

I WILL SING YOU A VERSE . . .



CANTOR HYAM SINGER'S JOURNAL
A FAMILY'S JOURNEY

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Journal Transliteration and Translation
from Yiddish and Hebrew
by
Myra Mniewski and Chana Pollack

Compiled, Annotated and Edited
by
Eudice Landy Gilman, Marlene Gilman Krause and Rachel Krause

*My Loves — my friends
Survivors — you who remain
My lords! — princes!
Excuse me — I entreat you
With patience — hear me

I will sing you a verse a fresh one*

— from the preface to Cantor Hyam Singer's Journal

Hyam Singer was a devout Jewish cantor, teacher, philosopher and poet. He spent his early life in lands dominated by Czarist Russia. Born in 1854 in Kovno, Lithuania, he moved to Riga, Latvia as a young man. In 1888 he and his wife and children immigrated to Dublin, Ireland, and in 1901 the family went to Chicago. During the 1880's and possibly the 1890's he maintained a personal journal. Writing in poetic Yiddish and Hebrew, using Hebrew script, he recorded his feelings and his opinions on everything from the fate of Judaism to what makes a good marriage.

His poetic wisdom is contained in a small timeworn journal containing eighteen poems and some fragments of pages which are incomplete. After one hundred and twenty years, the eighteen complete poems have been translated into English, so that now they can be savored and appreciated by his descendants, and by anyone who may be interested.

In the preface to his journal, Hyam Singer dedicated his writings to his *Geblibende*, his survivors. We, his survivors, lovingly rededicate this book to his memory. He is our patriarch. This is our heritage. A man of great intellect, sensitivity and courage, he has blessed us with the gift of himself. His personal story is our legacy. It is a portrait of a remarkable man, and an examination of an era in Jewish history which may otherwise be forgotten.

Because Hyam Singer's family members are another important aspect of his legacy, their lives are outlined following the journal translation. In his journal he wrote:

*Everyone must leave descendants
This is a good deed prescribed
For the world to still shine
After one hundred and twenty years*

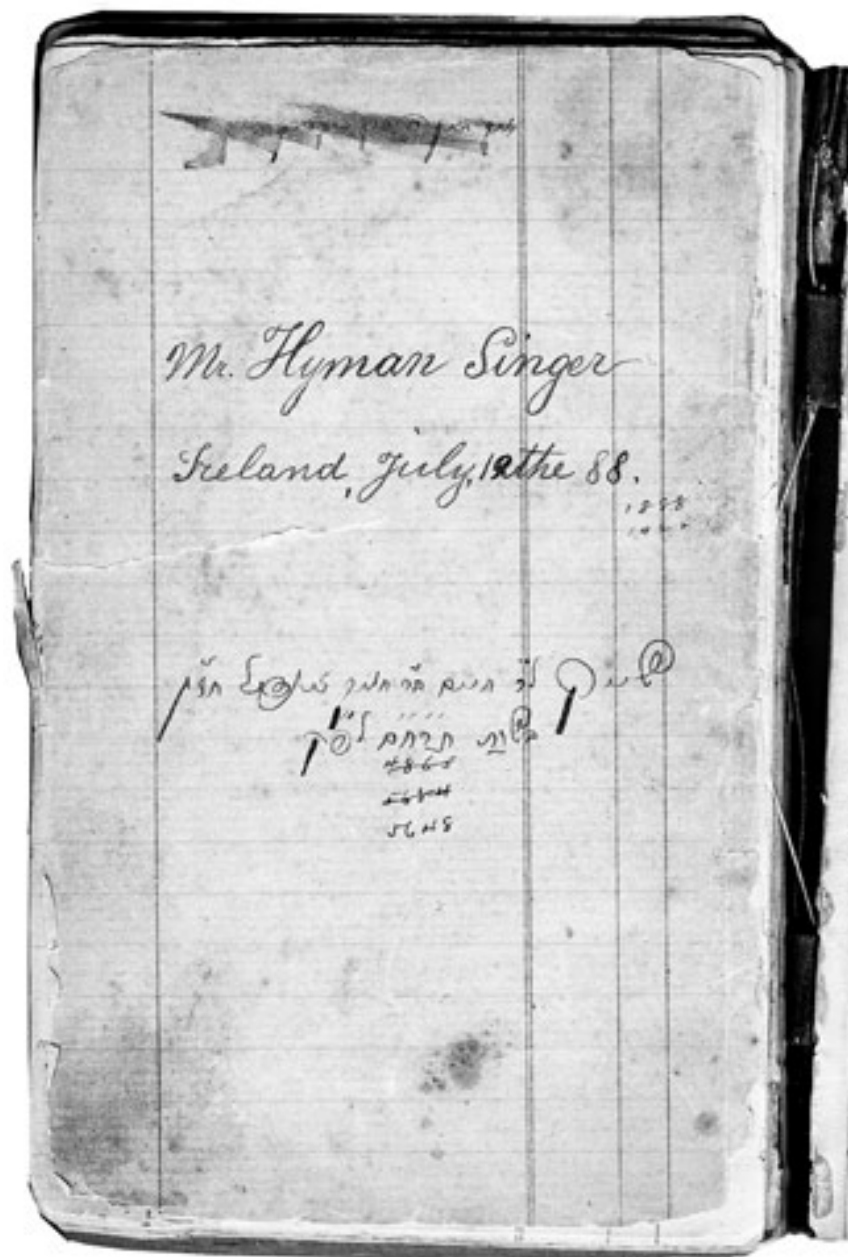
As of the year 2007, after almost exactly one hundred and twenty years, Hyam and Gertrude Singer have left one hundred and twenty-two descendants. The world is still shining.

THE JOURNAL



Shown actual size, 4 x 6.5 inches, the tattered and torn journal cover is dark blue. A Star of David has been impressed into the center, presumably by Hyam Singer himself. The binding, extremely fragile, is on the right. The book was written in Hebrew and Yiddish, which are written and read from right to left. Several of the pages are loose, and may have fallen out and been re-inserted.

FRONTISPIECE

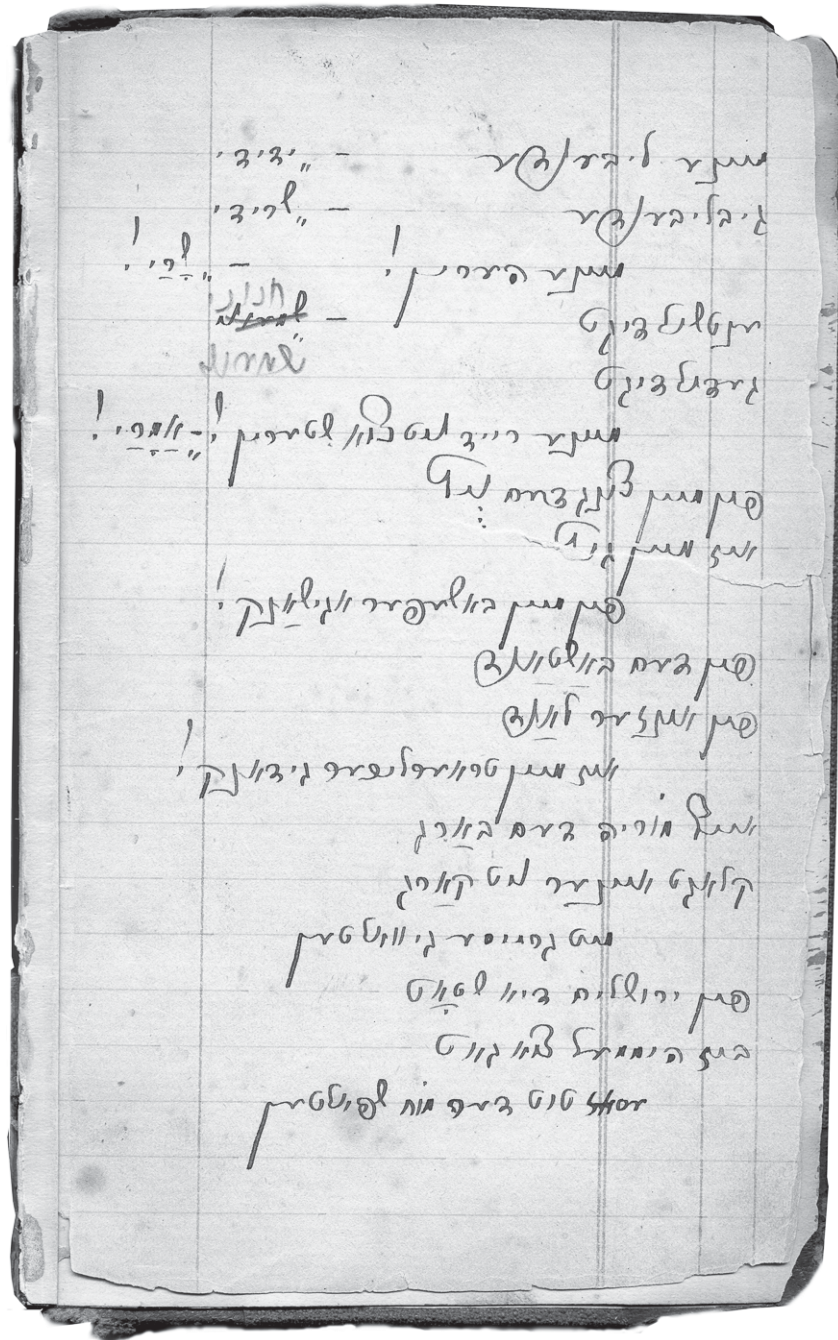


Although the frontispiece is inscribed with the name *Hyman Singer*, the author was always called *Hyam* by those who knew him. He is referred to as *Hyam* throughout this book. The lines beneath the English inscription are translated as:

This belongs to Reb Chaim, son of Chanoch Zundel Chazan
In the year 5648

The year 5648 was the Jewish calendar year corresponding to 1888.

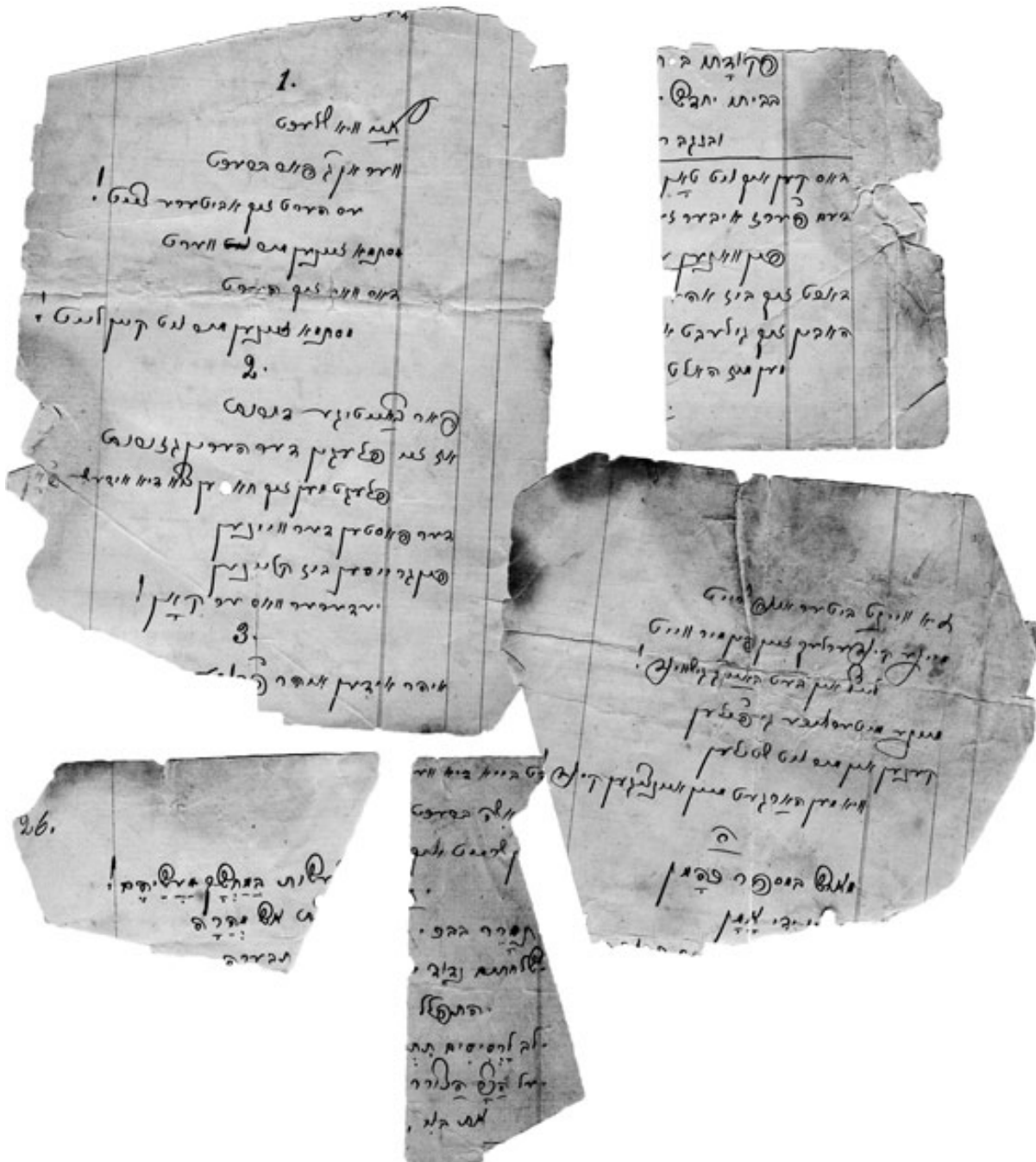
JOURNAL PAGE



The journal's pages are yellowed with age and frayed around the edges, but the text is still legible. Most of the poetry is written in Yiddish, but at times Hyam Singer expressed himself in Hebrew, especially when discussing biblical subjects.

This page, written in Yiddish, contains the preface to Hyam Singer's Journal. It begins with his entreaty, "With patience — hear me..." and ends with his pledge, "I will sing you a new verse a fresh one."

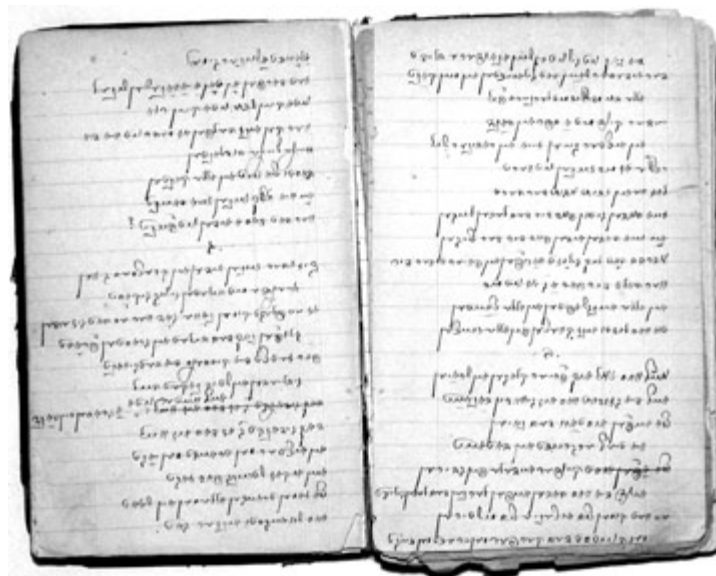
FRAGMENTS



Some loose page fragments which had been inserted in the journal are extremely discolored and deteriorated. These have not been translated.

CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	9
Cantor Hyam Singer's Journal	
Foreword: A Dream Realized	10
Historical Note	13
Translators' Note	15
Hyam Singer's Journal in Translation	16
Hyam Singer and His Family	92
Family Tree: From Generation to Generation	93
Family Lore: Biographies and Photographs	97
Map: A Family's Journey	108
About the Translators	109



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Immeasurable gratitude goes to translators Chana Pollack and Myra Mniewski, not only for their brilliant transliterations and translations, but also for their insightful interpretations. They have brought Hyam Singer's poetry and ideas to life in a way that is simultaneously informative and beautiful.

For their encouragement and expertise, thank you to the following professionals in the Cleveland Jewish Community:

Sean Martin, Associate Curator for Jewish History,
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The Maltz Museum of Jewish Heritage

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The Maltz Museum of Jewish Heritage

Sincere appreciation to Betty and Gayne Petranek for their enthusiastic cooperation in executing the layout, design and photographic reproductions in this book.

For extra-special help, special thanks to Martha Binstock, Ken Gilman, Frank Krause, Judy and Don-David Lusterman and Adam Vane.

Much of the historical background of the Singer family was learned from "A Saga of the Singers," a family history written by Hyam Singer's youngest son, Joseph Singer.

FOREWORD: A DREAM REALIZED

by Eudice Landy Gilman

My interest in the lives of my maternal grandparents, Hyam and Gertrude Singer, took root about 80 years ago. Grandma Gertrude, who was widowed in 1919, would come from her home in Chicago to visit us during summers in the 1920's. On the front porch of our cottage in Chippewa Lake, Ohio, she talked to me about her past. In her Yiddish-Irish brogue, she told me about her happy early years with her family in Riga, Latvia, where she met and married my Grandfather Hyam.

They had begun raising their family when a virulent epidemic swept through Eastern Europe, claiming the lives of several of their children, including Grandfather's "kaddish," their oldest son. They were frantic, making plans to leave as soon as possible with their surviving children, (One of them would someday be my mother). Grandma Gertrude's older brother, Julius Shillman, and his family had already fled to Dublin, Ireland. My grandparents saw Dublin as a safe haven, too, and arranged to go there with their four surviving children as soon as they could. That was in 1888. By 1899 there were nine children, and the Hyam and Gertrude Singer family was living securely and happily in Dublin. But within two more years, in 1901, they would begin to leave Ireland for America, the place where Grandfather had been longing to go for years. By 1903 the whole family was ensconced in Chicago. My mother, Bertha Singer, married my father, Samuel Joseph Landy in 1911, and they eventually moved to Cleveland, where my sisters, Adele, Marion, Arlene and I were raised.

For years my mother's upbeat stories about her family in Dublin had always fascinated me. My late husband, Phil R. Gilman, himself an author of science text books, shared my interest and curiosity throughout our 54-year marriage. In the 1960's, a precious item came into my life, which would reignite my interest in my grandparents' experiences. It was something that had belonged to Grandfather Hyam—a tired, nondescript and faded little blue book measuring about four by six inches, its cloth binding frayed on all the corners. The pages were brown and crumbling, but its exquisitely beautiful script was still clear. My sister, Arlene Ellis Friedman, had saved it with our late mother's mementos. She turned it over to me when I said I would try to have it translated

I recognized the Hebrew script, but could not understand a word of what Grandfather was saying, except for some of the words on the title page. There he had written in elegant English script:

Mr. Hyman Singer
Ireland, July 12th 88

I had always known that my grandfather's family had lived in Kovno, Lithuania; Riga, Latvia; and Dublin, Ireland before settling in Chicago in the early 1900's, but I knew few details of their lives in Lithuania and Latvia before they moved to Dublin. I hoped the little book would give me some answers.

For several years I looked for translators here in Cleveland. Erudite scholars would translate a few lines with difficulty, and then regretfully decline the challenge. Though the script was Hebrew, the language was mostly old Yiddish. "It's written in poetry, and it's wonderful," the renowned Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver declared when I showed it to him. He read a few lines here and there, tenderly turning the age-old pages. "Mayne libende Geblibende—my beloved survivors," he translated, and he gestured a kiss.

That phrase was a catalyst, because then I knew that my grandfather was communicating to me—actually to all of us, his progeny. His three little words, “my beloved survivors,” had given me wings. My curiosity was tangible, but finding a translator seemed so impossible that the book still languished in a bag in various drawers or cupboards wherever I lived. It was always a spiritual chain, but the difficulty translating my grandfather’s words had come to symbolize a missing link in my life. The effort was frustrating until early 2004, when my cousin Judith Singer Vane in Charleston, S.C., suggested I call our cousin, Judy Singer Lusterman in Baldwin, New York. She got into the search and struck gold.

“Gold” is the immensely talented Chana Pollack, filmmaker and head photo archivist for the *The Jewish Forward*, a respected daily Jewish newspaper which has been read worldwide for generations. Another facet of Chana’s professional career is translating challenging historical handwritten documents. Judy and I were confident that we could entrust her with the responsibility of bringing this cherished treasure to life. She would be joined by her partner, poet and co-translator Myra Mniewski. Between them they could transliterate Grandfather’s lyrical rhyming poetry, an enigmatic combination of Yiddish and Hebrew, and then translate it into poetic English.

Without really knowing exactly what the final cost of this project would be, I needed to find out how my children and extended family would react. Would financing be a problem? I called every descendant of Hyam and Gertrude Singer that I could locate. The response was sensational, with some assurances of “If you need more, let me know.”

In her first letter Chana wrote “Thank you for the opportunity. I look forward to working with you on reclaiming a vital piece of Jewish history.” She had already read some pages copied from the original book, but needed to work from the actual document. I was faced with the challenge of getting the book to her safely. To insure it seemed sacrilegious and demeaning. It was priceless — irreplaceable. So I wrapped it in pristine layers of towels and bubble wrap, encased it in a sturdy box, said a prayer and sent it off. I made sure the postal clerk stamped it “FRAGILE” in a dozen places and hoped for the best. It made it!

When I received the first translated chapters in May, 2004, my heart stood still, and then it started beating again very fast. That would happen over and over again for more than two years, every time a new installment arrived! I was eighty-seven years of age when my dream started to materialize. At this writing I’ve just celebrated my ninetieth birthday—gratefully. The age factor is worth mentioning because I claim that I was “born too soon” to computerize, though I tried. Consequently, innumerable letters and phone conversations were inevitable.

