
אַתָּר אֲשֶׁר אַמְצָא-חֵן בְּעִינֵי  
וְתָאָמֵר לָהּ לְכִ בְּתִי  
וְתַלְךְ וְקַבּוֹא  
וְתַלְקַט בְּשָׁדָה  
אַחֲרֵי הַקָּצָרִים  
וַיִּקְרַר מִקְרָה  
חַלְקַת הַשְׁדָה לְבָעֵז  
אֲשֶׁר מִמִּשְׁפָּחַת אֶלְמָלֵךְ

vAdonai anah vi  
veShadai herah li?”  
Vatashav Na’omi  
veRut haMo’avyah,  
chalatah, imah;  
hashavah misdei Mo’av;  
vehemah ba’u Beit Lechem  
bit’chilat ketzir se’orim.

**Chapter 2**

וְלֹעֲנֵמִי מוֹדָעִי לְאִישָׁה  
אִישׁ גָּבוֹר חַיִל  
מִמִּשְׁפָּחַת אֶלְמָלֵךְ  
וְשָׁמוּ בָּעֵז  
וְתָאָמֵר רֹות הַמּוֹאֲבִיה  
אַלְנָעֵמִי  
אַלְכָה-נָא הַשְׁדָּה  
וְאַלְקָטָה בְּשָׁבְּלִים  
אַתָּר אֲשֶׁר אַמְצָא-חֵן בְּעִינֵי  
וְתָאָמֵר לָהּ לְכִ בְּתִי  
וְתַלְךְ וְקַבּוֹא  
וְתַלְקַט בְּשָׁדָה  
אַחֲרֵי הַקָּצָרִים  
וַיִּקְרַר מִקְרָה  
חַלְקַת הַשְׁדָה לְבָעֵז  
אֲשֶׁר מִמִּשְׁפָּחַת אֶלְמָלֵךְ

UleNa’omi modah le’ishah,  
ish gibor chayil  
mimishpachat Elimelech,  
ushemo Bo’az.

Vatomer Rut haMo’avyah  
el Na’omi,  
“El’cha nah hasadeh  
va’alakotah vashibolim  
achar asher emtza chen be’einav.”

Vatomer lah, “Lechi, viti.”

Vatelech vatavo  
vatlaket basadeh  
acharei hakotzrim;  
vayikar mikreh,  
chelkat hasadeh leVo’az  
asher mimishpachat Elimelech.

<sup>1</sup> A manuscript would have the unusual spelling **מִדְעַ**. The word seems related to words for knowing, so it may mean an acquaintance or friend. However, he is from Elimelech’s family so he’s an in-law.

<sup>2</sup> “After *him* who I’ll find favor in his eyes.” Lev 19:9 says harvesters must leave the “corners” of the field and the gleanings for the poor. Rut plans to follow one of the harvesters, and if he or she takes a liking to this destitute woman who is trying to provide for herself and her mother-in-law, maybe the harvester will drop a few extra stalks for Rut to pick up.

<sup>4</sup> And here came Boaz from the food bank;  
he greeted the reapers,  
“God be with you,”  
and they replied,  
“May God bless you!”

<sup>5</sup> Boaz said to his employee  
who supervised the reapers,  
“Whose girl is that?”  
<sup>6</sup> The worker answered  
(the reapers’ supervisor) and said,  
“She’s a Moabite girl  
who came back with Naomi  
from the fields of Moab.

<sup>7</sup> She asked, ‘Please may I glean  
and collect *stalks* among the sheaves,  
*following* behind the reapers?’  
She arrived, and she kept going  
from early morning *right* up to now,  
and she’s hardly taken a break in the shelter.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Boaz said to Rut,  
“Listen, dear.  
Don’t go gleaning in any other field;  
*really*, don’t leave this one,  
but stick right here with my serving girls.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>9</sup> *Keep* your eyes on the field they reap  
and walk *right* behind them.

וְהִנֵּה-בָּעֵד בָּא מִבֵּית לְחֵם  
וַיֹּאמֶר לְקֹצְרִים  
יְהוָה עָמָכֶם  
וַיֹּאמֶר לָוּ  
יְבָרֶכְךָ יְהוָה  
וַיֹּאמֶר בָּעֵד לְנַעֲרָיו  
הַנַּאֲכֵב עַל-הַקּוֹצְרִים  
לְמַיִּר הַנְּעָרָה הַזֹּאת  
וַיַּעֲנֶן הַנְּעָר  
וַיֹּאמֶר לְקֹצְרִים וַיֹּאמֶר  
נְعָרָה מַוְאֲבִיהָ הִיא  
הַשְׁבָּה עַמְּדֵנִי  
מִשְׁדָּה מוֹאָב  
וַתֹּאמֶר אַל-קָטְה-הָנָא  
וְאִסְפְּחֵי בְּעָמְרִים  
אַחֲרֵי הַקּוֹצְרִים  
וּבְקֻוֹא נְעָמֹד  
מְאוֹ הַבָּקֶר וְעַד-עַתָּה  
וְהִשְׁבְּתָה הַבָּיִת מִנְעֵט  
וַיֹּאמֶר בָּעֵד אַל-רֹהֶת  
הַלְּוֹא שָׁמַעַת בְּתוֹךְ  
אַל-תַּלְכֵל לְלִיקְטָה בְּשָׁדָה אַחֲרָה  
וְגַם לֹא תַּעֲבֹרִי מִזֵּה  
וְלֹא תַּרְבְּקִין עַמְּדֵנְעָרֶת  
עַיְנֵךְ בְּשָׁדָה אֲשֶׁר-יַקְצִרּוּ  
וְהַלְכָתָךְ אַחֲרֵיכֶן

Vehineh Vo’az bah mibet lechem  
vayomer lakotzrim,  
“Adonai imachem,”  
vayomru lo,  
“Yevarechecha Adonai.”  
Vayomer Bo’az lena’aro  
hanitzav al hakotzrim,  
“Lemi hana’ arah hazot?”  
Vaya’an hana’ar  
hanitzav al hakotzrim, vayomar:  
“Na’arah Mo’aviyah hi,  
hashavah im Na’omi  
misdeh Mo’av.  
Vatomer, ‘Alakotah nah  
ve’asafti va’omarim  
acharei hakotzrim’  
vatavo vata’amod  
me’az haboker ve’ad atah  
zeh shivtah habayit me’at.  
Vayomer Bo’az el Rut,  
“Halo shamat biti,  
al tel’chi lilkot besadeh acher,  
vegam lo ta’avuri mizeh,  
vecho tidbakin im na’arotai.  
Einayich basadeh asher yiktzorun  
vehalachti achareihen.

<sup>1</sup> “This is her going back *to* the building a little”

<sup>2</sup> “Have you not heard, my daughter? Do not go to glean in a different field. Also, you shall not pass from this *one*. And here shall you stick (דָּקַק is glue in modern Hebrew) with my girls.” To refer to the reapers, Boaz uses the feminine pronoun but the “workers” he mentions are male, so presumably the women did the work and the men made trouble.

*Don't worry, I've told the male workers<sup>1</sup> not to bother you.*

*If you're thirsty, go to the *water* jugs and drink from *the water* that the male workers have drawn.*

<sup>10</sup> She fell to her knees and bowed low<sup>2</sup> and said to him,

*"Why do you treat me so well and acknowledge me, when I'm just a foreigner!"<sup>3</sup>*  
<sup>11</sup> Boaz responded and told her, "I heard—they told me<sup>4</sup>—all you did for your mother-in-law after the death of your husband: how you left your father and mother and your native land and went to a people you'd never known ever before.

<sup>12</sup> May God reward your deed, may you get all that you deserve<sup>5</sup> from God, the God of Israel, under whose wing you came for shelter.<sup>6</sup>

הַלֹּא צִוִּיתִי אֶת־הַנְּעָרִים  
 לְבָלְעִי נָגַעַךְ  
 וְצִמְתָּ וְהַלְכָתָךְ אֶל־הַכְּלִים  
 וְשִׁתָּהִתְמַאֵּשֶׁר  
 וַיָּשָׁבְּוּן הַנְּעָרִים  
 וְתִפְלַל עַל־פְּנֵיהֶן וְתִשְׁתַּחַוו אֶרְצָה  
 וְתִאֵמֶר אֶלְיוֹן  
 מִדְעוֹן מִצְאָתֵךְ חָן בְּעִינָךְ  
 לְהַכְּרִירִי וְאָנֹכִי נְכָרִירִי<sup>3</sup>  
 וַיַּעֲשֵׂנִי בְּעֵז וַיִּאמֶר קָהֵן  
 חָנֵד הָנֵד לֵי כָּל אֲשֶׁר־עָשָׂית  
 אֶת־חַמּוֹתָךְ  
 אַחֲרֵי מוֹת אִישָׁךְ  
 וְתַעֲזֹבֵי אָבִיךְ וְאַמְּדֵךְ  
 וְאֶרְץ מוֹלַדְתֶּךְ  
 וְתַלְכֵי אֶל־עַם אֲשֶׁר לֹא־יִדְעָת  
 תָּמֹלֵל שְׁלִשּׁוֹם  
 יִשְׁלַמֵּם יְהוָה פָּעָלָךְ  
 וְתַהֲיוּ מִשְׁכְּרָתָךְ שְׁלָמָה  
 מַעַם יְהוָה אֶלְעָזִיר יִשְׁרָאֵל  
 אֲשֶׁר־בָּאת לְחִסּוֹת תְּחִתְקָנָפָיו

<sup>3</sup> This is an anomalous grammatical form. You might want to change this to “vehalacht” without the final *i*, the usual feminine form for “and you shall go.” However, in verse 11 Boaz uses verbs ending in *i* (with a *וּ*), usually a feminine imperative, to describe Rut’s completed (not future) actions. Following the principle of *durior lectio* (accept a difficult reading because transcription errors favor familiar forms), one keeps the anomalous form.

<sup>1</sup> “Haven’t I told the workers?”

<sup>2</sup> “She fell on her face and bowed to the ground”; obviously, once you’re on your face you can’t bow any lower, so this is an idiom to describe assuming a submissive position.

<sup>3</sup> “Why have I found favor in your eyes, to acknowledge me, and I’m a foreign woman?” I don’t think she asks him the question but instead wonders out loud how this could happen.

<sup>4</sup> “It was told, it was told to me”

<sup>5</sup> “May your payment be complete”

<sup>6</sup> “that you have come to find shelter under *God’s* wings”

<sup>13</sup> She said, “I’ll seek your *continued* favor, sir, for you have reassured me and spoken to the heart of this female worker, though as a *foreigner* I couldn’t *really* be like one of your female workers.”

<sup>14</sup> Boaz said to her, “At mealtime, come over here; share our food and dip your bread in the sauce.”<sup>1</sup> She sat next to the reapers while he passed her parched corn.<sup>2</sup> She ate until she was full, and had leftovers!

<sup>15</sup> She got up *after the meal break* to glean more, but Boaz instructed his male workers: “She can glean right among the sheaves,<sup>3</sup> so don’t scold her,

<sup>16</sup> And you can drop *some stalks* for her from the bunches *in your hand*, and leave *them* so she can glean them, and don’t tell her off.”

<sup>17</sup> She gleaned in the field until evening and threshed what she had gleaned; it was about five gallons<sup>4</sup> of barley!

<sup>18</sup> She carried it back to town where her mother-in-law saw how much she had gleaned;

נִהְאָמֵר אַמְצָא־תָּן בְּעִינֵּךְ  
אַדְנִי כִּי נִחְמַתְנִי  
וְכִי דְּבָרָתָךְ עַל־לִבְךְ  
שְׁפָתָתְךְ  
וְאַנְכִּי לֹא אֲדֹהָ  
כְּאַחַת שְׁפָתָתְךְ  
וַיֹּאמֶר לְהָ בָּעוֹ  
לְעַת חָאָכְלָן שְׁיַחַלְמָם  
וְאַכְלָתָ מִן־הַלְּקָתָם  
וְטַבְלָתָ פִּתְחָ בְּחַמְמָיִם  
וְהַשְּׁבָּ מִצְדָּקָן כְּקוֹצָרִים  
וַיַּצְבְּתָּ לְהָ קָלִי  
וְתַאֲכֵל וְתַשְּׁבָּ וְתַהֲרֵר  
וְתַקְמִם לְקָטָן  
וַיַּצְאֵ בַּעַד אַחֲנָעָרְיוֹ לְאָמֵר  
בַּם בֵּין הַעֲמָרִים תַּלְקַט  
וְלֹא תְּכִלִּימִיהָ  
וְגַם שְׁלַתְשָׁלֹו לְהָ  
מִן־הַאֲכָתִים וְעַזְבָּתִים  
וְלֹקְתָה וְלֹא תַגְרַבְתָה  
וְתַלְקַט בְּשָׂדָה עַד־הָעָרָב  
וְתַחֲבַט אֶת אַשְׁר־לְקָטָה  
וַיֹּהֵי כְּאַפָּה שְׁעִירִים  
וְתַשְּׁאָ וְתַקְבֹּא חָעֵר  
וְתַרְאָ חַמּוֹתָה  
אֶת אַשְׁר־לְקָטָה

Vatomer, “Emtzah chen be’einecha, adoni, ki nichamtani vechi dibarta al lev shifchatecha, ve’anochi lo ehyeh ke’achat shifchotecha. Vayomer lah Vo’az, “Le’et ha’ochel, goshi halom, ve’achalt min halechem vetavalt pitech bachometz.” Vateshev mitzad hakotzrim, vayitzbat lah kali vatochal vatisbah, vatotar. Vatakam lelaket, vayetzav Bo’az et ne’arav lemor: “Gam bein ha’omarim telaket velo tachlimuha. vegam shol tasholu lah min hatzevatim, va’azavtem, velikta, velo tigaru vah.” Vatlaket basadeh ad ha’arev, vatachbot et asher liketah, vayehi ke’ephah se’orim. Vatisah vatavo ha’ir vatereh chamotah et asher liketah,

<sup>1</sup> “At the time for eating, come close over here; and you can eat from the bread/food (*i.e.*, our food) and you can dip your bread in the sauce/vinegar (presumably the bread was the main part of the food, flavored with sauce).”

<sup>2</sup> Like sharing popcorn in the movies; isn’t he sweet?

<sup>3</sup> Boaz means that Rut can keep level with the reapers instead of following behind them like the other paupers.

<sup>4</sup> “About an ephah”

she brought out and gave her the leftovers from eating her fill *earlier*.

<sup>19</sup> Her mother-in-law said to her, “Where were you gleaning today, where were you doing *it*? Blessed be the man who permitted you.”<sup>1</sup>

She told her mother-in-law how she had acted with him and said, “The name of the man I dealt with today is Boaz.”

<sup>20</sup> Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, “May he be blessed by God who has not abandoned God’s kindness with the living and the dead.”

Naomi *also* said to her, “That man is close to us. He’s family.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Said Rut the Moabite woman, “What’s more, he told me, ‘Stick to my male workers until they finish all my harvest.’”<sup>3</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Naomi said to her daughter-in-law Rut, “That’s fine, dear, if you go out with his female workers, so long as they don’t attack<sup>3</sup> you in some other field.”

vatotzeh vatiten lah  
et asher hotirah misavah.  
Vatomer lah chamotah,  
“Eifah likat’t hayom  
ve’annah asit?  
Yehi makirech baruch!”  
Vataged lachamotah  
et asher astah imo, vatomer,  
“Shem ha’ish asher asiti imo  
hayom Bo’az.”  
Vatomer Na’omi lechalatah,  
“Baruch hu l’Adonai  
asher lo azav chasdo  
et hachayim ve’et hametim.”  
Vatomer lah Na’omi,  
“Karov lanu ha’ish; migo’alenu hu.”  
Vatomer Rut haMo’avyah,  
“Gam ki amar elai,  
‘Im hane’arim asher li tidbakin  
ad im kilu et kol hakatzir asher li.’”  
Vatomer Na’omi el Rut kalatah,  
“Tov, biti,  
ki tetzi im na’arotav  
velo yifge’u vach  
besadeh acher.”

<sup>1</sup> “Blessed be the one who acknowledged you”—Boaz saw her and gave her favored status in his field; her right to glean was not in question.

<sup>2</sup> Boaz is related to Naomi’s husband Elimelech (1:3); Naomi now says he’s close enough to do something for her and Rut. (Lev. 25:25 says that when a poor person has to sell land, close family should buy it back.) If Elimelech went to Moab because he had to sell his land, Naomi sees a chance that family will (at last) help.