Chana and I became great telephone buddies, and kept talking about meeting in person some day. We finally did meet in September, 2005, when my daughter Marlene, son Ken and I traveled to New York to meet Chana and Myra. As a side benefit we enjoyed a reunion with several Singer cousins, direct descendants of Grandfather Hyam, including Judy and Don-David Lusterman and Adam Vane. We even met for the first time Shale Brownstein, grandson of Grandfather Hyam’s sister Dina, and Josef Feigelson, great-grandson of Hyam’s brother Beryl. Needless to say, there were hugs all around.

From the beginning, the purpose of bringing this story into the twenty-first century was not only for myself, but for the existing generations of Grandfather and Grandmother Singer’s

descendants, and for the generations who will follow us. My daughter, Marlene Krause, belongs to the generation which will succeed mine. I value the good judgement she has shown in the many facets of assembling this book. It is destined to be an heirloom and the tie that binds our families together.

Others will be able to appreciate it, too. Grandfather's diary brings a unique perspective to critical events in Jewish history. Because it is of such universal interest, The Maltz Museum of Jewish Heritage in Cleveland has accepted it as part of its permanent collection. An exact replica, along with some of the transliterations and translations will be on display for all to see.

Hyam Singer was an esteemed cantor, a dedicated scholar, and luckily for us, a gifted writer and poet. As his journal unfolds we are with him on his harrowing journey from Lithuania to Latvia to Ireland. In a graphically picturesque, eloquently emotional way he pours his heart out to us. As a devout, humane human being he recognizes trends in the 1880's that are abhorrent to him. He describes the beginnings and escalation of strife in Kovno, Lithuania, where the Russian soldiers stormed in, victimizing the Jewish population with their pogroms and savage treatment. He expresses strong opinions about moral issues, and doesn't hesitate to give advice. He decries the lack of piety among the younger generation. He identifies himself with Biblical characters, expressing his hope for a Jewish homeland in Israel. He laments the fact that he is curtailed in the practicing of his profession as a cantor and teacher. Forced to sing in taverns, he is humiliated and insulted by offers of drinks, which he refuses. He even provides musical notation to correspond to his poetic prose. He details every facet of his family's life, providing a microcosm of what other families were enduring, too. And he lays bare his anxiety about leaving his country, traveling toward an uncertain future.

I encourage you to read *Cantor Hyam Singer's Journal* many times, as I have done, and am continuing to do. Some of it may require discussion with bible-savvy people and history mavens. Well over one hundred years will disappear as you explore his feelings of rebelliousness, bitterness, and even his occasional fear of doubting his faith. You will explore the depths of his psychological insight, wisdom and love. And because he wrote that he hoped in a hundred years his descendants would be reading this book, you will marvel at the fact that his wish has come true!



HISTORICAL NOTE

*by Sean Martin: Associate Curator for Jewish History
The Western Reserve Historical Society*

Hyam Singer's journal of writings, a personal document that ties the Singer family's history to the larger events affecting East European Jewry in the late nineteenth century, offers us a portrait of an individual, a family, and a community on the brink of modernization. A photograph in the family collection shows Singer in top hat, tails, and full beard, the very picture of a nineteenth century Jew carefully calculating his place in modern society and his maintenance of some kind of Jewish tradition. Hyam Singer's story connects his family to the Jewish Eastern Europe of his youth. The family's journey away from that world took them to two different lands, Ireland and the United States, where they put down roots that flourished and continue to grow. The story of migration is one with which we can all readily identify, so clearly has this phenomenon marked our personal histories. Singer's vivid lines, penned around the 1880s, evoke the world he left behind and the challenges he confronted before making the difficult choice to leave his home. They help us to understand how difficult this transition was for a young man and how important it is to see ourselves as members of our family and as part of the larger communities to which we belong.

Hyam Singer was born in 1854 in the Russian Empire of the nineteenth century. Drastically poor economic conditions, subsequent social crisis, and religious persecution propelled the migration of the peoples of Eastern Europe westward. The empire's backwardness and, not least, popular anti-Semitism of the day made nineteenth century Russia a difficult place for Jews. The Singer family was a part of a larger phenomenon that ultimately transformed both the Jewish community and the United States. Singer's journal, apparently written in the decade his family immigrated to Ireland, documents that transformation. There is no clear indication when he began writing the journal. A reference in the text suggests 1881, but the frontispiece is dated 1888. The journal seems to be a collection of pieces written over the course of several years. It is at least probable that he wrote some of the pieces after 1888, as, in one of them, Singer mentions his age as "one and forty."

The writing in Singer's journal is difficult to describe. The journal is not a diary with chronological entries at given periods; rather, the writings here are a collection of poems of varying lengths, sometimes written in a prose style. The lines can be taken easily as poetry, but one finds there depictions of real events that are usually not described so poetically. The lack of identifying markers complicates the reader's task. We do not know exactly when or where each poem was written. Occasional references to "the 1800s" and several place names throughout some of the poems provide the specific context of Jewish Eastern Europe, but they are not enough to match an event described in a poem with something that actually happened to the author or a family member.

Because of his use of imagery and allegory, Singer's poems are difficult to take as concrete, realistic portrayals of daily life, yet they reveal pressing concerns that affected individuals deeply. The themes of his poetry range widely, offering the reader rich opportunities for reflection. In addition to more universal themes, such as the tension between tradition and modernity, the sufferings of Jews over the centuries, and his despair of God, Singer also addresses more common domestic themes, such as the weddings of relatives or his own marriage. Two themes he treats in particular depth are the conscription of young Jewish males into the Russian army in the mid-nineteenth century and the issue of migration.

Singer's extensive description of the system of conscription of Jewish boys and men into the Russian military reveals the heartbreaking tragedy of this Russian policy, adopted by Tsar Nicholas I but later abandoned by his successor, Tsar Aleksander II. Singer writes of his brothers being drafted, but it is unclear just when, and to whom, this might have occurred. The nineteenth century policy of conscription wounded the Jewish community significantly and was a theme taken up by many Russian Jewish intellectuals in their writings. Singer was perhaps falling in line with a developing literary tradition that used the fact of conscription to explore the Jewish relationship with the Russian state.

Whether to stay in or leave the land where one was born (or where one had built a life) was a decision fraught with consequences that made such life choices especially difficult. A cantor and composer, Singer had a talent for self-expression (a talent that seems to have been present in the family's line for generations and is still present today). He is at his most eloquent describing the journey on a ferry, which we might take as a metaphor for his family's emigration:

Near that shore over yonder there's a small bridge
Where the ferry comes to a stop
Leaving a space between ship and shore
So that one must jump in order to land
A feat that requires some courage
A leap a spring forward a run

Life in a foreign country certainly does require courage, and the Singer family demonstrated that trait clearly as they adapted both to the circumstances of Ireland and then to life in twentieth-century America. Such life changes simply required an acculturation to different norms. While always remaining firmly rooted in a Jewish tradition that looked back to Jerusalem for its roots, Singer seems both impatient and tolerant of unusual behavior and changing attitudes. For example, he writes of one friend, Reb Shimen, "How do you abandon high style and pleasure / How can you be so warped / As to pray in a woman's dress?" Then, later, sounding both politically correct and respectably concerned, he writes:

Only a fool would say
a wife is like a mezuzah on the door frame
 First a kiss and then a rap
God forbid
it's not fitting for a prayer leader
 Like you and like me

Singer's values as a Jew grounded him in a particular historical and theological perspective that appears to have served him well as he adapted to life in his adopted countries. His questioning of different attitudes and behaviors reveals the process an individual undertakes when adapting to new circumstances, whether that is the introduction of new ideals into the *shtetl* of Eastern Europe or an Irish or American homeland.

The family's experience in Ireland was a unique one for Jews from Eastern Europe and so deserves special mention. Family lore, as passed on by Eudice Landy Gilman, describes life for the Singer family in Dublin, according to Hyam's son, Joseph Singer, as "one grand spree." In fact, the conditions under which the small Irish-Jewish community forged their existence were significantly more positive in Ireland than in the Russian Empire. The Irish-Jewish community has always been significantly smaller than in other countries (numbering less than 2,000 today and, at its highest, just over 5,000). The Singer family was a part of the immigration that developed the Jewish community in Ireland from the 1880s to the early 1900s. In Dublin, the family located itself in the heart of the Irish-Jewish community, across the street from the Walworth Road Synagogue, today the Irish Jewish Museum. It is most likely that Singer served as cantor for the Walworth Road Synagogue. Family photographs attest to their style of life and success of the family.

Yet more challenges in another new country lay ahead. Like many others, the Singer family uprooted themselves yet again to join family members in the United States, after spending about thirteen years in Dublin. Most of the family of Hyam's wife, Gertrude, settled in the United States between 1900 and 1904. In America, Chicago became the Singer family's home, even as children and grandchildren spread throughout the country in the twentieth century. Singer's journal can take their descendants home again.

TRANSLATORS' NOTE

by Myra Mniewski and Chana Pollack

When Judy Lusterman brought us some photocopied pieces of her grandfather's handwritten journal, we were excited about bringing original, unpublished Yiddish materials to light. We understood the journal to have been personal, something that had probably never been read by anyone, even family members themselves. In fact, Eudice Gilman, Judy's first cousin, had preserved this diary of their grandfather, Hyam Singer, in her best homemade archive, a dresser drawer.

Singer's journal, addressed to his beloved descendents or as he names them, *mayne libende Geblibende*, is a compilation of poems that as a whole forms an historical legacy as well as an ethical will. It was his intention to pass down the principles of an orthodox Jewish life in shifting times of persecution and violence. In doing so he took on multiple roles: that of patriarch, counselor, upholder of tradition and recorder of history. But his avocation as a cantor and sermonizer allowed him to fashion poetry that also conveys landscape, mood and sensation.

In that Hyam Singer left his writings in a language no longer spoken or read by his descendents, the job of translation had to occur in order to bring his work to light. Luckily one of his granddaughters, Eudice Gilman, stepped forward to spearhead the project. And as the man, Hyam Singer, was revealed through his writings, it was clear that his granddaughter Eudice had inherited his will to perpetuate his thoughts and ideals. Taking the role of matriarch of the clan, Eudice, in her nineties, was determined to have the work translated and then preserved as an heirloom to his and her descendents. Her enthusiasm, energy and drive has seen this project through to its completion. Filling us in on family lore by sending pictures and articles she had written about her ancestors gave us context and her forthcomingness inspired us throughout the project.

The material in the notebook continually surprised us with its motifs. Fearing that modernity would squire in an abandonment of ritual and religious practice, Singer often admonished against it. Yet his poetry, generally conventional in its metrical structure and rhyme pattern, did incorporate free verse and contemporary syntax, a duality that also occurred in the content. And so we found ourselves interpreting allusions to ancient history, the bible and the prophets, as well as contemporary family relations and current events. His ability to express opposing views points to his artistry as a poet. Sometimes he is old fashioned and patriarchal, and other times light hearted and playful.

From the very first poem we translated, we traveled the oceans along with him. His imagery of traversing bodies of water in efforts to escape persecution captured our attention and helped us forge the twists and eddies we encountered. In order to be as faithful as possible to the content of the work we chose to abandon rhyme schemes found in the original. Translating poems that were written in two languages, Hebrew and Yiddish, also presented a challenge. Luckily English is malleable enough to allow for the melding of the biblical with the prosaic.

We would like to thank Eudice Gilman and her extended family for undertaking and supporting the important work of preserving this intimate and unusual text. Singer's poetics brought to life a world long gone yet connected in feeling to what we live and breathe today.

HYAM SINGER'S JOURNAL IN TRANSLATION

Each time the translators completed a section of the journal, they included an explanatory letter, expressing their insights into the background and meaning of the contents. These letters are included, serving as informative introductions to each installment.

The transliteration from Yiddish or Hebrew appears in the left column, with the translation to English directly opposite in the right column.

In several of the poems the verses are numbered by naming letters of the Hebrew alphabet to symbolize numerals:

1 = aleph	6 = vov
2 = beys	7 = zayen
3 = gimel	8 = khes
4 = dalet	9 = tes
5 = hey	10 = yud

A footnote indicated by an asterisk* denotes a translation or explanation which has been added by the editors.

POLLACK~ MNIEWSKI
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Baldwin, NY 11510

Dear Eudice, Judith, and Don-David,

Enclosed are the preface and opening poem of the notebook. The preface and the opening poem, *Ani ma'amin* are both written in Hebrew and Yiddish. In the preface the poet harkens his readers to listen to his sorrowful thoughts concerning his people's condition. At first glance the two languages side by side appeared to be translations of each other, so we were pleased when the English version unfolded in a cohesive poetic manner.

In *Ani ma'amin*, the poet begins each stanza with the traditional articles of faith in Hebrew. He completes each stanza in Yiddish providing commentary to the original prayers, which are the source of his inspiration.

The last line of *Ani ma'amin* "in the year of truth and justice, Krizhabov" hints at the year the piece may have been written. Pen marks above each letter of the Hebrew 'truth' and 'justice,' indicate the numerological practice of adding up the values of the letters. In this instance when added together and transposed to the Christian calendar the sum of the characters equals 1881.

It would be interesting to know the significance of the place name 'Krizhabov'.

His impassioned rendering of faith impressed us.

Best wishes,
Chana Pollack & Myra Mniewski

PREFACE

Mayne libende – ye di day
Geblibende – si ri day
 Mayne heren! Sa ray!
Anshuldikt – ha nu nay
Geduldikt – shi mu nay
 Mayne reyd nit tsu shteren! – a ma ray
Fun mayn tsung dem nuts
Is mayn guts
 Fun mayn bashefer a geshank!
Fun den bashtand
Fun undzer land
 Iz mayn troyelekher gedank!
Af mo ri ya dem barg
Klogt eyner nit karg
 Mit groyse gevaltn
Fun Yerusholayim di shtot
Biz himl tsu Got
 Tut der moyekh shpaltn
Azoy vi ir zayt do ale tsuzamen
Zay heren zay damen
 Bet ikh aykh ir zolt mir nit mishn
 Vel ikh aykh zingen ahir a frishn

My loves – my friends
Survivors – you who remain
 My Lords! – Princes!
Excuse me – I entreat you
With patience – Hear me
 Do not disturb my speech! – my compiled writings!
My tongue's work
Is my product
 Bestowed by my creator!
My thoughts are so sorrowful
Due to our
 People's condition
On Mount Moriah*
Complaints are abundant
 Loud cries
From the city of Jerusalem
To the heavens to God
 Splitting the mind
As long as you are all gathered here
Both men and women together
 I ask you not to confuse me
 I will sing you a verse a fresh one

* site of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem

ANI MA AMIN

Vov

Ani ma amin be amu na shley ma
She kol div rey niv i yim emet ikh gloyb
Mir kenen nit bashteyn in vi ku khim
Ober me vet undz has ve sholem nit beygn
Mir gloybn dayne nevi yim dayne shelukhim
Vi mir voltn dir gezen mit di oygn

Zayen

Ani ma amin be amu na shley ma she ne vu at Moyshe
Rabeynu
Olov ha sholem hay ta ami tut ve she hu ha ya ov
La ne vi im la kod mim le fa nav ve la b aim aharov ikh gloyb
Di neviyim zaynen gevezn reyne
Zeyer nevueh hot ek nit gefelt
Ober dokh nit vi Moyshe Rabeynu
Vos hot dir gezen ven er hot gevolt

Khet

Ani ma amin be emu na shley ma she kol ha Torah
Ha mi tsu ya a ta bi ya dey nu hi ha net u na le moyshe
rabeynu
Olev ha sholem ikh gloyb
A ye lud isha zol hobn yekhoyles
Afn himl tsu shtaygn skhoire
Nit tsu kukn af di melokhims koyles
Un krign in hant di toyre

I BELIEVE

Vov

I believe with complete faith
That the words of the prophets are true I believe
We cannot tolerate divisiveness
We will not be dissuaded heaven forbid
We believe your prophets and messengers
As if we've seen you with our own eyes

Zayen

I believe with complete faith that the prophesy of Moses
Of blessed memory
was the truth and that he was the father
Of the prophets of old and those who came after I believe
The prophets were pure
Their messages displeased you
Not like those of Moses
Who had complete access to your presence

Khet

I believe with complete faith that the entire Torah
As we now know it and that was given to Moses our
teacher
Of blessed memory I believe
To be born of a woman one has the ability
To ascend to heaven
Ignore the cries of the angels
And receive the Torah

Editor's Note: *Ani ma'amin*, based on Maimonides' 12th century commentary on the Mishnah (oral law), contains a total of thirteen principles of Jewish faith. Only nine of them appear in this poem, beginning with the sixth principle (vov) through the thirteenth (yud-giml). The fourth principle is placed at the end of the poem. It is unclear whether Singer purposely excluded principles one, two, three and five, or if another page containing four more stanzas is missing from the journal.

Tes

Ani ma amin be emu na shley ma she zot ha Torah

Lo tehey makhlefet ve lo tehey Torah aheret

Me'et ha boyre yis borakh shmo ikh gloyb

Men vet undz di toyre nit bahitn

Zi iz emes durkh oys eyn shtik

Der matrikn fun emes tut bataytn

Toyres moyshe emes tsurik

Tes

I believe with complete faith that this is the Torah

It will not be exchanged nor become another one

For it is from the Creator blessed be his name I believe

The Torah will not be guarded for us

She is truly of one fabric throughout

Signifying truth

Moses' Torah is truly with us

Yud

Ani ma amin b'emu na shley ma she ha boyrey yisborakh
shmo

Yoy deya kol mayse bay odom shel makh she voysem

She nemar hayoytser yakhad libum hameyvin

elkolmaaseyhem

Der bal melokhe fun a kli ikh gloyb

Veys vos in ir tut zikh gefunen

Farshtayt men dokh shoy n mimeyle

Az der boyrey veys undzer zinen

Yud

I believe with complete faith that Creator blessed be his
name

Knows all actions of an individual as well as his thoughts

As it is written he who creates all hearts understands all
actions

The craftsman of a vessel I believe

Knows everything inside you

Understood as a matter of course

The Creator knows our sins

Yud-aleph

Ani ma amin b'emu na shley ma she ha boyrey yisborakh
shmo

Goymeltov l'shoymrey mitsvoysov uma'anish le ovrey
mitsvosov ikh gloyb

Gan eyden mit rukhniesdike parad

far di vos hobn yidishkayt geton hitn

un in gehenem parad rishoym. Fayer un roykh un tsad

un malokhay khabole tantsn in mitn

Yud-aleph

I believe with complete faith that Creator blessed be his
name

He is charitable towards those who uphold his commandments
and punishes those who transgress them I believe

Paradise is a spiritual parade

For those who observed Judaism

And Hell is a parade of sinners fire brimstone and judgement

Demolishing angels dancing in the center

Yud-beys

Ani ma amin b'emu na shley ma be vies hamoshiakh

Vi af alpi she yismomeya im kolze

Akhake lo bekholoyom sh'ya vo ikh gloyb

Du bist gevis gerekht take

Ober mit tuen af Moshiakh vartn

Es iz vayt di kulo zokha

Shikt di g'ule vi mir gartn

Yud-beys

I believe with complete faith in the coming of the Messiah
And though he may tarry still

I will wait for him for the day he comes I believe

You are certainly correct

But waiting for the Messiah

Is far away

Send the redemption where we garden

Yud-giml

Ani ma amin b'emu na shley ma sh'yihy ye tekhiyes
Hameysim b'eys sh'ta ale rotsn meyes h'aboyle
Y'esborekh sh'moy v'yisale zikhro l'ad
Ulenetsakh netsokhim ikh gloyb
Di meysim vet er oyfshteln
Zibn mol azoy fil vet di zun veren geshaynt
Az undzere maysim zoln im gefeln
Ken dos zayn afile haynt

Yud-dalt

Ani ma amin b'emu na shley ma
She ha boyrey yisborakh shmoy
Hu rishon v'hu akhron ikh gloyb
Er iz der ershter
Melokhim af di shtuln zetst er
Iber alemen hersht er
Un er vet zayn der letster

B'shnas emes v'tsedek po krizhabov

Yud-giml

I believe with complete faith in the revival
Of the dead the moment the Creator wills it
Blessed be his name may his presence be forever with us
Forever and ever I believe
He will raise the dead
The sun will be 7 times more powerful
So that our dead may be pleased by it
It could happen now

Yud-dalet

I believe with complete faith
That the Creator blessed be his name
Is the first and the last I believe
He is the first
Appointing the angels to their posts
Ruling over everyone
And he will be the last one

In the year of truth and justice, Krizhabov



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Dear Eudice,

These poems witness the poet struggling to assimilate the values of yore with current trends, which are foreign and often abhorrent to him. The juxtaposition of modernity and tradition haunt his poetry creating a sort of seesaw effect — lashing out at God in anger for feeling forsaken, on the one hand, and then, fervently preaching to uphold tradition, in hopes of being comforted.

In “Itstike Yorn” [These Days], a rant against the popular culture of the time, the poet sees a hurtful style of satirical novel emerging, wherein the observant are mocked. He warns the reader not to be duped by these modern writers’ outlook, not to confuse their style of dress [outer appearance] with true wisdom or knowledge. He speaks against the study of Torah for reward, imploring that one should not acquire Jewish knowledge in order to use it for dishonorable purposes.