<sup>3</sup> Or “meet,” but Naomi seems concerned about some kind of threat to Rut.

<sup>23</sup> So she gleaned with Boaz' female workers<sup>1</sup> until the barley harvest was completed—and the wheat harvest, *too*—and she lived with her mother-in-law.

וְתִדְבַּק בְּנָעָרֹת בְּעֵז לְלַקְתָּט  
עַד-כֶּלֶת קִצְרֵ-הַשְׁעָרִים  
וּקִצְרֵ הַחֲטִים  
וְתִשְׁבַּ אֶת-חַמּוֹתָה

Vatidbak bena'arot Bo'az lelaket  
ad kelot ketzir hase'orim  
uketzir hachitim,  
vateshev et chomatah.

### Chapter 3

<sup>1</sup> Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, "My dear, aren't I looking to get you a break that will do you *a world of good*!"

וְתִאמְרֵ לְהָ נָעָמֵי חַמּוֹתָה  
בְּתִי הַלְּאָ אַבְקַשׁ-לְךָ מְנוֹתָה  
אֲשֶׁר יַיְצֵב-לְךָ

Vatomer lah Na'omi chamotah,  
"Biti, halo avakesh lach mano'ach  
asher yitav lach!

<sup>2</sup> Now, isn't Boaz someone we know (you were with his female workers);<sup>2</sup> Look, he'll be winnowing at the barley-threshing floor<sup>3</sup> tonight.

וְעַתָּה הַלְּאָ בְּעֵז מְדֻעָתָנוּ  
אֲשֶׁר חִיָּתָ אֶת-נְעָרֹתָיו  
הַגְּהָהָוֹ זָרָה  
אֶת-גָּרְנוֹן תְּשֻׁעָרִים הַלִּילָה

Ve'atah, halo Vo'az modatanu,  
asher hayit et na'arotav;  
hineh hu zoreh  
et goren hase'orim halaylah.

<sup>3</sup> Have a wash, put on some lotion,<sup>4</sup> put on your *good* clothes and go down to the threshing floor. Don't let the man know *you're there* until he's finished eating and drinking.

וְרִחְצָתָ וּסְכָתָ  
וּשְׁמַמְתָּ שְׁמַלְתָּנָךְ עַלְיךָ  
וַיְרַדְתָּ הַגְּרָנוֹן  
אַל-תִּנְדַּעַ לֵאֶשׁ  
עַד כְּלֹתוֹ לְאַכֵּל וְלִשְׁתֹּוֹת

Verachatzt vasacht  
vesamt simlotayich alayich,  
veyarad't hagoren.  
Al tivadi la'ish  
ad kaloto le'echol velishtot.

<sup>1</sup> "And she stuck with the female workers of Boaz to glean."

<sup>2</sup> You wouldn't think Naomi needs to remind Rut who Boaz is. Maybe Naomi is reminding herself how well things are going between Rut and Boaz.

<sup>3</sup> For threshing (separating grain from chaff, usually by bashing it with a flail or stomping on it) and winnowing (blowing off the chaff) you could use a flat area outside so the wind could carry away the chaff.

<sup>4</sup> Before the practice of a daily shower, people used to bathe and oil themselves. I think bathing was optional.

<sup>5</sup> A manuscript has the spelling, *شمְלָתָךְ*, which could be singular whereas *שְׁמַלְתָּנָךְ* looks like plural garments.

<sup>6</sup> A manuscript has the word *וַיַּדְתִּי*, "I will go," as if Naomi will be right with Rut for this expedition.

<sup>4</sup> When he lies down *to sleep*,  
take note of the place  
where he is going to lie down;  
then go, follow his footsteps;<sup>1</sup> lie down,  
and he will tell you what to do.

<sup>5</sup> *Rut* answered *Naomi*,  
“I’ll do exactly what you tell me.”  
<sup>6</sup> She went down to the threshing-floor  
and did everything  
her mother-in-law told her.  
<sup>7</sup> Boaz ate, drank and felt good.<sup>3</sup>  
He went to lie by the last row of sheaves.<sup>4</sup>  
She crept in,<sup>5</sup>  
followed his footsteps and lay down.  
<sup>8</sup> In the middle of the night,  
the man *woke up* trembling; he turned  
and—look!—there was a woman lying in  
his footsteps.

**וַיְהִי בְּשַׁבָּבָו**  
**וַיַּרְאֵת אֶת-הַמְּקוֹם**  
**אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁכַּב-שָׁם**  
**וְבָאת וְגַלְתִּית מִרְגָּלָיו וְשַׁכְבָּתָה**  
**וְהִוא יִגְדֵּל לְךָ אֲתָא אֲשֶׁר הָעָשָׂה**  
**וְתָאִמֵּר אֲלֵיכָה**  
**כָּל אֲשֶׁר-הָאָמָרָי אֲלֵי אֲעָשָׂה**  
**וְתָרַד הַגָּרָן**  
**וְתָעַשׂ כָּל**  
**אֲשֶׁר-צִוָּתָה חִמּוֹתָה**  
**וַיִּאֱכַל בַּעַז וַיִּשְׁתַּת וַיִּטְבַּל בְּלֹבֶן**  
**וַיַּבְאֵל לְשַׁכֵּב בְּקַצְבָּה הַעֲרָמָה**  
**וַתָּבֹא בָּלֶט**  
**וַתָּלֶל מִרְגָּלָיו וַתִּשְׁכַּב**  
**וַיַּהַי בַּחֲצִי הַלְּלָה**  
**וַיִּחְרַד הָאִישׁ וַיַּקְפַּת**  
**וְהִנֵּה אֲשֶׁר שַׁכְבָּתָה**  
**מִרְגָּלָתוֹ**

Vayehi veshochvo,  
veyada’at et hamakom  
asher yishkav sham;  
uvat vegilit margelotav, veshachavt;  
vehu yagid lach et asher ta’asin.  
Vatomer eleha,  
“Kol asher tomri elai e’eseh.”  
Vatered hagoren,  
vata’as kechol  
asher tzivatah chamotah.  
Vayochal Bo’az vayesht, vayitav libo  
vayavo lishkav biktzeh ha’aremah.  
Vatavo valat  
vatgal margelotav, vatishkav.  
Vayehi bachatzi halaylah  
vayecherad ha’ish vayilafet  
vehineh ishah shochev  
margelotav.

<sup>1</sup> The word for “follow” is from the root גָּלַה, “uncover/reveal” (or “send into exile”); Naomi tells *Rut* to be clear (uncover) which way he went; Rashi points out that Boaz would sleep by his crop to protect it from thieves. מִרְגָּלָתוֹ is a fancy word from the root רָגַל, foot or leg; if it means “his feet,” you’d expect the dual plural, so some scholars think it refers to the place where his feet have been, his footsteps. Some think “follow his footsteps” really means “uncover his feet,” the lower part of his bed covering; according to Ex. 22:27 or B.T. Ketuvot 48a, people used to remove their daytime garment and use it as a blanket. (מִרְגָּלָתוֹ could also mean “his pearls/jewels,” from מְרַגְּלִית, pearl, but I’m too naïve to know what that might mean, and as for you, you should stop snickering.)

<sup>2</sup> A manuscript has the word וְשַׁכְבָּתִי, “I will lie down,” as if Naomi is taking responsibility for what *Rut* does.

<sup>3</sup> “And his heart was good.”

<sup>4</sup> “At the edge of the sheaves (the word for sheaves is singular, but it’s used as a collective noun).” The harvest was complete (2:22) so the reapers had stacked it into sheaves, so there was lots of threshing still to do.

<sup>5</sup> “And she came quietly.”

<sup>9</sup> He said, “Who are you?”

She answered, “I’m Rut. I’m your servant. Spread your cloak over *me*, your servant, for you can help *us*.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>10</sup> He said, “God bless you, my dear.<sup>2</sup> You’ve done the right thing.

You’re even kinder now than before;<sup>3</sup> you’re not chasing the young fellows, whether poor or rich.

<sup>11</sup> So now, my dear,<sup>4</sup> don’t worry; all that you ask, I’ll do for you, for the whole town knows<sup>5</sup> that you’re a good woman.

<sup>12</sup> Yes, it’s true that I’m family; still, someone else is closer family than I.

<sup>13</sup> Stay the night *here*. In the morning, if he acts as family should, fine, let him be family. And if he doesn’t want to act as your family then I’ll be family for you, I swear it.<sup>7</sup> So lie *here* until morning.”

וַיֹּאמֶר מַיְצָאָתָּךְ

וְהִאמְרָתָּךְ אָנֹכִי רֹות אַמְתָּךְ

וְפִרְשַׁת כְּנֵפֶךְ עַל־אַמְתָּךְ

כִּי נָאֵל אַתָּה

וַיֹּאמֶר בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה לְיהוָה בָּתָּה

תִּיטְבָּחָת

תְּסַךְדֵּק הַאֲתָרָנוּ מִן־הַרְאָשָׁוֹן

לְבַלְתִּירְלְכָת אַתָּה בְּהַבְּחוּרִים

אַמְ-כָּל וְאַמְ-עָשֵׂיר

וְעַתָּה בְּתִי אַל־תִּירְאָא

כָּל אֲשֶׁר־הָאָמָרִי אַעֲשֶׂה־לְךָ

כִּי יוֹדֵעַ כָּל־שָׁעַר עָמֵד

כִּי אִשְׁתָּחַווֹת תְּיִלְאָתָה

וְעַתָּה כִּי אָמַנָּמָה

כִּי נָאֵל אַנְכִי

וְנִמְ יְשֵׁא כָּל קָרוֹב מִמְּנִי

לִנְיָה | הַלְּיָה

וְהִיָּה בְּבָקָר אַמְ-יִגְּאָלָךְ

טוֹב יִגְּאָלָךְ

וְאַמְ-לָא יִחְפֹּצֵן לְנִאָלָךְ

וְנִגְּאָלָךְ אָנֹכִי חִיְּיוֹתָה

שְׁכָבִי עַד־הַבָּקָר

Vayomer, “Mi at?”

Vatomer, “Anochi Rut, amatecha, ufarasta chenafecha al amat’cha ki go’el atah.”

Vayomer, “Beruchah at lAdonai, biti. Hetavt.

Chasdech ha’acharon min harishon levilti lechet acharei habachurim, im dal ve’im ashir.

Ve’atah, biti, al tiri;

kol asher tomri, e’eseh lach,

ki yode’ah kol sha’ar ami

ki eshet chayil at.

Ve’ata ki omnem

ki go’el anochi

vegam yesh go’el karov mimeni.

Lini halaylah

vehayah vaboker im yigalech, tov, yigal;

ve’im lo yachpotz lega’olech uge’altich anochi, chai Adonai.

Shichvi ad haboker.

<sup>1</sup> “For you are a redeemer.” Lev 25:25 says that when a poor person is forced to sell land, family should buy it back. This keeps land in the family and shows how family should help each other.

<sup>2</sup> “Blessed may you be to God, my daughter.”

<sup>3</sup> “Your later kindness is *more than* the first *kindness*.” Her first kindness was being nice to Naomi. The later kindness is being nice to Boaz—choosing him instead of going for a young fellow.

<sup>4</sup> “My daughter.”

<sup>5</sup> “For all the gate of my people.” Gate stands for city, an instance of synecdoche like “a sail!” for a ship.

<sup>6</sup> A manuscript inserts the word מִתְ. It’s not pronounced or translated.

<sup>7</sup> “As God lives,” quite an oath to take!

<sup>14</sup> She slept in his footsteps until morning and got up before *it was light enough that* anyone could recognize a friend, while he thought, “I hope no-one finds out<sup>3</sup> that this woman came to the threshing-floor!”

<sup>15</sup> He said *to her*, “bring *me* the cloak you’re wearing,<sup>4</sup> and hold it out.” So she held it out, while he measured *into it* six *measures of barley* and placed it on her and went into town.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>16</sup> She came to her mother-in-law, who said, “Who are you, my dear?”<sup>6</sup> Rut told her everything that the man had done for her.

<sup>17</sup> Rut said, “These six *measures of barley* he gave me as he said to me, ‘Don’t go empty-handed to your mother-in-law.’”

וַתִּשְׁכַּב מִרְגָּלֹתָיו עַד־הַבָּקָר וַתִּקְרַם בְּטַרְמָה<sup>2</sup> יָקִיר אִישׁ אֶת־רָעָה וַיָּאִמֶּר אֶל־יְוָהּ כִּי־בָּאָה הָאֲשָׁה הַגָּרָן וַיֹּאמֶר הַכִּי הַמְּטֻפָּחַ אֲשֶׁר־עָלָיו וְאַחֲזִיבָה וַתִּאָתֵחַ בָּהּ וַתִּמְרַגֵּל שְׁשׁ־שָׁעַרִים וַיִּשְׁתַּחַת עַלְיָהּ וַיִּבְאָה הַשִּׁיר וַתִּכְבֹּא אֶל־חַמּוֹתָה וַתִּחְמַר מִרְאַת בְּתִי וַתִּגְדַּלְתָּה אֶת כָּל־אֲשָׁר שָׁהַדְלָתָה אֶת־הָאִישׁ וַתִּהְמַר שְׁשׁ־הַשָּׁעָרִים הַאֶלָּה נָתַן לִי כִּי אָמַר אֵלִי אֶל־תְּבֹאֵי רֵיקָם אֶל־חַמּוֹתָךְ

Vatishkav margelotav ad haboker, vataksam beterem  
yakir ish et re’ehu, vayomer, “Al yivada  
ki va’ah ha’ishah hagoren.”  
Vayomer,  
“Havi hamitpachat asher alayich ve’echozi vah.”  
Vatochez bah, vayamad shesh se’orim  
vayashet aleha vayavo ha’ir.  
Vatavo el chamotah  
vatomer, “Mi at, biti?”  
Vataged lah et kol asher asah lah ha’ish.  
Vatomer, “Shesh hase’orim ha’eleh natan li ki amar elai, ‘Al tavo’i reikam el chamotech.”

<sup>1</sup> A manuscript version has the unusual spelling מִרְגָּלֹתִי in this instance; the accepted spelling is also unusual because of the dot on the final letter, מִרְגָּלֹתִי; as you can just see in the codex: **עַד־בָּקָר**

<sup>2</sup> A manuscript version has the unusual spelling בְּטַרְמָה.

<sup>3</sup> “Let *it* not be known.”

<sup>4</sup> “Which is upon you.”

<sup>5</sup> (If she slept in her cloak and nothing else, this could be awkward.) He gives her all this barley perhaps as a bonanza to a destitute woman, or perhaps so she’ll look like she’s been at work and not sleeping close to Boaz. Some translators say she and not he went back to town, though the Hebrew word is masculine. Boaz might have gone back to town because he didn’t need to guard his crop in daylight—his workers would be out threshing during the daylight hours.

<sup>6</sup> “My daughter.” Naomi pretends not to recognize Rut because she’s loaded with merchandise.

<sup>18</sup> Naomi said, “Sit down, my dear, until you find out how things will turn out.<sup>1</sup> Boaz won’t rest unless he settles this matter today.”

<sup>1</sup> Boaz went up to the *town* gate and sat down there.

Here came the *other* relative of whom Boaz had spoken.

Boaz said, “Come and sit over here, what’s-your-name the widower”; he came over and sat down.

<sup>2</sup> Boaz gathered ten of the town elders and said “Sit here”; they sat down.

<sup>3</sup> Boaz said to the *other* family member, “The piece of land that belonged to Elimelech our relative, Naomi sold it, Naomi who came back from the fields of Moab.

<sup>4</sup> I thought I’d say this in public:<sup>2</sup> Buy *it*, in the presence of those seated, in the presence of our people’s elders. If you *want* to buy it back, *then* buy it back; if you won’t buy it back, tell me, and I’ll know.

וַיֹּאמֶר שְׁבֵי בָּיוֹן  
עַד אֲשֶׁר תִּרְשְׁעֵין  
אֵיךְ יִפְלֶל דָּבָר  
קַיְלָא יִשְׁקַט הַאֲיָש  
כִּי-אִם-כֶּלֶת הַדָּבָר הַיּוֹם

Vatomer, “Shevi, viti, ad asher ted’in eich yipol davar. Ki lo yishkot ha’ish ki im kilah hadavar hayom.”