“L’David Ori,” [Psalms 27:1; By David, The Lord Is My Light], the first poem, is the title of prayer recited during ‘The Days of Awe’ in the Fall. The poem holds references to the strife suffered by the region, including a very strong image of ‘hundreds of lives strewn across fields.’ He then points to the strength of Jewish belief and assures us of salvation when the prophet Elijah will deliver us on a journey of return to ‘our land.’ We can assume he is responding to a vision of Jews living in peace in their own land, after suffering in the Diaspora.

These pages of Hyam Singer’s set reflect the struggles and victories of a sensitive and powerful man.
Thank you

All the best,
Chana & Myra

1.
Itstike yorin
Iz a neyes gevorin
 Der vos ken nor lider makhn
Ver es ken nor haltn a pene
Shtelt for a gantse tsene
 Un tut fun yidn lakhn

2.
Nor fun erlikhe yidn
Makhn di greste lidn
 Fun zeyer hilukh fun zeyer gang
Dos hot zikh farshpreyt
Zind romanishe bikher geyt
 Ot do gornit lang

3.
Vi zol er zayn zikher
Men zol koyfn zayne bikher
 Un tomir vil nit laydn yener
Makht er in zorgn gramen
Ertseylungen fun damen
 Ot vert er a kener

4.
Vu ir vet gebn a zukh
In an itstike bukh
 Iz ale gor ayn ponim
Zey tuen libe gefiln fleytsn
Yunge blut tsu reytsn
 Erger vi yevoni

5.
Itstike yung dor
Abi zey kenen klor
 Tsu makhn a kompliment
Vi biter vi shlekht
Ver es ken nit damen rekht
 Vi tsu gebn zikh di hent

1.
These days
The news is
 Anyone who can make a rhyme
Or hold a pen in hand
Writes an entire scenario
 Making fun of the Jews

2.
The ones most parodied
Are the most righteous of the Jews
 Their lifestyle and their ways
This has become popular
Since novels first appeared
 Not too long ago

3.
To make sure
His books will sell
 Without offending the reader
He puts misgivings into rhymes
Telling stories about women
 And that's how he becomes a winner

4.
Wherever you look
In a current book
 Everything sounds alike
Flaunting feelings of passion
Heating up young blood
 It's worse than the ancient Greeks

5.
Today's younger generation
Knows very well how to
 Give a compliment
How bitter how sad
He who doesn't know women well
 Won't know how to make it

6.
Rikhtik zikh boygn
Vinken mit di oygn
 Der mit vert men kluger
Ober der vos klert iber
Tsu meg zayn aza khibur
 Iz narish un mishuge

7.
Geyt shabes a frant
A shif tukh afn hant
 Merkurt es zol zen yener
A farcheylke iz a khakhbode
In a fartsaytike mode
 Es past nit far a kener

8.
Mitn geshlifnem tsingle
Vert er a kluger yingle
 Lakht fun melamed fun kheyder
Shabes hendshke afn hant
Ot iz er a frant
 Mit geborgte kleyder

9.
Ikh hob gezen geshtudirte
Fun klasn di drite di firte
 Gibn in di hayzer shtundn
Git a kuk bay im in tas
Vos er trogt im shabes in gas
 Iz makos mit vundn

10.
Du nar du bekheyme
Bistu kliger vi Shloyme
 Geven a kener a gevir a groyser
Az khasv'sholem mazel felt
Iz der kintsler in der velt
 Iz lo nevi'm osher

6.
Bowling correctly
And winking
 Makes them seem smart
But he who thinks
Such a connection makes sense
 Is foolish and crazy

7.
On *Shabes** a dandy
With a scarf tied to his hand
 Is sure to be noticed
A scarf is a hindrance
An old-fashioned style
 Not suitable for such an expert

8.
With his slick tongue
He becomes a smart boy
 Making fun of the *kheyder*** teacher
Sabbath glove in hand
He is now a swell
 Who wears borrowed clothes

9.
I've seen educated people
With 3rd and 4th class degrees
Who give lessons at home
Take a look at his facade
He parades around in on *Shabes*
 It's a plague on one's wounds

10.
You idiot you
Are you smarter than Solomon
 Who was wealthy and wise
If God forbid luck is lacking
There are always artists
 There will be no wealth for the prophets

* sabbath

** religious school

11.
Ikh hob gezen gevirim
Vos tuen gesheftn firin
 Vos kenen eyn emes nit makhn
Bay zey iz di gelt
Hobn a nomen in der velt
 Zey tuen dir oyslakhn

12.
Ze di eruge
Zey zenen gevezn kluge
 Der driter peyrik in ke lo im
A yediye zey hobn gehat
In rekhenung in qvadrat
 Un zikh nit gelernt bay goyim

13.
Tsi in a tkufe
Oder in koydesh ha'khoydesh gufe
 In ale khokhmes zibn
Vos in fil erter
Farshteyen mir nit zeyere verter
 Vos zey hobn geshribn

14.
Vilstu do fregn a kasha
In di khokhme handasa
 Zolstu dem il meshules nemen
Vos der goan hot gemakht
Vu er hot toyre nit getrakht
 Un vayz mir ikh zol zikh shemen

15.
Ikh volt ekh krign kinder
Ven di toyre volt mir nit farbundn
 Ikh zol zikh andersh kleydn
Gloyb mir benemonus
Ikh volt ekh kenen l'tsayt
 Az ikh volt megn redn

11.
I've seen wealthy men
Doing business
 Who can't even tell one truth
Having money to them
Means a name in the world
 They laugh at you

12.
Look at the ancient ones
They were astute
 They understood the 3rd chapter
Of *Kilayim** well
Learned in reasoning and study
 Not seeking knowledge from Gentiles

13.
In an era
Or holy month
 All 7 fields of wisdom
Are found in many places
We don't always understand
What was written

14.
If you want to ask a question
In the field of engineering
 Take the compass
That the Gaon** made
When he wasn't thinking about Torah
 And show it to me to shame me

15.
I would've had more children
If the Torah hadn't kept me busy
 I should dress differently
Believe in me with faith
In time I will know
 When to speak

* law prohibiting the mixing of inappropriate species.

** Torah genius

16.

A nayer nomen oysgetrakht
Frumkayt zol zayn far akht
 Dos gegebn a nomen tsvuyak
Vi tsulib vos zol er dos makhn
Az men zol fun im lakhn
 Un haltn im far a durak

17.

Mir dakht zikh az makh zey kayor
Alts beser vi a fayershe tsure
 Shelo lishma iz take an aveyre
Er tut dokh ober eyne
T'farvos bistu im a soyne
 Vos ba dir iz durkh oys treyfe skhoyre

18.

Barekhnt di tayve
Mit frumkayt makhn gayve
 Vern blaykh un shvakh un dar
Un nokh ale khorevane
Iz im keyner nit mekane
 Ot dem altn nar

19.

Fun andere hob ikh gehert
Az di toyre dem mentshn tsert
 Dakht zikh dos iz nit a klal
Ikh hob gezen kener
Dar vi di shpener
 Un farkert dem ander fal

20.

Vos keystu in der krim
Hahamir goy elokim
 Mit nisht zaynen zey tsufridn
Loz zayn dayne oygn ofn
Farvos hot zikh nit getrofn
 A goy zol zikh farshteln far a yidn

16.

A new name has been invented
Orthodoxy must be contended with
 Giving it the name hypocrite
Why did he do that
Just to be laughed at
 And be thought of as an imbecile

17.

The sunrise is
Better than a face on fire
 Studying Torah for reward is truly a sin
At least he does it
So why be enemies
 If it's all unkosher anyway

18.

Scrutinize your desires
Boast of your orthodoxy
 Becoming pale and weak and thin
And no one is envious
Of the hard labors
 Of this old fool

19.

I've heard from others
That people hold the Torah dear
 I don't think this is the rule
I have seen experts
Thin as rails
 And also the opposite

20.

Why are you going off the path
Toward the Christian God
 That doesn't make them happy
Open your eyes
Has a Christian
 Ever posed as a Jew

21.
 Shem iz mekane Khamen
 Un barirt iber dem nomen
 Fun Moyshe vert Makshe
 Mit vos mir tuen zikh shemen
 Mit undzere aygene nemen
 Vert men podle bay zey
22.
 Yakov zagt tsu di zin
 Lama ti tra u geyt ahin
 Lozn zey af aykh nit meynen
 Di mode nit gehert
 Men tut ober grade farkert
 Derfar tuen zey undz nit shaynen
23.
 Mir veln zikh haltn
 In undser firer dem altn
 Gor vi fartsaytn
 Rokhl Rivke Rishke
 Vi in di alte shkoshke
 Di nemen nit farbaytn
24.
 Vi di tume iz tif
 Az eyner shraybt a brif
 Durkh in loshn koydesh
 Fort im nit tsum shtot
 Rosh khoydesh shvat
 Nor zeyer khoydesh
25.
 Haynt itstike nekeyves
 Men vert durkh zey balekhoyves
 Men zet nit vu men halt
 Varum zey kukn shtendik hekher
 Davke vi yenims fekher
 Men vert yungerhayt alt
21.
 Shem is jealous of Ham
 And changes his name
 Moyshe becomes Makshe (stubborn)
 Why are we ashamed
 Of our own names
 Feeling debased by them
22.
 Jacob promised his sons
 Have no fear go forth
 Don't let others influence you
 Don't pay attention to the fashion
 But the opposite is actually happening
 That's why they don't honor us
23.
 We will be faithful
 To our ancient God
 As in days of yore
 Rachel Rebecca Risha
 Like in old *Shkoshke*
 Not changing their names
24.
 Errors abound
 When one writes a letter
 in Hebrew
 It doesn't reach its destination
 In our month of *Shvat*
 But their month
25.
 Today's women
 Put us in debt
 Not knowing where we're at
 Looking at another's outfits
 Makes us want more
 We get old while still young

26.
Kep gor naye
Barhaftik gor fraye
 Gornit vi a mame
 Meyle b'kheyn
Ken zey geyn
 Ot vi englishe dame

L'DOVID ORI

1.
Ir zolt nor visn vi tsu shatsn
 Vel ikh aykh gebn naye skhoyre
Ikh vel iberzetsn
Gor L'Dovid Ori

2.
I men zagt dokh l'dovid ori
Mer nit vi biz shmini ahtseres
To vikumt simkhes Torah
 Zingen aza interes

3.
Nor dos vet ir zen shpeter
 Kukt nor in sider
Nokh di tsayt nokh itstikn veter
 Fast far undzere brider

4.
Az der boyrey tut mir hilf geben
 Khob ikh nit kayn moyre far gehenem
Er iz der shtarker fun mayn lebn
 Shrek ikh zikh nit far mayne soynem

5.
Fun a sakh erter tut men zikh af undz gloybn
 Ale viln undz af esn
Ober zey veln narin blaybn
 Got vet zikh in undz nit fargesn

26.
New heads
Haughty and free
 Not at all maternal
 Well and good
Let them go about
 Just like Anglo women

L'DOVID ORI

1.
If you'll be appreciative
 I'll give you some new material
I'll translate
L'Dovid Ori

2.
We say the prayer L'Dovid Ori
Only until Shmini Atseres
So why be interested in
 Singing it on Simchas Torah

3.
But more about this later
 Just look into the prayer book
When this season is over
 Fast for our brothers

4.
With the help of the creator
 I am not afraid of hell
He is the strength in my life
 Thus I do not fear my enemies

5.
We are attacked from all directions
 All want to destroy us
But fools they will remain
 For God will not forsake us

6.
Di meride iz zeyer groys
 Tsu zidlen dem yidn iz do fil bikher
Mir farlozn zikh af dem v'af gam zot
 af dos zaynen mir zikher

7.
Farnem mayn bakoshe
 Un ze mir tsu shtitsn
Farlaykhter mayn parnose
 Ikh zol kenen beyshamidrash zitsn

8.
Zey hobn zikh tsuzamen geret ale banand
 Im tsu shtern in ale mishkhares
Zey traybn undz in undzer land
 Geyt handlt dortn mit korbones

9.
Fil yidn zaynen geblibn orem af a mol
 100 gezuntn tuen af di felder lign
Farnem zeyer kol
 Un fun di kinder in di vign

10.
Du bist dokh getrayer vi a foter un muter
 Dayn titl iz dokh rakhman groyser
Fargib undz undzere zind
 Bifrat ikh bin dayn eygn kind

11.
Yidn lozn zikh nit betn
 Tsu shlofn in kalt in suka
T'vos lostu af zey khazeyrim tretn
 Derlang iber snuke

6.
The opposition is tremendous
 No dearth of books cursing Jews
And on this too we depend
It is what we bargain for

7.
Accept my request
 And make sure you support me
Make my living easier
 So I may spend more time in study

8.
They got together and discussed it
 To hinder him in all his trades
They persecute us in our land
 Go and take care of the victims

9.
Many Jews have been suddenly impoverished
 Hundreds of lives strewn across the fields
Receive their voices
 And the childrens' in their cradles

10.
You are loyal like a father and mother
 You are called the great merciful one
Forgive our sins
 Especially since I am your child

11.
Jews haven't asked
 To sleep in a cold Succah
So why do you let swine trample them
 Give them a crack on the snout

12.
Yeder yidn tut zayn harts shrayen
 Vos es iz khorev gevorn azoy fil gehiles
Yidn nemt zikh tsu undzere kleyzayin
 Di gebet un di tfiles

13.
Yidn vern getribn un gevargn
 Zey zaynen di shvakhste vi di hozn
T'vos tustu fun undz farborgn
 Un tust undz gor farlozn

14.
Es iz shoyt tsayt tsu hobn nakhes
 Undzer eliokhu zol zikh bavayzn
Afzeyere tsulakhes
 Zoln mir in undzer land oprayzn

15.
Vos es tut zikh dem khoydesh
 Es verin gemishpet ale unzere natsyonen
Es iz do a zakh falshe eydes
 vos maserin oybn on

16.
Af azoy fil tsores vi es iz af undz geshen
 Tuen ale sform eyn shtime
Az bald veln ir nekhome zen
 Dos a rikhtiker simen

17.
Es iz gepakt yeder yidns harts
 Mit tsores gor a fule
T'ze nor in emune shtark
 Vet bald zayn di gehule

12.
Every Jewish heart is screaming
 So many communities have been destroyed
Jews take up our weapons
 Our prayers and entreaties

13.
Jews are driven out and abused
 They're the weakest just like rabbits
Why are you torturing and
 Abandoning us

14.
It's time to have some joyous pride
 O Elijah, please appear
In spite of them
 Let's journey to our land

15.
In this month
 All our nations are on trial
There are many false witnesses
 That betray us from above

16.
With all the troubles we've already had
 All the holy books are in agreement
That soon we will be comforted
 This is a true sign

17.
Every Jew's heart is heavy
 Filled with troubles to the brim
So if your faith is strong
 Salvation will be here soon

ENDE

THE END



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Dear Eudice, Judith, and Don-David,

Filial responsibility: giving blessings for an upcoming marriage, meet up with the question of the poet's identity in this poem.

Hyam Singer, the writer, is addressing the poem to a "Khayim", who we are assuming is himself, since according to Eudice, Khayim was married to Rivke –Gitl, who appears in the poem as the daughter-in-law. Because Hyam is addressing Khayim, one is led to question the poet's identity—was it Hyam writing to himself on the occasion of his marriage to Rivke-Gitl? We assume yes, because, as he mentions in the poem, he was left responsible for his siblings, a substitute parent due to his parents' early death. Therefore, he had to act as his own parent as well.

Appropriating a parental voice, he addresses his in-laws, his future wife and himself. In this way he invokes his beloved parents on the occasion of his marriage.

We'd like to hear your take on the matter and hope you're having a happy Peysekh.

Sincerely,
Chana Pollack & Myra Mniewski

MAYN BRUDER KHAYIM:
HER OYS A LID A NAYIM

1.
der boyrey zol gebn
mir soln derlebn
 fun undz zoln aroyskumen a frumer dor
vi undzer foter der trayer
vos er is gevezin in yidishkayt brandfayer
 undz tsu lengere yor
2.
vi ken ikh mir ginen
heymlikh tsu gefinen
 az ikh bin dokh do elent on mayn mishpukhe
un bifrat az es felt
di beste gute fraynd in der velt
 foter un muter zikhroynem livrokhe
3.
zey zaynen avkek yung tsi gikh
der elterer bin ikh
 dem zorg fun alemen darf ikh trogn
ale af mayn pleytse
vi ikh tu bin ikh nit yoytse
 vemen ken ikh mayn bitere harts oyszogn
4.
bay a taten un bay a mamen
az kinder zaynen tsuzamen
 iz a moshel vi feygelekh in nest
ober vi zey kenen nor flien
tuen zey zikh fanandertsien
 ayne on di andere fargest
5.
mayne treren un briven
tsu dayne priziven
 ze du zolst dos nit fargesn
tsen yor af mayne hent
bistu geven ongelent
 zol zikh di libshaft af eybik nit farleshn

MY BROTHER KHAYIM:
HEAR OUT A NEW SONG

1.
May the Creator grant us
Long life to see
 Our generation turn out observant
As was our loyal father
A firebrand of Judaism
 Long years to us
2.
How can I allow myself
To feel more at home
 When I'm so lonely without my family
Particularly when the best friends
In the world are missing
 Mother and father of blessed memory
3.
They were taken young much too soon
I, being the eldest
 Carry everyone's worries
All on my shoulders
My actions are never enough
To whom can I pour out my heart
4.
For parents
To see their children together
 Like hatchlings in a nest
As soon as they learn to fly
They unravel and spread out
 Forgetting about each other
5.
See that you don't forget
My tears and epistles
 To all your relations
Ten years of my guardianship
Were appreciated
 May our love never be extinguished

6.
 du veyst dokh derfun
 ikh hob dir gehaltn vi a zun
 vi du host badarft bin ikh gevezn dayn vant
 ikh ken andersh nit zogn
 du host mire ek getrogn
 du bist mir gevezn vi mayn aygene hant

7.
 rivke-gitl
 mayn shnur iz dayn titl
 du un er vern gerekhint ba mir vi ayner
 ir zolt zikh lebn in fridn
 vi ale erlekhe yidn
 du darfst zikh rekhenen az s'nito nokh azeyner

8.
 me darf a man herin
 un im nit shterin
 vos er zogt darfst du gebn dayn haskome
 az er tut amol nit glaykh
 zol dos blaybn tsuvishn aykh
 vet er dir lib hobn mistome

9.
 ikh hob gehert fun mayn bobn
 zi flegt ir shprakhvort hobn
 az a merkhe nemt zikh aleyn
 du zolst im tsum lernn traybn
 vel ikh nakhes klaybn
 dos iz far got un far laytn ek sheyn

10.
 tayerer mekhutn
 ikh halt aykh far a gutn
 fun mayne hent gib ikh iber ir zolt im zayn fraynt
 un di makhteyniste derbay
 ikh bet aykh az ir zolt im zayn tray
 foter un muter zayt ir im fun haynt

11.
 ikh zog dir on
 du must dos ton
 azoy vi der tate volt dos redn
 du zolst zikh firin vi frier
 lernn ale tog dem shir
 zoltst geyen in veg fun taten fun zeydn

6.
 You know about this
 You were like a son to me
 Whatever your needs I was your wall
 I can't say it differently
 You carried me to the ends
 You were like my own hand to me

7.
 Rivke-Gitl
 Daughter-in-law is your title
 You and he are as one to me
 May you be happy
 Like all righteous Jews
 Be it known there's no one else like you

8.
 One must obey one's husband
 And not contradict him
 Abiding by whatever he says
 If he sometimes strays
 Let it remain between you
 Most likely he loves you

9.
 As my *bobe** used to say
 A proverb
 Fate works on its own
 Drive him to study
 So I can reap joy
 Most pleasing for God and good people

10.
 Dear father-in-law
 I take you for a good soul
 I trust you'll be his friend
 Along with your wife
 Be true to him
 From now on you are his parents

11.
 To you I say
 You must obey
 As if your father had said it
 Conduct yourself as always
 Study a lesson a day
 Follow the path of your ancestors

* grandmother

POLLACK~ MNIEWSKI
Research & Translation

346 East 9th Street #3 ~ New York, N.Y. 10003 ~ 646-241-7626 ~ iberzetsers@earthlink.net

Eudice Gilman
23511 Chagrin Blvd., No. 310
Beachwood, Ohio 44122

Dear Eudice:

In these next two poems the pursuit of music & the desire to study juxtaposed with the necessity of earning a living. In the poem 'Take Derfar' Singer writes about his struggle with the call he deeply feels to create music and the desire to bring music into the *besmedresh*. He also mentions the writing of 56 commentaries on the *mishnah*, and we think this may indicate that he had been hired to write this, but in the end had to struggle to raise funding for it. At the end of that poem he addresses the crowd in the *shtibl* asking everyone to give donations, and describing the joy one will feel upon contributing to such a holy endeavor.

In 'Mentschn' he talks about singing for a living, and the option of performing for Gentiles in inns and pubs. He hints at the sacrifice this entails for him, as in his home he is like a king, wanting for nothing, thanks to the grace of God. Yet, on the road, in pubs and inns, he is made to feel less than kingly, having to ask for payment for playing, rather than to accept the liquor he is offered as recompense.

We are heartened that his struggle to earn a living did not detract him from his artistic and talmudic endeavors, as he is determined to continue to create by soliciting funding from his peers in the *shtibl*.

We feel that Singer's stated creative desires in these poems are in line with the completion of the translation of his poetry notebook. His work will finally see the light of day enabling his descendents and future generations to partake of his temperament and artistry. According to Singer's beliefs, a higher reward awaits those, as yourselves, who invest capital in the realization of his wishes.