### Chapter 4

וּבָעוּ עַלְלה הַשְׁעָר  
וַיֵּשֶׁב שָׁם  
וְהִנֵּה הַגָּאֵל עַבְרֵי  
אֲשֶׁר דָּבַר-בָּעֵן  
וַיֹּאמֶר סֻרָה שְׁבָה-בָּה  
פָּלָנִי אַל-מְנוּי  
וַיִּסְרֵר וַיִּשְׁבֶּה  
וַיִּקְחֵח עֲשָׂרָה אֲנָשִׁים  
מִזְקֵנֵי הָעִיר  
וַיֹּאמֶר שְׁבָוֹרָה וַיִּשְׁבֶּה  
וַיֹּאמֶר לְנַאֲלֵל  
חַלְקַת הַשְׁמָה  
אֲשֶׁר לְאַחֲנָנוּ לְאַלְיָמָלֵד  
מִכְרָה נָעֵמִי  
הַשְׁבָה מִשְׁמָה מוֹאָב  
וְאַנְיָ אַמְרָתִי אֲגַלָּה אַנְגַּע לְאָמֶר  
קְנֵה נְגֵד קִישְׁבִּים  
וְנִגְדֵּל זִקְנֵן עַמִּי  
אִם-תִּגְאַל נְגַל  
וְאִם-לֹא נְגַל  
הַגִּידָה לִי וְאַדְעָה<sup>3</sup>

UVo’az alah hasha’ar vayeshev sham, vehineh hago’el over, asher diber Bo’az, vayomer, “Surah, shevah po, ploni almoni”; vayasar vayeshev. Vayikach asarah anashim miziknei ha’ir vayomer, “Shevu fo”; vayeshev. Vayomer lago’el, “Chelkat hasadeh asher le’achinu, le’Elimelech, machrah Na’omi, hashavah misdei Mo’av. Va’ani amarti, egleh oznecha, lemora’im: “Keneh neged hayoshvim veneged ziknei ami. Im tigal, ge’al, ve’im lo yigal, hagidah li ve’edah.

<sup>1</sup> “How the matter will fall.”

<sup>2</sup> “And I said I will reveal *to* your ears, saying.”

<sup>3</sup> A manuscript version has the unusual spelling *וְאַדְעָה*

No-one has a better right to buy back *the land*,<sup>1</sup>  
but I'm next to you *in line*.”

*The other relative* answered, “I'll buy it back.”

<sup>5</sup> Then Boaz said,

“On the day you buy that land,  
from Naomi—

and from Rut the Moabite woman,  
the dead man's wife—you'll have bought it,  
to perpetuate the dead man's name  
on his legacy.”

<sup>6</sup> The *other relative* said,

“I can't buy it back, *to make it mine*,  
lest I damage my *own legacy*.<sup>3</sup>

You can take over my option  
because I can't exercise it.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>7</sup> This is how, in former times in Israel,  
*they handled* buying back *property*  
and transfer of *property options*,  
to settle any *such* transaction:  
one party would take off his shoe  
and give it to the other.

This was the public acknowledgement in Israel.

<sup>8</sup> The *other relative* said to Boaz,

“You can buy it.” So Boaz pulled off his shoe.

<sup>9</sup> Boaz said to the elders

**כִּי אֵין זָלַת־חַק לְנָאֹל**  
Ki ein zulat'cha ligol,  
**וְאָנֹכִי אֲחַרְיךָ**  
va'anochi acharecha.”

**וַיֹּאמֶר אָנֹכִי אֲנָאָל**  
Vayomer, “Anochi egal.”

**וַיֹּאמֶר בָּעֵז**  
Vayomer Bo'az,

**בַּיּוֹם־קְנוֹתְךָ הַשְׁדָה**  
“Beyom kenot'cha hasadeh

**מִינֶיךָ נָעֵמִי**  
miyad Na'omi—

**וּמִתְּהִלָּתְךָ רְוֹת הַמּוֹאֲכִיהָ**  
ume'et Rut haMo'aviyah,

**אֲשֶׁת־הַמָּטָה קְנִיתָה<sup>2</sup>**  
eshet hamet—kanita

**לְחַקִּים שְׁמַהְמָת**  
lehakim shem hamet

**עַל־נְחַלָּתוֹ**  
al nachalato.”

**וַיֹּאמֶר הַגָּאֵל**  
Vayomer hago'el,

**לֹא אָכַל לְנָאֹל־לְךָ**  
“Lo uchal ligal li

**פָּנָזְחִיתָ אֶת־נְחַלָּתִי**  
pen ash'chit et nachalati.

**נָאֹל־לְךָ אֶתְתָּה אֶת־נָאֹלְךָ**  
Ge'al lecha atah et ge'ulati

**כִּי לֹא־אָכַל לְנָאֹל**  
ki lo uchal ligol.”

**וְזֹאת לְפָנִים בִּישְׁרָאֵל**  
Vezot lefanim beYisra'el

**עַל־הַנְּאֹולָה**  
al hage'ulah

**וְעַל־הַתְּמֻמָּרָה**  
ve'al hatemurah

**לְקַיִם כָּל־דָּבָר**  
lekayem kol davar:

**שְׁלַף אִישׁ נָעַלְוֹ**  
shalaf ish na'alo

**וּנְקַעַן לְרַעַשוֹ**  
venatan lere'chu,

**וְזֹאת הַקְּעֻדָּה בִּישְׁרָאֵל**  
vezot hate'udah beYisra'el.

**וַיֹּאמֶר הַגָּאֵל לְבָעֵז**  
Vayomer hago'el leVo'az,

**קְנֵה־לְךָ וַיְשַׁלֵּף נָעַלְוֹ**  
“Keneh lach.” Vayishlof na'alo.

**וַיֹּאמֶר בָּעֵז לְקַנְּנִים**  
Vayomer Bo'az lazkenim

<sup>1</sup> “For there is none except you to redeem.”

<sup>2</sup> A manuscript version reads, **קִנְיִתִי**, “I have bought.”

<sup>3</sup> He's concerned that he'll spend his children's inheritance to buy back this plot of land, and it won't go to them but to Rut's future children. Even if he marries Rut so that her children are his children, he's worried that his grown children will give him trouble for diluting their future inheritance. Children! What can you say?

<sup>4</sup> “Buy back for yourself my *right of buying it back*, because I can't buy it back.”

<sup>5</sup> A manuscript version reads **לְגָאֹל**.

and all the people *present*,  
“Today, you are witnesses that I bought  
all of Elimelech’s *property*—  
with all of Chilyon’s and Machlon’s—  
from Naomi.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>10</sup> What’s more, Rut the Moabitess,  
wife of Machlon, have I acquired as my wife,  
to perpetuate the dead man’s name  
on his legacy,  
so the dead man’s name should not be scratched  
from the *list* of his relatives  
and the gate of his hometown.  
You are witnesses today.”

<sup>11</sup> They agreed, all the people at the gate  
and the elders: “Yes, we are witnesses.  
May God bestow upon the woman  
who joins your household *prominence*  
like Rachel and Leah  
who both built up  
the household of Israel,  
and may you succeed in Efrat  
and be famous at the food bank.

<sup>12</sup> May your family become  
like the family of Peretz  
whom Tamar bore to Judah—  
from the seed which God grants you—  
from this young woman.”

וְכָל-הָעֵם  
עֲדִים אֲתָם הַיּוֹם כִּי קָנוּתִי  
אֶת-כָּל-אֲשֶׁר לְאֶלְמָלֶךְ  
וְאַתָּה כָּל-אֲשֶׁר לְכְלִיּוֹן וּמַחְלוֹן  
מִינֶּרֶתְּנִי  
וְגַם אַתָּה רֹוֹת הַמְּאֵבִיהָ  
אֲשֶׁת מַחְלוֹן קָנוּתִי לְךָ לְאִשָּׁה  
לְהַקְרִים שְׁמַדְהָמָת  
עַל-נְחָלֹתָו  
וְלֹא-יִקְרַת שְׁמַדְהָמָת  
כְּמַעַם אֲחִיוֹ  
וּמִשְׁעֵר מִקְוָמוֹ  
עֲדִים אֲתָם הַיּוֹם  
וַיֹּאמְרוּ כָּל-הָעֵם אֲשֶׁר-בַּשְׁעָר  
וּהְזֹקְנִים עָדִים  
וְפָנִים יְהוָה אַתְּ-הָאִשָּׁה  
הַבָּאָה אֶל-בֵּיתְךָ  
כְּרָחֵל וּכְלָאָה  
אֲשֶׁר בָּנָנו שְׂתִּיהם  
אַתְּ-בִּתְּהֵרָאֵל  
וּשְׁחַדְּקִיל בְּאֶפְרַתָּה  
וּקְרָא-שֵׁם בְּבֵית לָחֶם  
וַיְהִי בִּיתְךָ  
כֶּבֶת פָּרֶץ  
אֲשֶׁר-יָלְדָה תָּמָר לִיהוּדָה  
מִן-הָנָזֶר אֲשֶׁר-יִתְןֵן יְהוָה לְךָ  
מִן-הָנָעָרָה הַזֹּאת

vechol ha’am,  
“Edim atem hayom ki kaniti  
et kol asher le’Elimelech—  
ve’et kol asher leChilyon uMachlon  
—miyad Na’omi.  
Vegam et Rut haMo’aviyah,  
eshet Machlon, kaniti li le’ishah,  
lehakim shem hamet  
al nachalato,  
Velo yikaret shem hamet  
me’im echav  
umisha’ar mekomo.  
Edim atem hayom.”  
Vayomru kol ha’am asher basha’ar  
vehazkenim, “Edim.  
Yiten Adonai et ha’ishah  
haba’ah el beitecha  
keRachel ucheLeah,  
asher banu shteihem  
et beit Yisra’el,  
va’aseh chayil be’Efratah  
ukerah shem beveit lachem.  
Vihi veit’cha  
keveit Peretz,  
asher yaldah Tamar liYehudah  
min hazerah asher yiten Adonai lecha  
min hana’arah hazot.”

<sup>1</sup> Naomi doesn’t get a voice in the transaction but presumably she relies on family to take care of her. Such a plan doesn’t always work out well.

<sup>13</sup> Boaz took Ruth  
and she became his wife.  
He came to her *as a sexual partner*,  
God granted her pregnancy  
and she delivered a boy.

<sup>14</sup> The women commented to Naomi, “Blessed be God, who did not block your helper today. May the boy become famous in Israel.”

<sup>15</sup> May he restore your fortunes  
and sustain your old age,  
for your loving daughter-in-law  
has borne him.

She's better for you than seven.  
<sup>16</sup> Naomi picked up the child  
and took it to her breast  
and became its nanny.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>17</sup> The neighbor ladies named him. They announced, "Naomi has a boy," and they named him Oved. He's the father of Yishai, father of David.

<sup>18</sup> This is the family line of Peretz.

Peretz fathered Chetzron.

<sup>19</sup> Chetzron fathered Ram,  
Ram fathered Aminadav.

<sup>20</sup> Aminadav fathered Nachshon,  
Nachshon fathered Salmah.

<sup>21</sup> Salmah fathered Boaz,  
Boaz fathered Oyed.

וַיָּקֹחַ בֶּעָשָׂר אֶתְרוֹת  
וַתִּתְהִרְלֹו לְאַשָּׁה  
וַיַּבְאֵלְיָה  
וַיִּתְּנַדֵּן יְהוָה לְפָנֶיךָ  
וַתִּתְּלַדֵּבָן  
וַתִּאמְרַנָּה הַנְּשָׁמָן אֶל-נְעַמֵּן  
בָּרוּךְ יְהוָה  
אֲשֶׁר לֹא הַשִּׁבֵּת לְךָ נָאֵל הַיּוֹם  
וַיַּקְרֵא שְׁמוֹ בַּיְשָׁרָאֵל  
וַתִּתְּהַלֵּךְ לְמִשְׁבֵּט נֶפֶשׁ  
וְלְכָלְכֵל אֶת-שְׁבָתָה  
כִּי כָּלָתָךְ אֲשֶׁר-אַתָּה-בָּתָה  
יְלָדֶתֶךְ  
אֲשֶׁר-הִיא טוֹבָה לְךָ מִשְׁבָּעָה בְּנֵי  
וַתִּתְּקַח נְעַמֵּן אֲתָה-הִלֵּד  
וַתִּשְׁתַּחַוו בְּחִיקָה  
וַתִּתְהִרְלֹו לְאַמְנוֹת  
וַתִּקְרֹא נָהָרָה לְזֶבֶחַ שֵׁם  
וַתִּקְרֹא אָנָה לְזֶבֶחַ שֵׁם  
לְאָמֶר יְלָדֶךָ לְזֶבֶחַ לְזֶבֶחַ  
וַתִּקְרֹא אָנָה שְׁמוֹ עֲבָד  
חָוָא אֲכִירָשִׁי אֲכִי דָּוד  
וְאֶלְהָ תּוֹלְדוֹת פָּרֶץ  
פָּרֶץ הַוְּלִיד אֲתָחָצְרוֹן  
וְחָצְרוֹן הַוְּלִיד אֲתָרָם  
וְרַם הַוְּלִיד אֲתָעִמְנָכְרָב  
וְעִמְנָכְרָב הַוְּלִיד אֲתָנְחָשָׁן  
וְנָחָשָׁן הַוְּלִיד אֲתָשְׁלָמָה  
וְשְׁלָמָה הַוְּלִיד אֲתָעָבָרָב  
וְבֶעָשָׂר הַוְּלִיד אֲתָעָבָרָב  
Vayikach Bo'az et Rut  
vatehi lo le'ishah  
vayavo eleha,  
vayiten Adonai lah herayon,  
vateled ben.  
Vatomarna hanashim el Na'omi,  
“Baruch Adonai  
asher lo hishbit lach go'el hayom.  
Veyikareh shemo beYisra'el.  
Vehayah lach lemeshiv nefesh  
ulechalkel et sevatech,  
ki chalatech asher ahevatech  
yeladatu,  
asher hi tovah lach mishivah banim!”  
Vatikach Na'omi et hayeled  
vat'shitehu vecheikah,  
vat'hi lo le'omenet.  
Vatikrenah lo haschenot shem  
lemor, “Yulad ben leNa'omi,”  
vatikrenah shemo Oved.  
Hu avi Yishai avi David.  
Ve'eleh toldot Paretz:  
Peretz holid et Chetzron,  
veChetzron holid et Ram,  
veRam holid et Aminadav,  
ve'Aminadav holid et Nachshon,  
veNachshon holid et Salmah,  
veSalmah holid et Bo'az  
uVo'az holid et Oved,

<sup>1</sup> מִנְחָה can mean nurse, wet-nurse, nanny or carer; the term is used of Mordochai's care for Ester.

<sup>22</sup> Oved fathered Yishai,  
and Yishai fathered David.

וְעָבֵד הַוְלִיד אֶת־יִשְ׈ׁיָהּ  
וַיַּשֵּׁׁי הַוְלִיד אֶת־דָּוִד  
ve'Oved holid et Yishai  
veYishai holid et David.

SPS Draft

# The Book of Lamentations

אֱלֹהִים

SPS Draft

## Lamentations • איכה • Eicha

## Chapter 1

The word “daughter / בָת / bat” can refer to a village near a larger town; we might think of it as a suburb, dependent on its larger neighbor. The word also means treasured part, as in “apple of the eye.” The poet uses

תְּבַת in all three senses. When the poem speaks of “the daughter of Zion” or “the daughter of Judah,” the beloved town of Jerusalem is personified as a vulnerable female figure and as a little village. With its walls and courtyards, citadels and palaces, it should have been the protector of its smaller neighbors, but it is now reduced to dependency and ruin.

<sup>1</sup> How empty sits  
the once densely populated town;  
she's like a grieving widow.  
*She who was once great among nations,  
princess among provinces,  
has now become a conscript!*<sup>1</sup>

<sup>2</sup> She weeps and weeps at night  
and tears are on her cheek;  
all who loved her bring no comfort,<sup>2</sup>  
all her friends have betrayed her  
and have become her enemies.

<sup>3</sup> Judah is exiled,  
by pain and great toil,  
so that she lives among foreigners  
finding no respite.  
All who chased her caught her  
in their ambush.<sup>3</sup>

אֵיכָה | יִשְׁבָה בָּרֵד  
דְּשֻׁרִי רַבְתִּי עַם  
הַיְתָה פָּאֵל מִנָּה  
רַבְתִּי בָּנוֹיִם  
שָׁרְתִּי בְּמִדְינּוֹת  
הַיְתָה לְמַס  
בָּכוּ תִּבְכֵה בְּלִילָה  
וְדַמְעַתָּה עַל לְחֹתָה  
אִירְדָּלָה מִנְחָמָם מִכָּל־אַהֲבָה  
כָּל־רַעַלְתָּה בְּגָדוּ בָּה  
הַיְוֹ לָה לְאַיִבִים  
גָּלוּתָה יְהוּדָה  
מְעַנֵּי וּמְרַב עֲבָרָה  
הַיְאֵי יִשְׁבָה בָּנוֹיִם  
לֹא מִצְאָה מִנּוֹת  
כָּל־רַדְפִּית הַשִּׁגְוָה  
בֵּין הַמִּגְרָרִים

Eicha yashvah vavad,  
ha'ir rabati am,  
haytah ka'almanah.  
Rabati vagoyim,  
sarati bamdinot,  
haytah lamas.  
Bacho tivkeh balailah,  
vedim' atah al lechayah:  
ein lah menachem mikol ohaveha.  
Kol re'eha bagdu vah—  
hayu lah le'oyvim.  
Galta Yehuda  
me'oni umerov avoda.  
Hi yashva vagoyim,  
lo matza mano'ach.  
Kol rodfeha hisiguha  
bein hamtzarim.

<sup>1</sup> מֵט (tax) refers to forced or conscripted labor. To build the Temple, Solomon conscripted a labor force: “King Solomon levied a conscript labor force from all Israel / וַיַּעַל הַמֶּלֶךְ שֶׁלְמָה מִסְמְלָשָׂרָאֵל / Vaya'al haMelech Shelomo mas mikol Yisra'el” (I Kings 5:13).

<sup>2</sup> “For her, there is no comforter among all her lovers”—those who love her or whom she loves.

<sup>3</sup> “Between the narrow places.”

<sup>4</sup> Zion's roads are in mourning  
for no-one comes to a festival;  
all her gates are abandoned,  
her priests sigh,  
her girls are sick and she feels awful.

<sup>5</sup> Her foes are in charge,<sup>1</sup>  
her enemies content,  
for God has hurt her  
for her many sins,  
her children have gone to captivity  
before the enemy.

<sup>6</sup> All her beauty has left Zion's daughter.<sup>2</sup>  
Her princes have become  
like harts that find no pasture  
and flee the hunter, exhausted.

<sup>7</sup> Jerusalem recalled  
in her days of pain and misery,  
all her pleasures  
that existed in the old days,  
when her people fell at the foe's hand  
with no-one to help her:  
her foes saw her and mocked her ruin.

**דְּرָכֵי צִיּוֹן אֲבָלָות**  
מִבְּלִי בָּאִי מוֹעֵד  
**כָּלְשָׁעֵרִיךְ שׁוֹמְמִין**  
כְּהַנְּהָה נָאָנָחִים  
בְּתוּלָתְךָ נָנוֹת וְהִיא מַרְלָה  
**חַיְ אַרְבָּה לְרָאֵשׁ**  
אַיְבָּה שָׁלֹו  
כִּירְיוֹהוֹה הַנְּגָנָה  
**עַל רַבְּ-פְּשָׁעִיךְ**  
עַזְלָלִיךְ הַלְּכוֹ שָׁבִי  
לְבָנְנִיאָר  
**וַיָּצֹא מִבְּתַצְיּוֹן כָּלְהַדְרָה**  
חַיְ שָׁרִיחָה  
כָּאַיְלִים לְאַמְגָזָא מִרְעָה  
וַיַּלְכֵי בְּלָאָכָח לְפַנֵּי רֹודֶה  
זְכָרָה יְרוּשָׁלָם  
יְמֵי עֲנֵיהֶן וּמְרוּבִּיהֶן  
כָּל מַחְמָדֵיהֶן  
אֲשֶׁר הָיו מִמֵּי קָדֵם  
בְּנֵפֶל עַמָּה בִּינְדָּאָר  
וְאֵין עוֹזָר לָהּ  
**רְאֵה אַרְבִּים שְׁחָקָו עַל מִשְׁבָּתָה**

Darchei Tziyon aveilot  
mibli ba'ei mo'ed.  
Kol she'areha shomemin,  
Kohaneha ne'enachim;  
betuloteha nugot, vehi mar lah.  
Hayu tzareha lerosh,  
oyveha shalu,  
ki Adonai hogah  
al rov pesha'eha,  
olalecha hal'chu sh'vi  
lifnei tzar.  
Vayetzeh mibat Tziyon kol hadarah.  
Hayu sareha  
ke'ayalim lo matzu mireh,  
vayelchu velo cho'ach lifnei rodef.  
Zachrah Yerushala'im  
yemei onyah um'rudeha,  
kol machmudeha  
asher hayu mamei kedem  
binfol amah beyad tzar,  
ve'ein ozer lah;  
ra'uhu tzarim, sachaku al mishbateha.

<sup>1</sup> “Her foes have become the head/chief.”

<sup>2</sup> Two notes on this. First, the “written” word (in manuscript versions) is **מִבְּתַ** instead of **מִבְּתַת**; there's no difference in meaning. Second, the word **בָּת** not only means daughter, it can refer to the (presumably) unprotected dwellings around a town, “daughters” in that they depend on the protection of the walled town.

<sup>8</sup> Jerusalem performed a sin,  
so she has become untouchable.<sup>1</sup>  
All who honored her deride her  
for now they've seen her naked.  
Even she groans and recoils *from herself*.  
<sup>9</sup> Her filth was in *lifting* her skirts,  
she didn't think of her future,  
she fell suddenly, no one comforts her:  
“See, God, my misery,  
for the foe has triumphed.”  
<sup>10</sup> The foe's power stretched  
to all she held dear,  
for she saw foreigners  
who came to her sanctuary,  
whom you told  
they should not enter your congregation.  
<sup>11</sup> All her people groan,  
hunting for food.  
They've given up their treasures<sup>2</sup> for food  
to sustain life.  
“See, God, and look  
how I am despised!”  
<sup>12</sup> *It's nothing to all you who cross the road.*  
Look and see  
if there's any suffering like my suffering  
which has hurt me,  
which God has inflicted  
on the day of *God's* anger.

חַטָּאת חַטָּאת יְרֻשָּׁלָם  
עַל־כֵּן לְנִידָּה הַיְמָה  
כָּל־מְכַבְּדִיקָה הַזְוּלָה  
כִּירְאָיו עֲרוֹתָה  
בְּסִדְחָה נָאָנָה וְתַשְׁבָּ אַחֲרָ  
שְׁמָמָתָה בְּשֻׁלִּיחָה  
לֹא זָכָרָה אַחֲרִיתָה  
וַתַּרְדֵּר פְּלָאִים אֵין מְנַחֵם לָהּ  
רָאָה יְהוָה אַתְּעָנֵנִי  
כִּי הַגְּדִיל אָוִ依ָב  
יָדוֹ פְּרַשׁ שָׁר  
עַל כָּל־מְחַמְּדָה  
כִּירְאָתָה נָוִים  
בָּאוּ מִקְדָּשָׁה  
אֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתָה  
לֹא־יָבֹא בְּקָהָל לֹא  
כָּל־עֲמָה נְאָנָחִים  
מְבָקְשִׁים לְחֵם  
נָרְנוּ מְחַמְּדִים בְּאֶכֶל  
לְהַשִּׁיב נֶפֶשׁ  
רָאָה יְהוָה וְחַבִּיטה  
כִּי הַיּוֹתֵר וּלְלָהּ  
לֹא אֲלִיכֶם כָּל־עָבֵרִי דָּרָךְ  
הַקּוֹטוֹ וּרְאוֹ  
אִם־יָשׁ מְכַאֲבָבָ כְּמַכְאָבָי  
אֲשֶׁר עַולְלָ לִי  
אֲשֶׁר הַגָּה יְהוָה  
בְּיוֹם חָרֹן אֲפֹ

Chet chatah Yerushala'im;  
al ken lenidah hayatah.  
Kol mechabdeha hiziluha  
ki ra'u ervatah;  
gam hi ne'en'chah, vatashav achor.  
Tumatah beshuleha,  
lo zachrah acharitah,  
vatered pela'im: ein menachem lah.  
“Re'eh Adonai et onyi  
ki higdil oyev.”  
Yado paras tzar  
al kol machamadeha  
ki ra'atah goyim  
ba'u mikdashah  
asher tzivitah  
lo yavo'u vakahal lach.  
Kol amah ne'enachim  
mevakshim lechem;  
natnu machamadehem be'ochel  
lehashiv nafesh.  
re'eh Adonai vahabitah  
ki hayiti zolelah!  
Lo aleichem kol ovrei derech;  
habitu ure'u  
im yesh machov kemachovi  
asher olal li,  
asher hogah Adonai  
beyom charon apo.

<sup>1</sup> “Like a menstruating woman,” who (by Jewish tradition) refrains from physical contact with her husband.

<sup>2</sup> The written text has **מחמודיהם** but we read **מִתְמַזְּהָם**. There may be little difference in meaning.

<sup>13</sup> From above God sent into my bones fire that overcame me,  
spread a net to trip my feet,  
dragged me backwards  
leaving me dazed,<sup>1</sup>  
sick all day long.

<sup>14</sup> The yoke of my sins is bound to God's hand,  
they are tethered on to my neck;  
God has made my strength fail;  
God has surrendered me  
into the power of *enemies* I cannot resist.

<sup>15</sup> God tossed aside my dearest fighters  
named a date to crush my *fighting* lads;  
God has bloodied<sup>2</sup>

Judah's virgin daughter.

<sup>16</sup> I weep for *all* these *disasters*;  
my eye, my eye lets water flow  
for far away is *any* consolation  
that might revive<sup>3</sup> me;  
my children are desolate  
because the enemy has prevailed.

**מִמְרָׁם שָׁלַח־אֵשׁ בְּעַצְמָנִי**  
ニירדנה  
**פֶּרֶשׁ רְשֵׁת לְרָגְלִי**  
paras reshet leraglai,  
**הַשְׁבִּינוּ אַחֲרִי**  
heshevani achor,  
**נְתַנְנוּ שְׁמָמָה**  
netanani shomemah,  
**כָּל־הַיּוֹם דָּוָה**  
kol hayom davah.  
**נִשְׁקָד עַל פְּשָׁע בֵּידָוֹ**  
Niskad ol pesha' ai beyado;  
**יִשְׁתַּרְגּוּ עַל עַל־צְוָרִי**  
yistargu alu al tzavari;  
**הַכְּשִׁיל כְּחֵנוֹ**  
hichshil kochi;  
**נְתַנְנוּ אָדָנִי**  
netanani Adonai  
**בִּידֵי לְאָוְקֵל קָוָם**  
bidei lo uchal kum.  
**סְלָה כָּל־אֲבִירִי אֲדֹנִי בְּקָרְבִּי**  
Silah chol abirai Adonai bekirbi  
karah alai mo'ed lishbor bachurai.  
**בְּתַדְךָ אָדָנִי**  
Gat darach Adonai  
**לְלִתְуָלָת בְּחִדְרֵה יְהֻדָּה**  
livtulat bat Yehuda.  
**עַל־אֶלְהָה אֲנִי בְּכִיהָ**  
Al eleh ani vochi'ah,  
**עַיִּנִי אֲנִי יוֹרֶה מַיִם**  
eini, eini yorda mayim  
**קִידְרָתָךְ מִפְנֵי מַנְחָם**  
ki rachak mimeni menachem  
**מִשְׁעֵב נְפָשָׁה**  
meshiv nafshi;  
**הַיּוֹם בְּנֵי שׁוֹמְמִים**  
hayu vanai shomemim  
**כִּי גָבָר אָוֶב**  
ki gavar oyev.

<sup>1</sup> "God has given me destruction/stunning."

<sup>2</sup> "The *wine*-trough has-trodden God"; treading grapes makes a lot of red liquid so presumably this is an idiom that means spilling blood. בְּתוּלָה means young woman or virgin—in ancient times, a young woman would likely live in her father's (and mother's) house until marriage; then, she'd become a matron instead of a maid.

<sup>3</sup> "Bring back my life-force," or restore and refresh.

<sup>17</sup> Zion reaches out in supplication<sup>1</sup>  
but none can comfort her.  
God has decreed for Jacob  
those around him are to be his enemies,  
among whom Jerusalem seems sick.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>18</sup> God is right; I defied God's decree;  
listen, all peoples,<sup>3</sup>  
and see my pain:  
my girls and lads are gone to captivity.

<sup>19</sup> I called to my lovers  
but they cheated me.  
My priests and elders died in the town  
while searching for food  
to revive themselves.

<sup>20</sup> See, God, how I suffer.  
My guts are boiling,  
my heart is twisted inside me  
for oh, I have rebelled.  
Outside, the sword is killing people,  
while in the house, it's like death.

<sup>21</sup> They have heard me groaning  
but no one comforts me;  
all my foes heard my trouble and celebrated  
that you did *this*.  
If only you would bring the day you promised  
so they would be like me in suffering!

**פָּרָשָׁה צִוְּן בְּיִדְּךָ**  
אֵין מַנְחָמָם לְהָ

**צִוְּה יְהוָה לְיַעֲקֹב**  
סְבִּרְבִּיו אַרְיוֹן

**הַיְתָה יְרוּשָׁלָם לְנִדְחָה בִּינְיָהָם**  
אָזְיקָה הוּא יְהוָה קִי פִּיהוּ מַרְיוֹן

**שְׁמַעְיָנָא כָּל־הָעָמִים**  
וּרְאֹא מַכָּבִי

**בְּתוּלָתִי וּבְחֻרְבִּי דְּלָכְוִ בְּשָׁבִי**  
קָרָא תַּיְלָמָה בְּאַחֲבִי

**גְּפַנְתָּה רְמָנוּנִי**  
כְּתָנִי וּזְקָנִי בְּעִיר גָּנוּעָה

**קִירְבָּקְשׁוּ אַכְלָל לְמוֹ**  
וַיִּשְׁבַּבוּ אֶת־נַפְשָׁם

**רָאָה יְהוָה קִי־צָרָלִי**  
מַעַי חַמְרָמָרוֹ

**נְהַפֵּךְ לְבִי בְּקָרְבִּי**  
קִי מַרְוּ מַרְיוֹן

**מַחְצִיז שְׁכָלָה־חֶרֶב**  
בְּבִית כְּמוֹת

**שְׁמַעַו קִי נְאַנְחָה אָנִי**  
אֵין מַנְחָמָם לְיָ

**כָּל־אָבִי שְׁמַעַו רְעַתִּי שָׁשָׁו**  
קִי אָפָה עֲשִׂיתָ

**הַבָּאָתִי יּוֹם־קָרָאתִי**  
וַיְהִי כָּמוֹנִי

Persah Tziyon beyadeha;  
ein menachem lah.  
Tzivah Adonai leYa'akov  
sevivav tzarav.  
Hayta Yerushala'im lenida beineihem.  
Tzadik hu Adonai ki fihu mariti.  
Shimu nah chol ha'amim  
ure'u machovi;  
betulotai uvachurai hal'chu bashevi.  
Karati lam'ahavai,  
hemah rimuni;  
kohanai uzekenai ba'ir gava'u  
ki vikshu ochel lamo  
veyashivu et nafsham.  
Re'eh Adonai ki tzar li,  
me'ai chomarmaru.  
Nehpach libi bekirbi  
ki maro mariti.  
Michutz shiklah cherev  
babayit kamavet.  
Shamu ki ne'enachah ani;  
ein menachem li.  
Kol oyvai shamu ra'ati, sasu  
ki atah asita.  
Heveta yom karata,  
veyiheyu chamoni.

<sup>1</sup> “Zion reaches out her hands,” in prayer or for help.

<sup>2</sup> “Jerusalem has become a sick woman among them,” or “a menstruating woman”; when societies value population growth, women are most honored when they are or can become pregnant; menstruation (with or without the discomfort it can bring) may be viewed as sickness.

<sup>3</sup> The manuscript “written” text is **כָּל־הָעָמִים** and the text we read and translate is instead **כָּל־הָעָמִים**.

<sup>22</sup> May all their evil come before you,  
and you do to them  
what you did to me for all my sins,  
for great is my misery  
and my heart is in pain.