Sincerely,
Chana & Myra

1.
take derfar
vet ir hobn skhar
 far ayer mi far ayer gelt
tsu koyfn sforim
un trogn mit klezmorim
 un in besamedresh arayn geshtelt

2.
dakht zikh greylikh koshe
bay itstike parnose
 der lebns mitl zeyer shver
in mitn drinen
tsu hobn aza zinen
 iz dos a heyliger derher

3.
iber ayere shisn
tut oykh der nomen pashn
 poyeley tsedik akemat
az eyner lernt vayl
hot ir ek a tayl in yeder blat

4.
yisokher mit zvulin
tuen tsuzamen hulen
 der hot gelernt der geton
derfar gevis
bayn shorhabor mit di fis
 veln mir zitsn ale eybn on

5.
mit yageya kapay fardint
fil shveys rint
 un derfun af shas opgeshport
zog ikh akh klor
az nokh hundred yor
 hot er dem bestn ort

1.
It is truly because
you will be rewarded
 for your labors and your money
that you will buy holy books
and bring musicians
 into the house of study

2.
It appears very difficult
in your current situation
 to make a decent living
and in the middle of it all
to have the mind of an artist
 Is that a holy calling

3.
Over your desires
the name of God also gets nourished
 Laboring precisely for justice
one studies because
every page is part of him

4.
Yisokher and Zvulin
celebrate together
 One studied one took action
Therefore it is known
with holy bison at the heavenly meal
 we'll all sit at the head of the table

5.
The labor of my hand earns
as sweat pours profusely
 causing study to be curtailed
I'm telling you clearly
in 100 years
 he'll have the best place

6.
dos iz nit mayn sfore
nor dos zogt di gemore
 zi heybt im of on a shir
nor vos tsum khayes
iz keyn melokhe nit mies
 reb yisroel ha sandlar hot ek geton vos ir

7.
a bisl bin ikh in kas
af di groyse shas
 vos es iz geven a nakhes tsu gebn a blik
es iz shoyngiven finf krokhim
vert eyner a khokhm
 un git avek tsurik

8.
barekhnt af klor
az in fir yor
 vi dos volt aykh geven gring
in vokhn akht
volt ikh a peyrik gebrakht
 tsvey ruf iz geven der bading

9.
aza tsiring vi ragal
iz nit far keyn fal
 zex un fuftzik peyrushim far ale shas mer
ayere bleter
vi volt ir zikh gefreyt shpeter
 un dertsu gornit shver

10.
meynt nit ikh red mit beyzn
vayl ikh vil leyzn
 dos iz zeyer prost
ir volt bald gehat in gantsn
un volt ek gekent tantsn
 far di gelt vos aykh hot gekost

6.
This is not my explanation
nor does the Gemorrah* say it
 It keeps him elevated
above the level of animals
No work is distasteful
 Reb Yisroel the cobbler did exactly the same as you

7.
I'm a little angry
at the big mishnah**
 Even a quick glance gives pleasure
and by the 5th volume
one is already a sage
 able to teach others

8.
It is clear
that in 4 years
 as if it were easy to do
in 8 weeks
I would have brought a chapter of study
 costing 2 rubles

9.
Such jewelry as befits royalty
is not an option
 56 further commentaries for all the mishnah
Your pages
How you would have rejoiced
 It wasn't even that difficult

10.
Don't think I'm speaking in anger
because to want to reap benefits
 is very uncultured
You would have had it all completed
and rejoiced in dance
 for the money it would have cost you

* part of the Talmud which deals mostly with legal analysis

** part of the Talmud containing a compilation of legal opinions

11.
nor on shtreyt
iz nokh itst ek tsayt
 ir nemt zikh tsu aselkhe zakhn
gor on katoves
git yeyderer nedoves
 lomir eyn onheyb makhn

12.
nor got bahit
ven afile nit
 khob ikh hasvesholem keyn sine
vi demolt azoy haynt
di zelibike gute fraynt
 rak mit a heymlikhe min

13.
hot keyn farible
di vos zaynen do in shtibl
 beyt ikh dem gantsn oylem
ikh volt zikh nit gedungn
un volt aykh gezungn
 nor mir felt tsvey keylim

11.
If there is no contention
there is still ample time
 to apply oneself to such matters
Without any jest
everyone giving donations
 Let us begin again

12.
God protect us
even when
 I don't God forbid have resentments
As always as now
The same good friends
 Cancer with a friendly smile

13.
Don't take offense
all those here in the *shtibl**
 I'm asking all assembled
Without having to bargain
And would have sung to you
 Had I those 2 missing instruments

* A small Jewish congregation, literally "a small house."

MENTSHN

1.

Mentshn mit a gefil
Vos farshteyen a khasonishn tsil
 Hob ikh haynt gekrogn
Dos iz mayn krom mayn lavke
Ot far zey vel zingen davke
 Ikh vel zikh nit foyln tsu zingen

2.

Fun vifil gerishe erter
Hob ikh gehat shtekh verter
 Vos kumt ir nit tsu undz af kovet
Ober vayl ikh veys
Az es iz umzist mayn shveys
 Iz zeyer betn mir lavud

3.

Der heyim bistu zikh a baron
Un bay zikh zits ikh ek oybn on
 Un bin borukh hashem ek nit farshmakht
Ikh darf nit dayne bronfn
To vos zol ikh dir khanfn
 Az dayn handt iz farmakht

4.

Farvos vert a yaridl?
Az men derhert a fidl
 Vi es hot mazl di klipe
Far eyn shar
Tsolt men in bar
 20 kap far a shkripe

1.

Today I received
People with feeling
 Who understand a Khasn's* goal
This is my store my pew
For them I will truly sing
 I won't hold back or be lazy

2.

How many Christian places
Have delivered words that stung
 Why don't you come to us with respect
Because I know
My sweat won't be paid for
 Their asking is therefore for naught

3.

At home I am a Baron
I sit at the head of the table
 And thank God I don't want for a thing
I don't need your liquor
So why should I flatter you
 As your fist is closed

4.

Why does it turn into a marketplace?
Whenever a fiddle is heard
 How the devil has luck
For one scrape of the bow
One is paid at the bar
 20 drops for a squeak

ENDE

THE END

* cantor



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Research & Translation

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Dear Eudice,

The opening line of this poem which states that ‘few and evil have been the days and months of my life,’ is taken from Genesis. “Jacob said to Pharaoh, ‘The days of the years of my pilgrimage are one hundred thirty years. *Few and evil have been the days of the years of my life*, and they have not attained to the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage.’” **Genesis 47:9**

This melancholy tone reverberates throughout the piece. Forced draft, deprivation, starvation, personal illness and bankruptcy are discussed throughout. Finally, after recounting the various troubles he has experienced, the poet appeals to God and commands “My destiny exchange! Return to the abandoned one. It shall be said!”

Best,

Chana & Myra

1.
 Me'at Veraim
 Ekhad V'arbaim
 B'mispar Shanim!
 Ani Hagever
 R'aiti Kever
 L'khamisha Banim!

2.
 Rabot Ankhoh
 B'zokhri Bnotay
 Savati Nakhat!
 Yifeyfiya V'tmima
 K'ktsiya V'yamima (*Bnot Iyov)
 Kol Ekhat!

3.
 B'matsok Khayiti
 Tapakhti Raviti
 Kista Ha'arets!
 L'shem Zkaney (*Yitskhok Bni o"eh)
 Hayakar B'eynay
 Ale Hakrets!

4.
 Imi V'avi
 Ahuvi l'vavi
 M'rom Shavu!
 Shisha Banim
 L'ra'av mukhanim
 Alay Azavu!

5.
 Anokhi He'ani
 Al Shulkhani
 Ha'okhlim Bibayti!
 Ki'ol Mikhiti
 Suvalam Nasati
 V'lo Nileyti!

6.
 Akhay Ha'tsi'irim
 Nifdu K'gvirim
 B'goral Tamim!
 Lo Ava
 Avinu Hatsava
 Tisha Pi'amim

1.
 Few and evil
 One & forty
 In the number of years!
 Woe is the man
 I have seen a grave
 For 5 of my children!

2.
 My sighs are plentiful
 As I remember my daughters
 I reap pride
 Beautiful and innocent
 Like, Cassia & Yemima (daughters of Job)
 Each one!

3.
 I lived in distress
 My interest spanning breadths
 Covered the land
 For the sake of my old age (*Yitskhok my son rest in peace)
 Who was dear to me
 Was slaughtered!

4.
 My mother and father
 The loves of my heart
 To the heavens they returned!
 My six children
 Prepared to starve
 Have abandoned me!

5.
 I of modest means
 Serve them
 At my table!
 It was a burden
 I bore their suffering
 And I did not refuse!

6.
 My young brothers
 Ransomed as if they were nobility
 Did not deserve their fate!
 Without their consent
 Our father decreed
 Nine times

7.
Ratsiti L'kavri
Hoda'ativ Shivro
 Afaro Khibakti!
D'imaot Eynay
Beyno Ubeyni
 K'mayim Hitsakti!
8.
B'shavua Harishona
B'mot Ha'akhrona* (*Biti Rishke o"h)
 Hamisulah B'pninim!
Pa'am Ha'asiri
L'akhi Yikiri
 Hilshinu Hamalshinim!
9.
Ba'kele Natnuni
Bamakhshavim Khishvuni
 Brakh B'eytsoti*! (*Ken Amru Alay)
Hashoter Omer
V'yimsiruni Lashomer
 V'titaleyf* Rayati (*Gekholesht)
10.
Lamakhhar Batsoharayim
Me'eyver Lamayim* (*Bayagobshtat Piha Nikhba)
 Shav L'hatsileynu
Harefuni Hashotrim
V'akhay Otrim
 Ra'ata Eynay
11.
Imo Nasu
Vitebske Ba'u
 Kshe Nikrava!
V'iad Miheyra
Ba'ah Habsora
 Akhi Batsava!
12.
L'shmona Khodashim* (*zerebesh)
Klem Gashim
 Ltikot Or!
Hashem Gimalo
V'yatsiyu Goralo
 Vayikra Dror!
7.
I ran to his grave
Lamenting our loss
 I clutched at the earth!
My tears flowed
Between us
 Like water!
8.
That first week
At the death of the last one* (*My daughter Rishka RIP)
 Precious as pearls!
For the tenth time
My dear brothers
 Were informed upon!
9.
They were imprisoned
Sitting alone and thinking
 At my advice* they escaped (*so it was said about me)
The authorities accused me of collusion
And threw me in jail
 And my wife fainted* (**gekhalisht*)
10.
The next day at noon
We were saved
 From across the waters* (*hidden in Yagovstat)
I lived to see
My brothers decorated
 and myself released
11.
Traveling along
As we came closer
 Vitebsk was sighted!
And just as swiftly
Word came
 My brothers were drafted!
12.
For eight months* (*zerebesh)
Everyone appealed
 For divine light!
Thus he was saved and
His fate revealed
 Freedom rang out!

13.
 Shtarot haviu (vekseln)
 Hanosim hishmiu (nosim monserh)
 L'shalem nidrashti.
 Banai ahavti
 V'raoty azavti.
 V'leseriga khashti.

14.
 Takhat shirati
 Ma'adon minkhati* (*plats fun baron)
 B'khov nimtsati
 Mkelem yakhad
 Pakhadti pakhad
 V'keley hikhsati!

15.
 Khalav parati
 Natna m'khayati
 Makharti b'kesef
 B'parsha para
 Dalagti ma'amra* (*shakhakhti b'beyt hamidrash
 ha'atsarot miparasha para b'nigniva motsey shabes koydesh
 ful v'yi l'mofati)
 V'nigniva b'neshef

16.
 M'kiev shonim
 Keyhu eynaim
 M'kievot savalti!
 Bl'khayay shamanti
 V'lo yashanti
 V'lo akhalti!

17.
 Shlosa mashakhti (shlosa shonim)
 Mar tsarakhti
 V'nkototi b'fanay* (*girisen di tsure pun ysurim)
 Takhat ben
 Natati shen
 Kofer banai* (*Banai hashlosa yikhyu)

18.
 Banai ha'ahuvim
 Hinam ktuvim
 Ba'yarot shtayim* (*po grizbarg ubiponevez)
 U'vni Yitskhok
 Eynenu nimkhok
 M'ezrakhim hakhayim

13.
 My promissory notes were brought (currency)
 The messengers announced (my bank clerks)
 My notes were due
 I loved my children
 I left my wife
 And wanted to leave for America.

14.
 Beneath my poems
 From the estate-owner* (*Baron's place)
 I was in debt
 Every which one
 Provoked me
 In great fear I hid my belongings!

15.
 I sold my cow
 Whose milk sustained me
 For cash
 On the week "cow" was read
 I skipped the reading of it* (*I left the cash from the sale
 in the beys medrish** after Sabbath departed and it was
 stolen which I took as a sign)
 It was stolen at the party

16.
 My eyes grew dim
 From the pain of toothache
 Such pain I suffered!
 My cheeks all swollen
 I neither slept
 nor ate!

17.
 This went on times three (three years)
 I screamed bitterly
 Hear my pleas* (*ripped sorrow from my face)
 In exchange for a child
 I gave my tooth
 As ransom* (*my three children will live)

18.
 My beloved children
 Are inscribed
 In two villages* (*Grisbarg and Poneviecz)
 And my son Yitskhok
 Who is not erased
 From the Book of Life

** Talmudic study hall, house of learning

19.
 Vamal rov
 V'sakhar tov
 El kheykam!
 L'vni hazkhiya
 Mimadrega shniya
 Shava reykam!
20.
 Shar hamkhoz* (*shpravnik)
 Bizroa oz
 Khitsim kale!
 Livni Moyshe!
 Bo k'nose
 V'nafsho hela!
21.
 Yom valel
 Asinu khayel
 Blimud v'rina!
 Kinor v'nevel
 Nehefakh l'avel
 Nhi v'kina! . . .
22.
 Eynai bokhiya
 B'zemer v'tushiya
 Hiskaltikh kfula
 Ulai nasata
 V'ata bata
 B'yayin metsu
23.
 Mavodot harabot
 Alai msabot
 Nimatu hadamim!
 Bmidkarot kherev
 B'roshi terev
 V'panai nizamim!
24.
 Haperets
 L'arets
 Dikhani!
 Nidhamti
 Nifamti
 Hekhlshani!
19.
 With great labor
 I return empty handed!
 A good reward
 I am worthy
 But to my children
 To a lesser degree!
20.
 The minister of the region* (*official)
 With a strong arm
 Slung arrows!
 At my son Moyshe!
 A messenger
 That took my soul!
21.
 Day and night
 We took courage
 In song and study!
 Harp and lyre
 Turned to mourning
 Keening and lamentations! . . .
22.
 My eyes weep
 Calling up a tune
 My loss times two
 Relief from my burdens
 Arrived
 In the deep waters of wine
23.
 It took much effort
 To bear my load
 The bleeding abated!
 Wounds of the sword
 Were endured in my head
 Enraging my countenance!
24.
 The troubles
 To this land
 Have depressed me!
 Shocked
 Throbbing
 Weakened!

25.
Bgav (ruken)
Rav
 Ha'kiev!
Khalusha
Anusha
 Halev!

26.
B'khor
V'uri
 Ayeka?!
Hineni
V'enen
 Hinkha!

27.
Mhovti* (*brokh)
L'khayati* (*Irashla akhiha khel)
 Akhila
Kokhi
Mokhi
 Hishpila

28.
Adoni!
B'gron
 Ekraekha.
Rakhem
Nakhem
 Avdekha.

29.
Mazal
Gorali
 Tamer! (Takhlef)
Shuva
L'azuva
 Ye'amer!

25.
The pain
Mostly
 In my back!
Weakness
Critical
 My heart!

26.
My eldest
My light
 Where are you?!
I am here
And I am not
 You are!

27.
I turn over
The essence
 Of my life
My strength
My mind
 Denigrated

28.
My Lord!
In my throat
 I call to you
Have mercy
Console
 Your servant.

29.
My luck
My destiny
 Exchange!
Return
To the abandoned one
 It shall be said!



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Dear Eudice,

The enclosed group of poems from Hyam Singer's notebook reprise the theme of modernity encroaching on traditional Jewish values. In the first poem, wild dance and cross-dressing are invoked to signify a departure from deliberate and staid behavior.

The second poem further beseeches the reader to conduct himself wisely, stressing the importance of earning a living: "without bread there's no Torah". The poet also admonishes God, stating there would be no purpose to heaven without mortals to fill it.

The third poem returns to the themes of the State subjecting Jews to a military draft as well as educational parameters which disrupted age-old traditional Jewish learning.

We're looking forward to reading his next poem.

Sincerely,
Chana & Myra

1

In vos es is mayn talent
 Tu ikh mir gornit dingn
Tantsn khob ikh amol gekent
 Ober nit shpringn

2

ikh veys ale damen rekht
 ober shpringn iz mir a hakhbode
far zikh bin ikh groylekh gerekht
 ober do iz dos nit di mode

3

tantsn is eyn fargenign
 der tsu shpiln oykh
ober not vi di tsign
 shpringn rak der hoykh
darum zet ze rikhtik batrakht
 kukt vi es tantst yener
tantsn darf men gants bazakht
 iz ful shener
liber fraynd reb shimen
vi geyt ir aroys fun shtat fun frayd
vi tut ir azoy farkrimen
 davenen in a vaybershe kleyd
ikh farshtey aley n oykh
 az ir zayt nit shuldik poshet mamesh
varum ikh hob getrofn glyakh
 ver es hot der nokh ongeton dem shamesh
vemen di kleyd gehert
 fun larem dem geshpet
hot zi zikh grod gekert
 un hot greylekh oysgeret

ENDE

1

With regard to a talent such as mine
 there is no haggling
Once I knew how to dance
 But did not leap

2

I know all the right women
 But to spring up is hard for me
It is enough for me to be plain
 But here that is out of fashion

3

To dance is a pleasure
 and so is to play
But not like goats
 who ceaselessly bound
Therefore make sure you think things through
 observe how others dance
Slow and deliberate
 is much better
Dear friend Reb Shimen
How do you abandon high style and pleasure
How can you be so warped
 As to pray in a woman's dress
I myself can understand
 If you are not guilty but simply naive
Because I guessed right away
 Who dressed the beadle
The one to whom the dress belonged
 was loudly ridiculed
So she owned up to it and
 famously confessed

THE END

1
do is ek a gute velt
in mitn a sakh shpilekhleikh ongeshtelt
 ober tsu yene velt iz nit tsu glaykhn
volt ikh veln zen
dray hundred mit tsen
 ir hot a shamesh zeyer a raykhn

2
ir darft shoy'n gornit zogn
men vet aykh shoy'n borgn
 tut nor dem kremer di gemore oyfmishn
zogn im "im eyn kemakh eyn toyre"
vet er shoy'n oykh gebn skhoyre
 nor zet ze er zol di gemore bay zikh nit farshlissn

3
mir veln ibershtupn di tsaytn
es leynt nit oystsubaytn
 mir zaynen nit kleyne kinder nor groyse
genug zikh shpilsn
men darf shoy'n zayn viln
un hobn seykhil hotch vi di froy fun reb Chanina ben dosa

4
az men hot oys shas farful
hot men nokh nit tsadik dem titl
 on undz shteyt ek nit leydik der oybn on
lernen iz ek gut
nor der iker der vos tut
 lohalimud iker ela der ton

ENDE

1
The world is not so bad
piled with toys at its center
 But it doesn't compare to the next one
I would like to see
Three hundred and ten
 You have a very rich sexton

2
you don't have to worry
we'll lend it to you
 only the grocer stirs up the gemorrah
tell him "if there is no food there's no learning"
Then he'll sell you the goods
 But make sure he doesn't shut away the gemorrah

3
We will push away the times
It doesn't pay to exchange them
 We're not small children but grown ones
Enough playing around
One must be willing and at least display
some common sense like the wife of Reb Chanina Ben Dosa

4
Even though you've had plenty of *mishna*
You are not yet a sage
 Heaven above would be empty if it weren't for us
Studying is not bad
but the bottom line is in the action
 Which speaks louder than words

THE END

Aleph

Biz aher hot men undz mekane geveyzn af undzer land

Az mir veysn fun goles nit

Un itster zores nokh anand

Di nokh nit geshnitn shoyndere blit

Der yididher shayn hot gelaykhtn in mayn kant

Ale bosey midroshim lerners fil

Yeder kind mit a seyfer in handt

Un itster geyen zey in rabiner shul

Reboynu sh'loylem az mir zaynen nit vert

Loz veren zkhush avos derhert

Zey hobn geton far dir dem lebn leygn

Un zey hobn yidn far dir dertsoygn

Avrom hot zikh gelost varfn in fayer iber dir

Ver halt dir far a got az nit mir

In ale ayngeshafn in ale tsaytn

Tu vos lostu undz kvetchn fun ale zaytn

Aleph

Until now our country was the object of envy

The diaspora being unknown to us

Now it's one problem after another

The next page not yet cut open

The glow of Judaism illuminated my neighborhood

All the study halls were filled with students

Each child with a *seyfer** in hand

But now the state oversees their study

God in heaven if we are not worthy

Let the merits of our ancestors be heard

They laid down their lives for you

Rearing Jews for you

Abraham let himself be thrown in the fire over you

Who keeps you as a God if not us

In all situations in all times

So why do you allow to be squeezed from all sides

Beys

Af vos zol ikh frier klogn un shrayen

Af di gzeyres vos iz gevorn banayt

Tsi afn ustave dem nayan

Vi tifer greykht in batayt

Kinder eydele fun gevorn

Un di vos hobn afn lernn afn lebn geleygt

Es vet kumen tsum itsenye tsum mustirn

Men kneycht dem kerper men brekht men beykt

A loykht a sheyner gevel

Vet darfn onton a yovonishn shenel

Nito keyn shabes nito keyn ru

Ver ken undz helfn az mer nit vi du

Dayne sheyne brilyantn

Hostu tsi skhus in ale kantn

Oy vi khoyshekh zaynen zey haynt

Ver hot dos a yidn nit faynt

Beys

What should I bemoan and keen over first

The decrees that have been renewed

Or the statutes newly declared

The significance of his reach is great

Gentle children of nobility

Whose mainstay was study

It has come down to military drills and training

The body forced to stretch and break

An illustrious and lovely soldier

Dressed in Hellenistic garb

There is no Sabbath no rest

Who else can help us if not you

Your beautiful diamonds

That radiate merit throughout the land

Oh how dim they are today

Who today does not hate Jews

* book

Giml
 Biz aher zaynen yidn in kretchmes geven
 Arende mit biletn genug gekost
 As es flekt kumen nove God ver es hot gezen
 Gelofn nokh dem billet in grestn frost
 Farzetst di kishenes di betgevant
 geblibn in shtub naked hayl
 af vayter nito a groshn in hant
 dokh gedankt got az dos iz vayl
 un itster men traybt men yogt
 eyn ukaz shtreng farzogt
 tsuzamen traybn alemen in shtot
 vos shvaygstu undzer got
 es hot zikh a naye gzeyre gemakht
 a kind zol mer nit lernen vi biz a yor akht
 hobn a geshtudirtn far a rebn fun klasn dray
 vos hostu undz gemakht azoy hefker azoy fray