<sup>1</sup> How God in anger has clouded  
Zion's *bright* daughter,  
flung from *high* heaven down to earth  
Israel's splendor,  
neglected *God's* glorious footstool<sup>1</sup>  
in *God's* day of anger!  
<sup>2</sup> God has swallowed without remorse<sup>2</sup>  
all Jacob's pastures<sup>3</sup>  
in anger razed  
the forts of Judah's daughter,  
brought *them* down to the ground  
dishonored the government and its leaders.  
<sup>3</sup> In fierce anger has *God* cut down  
Israel's every pride,<sup>4</sup>  
retreated in battle from the foe<sup>5</sup>  
and blazed in Jacob's dwellings<sup>6</sup>  
like a flaming tongue  
that consumes everything in reach.<sup>6</sup>

תָבוֹא כָל־רְעַתָם לְפָנֶיךָ  
וְעַלְלָל לְמֹנוֹ  
כַאֲשֶׁר עַולְלָתָ לִי עַל כָל־פְשָׁעֵי  
קַדְבָות אָנוֹתִי  
וְלֹבֶן דָבָר

Tavo chol ra'atam lefanecha  
ve'olel lamo  
ka'asher olalta li al kol pesha'ai  
ki rabot an'chotai,  
velibi davai.

## Chapter 2

אֶיכָה יְעַב בְּאָפָו אָדָנִי  
אֶת־בְּתַצְיָוָן  
הַשְׁלָקָד מִשְׁמָיִם אָרֶץ  
תְּפָאָרָת יִשְׂרָאֵל  
וְלֹא־זָכָר הַדְּסֶרְגָּלִי  
בַּיּוֹם אָפָו  
בְּלֹע אָדָנִי וְלֹא חָפֵל  
אֶת כָּל־נְאֹתָ וְעַקְבָּת  
הַרְסָס בְּעַבְרָתוֹ  
מִבְצָרִי בְּתִיחַוָּה  
הַנּוֹעַ לְאָרֶץ  
חַלֵּל מַמְלָכָה וְשָׂרִירָה  
גַּעַש בְּחַרְיוֹ אָף  
כָּל קָרְנוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל  
הַשִּׁבֵּ אַחֲרָ וּמִינָו מִפְנֵי אֹיָב  
וַיַּבְעַר בְּיַעֲקֹב  
כָּאַש לְהַבָּה  
אֲכַלָּה סְבִיבָה

Eicha ya'iv be'apo Adonai

et bat Tziyon,

hishlich mishamayim eretz

tiferet Yisra'el,

velo zachar hadom raglav

beyom apo.

Bilah Adonai, velo chamal,

et kol ne'ot Ya'akov;

haras be'evrato

miytzerei vat Yehudah,

higi'ah la'aretz,

chilel mamlachah vesareha.

Gadah bachori af

kol keren Yisra'el,

heshev achor yemino mipnei oyev,

vayivar beYa'akov

ke'esh lehavah

achlah saviv.

<sup>1</sup> What's the glory in being a footstool? This is no common role, for it's where Heaven meets Earth.

<sup>2</sup> The Hebrew word **וְלֹא חָמֵל** is what we read. In a scroll, we would write **לֹא חָמֵל**, which means the same.

<sup>3</sup> I.e., the places where Jewish people live.

<sup>4</sup> "Horn." Hunters value an animal by the size of its horns, and some motorists are proud of their horns. "Nice horn, Sol," is always a welcome compliment.

<sup>5</sup> "Turned back *God's* right hand (i.e., the fighting arm) from the presence of the foe."

<sup>6</sup> "Eating around," i.e., burning up everything it touches in every direction.

<sup>4</sup> God has bent<sup>1</sup> God's bow like an enemy,  
set God's right arm, *the fighting arm*, like a foe  
and killed all the good-looking *soldiers*,<sup>2</sup>  
in the tent of Zion's daughter  
God has poured out anger like fire.

<sup>5</sup> God has become an enemy,  
has swallowed Israel,  
swallowed all its palaces,  
destroyed its castles,  
and worsened for Judah's daughter  
wailing and weeping.

<sup>6</sup> God has wrecked God's shelter, like the garden,<sup>3</sup>  
destroyed God's meeting place;  
God has driven from Zion's memory  
festival and Sabbath day  
and in fierce anger humiliated  
ruler and priest.

<sup>7</sup> God has rejected God's altar,  
shunned God's sanctuary,  
trapped in the enemy's power  
the walls of its citadels;  
*the enemy* make a noise in God's house  
as if they're celebrating a festival day.

דָּרְךָ קָשְׁטוּ כָּאֹזֶב  
נָאָבָּי מִינּוֹ כְּצָר  
וַיִּהְרֹגּוּ כָּל מַחְמְדֵי־עַיִן  
בְּאָהָל בְּתַצִּיּוֹן  
שָׁפֵךְ כָּאֵשׁ חָמָתוֹ  
חָיהּ אָרְדֵּנִי | כָּאֹזֶב  
כְּלָעַ וַיְשַׁרְּאֵל  
בְּלָעַ כָּל אַרְמְנוֹתָיהּ  
שְׁחִתָּה מִבְּצָרְיוֹ  
וַיַּרְבֵּב בְּבְתִּירְוֹתָה  
תָּאַנְיָה וְאַנְיָה  
וַיִּחְמֹס כְּפָנוֹ שָׁכָוֹ  
שְׁחִתָּה מוֹעֵדָו  
שְׁבַחַת יְהוָה | בְּצִיּוֹן  
מוֹעֵד וְשְׁבָתָה  
וַיַּגְּאֵץ בְּזַעַם־אָפֹוֹ  
מֶלֶךְ וְכָהָן  
נָגַח אָדָנִי | מִזְבְּחָה  
גָּאֵר מִקְדָּשָׁו  
הַסְּגִיר בְּנֵדָאָזֶב  
חֹמֹת אַרְמְנוֹתָיהּ  
קֹל נִתְנַשׁ בְּבֵיתִירְוֹתָה  
כְּיּוֹם מוֹעֵד

Darach kashto ke'oyev,  
nitzav yemino ketzar  
vayaharog kol machamadei ayin;  
be'ohel bat Tziyon  
shafach ka'esh chamato.  
Haya Adonai ke'oyev;  
bilah Yisra'el,  
bilah kol armenoteha,  
shichet mivtzarav,  
vayerev bevat Yehudah  
ta'aniyah va'aniyah.  
Vayachmos kagan sukoh,  
shichet mo'ado;  
shikach Adonai beTziyon  
mo'ed veshabat,  
vayin'atz beza'am apo  
melech vechohen.  
Zanach Adonai mizbecho,  
ni'er mikdasho,  
hisgir beyad oyev  
chomot armenoteha;  
kol natnu beveit Adonai  
keyom mo'ed.

<sup>1</sup> The word **דָּרְךָ** usually means “stepped” or “trod,” and some archers use their feet when stringing a bow.

<sup>2</sup> “All the ones that please the eye”; don't you love a parade, with all the uniformed ranks polished and gleaming?

<sup>3</sup> “God-has-wrecked like-the-garden God's-shelter,” reading **שָׁכָוֹ**, “God's shelter,” as (from **סְכָה** (סְכָה), a temporary shelter). God's “shelter” is the Temple; as for the garden with a definite article, I suspect it refers to the Garden of Eden. Both are inaccessible.

<sup>8</sup> God planned to destroy  
the wall of Zion's daughter,  
set a limit,<sup>1</sup>  
devoured without restraint,<sup>2</sup>  
brought mourning to rampart and wall;  
they collapsed together.

<sup>9</sup> Her gates have sunk into the ground,  
*God* broke and shattered her *gates*' bars,  
her ruler and leaders are *exiled* among foreigners;  
there's no law.

Even her prophets have found no inspiration  
from God.

<sup>10</sup> They sit on the ground, silent,  
the elders of Zion's daughter;  
they have thrown dust on their heads  
and dressed themselves in sackcloth.  
They have bowed their heads to the ground,  
the daughters of Jerusalem.

<sup>11</sup> I can't see for weeping,<sup>3</sup>  
my innards are seething,  
my liver is spilled on the ground  
at the ruin of my people's daughter,  
as children and babies faint  
in the streets of the town.

**חָשַׁבְ יְהוָה לְהַשְׁחִית**  
**חֹמֶת בַּת־צִיּוֹן**  
**נָתָה קָוָן**  
**לְאַהֲשִׁיבָ יְדוֹ מִבְלָעָה**  
**וַיַּאֲבַל־תְּלִלְוָה וְחוֹמָה**  
**וְחַדְוָה אַמְלָלָה**  
**טָבַעַו בָּאָרֶץ שָׁעַרְיָה**  
**אָבֹד וְשָׁבֵר בָּרִיתָה**  
**מַלְכָה וְשָׁרִיקָה בְּנוֹיִם**  
**אֵין תּוֹרָה**  
**גָּסְגָּבְרִיאָה לְאַמְצָאוֹ חִזּוֹן**  
**מִיהָוָה**  
**יִשְׁבּוּ לְאָרֶץ יִדְמּוֹ**  
**וְקָנוּ בַת־צִיּוֹן**  
**הַעֲלָוָה עַפְרָעַל־רָאשָׁם**  
**חַגְרוֹ שָׁקּוּם**  
**הַוּרִידָו לְאָרֶץ רָאשָׁן**  
**בְּהִוְלָת יְרֻשָּׁלָם**  
**כָּלָו בְּדִמּוֹת עַנִּי**  
**חַמְרָמָרוּ מַעַיִ**  
**נִשְׁפָךְ לְאָרֶץ כְּבָדָי**  
**עַל־שָׁבֵר בַת־עַמִּי**  
**בְּעִטָּפָע עַולְלִי וַיּוֹנָקָ**  
**בְּרַחְבּוֹת קִרְיָה**

Chashav Adonai lehashchit  
chomat bat Tziyon,  
natah kav,  
lo heshiv yadoh mibale'ah,  
vaya'avel chel vechomah;  
yachdav umlalu.  
Tav'u va'aretz she'areha,  
ibad veshibar bericheha,  
malkah vesareha vagoyim;  
ein Torah.  
Gam nevi'eha lo matz'u chazon  
me'Adonai.  
Yeshvu la'aretz, yidmu  
ziknei vat Tziyon;  
he'elu afar al rosham,  
chagru sakim.  
Horidu la'aretz roshan  
betulot Yerushalayim.  
Kalu vadma'ot einai,  
chomarmeru me'ai,  
nishpach la'aretz kevedi  
al shever bat ami,  
be'atef olel veyonek  
bir'chovot kiryah.

<sup>1</sup> “Stretched out a line,” presumably to mark a limit in time rather than in space, a date for destruction.

<sup>2</sup> “Did not hold back *God's* hand.”

<sup>3</sup> “They are done, with tears, my eyes,” i.e. my eyes don't work any more because of my weeping.

<sup>12</sup> To their mothers they say,  
“Where is there grain and wine?”  
as they collapse as if dying<sup>1</sup>  
in the town streets,  
as their life spills out  
on their mothers’ breast.

<sup>13</sup> How shall I be your witness,  
to what can I compare you,  
O daughter Jerusalem?  
to what can I liken you, to comfort you,  
virgin daughter of Zion,  
for your wreckage is vast as the sea;  
who can heal you?

<sup>14</sup> Your prophets told you lies and folly;  
they did not expose your sin  
so as to make you repent;  
they prophesied for you  
unreliable, misleading oracles.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>15</sup> They clapped their hands at you,<sup>4</sup>  
all who passed along the road,  
they hissed and shook their heads  
at Jerusalem’s daughter.  
Is this the town  
they call the ultimate in beauty,  
the joy of all the earth?

לְאַמְתָּם יָמָרְנוּ  
אֵיכָה דָּגָן וַיַּיִן  
בְּהַחֲטָפָם כְּחַלְלָה  
בְּרַחֲבוֹת עִיר  
בְּהַשְׁתֵּפָה נַפְשָׁם  
אֶל-חַיָּק אַמְתָּם  
קָהָד אַיִלְלָה  
מִנָּה אָדָמָה-לְקָהָד  
הַבָּתִיְר יְרוּשָׁלָם  
מִנָּה אֲשֻׁה-לְקָדָן וְאֲנָחָמָה  
בְּתֻולָּת בַּת-צִיּוֹן  
כִּירְגַּדְלָל פִּים שְׁבָרָה  
מִי יַרְפַּא-לְךָ  
גְּבִיאָלָךְ חָזוּ לְךָ שֹׂוא וְתַפְלֵל  
וְלְאַגְּנָלָךְ עַל-עֲנָנָה  
לְהַשִּׁיב שְׁבָוֹתָךְ  
וַיַּחֲזֹוּ לְךָ  
מִשְׁאָוֹת שֹׂוא וּמִדְחוּבִים  
סָפָקָו עַלְיָיךְ כְּפִים  
כָּל עֲבָרִי דָּרָךְ  
שְׁרָקוּ נִגְנָנוּ רָאשָׁם  
עַל-בָּתִיְר יְרוּשָׁלָם  
הַזֹּאת הַשִּׁיר  
שְׁיַאֲמָרְנוּ כְּלִילָת יְפִי  
מִשּׁוֹשׁ לְכָל-הָאָרֶץ

Le’imotam yomru,  
“Ayeh dagan vayayin?”  
behitatfam kechalal  
bir’chovot ir,  
behishtapech nafsham  
el chek imotam.  
Mah a’idech,  
mah adamah lach,  
habat Yerushala’im?  
Mah ashveh lach va’anachamech,  
betulat bat Tziyon,  
ki gadol kayam shivrech;  
mi yirpah lach?  
Nevi’ayich chazu lach shav vetafel  
velo gilu al avonech  
lehashiv shevutech,  
vayechezu lach  
masot shav umaduchim.  
Safku alayich kapayim,  
kol ovrei derech,  
sharku vayani’u rosham  
al bat Yerushalayim.  
Hazot ha’ir  
sheyomru kelilit yofi,  
masos lechol ha’aretz?

<sup>1</sup> “Like a dying person”; the root חַלְל suggests pierced, like a person run through by the sword.

<sup>2</sup> Some translate this to say the prophets gave proper warning, placing the blame on the people: “Your prophets foresaw falsehood and folly. Did they not expose your sin, *so as* to bring you back from your captivity (or, to repentance)? And they foresaw for you equivocation and misleading visions.”

<sup>3</sup> שְׁבָוֹת is written (in a manuscript scroll), but not read.

<sup>4</sup> Presumably, a gesture of contempt in ancient times, the opposite of modern applause.

<sup>16</sup> All your enemies gape at you;<sup>1</sup>  
they hiss and gnash their teeth.

They say, “We’ve swallowed *her*.  
How we hoped for this day!  
It’s here,<sup>2</sup> and we’ve seen *it*!”

<sup>17</sup> God has done what *God* planned.

*God* has accomplished the pledge  
decreed in ancient times.

*God* has flattened *the town* without pity  
so the enemy can triumph over you;  
*God* has raised the pride of your foes.

<sup>18</sup> Their heart cried out to God.

O wall of Zion’s daughter,  
let your tears fall like a river,  
day and night;  
give yourself no respite.

Don’t let your favorite be silent.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Get up and shout in the night  
when the night watches begin;<sup>4</sup>  
like water pour out your heart  
in the presence of God,  
lift your hands to *God*  
for the life of your toddlers  
who faint with hunger  
at the entrance of every courtyard.<sup>5</sup>

**פָּנֶיךָ עַלְיָךְ פִּיהֶם כָּל־אֹיְבָךְ**  
שַׁרְקָוּ נִיחַרְקִיָּשׁ  
**אָמָרָו בְּלָעָנוּ**  
**אָקְ זֶה הַיּוֹם שְׁקִוִינָהוּ**  
**מַצְאָנוּ רָאִינוּ**  
**שְׁלָחָה יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר זָמָם**  
**בְּצָעָם אָמְרָתוֹ**  
**אֲשֶׁר צָוָה מִימְרִיךְדָּם**  
**חֶרְסָס וְלָא חַמְלָל**  
**וַיְשַׁמַּח עַלְיָךְ אֹיְבָךְ**  
**הַרְמִים קָרְנוֹ צָרָךְ**  
**אַעֲקָק לִבְמָא אֶל־אֲדֹנָי**  
**חוֹמָת בְּתַצִּיּוֹן**  
**הַוּרִידִי כְּנַחַל דְּמִיעָה**  
**יּוֹמָם וְלִילָה**  
**אֶל־תִּתְנִי פָּגָות לְךָ**  
**אֶל־תִּדְמֹם בְּתַעֲנִיךָ**  
**קָוֵמִי וּרֹנִי בְּלִילָה**  
**לְרוֹשׁ אַשְׁמָרוֹת**  
**שְׁפָכִי כְּפָנִים לְבָךְ**  
**נִכְחַ פָּנִי אֶדְנוֹ**  
**שְׁאֵי אֶלְיוֹ כְּפָדָךְ**  
**עַל־נֶפֶשׁ עֲולָלָךְ**  
**הַעֲטָופִים בְּרַעְבָּךְ**  
**בְּרַאֲשָׁךְ כָּל־חוֹצֹות**

Patzu alayich pihem kol oyvecha;  
sharku vayacharku shen.  
Amru, “Bilanu.  
Ach zeh hayom shekivinu.  
Matzanu, ra’inu!”  
Asah Adonai asher zamam,  
bitzah emrato  
asher tzivah mimei kedem.  
Haras velo chamal  
vay’samach alayich oyev;  
herim keren tzarayich.  
Tza’ak libam el Adonai.  
Chomat bat Tziyon,  
horidi chanachal dimah  
yomam valaylah;  
al titni fugat lach,  
al tidom bat einech.  
Kumi, roni valaylah  
lerosh ashmurot;  
shifchi chamayim libech  
nochach penei Adonai,  
se’i elav kapayich  
al nefesh olalayich  
ha’atufim bera’av  
berosh kol chutzot.

<sup>1</sup> “They have suddenly opened against you their mouths, all your enemies.”

<sup>2</sup> “We have found (or, encountered) *it*.”

<sup>3</sup> It’s hard to know how to interpret the idioms and metaphors. **חוֹמָת בְּתַצִּיּוֹן** means “the wall (or, protection) of Zion’s daughter (or, dependent village)”; **אֶל־תִּדְמֹם בְּתַעֲנִיךָ** means “don’t silence the daughter (or, “apple”) of your eye,” your favorite. In both cases, the daughter may be a metaphor.

<sup>4</sup> “At the head of the night watches”; since watches is plural, presumably this refers to several nights.

<sup>20</sup> Look, God, and see  
to whom you have done this.  
Must women eat their offspring,  
their babes in arms?<sup>1</sup>  
Must they be killed in God's sanctuary,  
*both* priest and prophet?  
<sup>21</sup> They lie on the ground, *in the* courtyards,  
young and old;  
girls and lads have fallen by the sword;  
You killed *them* on your day of anger,  
slaughtered them and had no remorse.  
<sup>22</sup> You invited as if to a celebration  
my terrors *who lived around me*,  
and on God's day of anger there was no  
fugitive or survivor.  
*My children* whom I cuddled and reared,  
my enemy destroyed them.

<sup>1</sup> I am the man *who has* felt pain  
at the cudgel of God's anger.  
<sup>2</sup> God marched me away;  
it's darkness, not light.  
<sup>3</sup> For sure, God keeps on  
slapping and punching me all day.<sup>2</sup>

רְאֵה יְהוָה וְהַבִּיטה  
לִמְיוֹעֵלֶת כָּה  
אָסְמָתָאכְלָנוּ נְשִׁים פְּרִים  
עַלְלִי טְפָחִים  
אִסְמִירָנוּ בְּמִקְדָּשׁ אֲדֹנִי  
כָּהֵן וְנָבִיא  
שְׁכָבָנוּ לְאָרֶץ חֹצֶזֶת  
גַּעַר וְזַקֵּן  
בְּתוּלָתִי וּבְחוּרִי נְפָלוּ בְּחַרְבָּה  
חַרְגָּתָ בְּיּוֹם אַפְּךָ  
טְבַחַת לְאַחֲמָלָתָךְ  
תְּקָרָא כִּיּוֹם מוֹעֵד  
מְגֻרָּי מִסְבֵּיב  
וְלֹא תָהֵה בְּיּוֹם אֲפִידָה  
פְּלִיטָה וְשָׁרִיד  
אֲשֶׁר-טְפָחִתִּי וּרְבִיאִתִּי  
אַבִּי כְּלָם

Re'eh, Adonai, vehabitah  
lemei olalta koh.  
Im tochalnah nashim piryam,  
olalei tipuchim?  
Im yehareg bemikdash Adonai  
kohen venavi?  
Shachvu la'aretz chutzot,  
na'ar vezaken;  
betulotai uvachurai naflu vecharev;  
haragta beyom apecha,  
tavachta lo chamalta.  
Tikrah cheyom mo'ed  
megurai misaviv,  
velo hayah beyom af Adonai  
palit vesarid.  
Asher tipachti veribiti,  
oyvi chilam.

### Chapter 3

אָנָּי הַגְּבָרָה רְאֵה עַנִּי  
בְּשֶׁבֶט עַבְרָתוֹ  
אָוֹתִי נְתַנֵּן וְיַלְכֵל  
חַשֵּׁךְ וְלֹא-אָוֹר  
אָךְ בַּיְשָׁב  
יְהָפֵךְ יַדְךָ כָּל-הַיּוֹם

Ani hagever, ra'ah oni  
beshevvet evrato.  
Oti nahag vayolach,  
choshech velo or.  
Ach bi yashuv,  
yahafoch yado kol hayom.

<sup>5</sup> Or, "at the head of every street" or "at the corner of every street," depending on your view of ancient city planning.

<sup>6</sup> The manuscript would have בְּלִיל; adding the letter ה makes the word familiar.

<sup>1</sup> Or, "the toddlers in their care," or "the toddlers they dandle"; טְפָחִים may mean "extended," so you can imagine a mother picking up a youngster by the hands to help him toddle a few steps. What a cutie, what a loss!

<sup>2</sup> "Oh, to-me God-would-return, would-turn-over God's-hand all-the-day." I presume that turning your hand over means punching with the fist and then slapping with the palm, or something similarly nasty.

<sup>4</sup> God has shriveled up my flesh and skin,  
shattered my bones,  
<sup>5</sup> built *siege-engines* against me,  
hemmed *me* in with bitterness and exhaustion,  
<sup>6</sup> settled me in gloomy places  
like people long dead,<sup>1</sup>  
<sup>7</sup> confined me so I can't escape,  
weighted down my brass *shackles*.  
<sup>8</sup> Even when I screamed and cried for help,  
*God* barred<sup>2</sup> my prayer.  
<sup>9</sup> *God* clogged my way with stone blocks,  
made me take detours.<sup>3</sup>  
<sup>10</sup> To me, *God* is a bear, lurking in ambush,  
a lion in hiding,  
<sup>11</sup> that blocks my path<sup>5</sup> and tears me to pieces,  
leaving me ravaged.<sup>6</sup>  
<sup>12</sup> *God* bent *God's* bow and placed me  
as a target for the arrow.  
<sup>13</sup> *God* shot into me  
arrows that come from *God's* quiver.<sup>7</sup>  
<sup>14</sup> I was the butt of everyone's jokes,  
the constant theme of their *s spiteful* songs.<sup>8</sup>

**בְּלָה בָּשָׁרִי וְעֹרוֹרִי**  
Bilah besari ve'ori,  
**שְׁבָר עַצְמֹתָיו**  
shibar atzmotai,  
**בָּנָה עַלְּ**  
banah alai,  
**נוֹקַר רָאשׁ וּתְלָאָהָה**  
vayakaf rosh utela'ah,  
**בָּמַחְשָׁבִים הַוִּישְׁבָנִי**  
bamachashakim hoshivani  
**כְּמַתָּר עַולְּם**  
kemetei olam,  
**גָּדָר בַּעֲדֵי וְלֹא אַגְּנָא**  
gadar ba'adi velo etzeh,  
**הַכְּבִיד וְנִחְשְׁתִּי**  
hichbid nechashti.  
**גָּמִים כִּי אָזָעַק וְאַשְׁׁעַ**  
Gam ki ez'ak va'ashave'ah,  
**שְׁתָמָם חַפְלָתִי**  
satam tefilati.  
**גָּדָר דָּרְכֵי בְּנֵיָה**  
Gadar derachai begazit,  
**נִתְיַבְּנֵי עַזָּה**  
netivotai ivah.  
**דָּבָב אֶרְבָּהוּ לְתִי**  
Dov orev hu li,  
**אָרִי<sup>4</sup> בְּמִסְתָּרִים**  
ari bemistarim.  
**דָּרְכֵי סָרֵר וְנִפְשְׁחָנִי**  
derachai sorer vayefashcheni,  
**שָׁמָנִי שָׁמָם**  
samani shomem.  
**דָּרָךְ קָשְׁתָו נִיאַבְנִי**  
Darach kashto vayatziveni  
**כְּמַטְרָא לְחַץ**  
kamatarah lachetz.  
**הַבִּיאָ בְּכַלְיָוָתִי**  
Hevi bechilyotai  
**בְּנֵי אַשְׁפָטוֹ**  
benei ashpato.  
**הַיִּתְיַיְּ שְׁחָק לְכָלְ-עַמִּי**  
Hayiti sechok lechol ami,  
**נְגִינָתָם כָּל-תְּיֻום**  
neginatam kol hayom.

<sup>1</sup> Or, "like the dead *people* of the world" or "like *people who are* dead forever/eternally."

<sup>2</sup> We assume that *סתם* and *סתם* mean the same: close off, or stop up.

<sup>3</sup> "My paths did *God* twist."

<sup>4</sup> A manuscript text would read *אריה*, another word for lion.

<sup>5</sup> "My ways *does God* turn aside (or turn into, enter)"; as if the lion suddenly appears to block the way.

<sup>6</sup> "*God* has set me as a ravaged one."

<sup>7</sup> "*God* brought into my guts the 'children' of *God's* quiver."

<sup>8</sup> "I became the *object* of laughter for all my people, their song all day."

<sup>15</sup> God stuffed me with bitter *agonies*,  
soaked me in sour *grief*,  
<sup>16</sup> chipped my teeth on gravel,  
buried me in ashes,  
<sup>17</sup> banished me from peace  
so that I have forgotten *all* goodness.

<sup>18</sup> I said, “My strength is gone,  
and so is my hope *of help* from God.”

<sup>19</sup> Remember my humiliation and persecution,  
poison and bitterness.

<sup>20</sup> Remember, you must remember;  
I’m so depressed.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>21</sup> But I’ll bring this back to my mind,  
and so I’ll have hope:

<sup>22</sup> God’s kindnesses are not finished,  
God’s mercies are not at an end.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>23</sup> They’re renewed each morning—  
God, you are very reliable!<sup>4</sup>

<sup>24</sup> “God is all I have,” that’s what I say,<sup>5</sup>  
and so I’ll place my hope in God.

<sup>25</sup> God is good to those who hope in God,  
to the person who seeks God.

<sup>26</sup> It’s good to wait in silence<sup>6</sup>  
for God’s salvation.

**השׁבַעֲנִי בְמִרְׁוּדִים** Hisbi’ani vamrorim,  
**הַרְגַּנִּי לְעָנָה** hirvani la’ah,  
**וַיִּגְרַס בְּחַצֵּן שָׁנָה** vayagress bechattatz shinai,  
**הַכְּפַשְׂנִי בְאֶפֶר** hichpishani ba’efer.  
**וְתִזְנַחַמְנִי מִשְׁלָוִם נַפְשִׁי** vatiznach mishalom nafshi,  
**נִשְׁתַּחַתְנִי טוֹבָה** nasiti tovah.  
**וְאָמַרְתִּי אָבָד נִצְחָיו** Va’omar, “Avad nitzchi  
וְתוֹתַלְתִּי מִיחָוָה vetochalti me’Adonai.”  
**זְכַר־עֲנֵי וּמְרוּדִי** Zechor onyi umerudi,  
**לְעָנָה וּרְאֵשׁ** la’ah varosh.  
**זְכּוֹר תִּזְכֹּר** Zachor, tizkor,  
**וְתִשׁוֹחַ עַלְיָהּ נַפְשִׁי** vetasho’ach alai nafshi.  
**זֹאת אֲשִׁיב אַל־לְבִי** Zot ashiv el libi,  
**עַל־קָנָן אָזְחִיל** al ken ochil.  
**חָסְדֵי אֱלֹהִים קַי לְאַתָּמָנוּ** Chasdei Adonai, ki lo tamnu,  
**קַי לְאַכְלָו רַחֲמָיו** ki lo chalu rachamav.  
**חֲדָשִׁים לְבָקָרִים** Chadashim labkarim,  
**רַבָּה אַמְנוֹנָתָךְ** rabah emunatecha!  
**חֶלְקֵי יְהוָה אַמְרָה נַפְשִׁי** “Chelki Adonai,” amrah nafshi,  
**עַל־קָנָן אָזְחִיל לֹא** al ken ochil lo.  
**טוֹב יְהוָה לְקָנוּ** Tov Adonai lekovav,  
**לְנֶפֶשׁ תִּדְרְשָׁנוּ** lenefesh tidreshenu.  
**טוֹב יְהוָה וּרוּם** Tov veyachil vedumam  
**לְתִשְׁעַתְנִית יְהוָה** lit’shu’at Adonai.

<sup>1</sup> “Remembering, remembers and-is-bowed-down for-me my-soul/personhood.”

<sup>2</sup> A manuscript text would read *ותשיח*.

<sup>3</sup> This is the reason for hope: “*When it comes to* God’s kindnesses, *I know* that they are not finished, that God’s mercies are not at an end.”

<sup>4</sup> “Your faithfulness/reliability is great”; we can rely on God’s assurances.

<sup>5</sup> “My-portion *is* God,” has-said my-self/soul.” Translating “my portion” as “all I have” recalls the idea that Levites didn’t get any land; instead, their “portion” was God (Deut 10:12 and other places).

<sup>27</sup> *It's good for a man*

to suffer when young.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>28</sup> *Let a person* sit alone and stay silent  
for *God* has lifted the load.

<sup>29</sup> *Let a person* place his mouth in the dust;  
perhaps there is *reason for hope*.

<sup>30</sup> Turn the *other* cheek when someone hits you  
so the *attacker* will earn a full measure of blame.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>31</sup> For *God* does not spurn *you* forever.

<sup>32</sup> If *God* brings grief, *God* brings comfort,  
in keeping with *God's* abundant mercies.

<sup>33</sup> For *God* does not bring trouble willingly  
bringing grief to humanity,<sup>4</sup>

<sup>34</sup> crushing underfoot

all those who are confined to the world,

<sup>35</sup> twisting human justice

despite the presence of the High One,<sup>5</sup>

<sup>36</sup> cheating someone in a conflict;

*God* doesn't approve of *such behavior*.

<sup>37</sup> Who can speak and make *something* happen  
if *God* hasn't ordered *it*?

**טוֹב לְאָבֶר** Tov lagever  
**כִּי־שָׁא עַל בְּנֵינוּרִיו** ki yisah ol bin'urav.  
**יִשְׁבֵ בָּדָר וַיָּתֵם** Yeshev badad veyidom,  
**כִּי נָטַל עַלְיוֹ** ki natal alav.  
**יִתְּהַן בְּעָפָר פִּיהּ** Yiten be'afar pihu;  
**אוֹלֵי יְשֵׁת תְּקֹוֹה** ulai yesh tikvah.  
**יִתְּהַן לְמַכְהוּ לְחִי** Yiten lemakehu lechi,  
**וַיִּשְׁבַּע בְּחַרְפָּה** yisbah becherpah.  
**כִּי לֹא יִזְנַח לְעוֹלָם אָדָן** Ki lo yiznach le'olam Adonai.  
**כִּי אִם־הַזָּנוֹה וְרִיחָם** Ki im hogah vericham,  
**כְּרָב חַסְדָּיו**<sup>3</sup> kerov chasadav.  
**כִּי לֹא עַנְהַ מַלְבוֹ** Ki lo inah milbo  
**וַיִּנְגַּה בְּנֵי־אִישׁ** vayageh venei ish.  
**לְדַקָּא תְּחַת רָגְלֵי** ledakeh tachat raglav  
**כָּל אֲסִירֵי אָרֶץ** kol asirei aretz,  
**לְהַטּוֹת מִשְׁפָט־גָּבָר** lehatot mishpat gaver  
**נְגֵד פָּנֵי עַלְיוֹן** neged penei Elyon,  
**לְעִזָּת אָדָם בְּרִיבָּו** le'avet adam berivo;  
**אָדָן לֹא רָאָה** Adonai lo ra'ah.  
**מַיְּהֵה אָמָר וְתָהִי** Mi zeh amar vatehi,  
**אָדָן לֹא צִוָּה** Adonai lo tzivah?

<sup>6</sup> The grammar is not obvious. “Good and-he-shall-wait/hope and-silent/silently”; perhaps we could translate “*It's best if* one waits and stays silent ...”

<sup>1</sup> “Bear a yoke,” or carry a burden like a tamed beast. “Suffer” is from the Latin sub (under) and ferre (to bear). Modern ideas of childrearing, fortunately, have improved.