Dalet
 men hot zikh undz gegeben a raytz
 gemakht kretchmes fray karik
 hot zikh yederer gegeben a kneytch
 gedingn kretchmes oygn blik
 simkhe shafn karik vi geven
 der yid zitst af eyn ort
 donen hot men gezen
 az zey hobn af yidn rakhmones fort
 un itster karik gevis
 men fankt undz azoy vi di fis
 ale vayle andersh gedreyt
 oy! Biter vi der toyt
 shteyn yeger arum vald
 es helft nit dershrayn gevald
 du got dayn rakhmones iz groys
 farges zey nit dem af gam zoys

ENDE

Giml
 Until now Jews were in the business of pubs
 A lease on credit cost them plenty
 At the turn of the year one could see them
 Chasing down the promissory note in the greatest frost
 Pawning the pillows and bedding
 Leaving their home naked and bare
 Not a penny in hand for the future
 Yet thanking God for what is
 And now we are driven and pressed
 warned not to disobey
 All of us herded together in town
 Why are you silent our God
 A new decree has been declared
 After three years of being taught by a student
 children must leave school at age eight
 Why have you made us so wanton so free

Dalet
 we've been given a tease
 Taverns are now free and clear
 Everyone gives himself a pinch
 Renting kretchmes* at a glance
 Having parties popping corks as before
 The Jew remains stationary
 Thence we saw
 That they strongly pitied Jews
 And now corks for sure
 They bind us like feet
 Turning us every which way
 Woe! Bitter as death
 Hunters surround the forest
 It does no good to scream for help
 You God in your endless mercy
 Do not forsake them in this as well

THE END

* vacation homes



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Dear Eudice, Judy & Don-David:

Enclosed please find three poems that we've translated. What they have in common is a description of strife and ongoing violence occurring in the area where Hyam Singer was then living, along with an allegorical comparison to the destruction of Jerusalem and the ensuing loss of the temple. Some of the shared imagery with the fall of Jerusalem is the loss of a Jewish woman's modest demeanor through rape, the starvation of young children, the vast class differences within the community and subsequent pillaging of assumed wealth by the starving youths, and generalized anarchy and loss of rule of law.

It is interesting to focus on the crossover moments in these poems, at which time the writer exposes the deep historical Jewish past through the lens of more current developments that he's witnessing at that time in Eastern Europe. There are also references to the prophets Job and Jeremiah, and a metaphoric use of Jerusalem as a substitute city for the Pale of Settlement and other regions of Eastern Europe with highly concentrated Jewish populations.

Each stanza begins with a descriptive use of Hebrew language and then segues into Yiddish. It is possible to consider the writer's use of this biblical style of Hebrew as an attempt to position the role of himself as a poet and witness, to that of prophets of yore. To that end, the response of the masses, which the writer notes, is not unlike the historic response to prophets such as Jeremiah and Job, which was to ignore them. This pain of being unseen at a time when such a prophet sees his witnessing of events as critical to history and the future survival of his people, is an ongoing motif. Other horrific accounts which the poet, as prophet, mentions witnessing are: the drowning murder of children in wells, the ongoing murder due to pogroms with no recourse for justice in the courts of law, forced exile from Russia due to these intolerable conditions.

Such poems are of importance to history as much for their witnessing and description as for their literary value. It strikes us as incredible whenever an artist can maintain their vision in the face of chaos and destruction. In these last three poems, that is the very least that can be said for Singer's writing.

We look forward to the ongoing dialogue with you in response to these translations.

Sincerely,

Chana Pollack
Myra Mniewski

Aleph
Shama estel kotel hama aravi
Omed yirmiakhnu hanovi
 Meylist yisrol ushilukho!
Ya anakhve im tad mi a
Ra a da teakh hez lishmo a
 La hashem yish pokk si kho!
Dortn baym koysel hamaravi
Shteyt yirmiokhu hanovi
 Der yiddisher patriot!
Okhtset un krekhtset mit trern
Es nemt on a shrek tsu heren
 Er veynt and shrayt tsu got!

Beys
Al yisroel yesiekh kayemet
Hanosim le arba pinot
 Arey hem nehersu ad hayisod!
Bi yerushalyim nir e be hut sot
 B'rakhat nid hemid nioid!
Vos fun yidn iz gevorn
In ale kantn tsu forin
 Zeyere shtet iz gevorin vist
Af di gasen fun yerushalyim
Ale vayle a yidn a nayem
 Lofyt fun Rusland tsu mist

Giml
Pitom ba kise ara
Kol nashi muz ara
 Eyn likinota b'shem!
Isha ke hama panaha
Til tifrosh kapeha
 Sh'agot anshey fom!
Plutsing in mitn klogn
Tut a shtime mit a shturim tsuhlogn
 Er hot gerkhent far a nit gutter
Er zet bay di vent
A fayne ishe brekht di hent
Tsehrayt ikh bin di muter

Aleph
There by the western wall
Stands Jeremiah the prophet
 Messenger and advocate of Israel!
And if you were to sigh and be surprised
You will be gripped into listening
 As he pours out his speech to God!
There by the western wall
Stands Jeremiah the prophet
 The Jewish patriot!
Moaning and groaning in tears
Frightening to hear
 He wails and cries to God!

Beys
What has happened to the Jews
Dispersed to all four corners of the world
 Their cities have been completely demolished!
From afar one sees Jerusalem
 The abandoned daughter in shock and destroyed!
What has happened to the Jews
Dispersed across the wide world
 Their cities desolate
On the streets of Jerusalem
Every moment another Jew
 Is discarded as he escapes from Russia

Giml
Suddenly arriving in storm
A strange female voice
 Un-nameable!
By her face she is a woman
Her hands outstretched holding earth
 Roaring I am the mother!
Suddenly in the midst of despair
A voice breaks out in gale force
 Not boding well
He sees at the wall
A fine woman wringing her hands
Screaming out I am the mother

Dalet
 Tima rer be bekhi banay
 Shil khahim nedud meyal panay
 Hi't palel el eyli yededay!
 Lev l'risisim tit porer
 Al hatsar hatsorer
 Et bini bini yekhidi!
 Zi veynt biter un shrayt
 Mayne kinderlekh zaynen fun mir vayt
 Loyf un bet bay got geshvind
 Mayne muterlikhe gelfiln
 Kenen in mir nit shtiln
 Vi men harget mayn eynsike kind

Hey
 Meyish b'mispar kehamon
 Ma 'asov yidey etan
 B'erit liskvatayim k'ruta
 Kudato biseter yutsa
 Biveyto y'khadesh eytsa
 Uvanegev rusi m'tsudato perusha!
 Dos ken ikh nit ton
 Dem ferze iberzetsn un zorgn
 Fun vanent es sist dem koyl
 Dort zukh biz aher yidn
 Hobn gelept in rusland in fridn
 Men muz hitn di moyl

Vov
 Ma nekh sh'vu tsoros iyov
 L'umat elisavet grad v'kiov
 V'afki l'balte hakevoda!
 Haristo balte u've mote ha h'avra yut
 Mish kekhot et harishuyot
 Mi kemoha sh'duda
 Men ken makhn a ganstn iov
 Fun ylisavet grad mit kiev
 Nor mit ktifa minhayam
 Antkegn khurbn fun balte
 Es dekt tsu di tsores di alte
 Es iz nit gevezn aza peregrom

Dalet
 My children in tears embittered
 Emissaries wandering before me
 Pray to the lord my friends!
 The heart shatters in fragments
 Due to our suffering at the hands of the enemy
 My child my child my only
 She cries out bitterly in tears
 My children are far from me
 Run speedily and ask God
 My instincts
 Cannot be silenced
 As my only child is being murdered

Hey
 A single man is like many in number
 His accomplishments are sound
 Cutting down vows that had passed his lips
 Secretly fulfilling his orders
 His ideas will be renewed in his house
 Expanding his ramparts through the south of Russia!
 That I cannot do
 Worry about translating the stanza
 Where is the sound coming from
 From there to over here
 Jews have lived in Russia in freedom
 One must watch what one says

Vov
 How the troubles of Job
 Compared to those of Ylisavet, Grad and Kiev
 And even those of the great Baltic!
 The ruins of which are
 On the hands of the authorities
 Who amongst her has been so plundered!
 The scourge Yslivet, Grodno and Kiev
 Can be compared to the trials of Job
 Only with the velvet veiling the sea
 The destruction of the Baltics
 Does not compare to the suffering of old
 Such pogroms have never been seen

Zayen
Kirou shrayey kesev u'bigadim
B'iborot hashlikhu yiladim
Maha af uma kharay
Baym nosnu bidey shifalim
Katson latevakh muvalim
Tisa er si arat b'saray!
Billetn kleyder gerisn
Kinder in brinamer geshmishn
On keyn shuld'n gor
In di hent fun di vilde tiren
Vi'shepsn tsu der shkhite firn
Es svegt mir mayne hor

Khes
T'hoyrus k'eyshes khavar ye al
Bahin gan nenl
B'ayos b'ala hi l'sota!
Bidley genalim
Ume usim
Z'rey mosum z'rey mos hasusim
B'eyn uma b'eyn busha!
Af froy a erlikhe a reyne
Plutsing gevorn azoyne
In di oygn fun ir man
Gevorfn geshlaydert tsu der erd
Azakh erger vi ferd
Keyn moyre keyn bushe faran

Tes
B'meya asher anakhnu ota gomrim
Umitsvas hamelekh shomrim
B'akhavta l'eyaka nitfrats perets
Erets nitana b'yad resha
Eyn onshim alkol devae pasha
Haki mosheyl eyn b'arets
In demy or 1800 vos mir lebn
Hobn mir nit gerekhnt az dos zol gebn
In ale opgabn dinen mir tray
Azelkhe merder azelkhe raskoles
Hobn keyn knosim keyn mapoles
Tsi iz den di velt gor fray

Zayen
Money and clothing rent asunder
Children thrown into pits
What have we done!
Being sent into the hands of lowlifes
Like sheep being led to the slaughter
The hair of my skin is on edge!
Money and clothes torn to bits
Totally innocent
Children thrown down into wells
At the hands of wild tyrants
Like sheep being led to the slaughter
My hair stands on edge

Khes
A righteous and upstanding woman
Suddenly becomes such a one
That has strayed in the eyes of her husband!
At the hands of repulsive bandits
Loathesome as the beasts
They ride on
Without shame or fear!
A woman honest and pure
Suddenly reduced to a whore
In her husband's eyes
Thrown to the ground and beaten
Worse than one would treat a horse
Without any shame or fear

Tes
In the century that is now ending
The king's commandments we keep
"Love your brother" has been breeched
Evil has taken over our land
There is no rule of law
As there is no ruler
In the 1800's in which we live
We never expected this to happen
We've remained devoted in all respects
Why aren't such murderers and
bandits punished or rebuked
Is the world totally lawless

Yud
 Shoded b'tsohorayim l'eyney hashmesh
 Rukh shiftuhu shoftey ha emet
 Takhat shevi ubiza umalkot!
 Shofekh dam h'adam k'mayim
 Nizgar bekele y'mayim
 H'musar bize rotseyakh!
 Ver dos gehert in lebn
 Az arur zol men knas gebn
 Der vos hot geroybt bay tog a fule
 Der vos hot blut vi vaser gegosn
 Hot 2 teg tfise gegosn
 Iz den dos af vayter a psule

Yud-aleph
 Gevirim k'ne orem eyley kesef
 Nadlu b'me at kat b'kheref
 Hotsogu kitseytam m'rakhem!
 L'ev even timas k'doneg
 K'yiladim milomdey oneg
 Porshim yad la lekhem!
 Soykhrim mefursomim gevirim
 Hot men geton oys robirn
 Men hot im gelozn vi er shteyt
 A harts fun shteyn darf tsegeyn
 Fun di eydele kinders geveyn
 Vos betn a shtikele broyt

Yud-beys
 Zulat yadam harama hakasha
 Hamtsi u takhbula khadasha
 L'asot b'mikhshak m'asyehem!
 B'avaro yatsit esh m'heyra
 V'haru akh yefiakh toveryra
 Milo yeyra m'pneyhem!
 Gor a naye hamtsoa
 Merderlekh gor on hanoa
 Eyner geyt farbay a vant
 Erg it a tsind zeyer geshvind
 Un vayter trogt der vint
 Shver tsu khapn farn hant

Yud
 In the blaze of the noontime sun
 A criminal should face true judgment
 Be sentenced to flogging humiliation and prison!
 He who spills human blood like water
 Receives merely two days in prison
 For the mortal sin of murder!
 Who ever heard of such a thing in life
 That a villain should not be fined
 He who pillaged a whole day long
 And spilled blood like water
 Only served 2 days in prison
 And the rest of the sentence annulled

Yud-aleph
 Wealthy young lords of high class
 Newly rich
 Having gained their wealth by force
 See children who should be carefree
 Begging for a piece of bread!
 Enough to melt a heart of stone
 Famous merchants of wealth
 Thieving to hold on to their riches
 Not heeding the hungry child
 Wailing
 For a little piece of bread
 Melting a heart of stone

Yud-beys
 The public with their hands upraised
 Devise a new ruse
 For their dark deeds!
 As he passes they light a quick fire
 That the wind really spreads
 Who would not fear them!
 Yet another device
 Murderous lacking all pleasure
 One walks by a wall
 Quickly lighting a fire
 That the wind carries further
 Hard to grasp

Yud-giml
Mordim ol melekh mashlikhim
Korbones beseyter ma'arukhim
 Adam nimshal k'beheyme!
Sh'had pzura she mo le matara
Al ya an matsa o b'gimara
 Hevey mitpalel bishloma!
Rozbaynikes un sotsyalistn
Viln di velt farvistn
 Beheymes viln dem tsam tsebrekhn
Mir forkhn zikh fargeyn meylekh
Mir betn er zol zany gezunt un freyklekh
 Derfar viln zey undz derhstern

ENDE

Yud-giml
Throwing off the yoke of the ruler
In secret preparing for martyrdom
 Like a beast on the sacrificial altar
Giving his name for the cause
That will result in a good end
 Pray for success of the cause!
Highwaymen and socialists
Want to lay waste to the world
 Beasts who want to do away with the law
We dread begrudging the ruler
We only want his health and happiness
 That's why they want to disturb us

THE END

ESTREYSLT MIR

Es treyselt mir ale glider
A froy vos zi iz zeyer getray
Vet betn a get af a tnay
 Ver veys tsi zey veln zikh zen vider
Eynem az men shlogt
Veynt er un klokt
 Ver ken im veynen farvern
Men makht yidishkayt azoy krank
Muz men nokh gebn a dank
 Men tor nit vayzn keyn trern
Dermont zikh nit fargest
Vos iz der pshat fun manifest
 Dos iz dokh a toyve un a glik
Vi men drayt azoy shpint zikh
Yederer hot vi er fardint zikh
 Keyner is nit shuldik az men vil redn karg
Yidn hobn gehat genug mapoles
Ober dokh nit aza goles
 Y afn nefesh y afn guf
Mir vern farvundert
Shoyn mer vi 18 yor hundert
 Vos vayter alts gresere tsores aruf,
Dos taynet der guf
Af di gzeyres vos iz aruf
Di tsores iz on a grund
Es iz shoyn nit mer do kayn gezondt
Di tsores oystsuhalt
Du got du boyrey
Tsureydn hob ikh fil moyre
Vos shvaygstu vos ven men vil undz ton
Loz zayn ikh hob zint
Ikh bin dokh ober dayner a kind

I SHUDDER

All my limbs are atremble
A woman who is very loyal
Will request a conditional divorce
 Who knows if they will ever see each other again
When one is beaten
He wails and bemoans
 Who can forbid him his crying
Judaism is becoming so ill
Yet we still have to be grateful
 We cannot be seen weeping
Remember don't forget
The meaning of the manifesto
 It is a good deed and a joy
It turns how one spins it
Each one reaps what he sows
 Talk is cheap and no one is guilty
Jews have had enough defeats
But not yet such an exile
 Encompassing body and soul
We are in shock
Since before this 18th century started *
 As it progresses more troubles amount
The body's worn down
By the decrees heaped upon it
Difficulties without reason
There is no more strength
To endure all the suffering
Oh lord oh creator
I'm scared to even speak up
Why do you keep silent about what's being done
Even if I have sinned
I am still your child

* Editors' Note: He was probably referring to the 1800's.

Tu farvos nemtsdu zikh nit on
Nor dos iz der trayst
Dos vos ir ale veyst
 Az es muz zayn klepl far moshiakhs kumen
Az kulo khayev vet er kumen take
Nor glaykher az kulo zaka
 Tsu yidishkayt darf zikh vern genumen
Ruft zikh op di neshome
Ikh vel dir zogn nekhome
 Layd iber dem klap dem zets
Hob gor nit keyn moyre
Vayl men hot zikh genumen tsu di toyre
 Vet zayn gikh un bald der keyts
Vi ikh tu fun ir hagonuz visn
Ken ikh aykh gerisn
Ken zayn frier
Nit mer vi der shir
 Vi a yor draysik nit shpeter

ENDE

Why don't you stand up for us
Only in this way can you be consoled
That which you already know
 There has to be a thrashing before the messiah comes
If you oblige the requirements he'll certainly come
Even more so if your intent is perfection
 If you put all your efforts into maintaining your Judaism
Your spirit will answer
I will comfort you
 Endure the beatings the whippings
Don't be afraid
Because we have applied ourselves to the Torah
 The end will be swift soon in coming
As the hidden light is revealed to you
Accept my greetings
It could be sooner
Not more than the allotted amount
 In thirty years – not later

THE END

1.
hert zikh ayn mayne libe brider
a shaynem a finem geshlider
dos iz nit vi ale puste liden
mir veln shmuesn arum undz yidn

2.
az ir vet dos ton mit a moyekh aynherin
darf zikh efenen der kval fun trern
tu zetse loz zayn shtil
helft nor zingin dem tsushpil

3.
tsiyen tsiyen ir elokeynu
 ma gadlu she verekh mi yerafalakh
 ma nora me id devir kotcheynu
 yidid asher naka bakh
tsien tsien vey undz okh
ver ken dir heyln dayn brokh
vos ba dir iz gevezn di shekhine oft
bistu gevorn azoy gikh geshroft

4.
kol am ve am kol ir u medina
 ya alu m'la mi yum el yum
ve et am kha me az ve ad heyne
 pla im terud mehom el tehom
in yeder folg in yeder shtot
dem groysn glik un mazl hot
un du mit undzere brider
keyst vos viter ales nider

5.
admas koydesh tseyon v'yerushalayim
 bereg l'gi a va yarum zar
 ve ikh ya modu yakhlol o sha mayim
bim kom tsvita el yikreyv zar
heylike erd tsiyon v'yerushalayim
yetst tretn af dir ale goyim
vu dortn hot a yid nit getort arayngeyn
yetst tut dortn a tfile shteyn

1.
listen up my beloved brethren
a fine and beautiful accompaniment
this is no ordinary empty poem
we discuss this amongst us Jews

2.
If you do this with your mind strongly focused
A wave of tears will be released
so see to stay quiet
yours is only to help recite the example

3.
zion zion city of our lord
 the break is so large who will heal you
 the apex of our holiness is awesome
 how badly you have been battered
zion zion woe and pain
who can heal your distress
where once the Shekhina* often visited
has suddenly become so swiftly punished

4.
all nations cities and states
 will ascend day after day
and your people from here until eternity
 wonders elude them from abyss to abyss
every nation and every town
are blessed with great joy and luck
and you and our brethren
sink further and lower

5.
holy earth zion and Jerusalem
 the foreigner walks upon you with proud feet
 where Jews were prohibited to tread
a holy place not to be approached
holy land zion and Jerusalem
other peoples now overrun you
where in times past even a Jew was not allowed to enter
now only a prayer is left to stay there

* presence of God

6.

galil ha goyim mikol ketsey aretz
lishmoa khokhmotkha baou
ve ata she arura mikol peretz
khokhmekha p'sha im yikra u
ale felker hobn zikh tsu dir geton keren
dayne shaynhayt un klughayt heren
un yetst tsu a tayern yid
ruft a pastekh far khata zid

7.

dray mol in yor in yontov di teg
flegt zayn gepakt di gas fun breg biz breg
di yidn vos men hot nit gekent ibersteyln
vi got hot zey geton fananderteyln

8.

af eyn aveyere flegt men gebn a korbn a rind
di shekhina hot gerut af yeder kind
zint mir hobn ongeborn dem kroyn fun undzer kop
zaynen mir badekt mit aveyres fun oybn biz arop

9.

ad ana hashem ad ana netsakh
kereb yakov yirbu shod
ad ana oy vay yarim metsakh
ad ana al emek yarimu sod
biz vi lang got biz vi lang nokh
veln undzere faynd vern undzer brokh
biz vi lang veln zayn yidn tshespat in shand
klog un troyer nokh an and

10.

ad yurokhem hashem tsion mi ra ayato
ad la asirim yikarey dror
gam im az tsion or malkhutor
yasisu olam tehi ledor dor

ende

bishnat t'r'h'm'lp'k

6.

Christians from all ends of the earth gathered in the Gallilee
They came to hear your wisdom
And everywhere a scandal broke out
Your wisdom was called criminal
Everyone turned to you
To hear your wisdom and beauty
And now to a dear Jew
Is slandered by any shepherd

7.

three times a year during holiday time
the streets are packed from side to side
the Jews that could not be counted
because God had separated them out

8.

for one sin a head of cattle had to be sacrificed
the Shekhina ruled over every child
since our heads were crowned
we are covered in sin from top to bottom

9.

for how long oh lord for how long eternally
the sons of Jacob are being slaughtered
for how long will my enemies be able to hold their heads up
for how long over the valley will the secret be raised
for how long God for how long still
will our enemies be our downfall
for how long will Jews be mocked and shamed
woe and sorrow without end

10.

until the lord shows mercy to zion and those who fear him
until those imprisoned are freed
and if then zion becomes his kingdom
the universe will rejoice from generation to generation

the end

in the year (have mercy) [1888]



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Research & Translation

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Dear Eudice, Judith and Don-David,

The latest installment of Hyam Singer's notebook in translation includes two pieces: the first, *Teyvos Haklula* is about a wedding. The second, *Ikh Vil Etvos Fregn* is nine stanzas long and continues to address the wedding from the prior piece. *Teyvos Haklula* presented us with a bit of a riddle, as it compares the wedding to that of Jacob's biblical one where he married the wrong woman.

Ikh Vil Etvos Fregn describes Jewish laws pertaining to wedding guests. It poses queries about what the future holds for the bride who will soon move to a new home far away, and what will become of Judaism if it is practiced laxly by the next generation.

In *Teyvos Haklula*, the happiness of the married couple is hinted at by the poet's use of the first initials of their names, THLH (Tsvi Hirsh and Leye Hene) to spell out 'TsaHaLaH' which means 'joy'.

It would be interesting to hear more about the history of Tsvi Hirsh and Leye Hene. Why is their wedding being compared to Jacob's biblical one?

Kindest Regards,
Chana and Myra

Editors' Note: Zvi Hersh Landy was a distant relative and friend of Hyam Singer. This description of Zvi Hersh and Leye Hena's wedding is interesting because Zvi Hersh and Leye Hena's son Samuel Landy would someday marry Hyam and Gertrude's daughter Bertha. The union of Samuel and Bertha was an idea which had been contemplated by their fathers for years, eventually coming to fruition in 1911.

Far teyves haklula
Kvar noda lanu
Mishtey teyvas kfula
B'azoy yakov avinu

Kol khosn ve kol kale
Gam po narima v'nishma ina
Ki shmo tam rimu zim b'tsa hala
Tsvi hirsh vezugato leye hene

Aza khasene vi yentst
Is shoyn af der velt faran
Leye iz haklula gevezn gezetst
B'eys zi hot yakoven far a man

Dem nomen fun khosn mit di kale
Velen mir aynzetsn in di zelibike stsena
Mir velen nor zogn dem vort tsahala
Vet dos makhn tsvi hersh leye hene
Yeder mentsh darf visn dem ort
Men darf rak hobn a reynem zinem
Nit tsu redn keyn vort
Vu mentshen darfn fardinen

Zayt zikh gut boydik
Yederer bay zikh in tash
Kolsman es iz far kleyn gelt nit leydik
Varft nokh anand shabes

Dervayl zaynen mir dokh yidn
Yenem in parnose nit shtern
Oyb zey zaynen tsufridn
Vel ikh mir lozn heren

In the bridal chamber
We've already been made aware of
A double wedding party
Like that of Jacob our forefather

Here too we will have the pleasure to hear
The voices of the bridegroom and bride
Because their names are hinted at joyously
Tsvi Hirsh and his partner Leye Hene

A wedding such as this
Has already occurred in the world
Leye who was falsely installed
When she received Jacob as a husband

The name of the bride and groom
Are placed in the same scene
Only rejoicing in the words
Tsvi Hersh and Leye Hene
Everyone should know his place
And keep a clear conscience
Don't say a word
About how one earns a living

Everybody check
Your own pockets
As long as they're not empty of change
Another Shabes prevails

In the meantime we are still Jews
Not disturbing another in making a living
If they are happy
I will let myself hear it

Aleph
Ikh volt etvos fregn
Nokh mayn seykh nokh mayn farmegn
 Gor a modnem rayon!
Nor vilt nor aynhern
Un es zol shtiler vern
 Varum ikh foyn mir tsu shrayen!

Beys
Vos iz di svore
Fun undzer gemore
 Fun di amororim ale!
Az yederer fil khoyekh
Muz zayn misameyekh
 Khosn v'kale

Giml
A vayb mit nadn
In heymlikhkayt ek faran
 Tu vi ken zikh umet gefinen!
Tu vos zogt men undz on
Yederer zol hulenen fil er kon
 muz dokh do lign anander zinen!

Dalet
Nor fun got iz dos a matone
Ober do ligt anander kavone
 Yeder mentsh darf lozn a dor
Dos iz a mitsve geshtelt
Es zol shaynen a velt
 Nokh hundert un tsantsik yor

Hey
Tsi er hot tekhter mit zin
Vos zoln laykhtn ahin
 Agri dabay hiluli hatluli darfn eyn vort zogn
A mentsh mit an eydeln gefil
Geyt im nit ayn kayn zingn kayn shpil
 Darfn im dem umet aroyshlogn

Aleph
I want to ask something
In light of my intellect and my standing
 A peculiar idea!
Listen up good
And be quiet
 Because I hesitate to shout!

Beys
What is the theory
In our Gemorrah
 penned by our early scholars
Everyone's entire strength
Must be used to make
 the bride and groom happy!

Giml
A wife with a dowry
In a home far away
 There she will be lonely!
So what are we told
So make merry as much as we can
 there must be another point to this!

Dalet
This gift could only be God given
But here lies another meaning
 Everyone must leave descendants
This a good deed prescribed
For the world to still shine
 After 120 years

Hey
If he has daughters and sons
That strive to that end
 Need to be told one word
A sensitive person
Not interested in singing or playing
 Needs to have the loneliness knocked out of him

Vov
Vi gut iz dem mentshn
Vos got tut im bentshn
 Az er geyt ariber dem taykh!
Gert zikh nit op fun veg
Tut vos men meg
 Un dertsi nokh gants raykh!

Zayin
Faran a sakh tiren
Men muz zikh ober visn vi tsu firn
 Yederer darf visn vos im felt!
Arum yedern trit
Muz men zayn gehit
 Un visn az es iz do nokh a velt!

Khes
Mir tut di kop mishn
Ober vu ikh halt tu ikh visn
 Ikh vel keynem nit antkern
Az ikh vel nemen person vebn
Ikh veys aleyn nit vos es vet zikh oysgebn
 Nor az ikh vel onheybn vel ikh aroysfirn

Tes
Vos iz gevorn
In di etlekhe yorin
 Di velt hot zikh a sakh umgebitn
Zeyer shvakh
In yidisher fakh
 Es geyt a dor zol got aynhitn!

ENDE

Vov
How good is the man
whom God blesses
 When he crosses the river!
He who never strays from the path
Does all which is incumbent on him
 Is this not riches!

Zayin
There are many doors
One must know how to behave
 Each is responsible for what he lacks!
One must be mindful
At every step
 And know there is a world yet to come!

Khes
I am confused
But I know where I am
 I will not dissuade anyone
If I take to imposing my views
I can't tell what the results will be
 But to achieve I must only begin

Tes
What has happened
In these past few years
 The world has changed considerably
Judaism has grown weak
God protect
 The coming generation!

THE END



POLLACK~ MNIEWSKI
Research & Translation

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Dear Eudice, Judith, and Don-David,

Enclosed please find the latest installment of the Singer notebook in which a long 35 stanza poem has been translated. This piece is concerned with the forced military service that was unavoidable for most young men. According to the writer, and in agreement with historical sources, the poem notes how some of the boys were able to avoid service if their parents were wealthy enough to buy their freedom. The fate of those who were unable to do so is described in depth.

The writer then uses the problem of conscription and lengthy service as a prism through which he focuses on the lack of depth in Jewish studies, and the corruption of the long heralded yeshiva system of scholarship, as rabbis are also forced to learn Russian and otherwise prove their loyalty. Finally, in a remarkable last passage, Singer notes the sad fate of women who particularly were afraid of facing the 'agunah' * status, should their husbands be lost in war.

We hope you are as impressed with this poem as we were. Also, we've included the musical notation, and are very interested in hearing what you can uncover to accompany what appears to be a libretto!

We look forward to hearing from you,

Regards,

Chana Pollack & Myra Mniewski

* a Jewish woman who is chained to her marriage because her husband's whereabouts are unknown.

1
Oy vi shlekht
ver in got farbrekht
 es hert zikh a bitere zayt
mistome zaynen mir vert
dos vos zikh hert
 mistome zeynen mir nit keyn layt.

2
far tsaytike doyres
az zey flegn derhern gezeyres [decrees]
 flegt men zikh hapn tsu di yidishe fon
derfastn derveynen
fun groysn biz kleynem
 yederer vos er kon

3
ir yidn ir frume
dermont zikh di velt di krume
 es helft nit ire doyres
in a tsayt fun etlekhe yorin
vet zayn gegolt un geshorin
 es vet oysgeyn berd mit peyes

4
ay brider men shloft
men farshteyt nit az men iz geshtroft
 shrayt tsu undzer emesm taten
vos men horevet mit koyekh
un mitn gesund un mitn moyekh
 zol dos nit zayn far soldatn

5
eyder men hodevet oyf a kind
iz dokh nit azoy geshvind
 es kost genug gezond un gelt un trerin
gor umzist
vos men iz iber a kind tsemisht
 vi es tut zikh itster herin

1.
Oh woe
Those who disobey God
Will face bitter times
We probably deserve it
That's what you hear
Apparently we're not humane

2
In generations past
When they would hear decrees
 They clung to the Jewish flag
Fasting and keening
Young and old
 Each doing what he could

3
You religious Jews
Remember the world the crooked one
 The generations that have past
Will be of no help in the coming years
We'll be cropped and shaved
 No more beards and ear locks

4
Oh brothers we're asleep
Not comprehending how we're being punished
 Beseech our true father
Whom we worship with all our strength
With our health and with our minds
 So that our children won't be soldiers

5
By the time a child is raised
It's not so swift and easy
 It costs plenty of health and money and tears
Without reward
All worried and upset over a child
 Which is heard about so often now

6

kinder gebn in kheyder
esn un kleyder

dermont zikh vos dos kost
umzist hasvesholem di gelt
vi es hert zikh in der velt
es geyt a dor zol zeyer prost

7

es tut a moyekh shpaltn
az men vet zikh darfn bahaltn
mit a kind lernen far a yidn tsu shteln
vos far guts mer hobn
az men zol lernen farbotin
vider barekhent vos undz vet felin

8

toyre hagrishak
far dir iz dos a hak
ver vet af dir kukin
tu shrayen tu brumen
du zolst nit verin tsu gelukhmen
men zol dir nit oyftsudrikn

9

ir meforshim [commentaries] ir gemores [Talmud]
vos shvaygt ir af di tsores
ir vet dokh gevis kayn guts nit gevisn
vos shvaygt ir vos zayt ir foyl
ver vet aykh nemen eyn mol
aykh vet men glaykh tsushlisn!

10

Der beysa midresh di shul
Felgt zayn nokh anand ful
Davenen un lernen durkh tog un durkh nakht
Un itster iz pust
Beser tsu shkoles lust
Az ikh dermon zikh blayb ikh on makht

6

Children are sent to *kheyder*
Fed and clothed

Remember the cost
Not for free God forbid the money
In this universe
A coarse generation is appearing

7

The mind spins
To have to hide
Teaching a child to be Jewish
What good will come of
Studying being forbidden
Keep a count of what will be lost

8

Torah of suffering
What a blow it is
Who will look at you
Try screaming try roaring
You don't need to get too assimilated
You'll be squeezed dry

9

Your commentaries your gemorahs
Why are you silent in the face of these struggles
Nothing good will come of this
Why are you silent why are you lazy
Who will take you up again
You will soon be locked shut!

10

The study hall the synagogue
Used to be always full
Day and night praying and studying
Now the halls are empty
They'd rather go to secular schools
In the face of this I feel powerless

11

oy! Vi nit gut
az ir sforim vet zayn barut
 in beysa medrish vet zayn shtil azoy vi in shul
makhmas eyama vert kalt
vi plutsling ir vet verin alt
 ir vet verin badekt mit shtoyb un mit fel

12

vi zis es dos iz tsu herin
ven kinder lernen bagerin
 lernen zey oyfn koyl mit a faynem nign
un itster geyt oys di mayle fun hasmode
varum lernen is oys mode
 vemen tut es in kop lign

13

az men flegt zogin dem leynes gut
di tsurkele flegt verin roynt vi blut
 makhmes geshmak fun mirpoeh
vi flegt zis in geshmak
der heyliker kop un bak
 oy! Es geyt oys di hanoeh

14

vi es iz geveyzin dos tsil
di nodin fil
 oder fun vegin di emese velt
der vayle hot men gelerent on a breg
gevalgert zikh un gegesn teg
 afile lernen a sakh gevolt

15

vilne velkomir
isheshok un mir
 men vet dokh aykh gor farlozn
vi falt mir a troyer
afn groysin kloys afn moyer
 vos iz in dir farlozin

11

Oh how horrid
Our holy books will be at rest
 Quiet in the study hall and in the *shul**
I grow cold with fear
As if suddenly I've aged
 Hoary and covered in must

12

How sweet it is to hear
Children studying with passion
 Aloud in a beautiful tune
And now the attribute of diligence is fading away
Because learning Torah is out of fashion
 Who has it in their head to do this

13

When we used to learn the teaching well
Blood rose to our faces
 Due to the good taste of healing
How sweet and delicious
Holy head and cheek
 Oy! The pleasure is dissipating

14

How once there was the goal
Of a full dowry
Despite what was going on in the world
We continued to study without end
Wandering and charitably fed
 Hungry for more learning

15

Vilne Wilkomir
Isheshok and Mir
 One can get lost there in study
How mournful I become
When I think of the big study halls
 That are lost within you

* synagogue

16

in der gantzer velt
far dir geglibn gelt
 nor a guter yingl ahin gefloygin
un itster di shmertsn
ver es hot a yidishn hartsn
 darfn nit trikenen bay im di oygn

17

ikh hob aley gezen
vi es flegt geshen
 nit gekukt af esn un af sholfn
gegesn broyt far dorte
di kop bay nakht tsigal harte
 afile dem leynes getrofn

18

es is gevezn di groyse masmidim
gevirish kinder ben yehidim
 der nomen klayzener iz nit geven keyn bi esh
geshlofn bay sho un me eys leys
di tsure blas vi emes
 der lernen iz ober geven der grester khi esh

19

men flegt zitsn arum tish
dem pshat veys men gevis
 men flegt nor pshetler glaybn
un itser men tsuloyft men tsufort
yederer oyf zayn vort
 men darf zikh lernen rusish shraybn

20

gor a valvele mosbeye
vet zayn klorkayt in yoredeya
 es gezt oys yidishe yikhes
es vet andersh nit kenen geyn
ver es vet nit etvos farshtayn
 vet men im musn gebn smikhes

16

All the world
Would gather alms
 A deserving boy to send there
And now the pains
Anyone with a Jewish heart
 Should not have a dry eye

17

I myself have witnessed
How it used to happen
 One didn't think about eating or sleeping
Just a crumb of bread sufficed
The head laid down on brick hard beds
 Even the instructors endured the same conditions

18

There once were the greatest scholars
The only sons of wealthy patrons
 To be called a scholar was not a shame
Lacking sleep
Faces pale as truth
 To study was their greatest passion

19

We used to sit around the table
The teaching we knew for sure
 Only gathering more disputations
Now we disperse and travel
Each going his own way
 One must learn to write Russian

20

In exchange for a worthless coin
One bought achievement in Jewish law
 Jewish pedigree is running out
There is no other way to go
With the smallest bit of knowledge
 One can get ordained

21

nito keyn yikhes fun rabonim
varum lernen vet nit hobn keyn ponim
 di vos lernen bay der gemora
di vos zitsn un lernen oyf zeyere erter
farshteyn nit keyn rusishie verter
 oyf zey is nokh greser di tsore

22

ikh hob gehert men ret
men vet nit baytn keyn melamid dem billet
 a kind sol mer nit lernen vi biz a yor akht
men vet hobn abi shtudertn far a rebin
oy vi geyt ayn der lebn
 ver dos rikhtig batrakht

23

tsvontsik yor gevorn
gor in di beste yorn
 er halt ersht in rekhtn blien
in rekhtn vaksn in rekhtn fis
nokh gezen keyn guts
 men mus geyen a tsetl tsien

24

vos iz dos far a mode
az bay yet vidern iz di yorn a khakhbode
 es fardrust as men iz yinger
nit men shloft nit men rut
ken men makhn mit gelt iz gut
 az nit baysn zikh take di finger

25

men kukt nit af gelt nor men shit
varum vi den gib nit
 vos es vi der lebn liber
ver es hot a reykhe baytl
rukt of un shkoshke dem taytl
 plutslig etlekhe yor ariber

21

Rabbis no longer pass down knowledge
Because learning will have no standing
 Those that study the gemorah
Those that stay put and learn
Those that don't understand any Russian
 Their troubles are greater still

22

I heard talk
That a teacher's ticket won't be changed
 A child will only study 'til he's eight
No matter which one will be a rabbi
What a turn life has taken
 Who would've known this would happen

23

Turning twenty
In his best years
 Just about to fully bloom
In healthy growth with steady feet
Not yet reaped life's goods
 He must go and draw a ticket

24

What kind of style is this
Making youth into a burden
 To be annoyed that one is young
Losing sleep and lacking rest
To buy your way in would be good
 As long as you don't bite your finger

25

One doesn't hold back but pours money
Because how can we not give
 What is more precious than life
He who has a hefty purse
Laughs at the notice and throws it off
 Before he knows it the years have past

26

az es flegt nemen a bokher di morde tots in
es flegt nemen a berdl shprotsn
flegt tsipn gelen baytchn
itster tuin zey di herelekh tsien
es zol gikher vaksn un flien
oyf over tuen zey di hor fun kop raysn

27

men lernt zikh dem muster
eyderer vil zayn az oficir
men khapt zikh tsu shtudirn
varum es is nit keyn matone
tsu zayn in karmeszhane
muz men zikh azoy firin

28

men hot derhert in mitn
az men ken koyfn kvitin
hobn di gildes geton gevinin
geshikt prozbes dapesin
a kinds an oremen af tsu esin
di kinder gemakht far mesh tsu vinen

29

ober nit vi zey meynen
men vet zey kornit shaynen
es vet nit geyn vos zey vilin ton
mir velen aykh nit trogn barantseg
bifrat der zun iz nokh nit eyn un tsvantsig
zey velen hobh oysgeret fun aybin on

30

va! iz dos a yoysher
fun der giber groyser
az du vilst hanoah hobn derfun
beys es iz gegangen mentshn fun gezunt
hot ir gehaltn di hent fun hintn
t'varvos kumt ir tsu farhintn dayn a zun

26

As soon as a boy's chin starts itching
And a beard starts to sprout
He'll pull his peach fuzz out
Full grown hairs were also plucked
So a beard would grow fast and full
In the past they pulled their hair out

27

They learned the army's master code
Each wanting to be an officer
Immersing himself in study
Though it was no gift
To be in the barracks
One had to conduct oneself this way

28

In the middle of all this it was heard
That exemptions could be bought
Hence he who had the funds won out
Sending provisions
To feed a hungry child
Using children to win medals

29

But it's not what they think
Medals won't shine for them
It won't go according to their plans
Brass will not be awarded
Especially if you're under twenty-one
They will be lectured from above

30

Va! Is this justice
Given from the big hero
Do you want to reap pleasure from it
While people are losing their health over this
Your hands folded behind you
What gives you the right to raise a son

31

kinder fun gevirim
 mir hit zikh farvedt shpatsirin
 heymloze ir vet ek geyen in rate
 di tsure fartrugn mit blote
 di fis fun gang ongerisn blozn

32

er iz geven geyveynt tsu lign afn bet
 oftsushteyn gants shpeyt
 der kind vos iz fun der heym a gevir
 az er vet farzamen dem mushter
 vet im araynforin der ofitsir
 mistome meynt er dos dos nit mir

33

meydelekh ir blaybt in der heym
 meynt nit az ir zayt gliklekh shaym
 ir veyst nit vu ir tut haltn
 di vos ken shtrikn haftn mien
 vet zikh graylekh freyen
 az zi vet grign a soldat an altin