<sup>2</sup> “Let *him* turn to the hitter a cheek; *the hitter* will be sated in reproach.” This could mean that the sufferer keeps his dignity by standing up to the blow and taking more, so that the attacker is more to blame, or it could mean that the sufferer can't resist the attack and loses all dignity.

<sup>3</sup> A manuscript text would read סְדוּת

<sup>4</sup> “The sons of men,” i.e., human beings.

<sup>5</sup> “To remove/stretch/bend judgement of a man (human judgement or a particular person's sentence) against the presence of the high one.”

<sup>38</sup> Don't they come at the High One's command,<sup>1</sup>  
both troubles and good?

<sup>39</sup> Why should a living man complain,  
a person *complain* at his own sins?

<sup>40</sup> Let's search our conduct and probe *it*,  
then return to God!

<sup>41</sup> Let's lift our hearts toward our *upraised* hands  
Toward God up in the sky.

<sup>42</sup> We sinned and rebelled;  
you have not pardoned.

<sup>43</sup> Wrapped in anger, you have chased us,  
killed *us* without mercy.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>44</sup> You wrapped *yourself* in *dense* cloud  
so prayer could not pass through.

<sup>45</sup> You've made us *like* slops and muck  
among the *other* nations.

<sup>46</sup> They spout *slander* against us,<sup>4</sup>  
all our enemies.

<sup>47</sup> Alarm and collapse are upon us,  
ruin and wreckage.

<sup>48</sup> My eye drops streams of tears  
at the ruin of my people's town.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>49</sup> My eye drops *tears* and won't stop,  
without a break,

<sup>50</sup> Until God will look *down* and see  
from *up in* the sky.

**מֵפִי עַלְיוֹן לֹא חַצֵּא**  
הַרְעָוֹת וְהַטּוֹב  
**מַהְיִתְהָאָנוּ אָרֶם חַיִּי**  
גָּבָר עַל-חַטָּאָיו<sup>2</sup>  
נַחֲפֵשָׂה דָּרְכֵינוּ נַחֲקָרָה  
וְנַשְׁׁבָּה עַד-יְהוָה  
**נִשְׁאָל בְּבָנָנוּ אֶל-כְּפִים**  
אֶלְאֶל בְּשָׁמִים  
נִחְנוּ פְּשָׁעָנוּ וּמְרָנָנוּ  
אָתָה לֹא סְלָחָת  
**סְלָתָה בְּאָרֶף וְתַרְדֵּבָנוּ**  
הַרְגָּת לֹא חַמְלָת  
**סְפָוָתָה בְּעָנוֹן לֹא**  
מְעָבָדָת חַפְלָה  
**סְחִי וְאָסָתָה תִּשְׁׁמֵנָנוּ**  
בְּקָרְבָּה הַעֲמִים  
**פָּצָן עַלְיוֹנוּ פִּיהִם**  
כָּל-אַבְנֵינוּ  
**פָּחָד וְפִחְתָּה הָיָה לָנוּ**  
הַשָּׁאָת וְהַשְּׁבָר  
**פָּלְגִּי-מִים תַּרְדֵּעַ עַיִּי**  
עַל-שְׁבָר בְּתִרְעָמִי  
**עַיִּינָה נְגָרָה וְלֹא תְּדַמֵּה**  
מְאַיִּינָה הַפְּנִוָּת  
**עַד-יַשְׁקִיף וּבָרָא יְהָוָה**  
מִשְׁמָרִים

Mipi Elyon lo tetzeh  
hara'ot vehatov?  
Mah yitonen adam chay,  
gever al chata'av?  
Nachpesah deracheinu venachkorah,  
venashuvah ad Adonai.  
Nisah levavenu el kapayim,  
el El bashamayim.  
Nachno fashanu umarinu;  
atah lo salachtah.  
Sakotah va'af vatardefenu,  
haragtah, lo chamaltah.  
Sakotah ve'an'an lach  
me'avor tefillah.  
Sechi uma'os tesimeinu  
bekerev ha'amim.  
Patzu aleinu pihem,  
kol oyveinu.  
Pachad vafachat hayah lanu,  
hashet vehashaver.  
Palgei mayim terad eini  
al shever bat ami.  
Eini nigrah velo tidmeh,  
me'ein hafugot,  
ad yashkifveyereh Adonai  
mishamayim.

<sup>1</sup> "Mouth."

<sup>2</sup> A manuscript text would read חטא.

<sup>3</sup> "You covered/wrapped *yourself* in anger, you killed and you did not have mercy."

<sup>4</sup> "They have burst open their mouths against us."

<sup>5</sup> Or "my people's daughter."

<sup>51</sup> My eye hurts me  
more than all the suburbs of my city.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>52</sup> They trapped me like a bird,  
my enemies, for no reason.

<sup>53</sup> They ended my life *by tossing me into a pit*  
and threw a rock down on to me.

<sup>54</sup> Water flowed above my head.  
I thought I was done for.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>55</sup> I called out your name, God,  
from the depths of the pit.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>56</sup> You heard me. Don't cover your ears.  
But release me at my cry.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>57</sup> You approached *me* on the day I called for you  
and said, "Don't be afraid."

<sup>58</sup> O God, you championed all my disputes,  
you saved my life.

<sup>59</sup> You have seen, O God, how I suffer;  
judge my case!

<sup>60</sup> You have seen all their spitefulness,  
all their plots against me.

<sup>61</sup> You've heard their taunts, God,  
all their plans against me.

<sup>62</sup> My attackers' speech and thoughts  
*are* against me all day *long*.

<sup>63</sup> Whether they sit or stand, take a look:  
I'm their *constant* refrain.

**שִׁנְיִן עֹלְלָה לְנַפְשִׁי**  
Eini olelah lenafshi

**מִכֶּל בְּנוֹת עִירִי**  
mikol benot iri.

**צָוֹד צָדָעִי כַּאֲפָורִי**  
Tzod tzaduni katzipor,  
oyvai, chinom.

**אַיִבְיָה חַנּוֹם**  
Tzamtu vabor chayai  
vayadu even bi.

**אַמְתָּה בְּבּוֹר חַיִּי**  
Tzafu mayim al roshi,  
amarti, "Nigzarti."

**נִנְדוֹאָבָן בָּיִ**  
Karatim shimcha, Adonai,  
mibor tachtiyot.

**אַפְוָמִים עַל־רָאשִׁי**  
Koli shamata. Al ta'lem oznecha  
leravchati, leshavati.

**אַמְרָתִי נִגְזָרִתִי**  
Karavta beyom ekra'eka,  
amarta, "Al tirah."

**קָרָאָתִי שִׁמְךָ יְהֹוָה**  
Ravta, Adonai, rivei nafshi,  
ga'alta chayai.

**מִבּוֹר פְּתַחְתִּוֹת**  
Ra'itah, Adonai, avatati;  
shoftah mishpati.

**קָוְלִי שִׁמְעָתָה אֶל־חַעַלְתִּים אָזְנָה**  
Ra'itah kol nikmatam,  
kol machshevotam li.

**לְרָחָתִי לְשָׁעַתִּי**  
Shamatah cherpatam, Adonai,  
kol machshevotam alai.

**קָרְבָּתִ בַּיּוֹם אַקְרָאָתִ**  
Siftei kamai vehegyonam  
alai kol hayom.

**אַמְרָתִ אל־תִּירָה**  
Shivtam vekimatam habitah;  
ani manginatam.

**בָּבְתָּחָת אַדְנֵי רַיְבִּי נַפְשִׁי**

**גָּאַלְתִּי חַיִּי**

**רָאִיתָה יְהֹוָה עַתְּהָזִי**

**שְׁפָטָה מִשְׁפָטִי**

**רָאִיתָה כָּל־נִקְמָתִם**

**כָּל־מַחְשָׁבָתִם לִי**

**שְׁמָנִיעָתָה חַרְפָּתִם יְהֹוָה**

**כָּל־מַחְשָׁבָתִם עַלִי**

**שְׁבָתִי קָמֵי וְהַנוּנִם**

**עַלִי כָּל־הַיּוֹם**

**שְׁבָתִים וְקִימָתִם הַבְּיִתָּה**

**אַנְיִ מַנְגִּינָתִם**

<sup>1</sup> "My eye brings pain to my self/soul more-than/because-of all the daughters/suburbs of my city."

<sup>2</sup> "I said, 'I have been cut off.'"

<sup>3</sup> Or, "the pit of depths."

<sup>4</sup> "My voice/noise you heard; do not hide/conceal your ear; for *the sake of* my relief *in response* to my cry."

<sup>64</sup> Pay them back as they deserve, God, with all your power!<sup>1</sup>

<sup>65</sup> Let them have their hard hearts so they'll earn your curse!<sup>2</sup>

<sup>66</sup> Pursue *them* with anger and destroy them from beneath God's sky.

<sup>1</sup> How the gold has become dull, the fine treasure looks different, the holy stones are spilled at the top of each courtyard.

<sup>2</sup> Treasured children of Zion, worth their weight<sup>3</sup> in fine gold, are now valued like *cheap* earthenware jars, the work of a potter.

<sup>3</sup> Even jackals offer the breast and suckle their young, but my people's daughter has become as cruel as ostriches in the desert.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> The infant's tongue sticks to its cheek for thirst; children ask for food but there's no one to hand it out to them.

קָשֵׁיב לָהֶם גָּמָל יְהוָה

כִּמְעָשָׂה יְדֵיכֶם

תַּפְנוּ לָהֶם מִגְנָתָלֶב

תַּאֲלֹתָה לָהֶם

תִּרְדֹּף בְּאָלֶף וְתִשְׁמִידֶם

מִתְחַת שְׁמֵי יְהוָה

Tashiv lahem gemul, Adonai, kema'aseh yedeihem.

Titen lahem meginat lev, ta'alat'cha lahem.

Tirdof be'af vetashmidem mitachat shemei Adonai.

## Chapter 4

אֵיכָה יוּם זָהָב

יִשְׁנָא הַכְּבָדָה הַטּוֹב

תִּשְׁתַּפְכְּנָה אַבְנֵי קָדֵשׁ

בָּרוֹאשׁ כָּל־חוֹצֹצָה

בְּנֵי צִיּוֹן דִּיקְרִים

הַמְּסֻלָּאִים בָּפָזָן

אֵיכָה נָחְשָׁבָו לְנַבְלִי־תְּרֵשָׁ

מְשֻׁשָּׁה יְהִי יוֹצֵר

גָּמְתָּנוּם<sup>5</sup> תְּלַצּוּ שָׁדָ

הַיְנִיקָה גָּוְרִיָּהָן

בְּתַחְעַמִּי לְאַכְּזָר

קִיעְנִים<sup>6</sup> בְּמַדְבָּר

דָּבָק לְשׁוֹן יוֹנָק

אַלְּחָכָב בְּצָמָא

עוֹלָלִים שְׁאָלָו לְחָם

שְׁרַט אַיִן לְהָמָ

Eicha yu'am zahav, yishneh haketem hatov, tishtapechnah avnei kodesh berosh kol chutzot.

Benei Tziyon hayekarim, hamsula'im bapaz, eicha nechshevu lenivlei cheres, ma'aseh yedei yotzer.

Gam tanim chaltzu shad, heniku gureihen;

bat ami le'achzar kay'enim bamidbar.

Davak leshon yonek el chiko, batzamah;

olalim sha'alu lechem; pores ein lahem.

<sup>1</sup> "You will return to them payment, God, according to the work/performance of your hands/power."

<sup>2</sup> "You will give them covering/shield of heart, your curse to/for them."

<sup>3</sup> The root of **הַמְּסֻלָּאִים**, **סָלָא**, suggests weighing something in a balance—the children would counterpoise gold.

<sup>4</sup> In biblical folklore, ostriches are rotten parents; see Job 39:13-19.

<sup>5</sup> A manuscript version would read **תְּנִינָה**, sea-monster instead of jackals, but the plural verb asks for a plural subject—jackals instead of a single sea-monster. "Jackals" is masculine plural, so is "they suckle," but "their young" is feminine plural; so perhaps the traditional emendation is wrong, or perhaps the writer wavers between masculine and feminine.

<sup>6</sup> A manuscript version would read **כִּי עֲנִים**. You might almost translate this as "for *they are poor*."

<sup>5</sup> Those who used to eat sweets  
are devastated, in the courtyards;  
those raised in *luxurious* scarlet *clothing*  
now cling to dumpsters.

<sup>6</sup> The sin of my people's daughter has grown  
greater than the sin of Sodom,  
which was toppled in an instant,  
and nobody reached *helping* hands to her.

<sup>7</sup> Her Nazirites<sup>1</sup> were *once* purer than snow,  
whiter than milk,  
their bodies redder than coral,<sup>2</sup>  
their frames *more shapely than* lapis lazuli.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Now their appearance is darker than black,  
unidentifiable in the courtyards;  
their skin clings to their bones;  
it's become dry as wood.

<sup>9</sup> Those who died by the sword were better off  
than those who died of famine—  
pierced through, they bleed, *but that's better*  
*than starving* for lack of agricultural produce.

<sup>10</sup> Women's caring hands  
cooked their children,  
which became servings of food for them  
when my people's town was destroyed.

**הַאֲכָלִים לִמְעָדָנִים** Ha'ochlim lema'adanim  
**נִשְׁמָעוּ בְּחֻזְצָוֹת** nashamu bachutzot;  
**הַאֲמָנוּנִים עַלְיָהוּלָע** ha'emunim alei tolah  
**חִבְקָנוּ אֲשֶׁפְתָּחוֹת** chibku ashpatot.  
**וְנִינְדָּל עַזְנֵן בַּת-עַמִּי** Vayigdal avon bat ami  
**מִחְפְּתָאַת סָלָם** mechatat Sedom,  
**הַהֲפֹכָה כְּמוֹרְגָּעָע** hahafuchah chemo ragah,  
**וְלֹא-חַלְלוּ בָּה יְהָרִים** velo chalu vah yadayim.  
**זָקָע נְזִירֶה מִשְׁלָגָן** Zaku nezireha misheleg,  
**צָחָב מִחְלָבָב** tzachu mechalav.  
**אַדְמָוּעָצָם מִפְנִינִים** Admu etzem mipnanim,  
**סְפִיר גִּזְרָתָם** sapir gizratam.  
**חַשָּׁחָמָשָׁחָוָל תְּאָרָם** Chashach mishchor ta'oram,  
**לֹא נִקְרָא בְּחֻזְצָוֹת** lo nikru bachutzot;  
**צָפָד עַזְרָם עַל-עַצְמָם** tzafad oram al atzmam,  
**יָבֵשׁ הַיָּה כְּעֵץ** yavesh hayah ka'etz.  
**טוֹבִים הַיּוֹחָלְלִי-חָרָב** Tovim hayu chalelei cherev  
**מְחַלְלֵי רָעָב** mechalelei ra'av,  
**שְׁהָם יְזֻבָּו מִדְקָרִים** shehem yazuzu medukarim,  
**מִתְנֻבָּת שָׁדָי** mitnuvot sadai.  
**יְדֵי נְשִׁים רַחֲמָנִיּוֹת** Yedei nashim rachamaniyot  
**בְּשַׁלְוּ לִי-דִיןָן** bishlu yaldeihen;  
**הַיּוֹ לְבָרוֹת לְמוֹ** hayu leverot lamo  
**בְּשַׁבְּרַב בַּת-עַמִּי** beshever bat ami.

<sup>1</sup> Nazirites dedicated themselves to a life without booze or haircuts, drawing admiration from some quarters (but leaving Samson nothing but women and rowdiness for distraction).

<sup>2</sup> “Their bodies redder than coral” is literally “Their bone redder/more-ruddy than corals/pearls”—the bony parts of the body support the flesh and give it its shape, so maybe the poet is thinking of bodies. Some think it's about a ruddy complexion, which society sometimes considers healthy and attractive, and other times considers coarse and repulsive.

<sup>3</sup> “Sapphire was their cutting,” they had a build as well shaped as a carved precious stone. Sapphire and lapis lazuli are both blue, though today sapphire is far more costly.

<sup>11</sup> God has fulfilled God's fury,  
poured out God's anger,  
sent fire against Zion  
and consumed its foundations.

<sup>12</sup> The rulers of the earth wouldn't believe,  
all *those* who live on earth,  
that trouble and foe would come  
to Jerusalem's gates ...

<sup>13</sup> ... because of the sins of her prophets,  
the crimes of her priests,  
who spill within *the city*  
the blood of the righteous.

<sup>14</sup> Blind, they wandered in the courtyards,  
soiled with the blood,  
so that *people*<sup>2</sup> could not  
touch their garments.