34

es vet zikh trefn mistome
 a greyse milkhome
 men vet derlangen a poyk in bareban
 mit vosere bitere koyles vet men balaytn
 tsu vestu blaybn lebn oder hasvekhohile toytn
 mayn kind mayn bruder mayn man

35

es kvetcht di harts az men nemt reydn
 as a por folk velin zikh darfn lebedikerhayt shaydin
 es treysilt mir ale glider
 a froy vos zi iz zeyer getray
 vet betin a get of a tnay
 ver veyst tsi velin zikh zen vider

31

Children of wealth
 Make sure not to wander to forbidden places
 Away from home you'll be drafted
 Your face covered in mud
 Your feet torn up and swollen from marching

32

He was used to staying in bed
 Sleeping late
 The child who comes from a wealthy home
 If he misses the military drill
 And the officer comes to get him
 He still won't think it's about him

33

Girls, don't think you're lucky
 To stay at home
 You don't know where you stand
 Those that knit and sew and labor
 Will most certainly rejoice
 When she gets an old soldier man

34

Surely there will soon be
 A great war
 You'll receive your marching drum
 What bitter cries you'll be accompanying
 Will you live or God forbid die
 My child my brother my husband

35

It pains my heart to speak of this
 That some will be separated while still alive
 All my limbs are trembling
 A woman who is very faithful
 Will ask for divorce on condition
 Not knowing if they'll ever see each other again



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Eudice L. Gilman
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Dear Eudice:

In this poem, the poet, before departing to live somewhere far away, is admonishing 'bruder Berel' for cheating on his wife and not treating her properly. He warns him he will keep an eye on him even if he is far away but ultimately ends the poem with the wish to see each other 'oyf simkhes'.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Regards,
Chana and Myra

cc: Judy Lusterman

1.
Her bruder berl
A moshel fun a perl
 Oder fun tayere zakhn
Iz in beyze vegn
Eyner do un eyner antkegn
 Muz men kneplekh makhn

2.
vayl di kneplekh hitn
zey zoln zikh mitzveh shitn
 yedere in a fortn ort
megn zikh zitsn shiter
afile di kneplekh di hiter
 haltn zey tsuzamen fort

3.
bay a tatn un a mamen
az kinder zaynen tsuzamen
 iz aza simkhe gor on a grenitz
der kumt on aher der Aron
afile tsuzamen ale zin
 hobn dem glavnem bint

4.
her Bertsug Yosl
du farshteyst dem moshl
 un dos hobn mir nit itst
ver veys nokh vi ir
vi tif bey mir
 in hartsn ir zitst

5.
vi ikh hob nor gekent
mit mayne hent
 tsi mit briv tsi mit gelt
hob ikh nit gekugt
ikh hob zikh gerukt
 fil mol in sakones geshtelt

1.
Hear oh brother Berel
a parable of a pearl
 or of dear possessions
that in anger have gone separate ways
one here and one opposing
 of them we must make friends (buttons)

2.
Because pals (buttons) watch out for each other
in order to pour forth *mitsves**
 each is strongly placed
even if widely spaced
as they guard
 they stick together

3.
For a father and a mother
when children are all together
 the celebration knows no bounds
he approaches us that Ahron
all the sons
 have a common bond

4.
Hear oh Bertsug Yosl
you must understand this model
 it's what we now don't have
who knows as well as you
how deep in my
 heart you dwell

5.
Only as much as I could
with my hands
 with letters or money
not watching out for myself
putting myself in danger
 often in harm's way

* good deeds

6.
ikh hob nit geshvign
dem tatn nit gelost lign
 dem keyver in trern geveygt
ikh ken andersh nit zogn
zayn zkhush hot getrogn
 er hot zikh drinen geleygt

7.
vi mir tuen zikh sheydn
meg men ales reydn
 bifrat vi ikh bin elter
un vi ir veyst
az ikh bin ir treyst
 ikh hob far mayn kinder nit helter

8.
zog ikh dir on
mit a gebeygenem ton . . .
 zolst zikh firn vi ikh zog
di shviger vet dos ekvelen
er sol kh'v nit felen
 lernen ale tog

9.
in gedanken as mir
zaynen brider fir
 nor mir zaynen itst tsuforen
ober di hertser zaynen oyf
mir zaynen vi eyn guf
 got gib oyf lange yorin

10.
ikh volt dir nit shoynen
nor ikh vil nit du zolst veynen
 vayl ikh ken dokh dir
az der koyekh dervekn
ken nor dos klekn
 vi ikh blayb on dir

6.
I didn't stay silent
not letting Father rest
 soaking his grave with tears
there's no other way to put it
his merit carried him
 to his final rest

7.
As we part
may we say all that is in our hearts
 especially since I am older
and as you know
I am faithful to her
 never putting my children first

8.
I'm telling you now
with an imploring tone . . .
 conduct yourself as I say
your mother-in-law will praise it
Heaven forbid you should lack
 studying Torah every day

9.
In remembering that we
are brothers four
 even if we're spread far apart
our hearts are open wide
we are complete as one
 may God give us long life

10.
I wouldn't attempt to spare you
but I don't want you to cry
 because I know you
to awaken your strength
is the right thing to do
 as I remain far from you

11.
vi mir zaynen fun ayn guf geboyrn
ligt oyf mir az far mayn forin
 dir a seyder fortsutrogn
vi zikh tsu firin dayn lebn
vi a foter vi a rebin
 must du folgn vos ikh vel dir zogn

12.
ver ret ir tsuvishn zikh
host du gezen ot vi ikh
 vi mir zayen zikh geneyvike
 amol folgt zi mir
un amol ikh ir
 zi iz dokh bay mir an eyntsike

13.
dos zogt nor a dirak
a vayb iz vi a mezuzeh oyfn ushak
 frier a kush dernokh klapin tsu
got zol hitn dos kholile
dos past nit far a bal tfile
 vi ikh un vi du

14.
khotch ikh bin fun vaytn
vel ikh fregn bay laytn
 vi du first zikh dayn veg
yeder trit
muz men zayn gehit
 nit hastig zogn ven men ...

15.
meynst du bin ikh den nit fiksh
flink makhn a kimikishe
 azoy vi in dem kant
a pintl mitn oyg
un di fis a beyg
 un drikn a fremde di hant

11.
As we are born of one body
it is up to me before I depart
 to present you with a list
on how to live your life
as a father as a rabbi
 you must heed what I tell you

12.
who speaks among us
have you seen how I
 how we conduct our lives
at times she defers to me
sometimes I to her
 she is my one and only

13.
Only a fool would say
a wife is like a mezuzeh on the door frame
 first a kiss and then a rap
God forbid
it's not fitting for a prayer leader
 like you and like me

14.
even when I'm far away
I will ask about you
 how you're conducting your life
Each step
must be well guarded
 not speaking too quickly when you ...

15.
Don't you think I know how people carry on
flirting is easy
 just like in our neighborhood
a wink in the eye
with a bend in the legs
 while squeezing a stranger's hand

16.
nor vos iz der hisaron
ikh bin fun erlikhe yidn geboyrn
 zey hobn mir azoy ertsoygn
men darf hobn moyre
far a khet far an aveyre
 es muz zayn gemostn geveygn

17.
far dem amuzirn
darfn zikh frizirn
 a yid darf dokh hobn tikun
ikh veys az a megulekh
iz dem yeytse hore a meshule
 er geyt vi er tut im shikn

18.
ilkh hob kayn frakht
hof es iz do ver es horkht
 ot vet verin a gantse yaridl
ikh vel efenen der toeshter
gebn oys got dem kapel mayster
aykh rivolf yidl

19.
ir zayt do bald a zeyde
te zayt zhe khuts moyde
 vi iz men azoy nit foyl
kukn di veg vaytlekh
mit aykh vi men raytlekh
 es is aykh gelofn shlinish fun moyl

20.
ir alter kot
vos far a yeytser hore ir hot
 az nit ikh hutz kukn vi yener
kukn vi men flekhtsek
vi aher in damen brekhtsek
 tehilim zogn volt gevezn far aykh shener

16.
But what is the problem
I am born of upstanding Jews
 they raised me
to be afraid
of a misdeed of a transgression
 all must be measured and weighed

17.
To go out on the town
one must first have his hair done
but a Jew must be observant
 I know that desire
is a messenger of temptation
 it goes where it is sent

18.
I'm not trying to sell you a story
hoping there is someone listening
 without making this into mean gossip
exposing the deluded one
giving the conductor's baton back to God
 to guide his rebellious Jewish children

19.
You are almost a grandfather
so behave as to not have to confess
 how can you be so lazy
as to not look at the road ahead
you act like the wagons
foaming at the mouth as you roll

20.
You old tomcat
what a curse you have on you
 If it weren't for me looking on
how easily you get contorted
veering towards women 'til you break
 Reciting psalms would have been nicer

21.

tsu az men hot shoy n a shtep
darfn zikh mishn vi a khokh lefl
velen verin a por shayter
shtekt nebekh di hent
un me git im a varf tsu di vent
un er krikht vayter

22.

ikh vel nit farhaylin
un vel ir plumste dertseylin
fun ir tayerin man
vet zi verin inkas
un makhin vayn bay im riobarash
blaybt ir keyrekh makhin vi koyekh makhin

23.

dos kumt mir ek tsu nutz
az a groylekhe kop on a mutz
zitst in mitn karahod
gemakht undzer shtub
gor far a club
un shrayt tsu mir ot grod

24.

lomir makhin gor a nayim
a trink tsu mayn bruder Chayim
ikh volt gegent volt ikh hoykh geshrayen
ikh gloyb az im in kork
git im haynt ale vayle a fork
un volt velen kenen flien

25.

beys dem balabesl
fun mayne vegn nokh a plesl
biz mir velin zikh nokh a mol bagenen
vi mir farshteyen
vil ikh mayn kop fardreyen
nit heren vi mir velen zikh gezegenen

26.

ikh vinche di yunge por
120 yor
un nakhes un gedult
iber a yor gevis
az es vet zayn a bris
kum ikh aher un khulye

21.

If you already have a stitch in
you must see to mix yourself in
and become fuel for the fire
pitifully stinging your hands
Suddenly thrown up against the wall
and yet crawling further

22.

I won't beat around the bush
and will tell her directly
of her dear husband
She will get angry
making wine into pitch
acting like ice makes you strong

23.

It will be quite useful to me
like a horrible head with no mouth
displayed in the center of the circle
making our home
into a club
Yelling at me just because

24.

Let us start again
and toast my brother Chaim
If I could I would loudly proclaim
I believe that his neck
quivers and shakes
wanting to learn how to fly

25.

All of this commotion is
another town square in my travels
until we meet again
as is understood
I want to drive myself crazy
avoiding the fact that we're parting

26.

I wish the young couple
120 years
of joy and patience
in a year for sure
if there is a *bris*
I will come and dance with you all



POLLACK~ MNIEWSKI
Research & Translation

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44122

We found this poem rather difficult to decipher since the poet freely transitions between voices. Starting off as a memorial to Gershon, a murder or wrongful death is implied. The poem goes on to describe the family's mourning, the difficulty of returning to life, and finally liberation through the rituals of their faith. Again, as in previous poems, their faith offers renewal which allows them to continue with their lives.

Crossing the Sambation River is a strong image in the poem. The theme of drowning and being saved from drowning is also prevalent. There is also imagery of bulimia and the notion that the brother may have been a lifeguard. This might be an allusion to the saving of lives that have fallen astray of their faith. The need to be thin then would be an allusion to an ascetic's calendar of fasting in order to maintain a strong faith, which is not unusual in Jewish communities of strong Orthodox practice. This connects further to the fasting mentioned in the poem on the Days of Awe. It seems from the poem that the father and grandfather figures are leaders of prayer in their community and that their position as such allows them to overcome their grief and renew the family's faith in God.

It would be interesting to hear any added insight you might have into this poem.

Sincerely,
Chana & Myra

1.
 “al akh-hey-nu gershun”
 ze nit farges
 dem groysn nes
 tsayt dayn lebn!
 der klolezikorin
 tsu di kumendike yorin
 vel ikh dir a lid gebin!

2.
 gor on katoves
 dos iz nor zikh-roy-ne avu-es
 dos ken got vuntshin dir aleyn!
 on a feler
 un nit a sakh shmeler
 un di tsure roit un sheyn!

3.
 vi gefint di tir
 zagt der shpravnik ikh ken dir
 vi du tsolst zikh unterin mos!
 Der tsu sambatyen
 Iz gevorin oyfgezotn
 Un zagt on “zdarov kak los!”

4.
 di doktoyrim beyde
 zenen ek moyde
 yederer tapt im mit di finger
 vosere gezunte beyner
 shrayen zolin zey up zeyere tseyner
 ikh darf dokh im far a zinger

5.
 es hot zey geton riren
 vayl me hot nit geton shmirin
 vi vert er tsugenumen!
 tsu ken dos got
 mir aropnemen fun shafot
 ikh zol tsurik aheym kumen.

1.
 about our brother Gershon
 see don't forget
 the big miracle
 of your life
 as not to be forgotten
 to the coming years
 I will give you a song!

2.
 all jesting aside
 due to the merit our ancestors
 which only God can grant!
 without a mistake
 and not much narrower
 you with your face nice and red!

3.
 how does one find the door
 says the mayor I know you
 how you underestimate yourself
 moreover the Sambation [River]
 boils over
 and declares you “healthy as a horse!”

4.
 both doctors
 readily admit
 tapping him with their fingers
 what healthy bones
 yelling at the top of their lungs
 I need him as a singer

5.
 distraught as they were
 because he wasn't protected
 when he was taken away!
 can God
 take me out of the coffin
 and return me to my home

6.
tsu ken den zayn poter
undzer tayerer foter
 tsu helfin betn shrayen
letokh rekhn gevis tut er
dos glaykhn undzer muter
 men zol zeyer kind bafrazen

7.
yomim norayim far an eyde
er un der zeyde
 mit a heylikhin reynem zinen
fun horeven fun geshrayen
dem kitl oystsudreyen
 zikh mafkir gevizn got tsu dinen

8.
fil mol in khaloshes geblibn
der nokh vayter geribn
 nor dem oylem tsu dervekin
di vos flegn herin
flegin gisin taykhn trerin
 di makhzoyrim fil mit flekn

9.
vi er flegt zikh firin
a yidn tsu ratirn
 az der lebne gevezn frayn
fun der khayim iz nit farheylin
b'es es hobn gevolt keyln
 eyn yidn burlakes drayn

10.
mit zayn kenshaft shvimen
kenen mir zikh barimen
 fil geratevet fun toyt
gevis iz er maser
zayn kind's tsar
 unterin mos beys er shteyt

6.
can one forgive
our dear father
 for partaking in the keening
to take measure of his conscience
along with our mother
 that their child should be released

7.
days of awe as a witness
he and our grandfather
 with clear & holy mind
exhausted from grieving
turned the shroud inside out
 and were freed to give service to God

8.
feeling faint from the fast
and further ground down
 if only to awaken the congregation
those who would listen
spilled rivers of tears
 the prayer books filled with stains

9.
how he would conduct himself
for Jews to be saved
 life must go on
there's no cure for it's tragedies
when three brawny thugs
 seek a Jew to butcher

10.
his swimming proficiency
allows us to boast
 many he saved from death
his child's sorrow
was certainly appraised
 as he stands under the measure

11.
gor on a feler
azoy er azoy der geler
mit mayne treren zaynen zey geknetin
geratevet tsvey brider
iber a yor heybt zikh vider
vayter mit grine biletn

12.
gevoltn un geveygn
gedart un getsoygn
tsu zayn moger iz a glik
fun moyl aroysgerisn
dem letstin bisn
tomer vert er dik

13.
dem finger in moyl geshtokhn
grin in gal gebrokh
in hitn yener zol nit herin
nit gegangen in bod
un nokh vos besod
nor oystsutsern

14.
gantse nekht
hot men zikh gefekht
mit yenkh un nokh aza kapitl
a gantse nakht nit geshlofn
un tsum tatesh keyver gelofn
dos iz gevezin der bester mitl

15.
ikh hob zikh gemelt
az nor di gelt
lefohos 2, 3 hundred
ober tsu ken ikh zayn leyz
az ale kukn oyf mir beys
hob ikh mir aleyn gevundert

11.
without a mistake
like him, like the redhead*
squeezed and pressed with my tears
having saved two brothers
in a year it will start again
again with green dollar bills

12.
soaked and exhausted
emaciated and drawn
his slenderness is a joy
pulling the last bite
from his mouth
so as not to gain weight

13.
his finger stuck in his throat
spewing up green with gall
making sure no one heard
not attending the bath
another secret to keep
only to grow ever thinner

14.
for nights
we fought amongst ourselves
about this and that repeatedly
sleepless at night
running to our father's grave
was the best remedy

15.
I proclaimed to myself
that only money
at least 2 to 3 hundred
but can I acknowledge
when everyone looks at me angrily
surprising even me

* Since Hyam Singer was a redhead, he was probably referring to himself.

16.
reboynusheloylem zay mir moykhl
far mayn kleynem seykh
itst veys ikh dayn matone
glaykh vi gekumen
tsu fel zikh genumen
un gemakht shekhianu

17.
eyder trinken esn
hobn mir nit fargesn
dir tsu zogn a dank
vos du host mir gegeben
fun haynt on mayn lebn
iz dos a groyser geshenk

18.
nem tsu undzer tfile
es zol nit zayn nefrad akhavila
vi du host geholfn mir
ma tov shevet akhim
tu ze fray makh im
mir aleyn zayn in gantsn di fir

19.
ikh vel zayn gehit
tsu geyn in di trit
fun mayn foter zikhroyno l'vrokhe
gelernt un gezungen
vi keyn itstike yungen
in undzer gantse mishpukhe

20.
vi lang du vest mir mayn lebn shenken
vel ikh kislev gedanken
es vet nit aroys fun mayn zinen
dem yud aleph in khoydish
zol zayn k'lamed vov koydish
farshteyn in der dinen

16.
Ruler of the Universe forgive me
for my small mind
now I know your gift
straight as it came
fortuitously taken
with a blessing of renewal made

17.
before drinking, eating
we hadn't forgotten
to give you our thanks
for what you have given
from now on my life
is a bountiful gift

18.
receive our prayer
may it not be apart from the rest
how you have helped
how good it is for brothers to be together
so see to liberate him
we are only us four

19.
I will be guided
to walk in the steps
of my father of blessed memory
learned and well sung
like none of today's youth
in our entire family

20.
as long as you grant me my life
I will commemorate the month of Kislev
it will never be forgotten
the 11th of the month*
will be sanctified like the 36 righteous ones
absorbed in my daily prayers

* The 11th of Kislev is the anniversary of the release of the Lubavicher Rebbe from a Czarist prison in 5581, corresponding to November 15, 1827.

21.
undzer bisele blut
b'es dir iz gut
 freyen zikh ale tsuzamen
un ikh fule in drayen
far a bruder a trayen
 un farn taten un far di mamen

22.
got fun oybn
tu shoybn undz derhoybn
 mir hobn shoybn genug gelitn
az mir zaynen dos ariber
vet aykh shaynen in undzere shtiber
 der zelibiker got vet undz vayter hitn

ENDE

21.
our small bit of blood
as long as you're fine
 we're all happy together
and I filled with us three
for a brother a true one
 and for our father and our mother

22.
God in Heaven
come on and lift us already
 we've suffered enough
that we've overcome this
God's light will shine in our homes
 the very same God who will further guard us

THE END



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Dear Judith:

Enclosed you will find our translation of the first pages of your grandfather's notebook.* It is arranged on the page with Yiddish transliteration so that you can read the original, and get a feel for the rhythm and sound of his poetry. Facing the transliteration is the English translation, which has been rendered in a matching poetic style.

Several themes emerge, though the dominant one is that of a taking leave by ship, and the ensuing metaphors for such a journey. Singer speaks of a ferry journey which we assume to allude to exodus or immigration. He warns against getting stuck in the middle of the river as one might in middle age be afraid to leap. At the same time he speaks of youth moving too fast or not taking hold of the rope properly. We must not be afraid to leap onto shore when the time comes yet also make sure we have a firm hold on the rope. The sailors driving the boat are like the seasons, immutable forces of nature that we depend on to guide us. Faith, national unity, and personal fortitude also emerge as themes in the piece.

It would be interesting to see how the poem develops, as there is an internal rhythm that creates a tension the reader would like to see resolved. I hope this sample encourages you to continue with the project. We enjoyed working on the poem and are curious to read through to the end.