<sup>15</sup> "Move aside! Unclean!" they warned,<sup>3</sup>  
"Move aside, move aside, don't touch,"  
as they ran off and wandered;  
*Other* nations said, "They can't stay *here*."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>16</sup> God's presence has scattered them;  
God no longer looks at them.  
They ignored the priests<sup>5</sup>  
and rejected the elders.

**כָּלָה יְהוָה אֶת-חַמֹּתָו**  
**שָׁפֵךְ חָרְוֹן אָפֹוּ**  
**וַיַּצְאֵשׁ בְּצִיּוֹן**  
**וְתָאֵל יְסוֹדְתָה**  
**לֹא הָאמִינוּ מַלְכֵי אָרֶץ**  
**כָּל<sup>1</sup> יְשֻׁבֵּי תְּבֵל**  
**כִּי יָבָא צָרֵי אֹיְבָה**  
**בְּשֻׁעָרֵי יְרוּשָׁלָם**  
**מְחֻטָּאת נְבִיאָהָה**  
**עֲוֹנוֹת פְּהָנִיתָה**  
**הַשְּׁפֵכִים בְּקִרְבָּתָה**  
**דָם צָדִיקִים**  
**נָעוּ עֲוֹרִים בְּחֻזּוֹתָה**  
**נוֹאָלָו בְּדָם**  
**בְּלָא יְוָחָלָו**  
**וְגַעַו בְּלִבְשִׁיהם**  
**סָרוּוּ טָמֵא קָרְאֹו לֹמֹז**  
**סָרוּוּ סָרוּאָל תְּגַעֲנָעָה**  
**כִּי נָצָו גָּמְגָעָה**  
**אָמְרוּ בְּגָזּוֹם לֹא יוֹסִיףָו לְגֹורָה**  
**פְּנֵי יְהוָה חַלְקָם**  
**לֹא יוֹסִיףָו לְהַבְּיטָם**  
**פְּנֵי כְּהָנִים לֹא נָשָׂאָה**  
**וְזָקְנִים<sup>6</sup> לֹא חָנָנוּ**

Kilah Adonai et chamato,  
shafach charon apo,  
vayatzet esh beTziyon  
vatochal yesodoteha.  
Lo he'eminu malchei eretz,  
kol yoshei tevel,  
ki yavo tzar ve'oyev  
besha'arei Yerushala'yim ...  
... mechatot nevi'eha,  
avonot kohaneha,  
hashofchim bekirbah  
dam tzadikim.  
Na'u ivrim bachutzot,  
nego'alu badam  
belo yuchlu  
yig'u bilvusheihem.  
"Suru, tameh," karu lamo,  
"suru, suru, al tigu,"  
ki natzu gam na'u;  
amru vagoyim, "Lo yosifu lagur."  
Penei Adonai chilkam;  
lo yosif lehabitam,  
penei chohanim lo nasa'u  
uzekenim lo chananu.

<sup>1</sup> A manuscript version would read **וְכָל**.

<sup>2</sup> Or "they"; perhaps the priests could not touch the bloody garments because human blood would make them unfit for Temple service, and perhaps other people could not touch the bloody garments because they were icky.

<sup>3</sup> "They cried out, regarding themselves," or "*Other* people cried out, referring to them."

<sup>4</sup> "They will not continue to dwell *with us*."

<sup>5</sup> "The faces of the priests they did not raise." Raising the face is an idiom (in my humble opinion) for taking note of someone.

<sup>6</sup> A manuscript version would read **זָקְנִים**.

<sup>17</sup> Still we strained our eyes  
to *see* some help—but *it was* useless!  
We searched from our watchtowers  
for an ally, *but allies* could not save *us*.

<sup>18</sup> They tracked our steps  
so we could not move in our streets;  
our end drew near, our days were done  
for our end had arrived.

<sup>19</sup> Our pursuers were swifter  
than eagles in the sky;  
they chased us on the hills,  
ambushed us on the plain.

<sup>20</sup> Our *life's* breath,<sup>2</sup> God's anointed *priest*,  
was captured in their dungeons;  
of him we used to say,  
“Under his protection, we can survive in exile.”<sup>3</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Rejoice, be glad *now*, daughter of Edom  
who lives in the land of Utz.  
The *bitter* cup will come to you too:  
you'll get drunk and throw up.<sup>4</sup>

עֲזִינֵּנוּ תְּכִלֵּנָה עִנְנָנוּ  
אֶל־עִזְרָתֵנוּ הַבָּלֶל  
בְּצִפְיָתֵנוּ צִפְנָנוּ  
אֶל־גּוֹי לְאָיוֹשָׁעָנוּ  
אֶרְיוֹן אַעֲדָרֵנוּ  
מַלְכָת בְּרַחְבָּתֵנוּ  
קָרָב קָאַתְנוּ מָלָא יָמֵינוּ  
כִּירְבָּא קָאַתְנוּ  
קָלִים חַי רַדְפָּנֵינוּ  
מַנְשָׁרֵי שָׁמָמִים  
עַל־הַהָרִים דָלָנֵינוּ  
בְּמִדְבָּר אַרְבּוּ לְנוּ  
רוּחַ אֲפֵינוּ מְשִׁיחַ יְהוָה  
נַלְכֵד בְּשִׁחוֹתֹתֵם  
אֲשֶׁר אָמְרָנוּ  
בְּצִילּוּ נִיחִי בְּנוּם  
שִׁישִׁי וְשִׁמְחִילְתָּהָרָם  
יֹשֵׁבְתָה<sup>5</sup> בְּאֶרְץ עַזְזָז  
גַם־עַלְלִיקְתָּעַבְרְפּוֹס  
תְשַׁכְּרֵי וְתְחַעֵרֵי

Odenu tichlenah eineinu  
el ezratenu—havel!  
Betzipiyatenu tzipinu  
el goy, lo yoshi'a.  
Tzadu tze'adeinu  
milechet bir'chovoteinu;  
karav kitzeinu, malu yameinu  
ki vah kitzeinu.  
Kalim hayu rodfeinu  
minishrei shamayim;  
al heharim delakunu,  
bamidbar arvu lanu.  
Ru'ach apeinu, meshi'ach Adonai,  
nilkad bishchitotam;  
asher amarnu,  
“Betzilo nichyeh vagoyim.”  
Sisi vesim'chi, bat Edom  
yoshevet be' eretz Utz.  
Gam alayich ta'avar kos:  
tishkeri vetit'ari.

<sup>1</sup> A manuscript version would read **עֲזִינֵּנוּ**.

<sup>2</sup> “Spirit/wind/breath of our noses/nostrils.”

<sup>3</sup> “Inspiration” is “the breath of our noses/nostrils,” i.e., our source of life and courage, without which we have the metaphorical wind knocked out of us; “their dungeons” can be translated “pits,” something far less elaborate than a dungeon, but I think it suggests a low location used to hold prisoners, just as Joseph was held in a pit; “in exile” is literally “among the nations,” and I take this to mean “in the foreign countries to which we will be transported as slaves after we lose our last battle”—had our anointed High Priest survived (the poet implies), we could have clung to some scrap of hope that we could restore our Temple service.

<sup>4</sup> Or, “get naked”; the root (**ערָה**) means pour out (hence empty oneself, maybe at both ends) or uncover (hence get naked and vulnerable). Either way, the fun will be short-lived. Utz is another name for Edom.

<sup>5</sup> A manuscript version would read **יֹשֵׁבְתָה**.

<sup>22</sup> Daughter of Zion, your sin is complete;  
God will no more expose<sup>1</sup> you to punishment.  
Daughter of Edom, God knows your sin  
and will expose your faults.

<sup>1</sup> Remember, God, what happened to us;  
look and see our disgrace.

<sup>2</sup> Our heritage is turned over to foreigners,  
our homes to strangers.

<sup>3</sup> We're like orphans, fatherless,  
and our mothers are widows.

<sup>4</sup> We've had to pay for our drinking water;  
our wood comes at a price.

<sup>5</sup> We're hunted to death;<sup>4</sup>  
we're exhausted and get no rest.

<sup>6</sup> We surrendered to Egypt<sup>6</sup>  
and Assyria, to get enough food.

<sup>7</sup> Our ancestors sinned and are gone  
while we bear their guilt.

<sup>8</sup> Servants give us orders;  
there's no one to save us from their power.

<sup>9</sup> At the risk of our lives we get our food  
because of bandits in the wilds.<sup>8</sup>

תְּמַעֲנֵד בַּת־צִיּוֹן  
לֹא יוֹסֵף לְהַגְלוֹתָךְ  
פָּקַד עָנֵד בַּת־אֲדוֹם  
גַּלְּה עַל־חַטָּאתֶךָ

Tam avonech, bat Tziyon;  
lo yosif lehaglotech.  
Pakad avonech, bat Edom;  
gilah al chatotayich.

## Chapter 5

זָכָר יְהוָה מֵהָרְתָה לְנָא  
הַבּוּטָה<sup>2</sup> וּרְאָה אֶת־חַרְפָּתָנוּ  
נַחֲלָתָנוּ נַחֲפָכָה לְנוּרִים  
בְּתוּמָה לְנַכְּרִים  
וַתּוֹמִים הַלְּיָנוּ וְאַיְוָן<sup>3</sup> אָבָּ  
אַמְּתָנוּ כָּאַלְמָנוּת  
מַיִּמְנוּ בְּכֶסֶף שְׁזָנוּ  
עַצְּנָנוּ בְּמַחְיָר יְבָאָ  
עַל צְוֹאָרָנוּ נַדְרָפָנוּ  
גַּעֲנָנוּ וְלֹאָלָה הַוְנָחָ לְנוּ  
מַגְּרָבִים נַתְנוּ יָד  
אַשּׁוּר לְשָׁבָע לְחָם  
אַבְּתָנוּ חַטָּאוֹ וְאַיִם<sup>4</sup>  
וְאַנְחָנוּ<sup>7</sup> שְׁוֹתִיתָם סְכָלָנוּ  
עֲבָדִים מַשְׁלָוּ בָּנוּ  
פָּרָק אֵין מִידָּם  
בְּנֶפֶשָׁנוּ נַבְּיא לְחַמְּפָן  
מִפְנֵי חֶרֶב הַמִּדְבָּר

Zechor, Adonai, meh hayah lanu;  
habitah ure'eh et cherpatenu.  
Nachalatenu nehef'chah lezaram,  
bateinu lenochrim.  
Yetomim hayinu ve'ein av;  
imoteinu ke'almanot.  
Meimeinu bekesef shatinu;  
atzeinu bim'chir yavo'u.  
Al tzavarenu nirdafnu;  
yaganu velo hunach lanu.  
Mitzrayim natanu yad,  
Ashur lisbo'ah lachem.  
Avoteinu chatu ve'einam  
va'anachnu avonoteihem savalnu.  
Avadim mashlu vanu;  
porek ein miyadam.  
Benafshenu navi lachmenu  
mipnei cherev hamidbar.

<sup>1</sup> The root for “expose” can mean uncover (expose nakedness, remove protection, remove cover.)

<sup>2</sup> A manuscript version would read הביט.

<sup>3</sup> A manuscript version would read אין.

<sup>4</sup> “For/on/about our necks are we hunted”; presumably, the hunters want to cut off our heads at the neck.

<sup>5</sup> A manuscript version would read לא.

<sup>6</sup> “To Egypt we granted power over us.”

<sup>7</sup> A manuscript version would read אַיִם אַנְחָנוּ.

<sup>10</sup> Our skin is burning like an oven from *crop-killing* heat that brings famine.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>11</sup> They humiliated the women in Zion, the young women in the towns of Judah.

<sup>12</sup> Leaders in their power were hung,<sup>2</sup> they showed no respect for the elders.

<sup>13</sup> Young men carried millstones and youths tottered under *heavy* logs.

<sup>14</sup> Elders are gone from the gates, young men from their music.

<sup>15</sup> Our greatest pleasure<sup>3</sup> is gone, our dancing turned to mourning.

<sup>16</sup> Our crown<sup>4</sup> has fallen down— alas for us, that we sinned!

<sup>17</sup> Because of this, our heart has been aching; because of these *disasters*, our eyes dim with *tears*.

<sup>18</sup> Upon Mount Zion, which is desolate, foxes roam.

<sup>19</sup> You, God, will rule forever; your throne is *secure* from age to age.

<sup>20</sup> Why will you forget us forever or abandon us for years and years?<sup>5</sup>

**עָזָרָנוּ כִּתְנוּרַ נִכְמָרוּ** Orenu ketanur nichmaru  
**מִפְנֵי זָלָפּוֹת רַעַבּ** mipnei zalafot ra'av.  
**נְשָׁיִם בְּצִיּוֹן עָלָיו** Nashim beTziyon inu,  
**בְּתַלְלָתּ בְּעָרֵי יְהוּדָה** betulot be'arei Yehudah.  
**שָׁרִים בִּירָם נִתְלָיו** Sarim beyadam nitlu;  
**פָּנִים זָקְנִים לֹא נִתְהַדְּרוּ** penei zekelim lo nehdaru.  
**בְּחוּרִים טְהָרָן נִשְׁלָאוּ** Bachurim techon nasa'u  
**וּנְעָרִים בָּעֵן קְשָׁלוּ** une'arim ba'etz kashalu.  
**זָקְנִים מִשְׁעָרַ שְׁבָתוֹ** Zekelim misha'ar shavatu,  
**בְּחוּרִים מִנְגִּנָּה** bachurim min'ginatam.  
**שְׁבָתּ מִשּׁוֹשָׁ לְבָנָנוּ** Shabat mesos libenu,  
**נִהְפַּךְ לְאָכְלֵ מִתְהַלְּנוּ** nehpach le'evel mecholenu.  
**נִפְלָה עֲטָרָתְּ רָאשָׁנוּ** Naflah ateret roshenu;  
**אָוִיְגָא לְנָנוּ קַי חַטָּאנוּ** oy nah lanu ki chatanu.  
**עַל-זֶה הַנִּיחַדְתָּ לְבָנָנוּ** Al zeh hayah daveh libenu;  
**עַל-אֶלְהָה חַשְׁכָּו עַיִנָּנוּ** al eleh hash'chu eineinu.  
**עַל הַר-צִיּוֹן שְׁשָׁמָם** Al Har Tziyon sheshamem  
**שְׁוֹעֲלִים הַלְּכִיבָּו** shu'alim hil'chu vo.  
**אַתָּה יְהוָה לְעוֹלָם תִּשְׁבַּ** Atah, Adonai, le'olam teshev;  
**כָּסָאךְ לְדָרְ וְדָרְ** kis'acha ledor vador.  
**לִמְהָ לְנִצְחָתְּשִׁכְחָנוּ** Lamah lanetzach tishkachenu,  
**תַּעֲזַבְנָנוּ לְאָרֵךְ יָמִים** ta'azvenu le'orech yamim?

<sup>8</sup> “With our lives do we bring our food because of the sword of the wilderness”; i.e., we can't get food in the market so we go foraging in the wilds, where we can be attacked by weapon-wielding bandits.

<sup>1</sup> “Our skin like an oven has become hot because of the heat of famine.” I've never found hunger to be a source of heat, but scorching weather can kill the crops and cause both famine and sunburn.

<sup>2</sup> Or, “hung up by their hands.”

<sup>3</sup> “The joy of our heart.”

<sup>4</sup> “The crown of our head.”

<sup>5</sup> Or, “will you forget us for length of days.”

<sup>21</sup> God, take us back; we'll no more stray. Take us back to the olden days!	<sup>1</sup> <b>הַשִּׁיבֵנוּ יְהוָה   אֱלֹךְ וַנִּשְׁׁבוּה</b> <b>חִרְשׁ יָמִינוּ כִּקְרָם</b>	Hashivenu, Adonai, elecha venashuva; chadesh yamenu kekedem.
<sup>22</sup> Unless you despise us entirely, as furious at us as can be.	<b>כִּי אִם־מִאֵס מְאָסָרָנוּ</b> <b>קָצְפָת עַלְנוּ עַד־מָאָר</b>	Ki im ma'os me'astanu, katzafka aleinu ad me'od.
<sup>21</sup> God, take us back; we'll no more stray. Take us back to the olden days!	<sup>1</sup> <b>הַשִּׁיבֵנוּ יְהוָה   אֱלֹךְ וַנִּשְׁׁבוּה</b> <b>חִרְשׁ יָמִינוּ כִּקְרָם</b>	Hashivenu, Adonai, elecha venashuva; chadesh yamenu kekedem.

<sup>1</sup> A manuscript version would read **וַנִּשְׁׁבוּ**.