Sincerely,
Chana Pollack

* Editors' Note: Although these pages were the first to be translated, the precise chronological order in which Hyam Singer penned his journal entries is not completely clear. This section and the following section are placed at the end of the translation because this one apparently describes his departure from Eastern Europe by boat, heading for a new life in Ireland. The last installment seems to deal with his estrangement in an unfamiliar place, his joyous exuberance in his pastoral surroundings, and his optimism about a new life in Ireland.

aleph

Dort baym valye gey ikh shpatsirn
Zey ikh dem from oyfn taykh
Fun gayen tsurik tut er iberfirn
Zog ikh aykh dos meynt men aykh
Di velt iz der taykh tif un shtreng
Der from is dokh di tsayt
Inevaynik mentshn ongeshpart eng
Un er shept zikh tsu yenem zayt
Di shtramen mit di gayves
Iz di veltlekhe tayves
Vos zey traybn dem from
Der mit di linye
Dos is di emune
Lost undz nit fartninken in tehom

beys

Di mentshen vos zaynen agorst fun breg
Hobn nit kayn moyre farn shtrom
Un di vos zaynen shoy n alts ariber di veg
Lakhn oykh oys dem vaser dem tehom
Az er iz nokh a kind
Shrekt im gikhin vind
Bay im iz ales glaykh
Vert er vider alt
Iz er bay zikh kalt
Er iz shoy n bald ariber dem taykh
Nor vu den shrekt di hartz
Un iz ful mit shmertz
 Az der from iz in mitn geshtelt
In di mitele yorn
Muz men langzamer forin
 Nit tsu blaybn in mitn der velt

aleph

There where the waves break I go for a walk
I see the ferry on the river
Turning back will ruin everything
This I say to you
The world is a river deep and stern
The ferry but time
Within it people are crowded, compressed
Being dragged to the other side
The currents carry false pride
Worldly desires
Propel the ship
Our faith in the one holding the line
Will not let us down
Perish in the abyss

beys

Those left on the shore
Aren't afraid of the tide
And those who've already crossed
Also laugh at the water, the bottomless pit
A child would be scared of gale force winds
In his eyes it's all the same
He becomes old once again
Getting cold inside
With the crossing almost complete
Why does the heart jerk in fear
Filling with anguish and grief
 When the ferry stops in its tracks
At the halfway point of its life
Its pace must slow down
 Not to remain in the center of time

giml

Di gute matrozn tut gornit harin
Vos ale shrayen tsit gikher di shtrik
Vos darfin mir der from mit gevald es shparn
Az mir muzn bald forin tsurik
Undzere matrosn iz der vinter de zumer
Zey art nit dem mentsh's farlang
Vos der mentsh trakht tsayt hobn zey kayn kimer
Zey geyn zikh dem regularn gang
Barekhints alts mezumen
Az ir vet shoyn dort kumen
Tsi vet men aykh dort lozin lign
Es ken nokh unds trefin
Tsurik zikh tsu shifn
Iber a nays in a vigele zikh vign

dalet

Lebn yat vi der breg shtayt dort a brikl
Vos der from shtelt zikh dort op
Es kumt nit mit tsu im blaybn oyfn shtikl
Un yat vider ayner shpringt arop
Dort oyf tsushpringn darf neb zayn a giber
A shprung un vayter a loyf
Mir darfn oykh di tsvey briklekh ariber
Fun onhoyb un vider tsum sof
 Beshet gevorn shrayt er
 Un tsum sof iz im shver
Er volt avekigebn zayn gantse fameg
Vos helft dir dayn dingen
Du must shoyn dokh shpringen
Du zest dokh dem shtrum shtayt dokh baym breg

giml

The good sailors pay it no mind
When the others yell pull the rope faster
Why do we have to push forward with such force
When we know we will soon be returning
Our sailors are like winter and summer
People's demands don't phase them at all
How man thinks about time doesn't concern them
They take the typical road
Counting expenses incurred
If you then truly arrive there
Will you be allowed to just lie there
It can also befall us
To return to our boat
Back to the cradle that rocked us

dalet

Near that shore over yonder there's a small bridge
Where the ferry comes to a stop
Leaving a space between ship and shore
So that one must jump in order to land
A feat that requires some courage
A leap a spring forward a run
We have to cross those two bridges
From beginning and further 'til we come to the end
 While airborne he yells
 And the end is difficult
He would give his all to succeed
What good is your bargaining
There's nothing left but to jump
As long as the ferry is docked at the bank

hey

Vi groys iz der pakhed fun forint un fun hintin
In mitn taykh der from tut trogn
Di voln di shrobn di shtrums di vintn
Etlekhe viln nor dem shif dokh tsuhlogn
Vi tayer vi vikhtig darf undz zayn di linye
Zi firt undz zikher tsum breg
Vi vikhtig iz undz di emune
Men gayt zikh mit a gants glaykhe veg
Ver es vil zikh barimen
Az er ken gut shvimen
Di linye iz im tsu grob tsu groys
Ken men zen fun der vayt
Dem sof fun di layt
Az a toyzenter kumt koym aroys

vov

Az der from volt gegangen vi di voln em shlepin
Ver vays vihin zey voltn farshmaysn
Az der mentsh zayne tehom nokhgebn
Volt der mentshlekher bund verin tsurisin
Vi volt gehalten a bund fun a medine
Vet nit fun religye dersaykhn
Ver tsamet a folg ven nit di emune
Vi der oyg fun provitelstve ken nit graykhn

hey

How great is the fear from bow to stern
That the ferry hauls in the river's center
The waves the currents the storms the winds
Whose sole wish is for the ship to be mangled
How precious how vital the line is to us
It surely will tow us to shore
How critical our faith is to us at this moment
We must walk a sure-footed path
Whoever wants to boast
He's a good swimmer
That the rope for him too broad or too fat
Can we see from afar
The end of mankind
If a thousand barely survive

vov

If the ferry bobbed to where the waves dragged it
Who knows what frightful end would befall
If a person yielded to worldly desire
The bond that holds us together would break
How would the knot that binds a nation hold up
If not for religious persuasion
How is a people tamed if not by faith
To where the eye of providence doesn't reach



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Dear Judith and Eudice:

Enclosed you will find our translation of four more pages of poetry from your grandfather's notebook. The poem takes a turn after the fourth stanza, and describes pastoral plenitude and joy, whereas it opened with descriptions of alienation and exclusion from the fold. It can be taken to represent the joy of family and inclusion in a worship community. The shift in the mood was interesting.

Sincerely,
Chana Pollack

1.
Es ken zayn di simkhe di beste
In shtet di greste
 Klaybin zikh ale in eyn shtub tsunoyf
Kent ir zen mit di oygn
Vi tut beser toygin
 In a kretchme oder in a hoyf

2.
Eyner ayngboygin in drayen
In gas tut er arum shnayen
 Di gedanken gibin im oykh kayn nakhes –
Er derhert men shpilt forter in pyano
Iz er dos gringlekh mekane
 Er maynt men tut im tsulakhes

3.
Yungatches fun umetum
Baym shtub arum un arum
 Gelekhter tuen fun zey herin
Shteyen arum di shoybin
Varfin oygin vi toybin
 Tuen di simkha tsushterin

4.
A shokhin a fraynt gut bakant
Shteyt oysgeputst vi a frant
 Fargesin vegin im tsu klerin
Me tut im oyfin layster nit shtelin
Meynt er me tut im nit velin
 Tut er fun a soyne verin

5.
Ober do in kretsim
Iz take gut be-etsim
 Baym plats iz gor on tumul
Oyf droysn di velt hot a ponim
Az nor tsulib di makhatonim
 Shaynen di hershaft fun himl

1.
It can be the best celebration
The largest in the town
 Everyone gathered in one house together
It's obvious to the eyes
The party would have been better
 In a tavern or in a yard

2.
One is bent over in three
Very busy on the street
 His thoughts don't even give him pleasure
He hears the piano being played louder
Which easily fills him with envy
 Thinking it's done just to spite him

3.
Scoundrels from every which way
Surround the house on all sides
 Laughter exudes from their persons
As they stand close to the windowpanes
Their eyes darting like pigeons
 Disturbing the festivities

4.
A neighbor a friend well-known
Is dressed to the nines like a dandy
 Forgot to keep him in mind
He won't be placed on the roster
This makes him think he's unwanted
 An enemy he will become

5.
But here in the hall
There is room for all
 The place is quite without drama
For all appearances it is respectful
Because everyone is related
 Glory shines from the heavens

6.

Di zun fun oybin tut laykhtin
Zi helft vaksin di frukhtin
 Zi shenkt kikh ire shtralin
Di levone mit di shterin tsuzamen
Tuen di volken upramen
 Oystsuputsin di farsheydene zalen

7.

Groz un bliung un blumen
Shprotsun un vaksin oyskumen
 Zey hobin oykh zeyer flage aroysgeshtelt
Zey makhin umetum zol shmekn
A frishin luft tsu dervekin
 Tsu shpatsirin vi eynem gefelt

8.

Ale faykhte beymelekh
Shteyen shtil heymelekh
 Boygn zikh mit a shtiln veter
Vi eyner ruft mit zayn hant
Tsu di vos zaynen im bakant
 Kumt ruen unter mayne bleter

9.

Feygelekh fun ale kantn
Shpiln sheyne kurantn
 Zeyer zis farin herer
Khotch es iz nito di vos farshteyen
Zeyere srelen un dreyen
 Zey makhn lustig merer.

6.

The sun radiates from above
Helping the plants to grow
 Amplly presenting her rays
The moon and the stars in union
Quickly sweep the clouds away
 Sprucing up numerous halls

7.

Grass and blossoming flowers
Abundantly sprout and grow
 Hoisting up their banner
Their fragrance is sensed far and wide
A fresh breeze to awaken
 And promenade to your heart's content

8.

All the moist trees
Stand quietly sheltered and warm
 Bending to the softest breeze
As one who waves his hand
To a familiar fellow
 Come rest under my leaves

9.

Birds from all of the counties
Play beautiful chimes
 Very sweet for the listener
Although some don't understand
Their chirping and turning
 Make us all the more merry

10.

Akerer zingen lider

Bet shteln di tvue anider

Fun oybn s'zet oys vi a hitl

Untn breyter tuen zey shteln

Zey tuen un nakhes kveln

Ontsugreytn dem lebns mitl

11.

Pastiger zingen fun vaytn

Beys zey tuen di fiternes baytn

Shpiln mit holtserne trumpetn

Traybn oksn fun di velder mit shtekelekh

Es shpringen di tsigelekh di bekelekh

Zeyer sheyn vi zey tuen zikh shpreytn

10.

Reapers sing songs

Until they put the wheat down

Because they built the base wider

It looks like a hat from above

Beaming with delight and pleasure

As they prepare life's source

11.

Shepherds sing from afar

Roaming from meadow to meadow

Playing on wooden trumpets

Chasing oxen from forests with sticks

The goats and sheep leap for joy

How nice how wide they can spring.



FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION

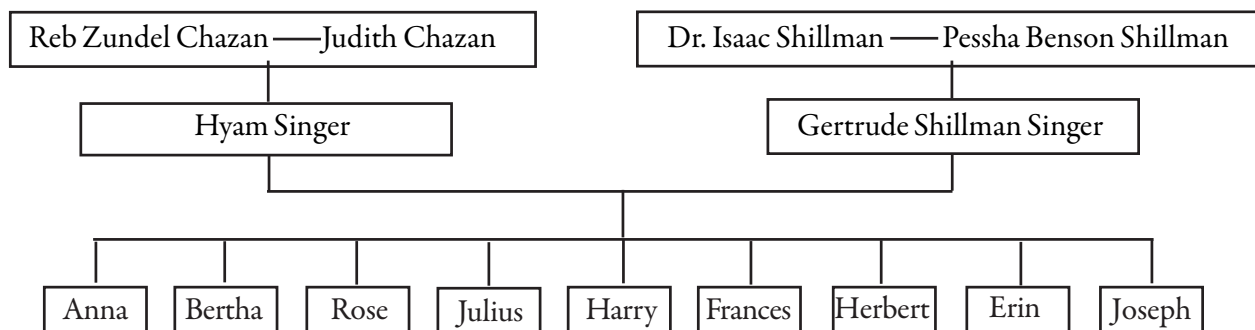
L'Dor V'Dor



HYAM SINGER AND HIS FAMILY

FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION

L'Dor V'Dor



As of 2007 there are one hundred twenty-two descendants of Hyam and Gertrude Singer, with more being added each year. On the following outline each generation is numbered as follows:

- | | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|---|
| 1 Parents | 3 Grandchildren (15) | 5 Great-great-grandchildren (48) |
| 2 Children (9) | 4 Great-grandchildren (32) | 6 Great-great-great grandchildren (18) |

1 HYAM SINGER (1854-1919) AND GERTRUDE SHILLMAN SINGER (1856-1934)

2 ANNA EUDICE SINGER EDELSTEIN 1882 (SIMON)

- 3 Bernice Stone 1906 (Julius)
- 3 Josephine Breckstein 1916 (Jerome, Ruben Rosenberg)
 - 4 Doris Monieson 1940 (Brian) *Phoenix, AZ*
 - 5 Douglas Monieson 1965 (Leslie) *Chicago, IL*
 - 6 Aaron Monieson 1994
 - 6 Sarie Monieson 1996
 - 5 Steve Monieson 1969 (Michelle) *Chicago, IL*
 - 6 Jonas Monieson 1999
 - 6 Ellie Monieson 1999
 - 6 Owen Monieson 2003
- 4 Alan Breckstein 1942 (Eileen)
 - 5 Rachel Polsky 1969 (Erick) *Raleigh, NC.*
 - 6 Benjamin Polsky 1997
 - 5 Leah Breckstein 1972 *Raleigh, NC*
- 3 Miriam Barg Fennessy 1919 (Bernie Barg, Thomas Fennessy)
 - 4 Marvin Barg (Michele) 1945 *Pisgah Forest, N.C.*
 - 4 Cy Barg (Kathy) 1952 *Big Spring, TX*

- 2 BERTHA SARA SINGER LANDY 1886 (SAMUEL)
- 3 Adele Brown 1912 (Elmer)
- 4 James Brown 1937 (Joan) *San Diego, CA*
- 5 Amy Lyn Brown 1963 *San Diego, CA*
- 6 Sofie Brown 2006
- 5 Daniel Brown 1963 (Amy Ruth) *Cleveland, OH*
- 6 Jordan Brown 1994
- 6 Casey Brown 1996
- 4 Roberta Katzman 1939 (Richard) *Cleveland, OH*
- 5 Audrey Katzman 1964 *Cleveland, OH*
- 5 Sharon Siegel 1966 (Brian) *Palm Harbor, FL*
- 6 Melissa Siegel 1997
- 6 Rachel Siegel 2000
- 5 Naomi Kall 1969 (Matthew) *Cleveland, OH*
- 6 Hannah Kall 2006
- 5 Noah Katzman 1971 *Cleveland, OH*
- 3 Eudice Gilman 1916 (Phil) *Cleveland, OH*
- 4 Marlene Krause 1942 (Franklin) *Cleveland, OH*
- 5 Julie Krause 1967 *Cincinnati, OH*
- 5 Rachel Krause 1970 (Adam Helman) *Atlanta, GA*
- 4 Kenneth Gilman 1944 (Judy) *Potomac, MD*
- 5 Beth Jolles 1969 (David) *N. Potomac, MD*
- 6 Abigail Jolles 1996
- 6 Lauren Jolles 1998
- 5 Michael Gilman 1971 (Wendy) *Bethesda, MD*
- 6 Owen Gilman 2002
- 6 Grant Gilman 2005
- 4 Peggy Gilman 1950 *Cleveland, OH*
- 3 Marion Kabaker 1918 (Arnold)
- 4 Richard Kabaker 1943 (Barbara) *Chicago, IL*
- 5 Matthew Kabaker 1976 (Jennifer) *New York, NY*
- 6 Charlie Madeleine Kabaker 2005
- 5 Adam Kabaker 1979 *Chicago, IL*
- 4 William Kabaker 1946 (Peggy, Susan) *Chicago, IL*
- 5 Karen Wilbert 1974 (Doug) *New York, NY*
- 6 Marissa Wilbert 2006
- 3 Arlene Ellis Friedman 1923 (Paul Ellis, Edward Friedman) *Cleveland, OH*
- 4 Kathy Klatsky 1948 (Fred) *Holmdel, NJ*
- 5 Michael Klatsky 1978 *New York, NY*
- 5 David Klatsky 1981 *New York, NY*
- 5 Jaclyn Klatsky 1987 *Holmdel, NJ*
- 4 Barbara Mirel 1950 (Jeffrey) *Ann Arbor, MI*
- 5 Joshua Mirel 1973 *Hardin, MT*
- 5 Lisa Mirel 1975 (Avi Levy) *Washington, DC*
- 6 Edin Levy 2006
- 5 Diana Mirel 1978 (Jody Schwartz) *Chicago, IL*
- 4 Gary Ellis 1954 (Mona) *Silver Spring, MD*
- 5 Paul Ellis 1996

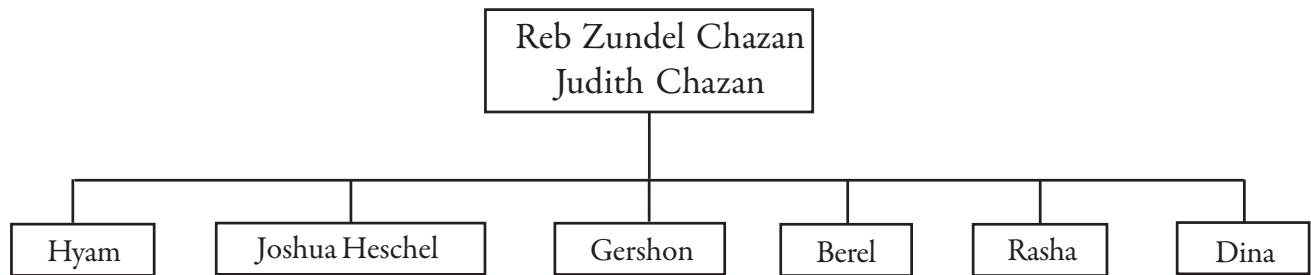
- 2 ROSE RACHEL SINGER WOODMAN 1887 (LOUIS)
- 2 JULIUS SOLOMON SINGER 1888 (MARY SCHINDLER)
- 3 Pessha Snedeker 1923 *Las Vegas, NV*
 - 4 Dori Anne Snedeker 1956 *Las Vegas, NV*
 - 4 Walter Snedeker 1958
 - 5 Lydia Snedeker
 - 5 Amelia Snedeker
 - 3 Judith Vane (Jack) 1928 *Charleston, SC*
 - 4 Jay Vane 1953 *Charleston, SC*
 - 5 Sarah Vane 1996
 - 4 Adam Vane 1956 *New York, NY*
- 2 HARRY ZVEE SINGER 1892 (SARA SHANBAUM)
- 3 Rudi Ruthlorrain Berlin (Jerry) *Chicago, IL*
 - 4 Scott Berlin *Chicago, IL*
 - 4 Brian Berlin *Chicago, IL*
 - 3 Hyam Singer 1922 (Barbara) *Moline, IL*
 - 4 Greg Singer *Moline, IL*
 - 5 Brianna Singer 1987
 - 5 Hannah Singer 1991
 - 5 Benjamin Singer 1995
 - 5 Marshall Singer 1999
- 2 FRANCES SINGER RUBY 1893 (GEORGE)
- 3 Earl Ruby 1917 *Chicago, IL*
- 2 HERBERT NAPHTALI SINGER 1894
- 2 ERIN SINGER 1896 (HANNAH FELDMAN)
- 3 Hyam Singer 1961 (Naomi) *Silver Spring, MD*
 - 4 Yehoshua Singer 1981 (Serena) *Queens, NY*
 - 4 Adina Gayer 1982 (Elie) *Queens, NY*
 - 5 Dovid Gayer 2004
 - 5 Moshe Gayer 2006
 - 4 Aaron Singer 1988
 - 4 Daniel Singer 1992
 - 4 Rafael Singer 1996
 - 4 Aryeh Lieb Singer 2000

- 2 JOSEPH SINGER 1899 (EVELYN YASINOW)
- 3 Jay Louis Singer 1925 (Marcia)
- 4 Mark Singer 1955 (Pegge) *Muskegon, MI*
- 4 Joel Singer 1956 (Lise) *Sudbury, MA*
- 5 Jessica Singer 1994
- 5 Erica Singer 1995
- 5 Samantha Singer 1998
- 5 Alexandre Singer 1999
- 5 Andre Singer 2002
- 4 Laurel Singer 1958 (David Striar) *Portland, OR*
- 5 Benjamin Singer Striar 1991
- 5 Zachary Singer Striar 1994
- 4 Mitch Singer 1960 (Jeanette) *Bloomfield Hills, MI*
- 5 Nathan Singer 1984
- 5 Neil Singer 1986
- 5 Hannah Singer 1999
- 5 David Singer 2000
- 5 Aaron Singer 2002
- 3 Judy Lusterman 1931 (Don-David) *Baldwin, NY*
- 4 Eliezer Lusterman 1960 *E. Rockaway, NY*
- 5 Ariella Lusterman 1992
- 5 Talia Lusterman 1995
- 5 Adam Lusterman 1997
- 4 Noam Lusterman 1962 (Stacy) *Baldwin, NY*
- 5 Ethan Lusterman 1992
- 5 Shaina Lusterman 1995
- 4 Gavriella Lusterman 1964 *Freeport, NY*

*Everyone must leave descendants
This is a good deed prescribed
For the world to still shine
After one hundred and twenty years*

— Cantor Hyam Singer

HYAM SINGER AND HIS PARENTS AND SIBLINGS



Reb Zundel Chazan and Judith Chazan raised six children. Reb Zundel was descended from a long line of rabbi-cantors. He was the distinguished spiritual leader and cantor in the Great Synagogue of Ponievecsz, Kovno, Lithuania. Throughout the many generations of their descendants is a generous sprinkling of musicians, writers, artists, composers and actors.

Hyam Singer* eventually escaped from his intense suffering and anguish in Eastern Europe. In Ireland and finally in the United States he could practice his Judaism in peace. He continued to be an esteemed cantor and an inspiring teacher, first in Dublin, and then in Chicago. In Chicago he established a Hebrew School on the first floor of the family home. He and his wife Gertrude (nee Shillman) raised nine children, and they all appreciated his keen sense of humor. He died in 1919 as a result of the flu epidemic.

Joshua Heschel Singer, also known as Heschel Singer, was a gifted and highly respected cantor in Buffalo. *The Buffalo Jewish Review* of January 9, 1925, featured a eulogy of Rev. Singer, identifying him as “the patriarch and communal leader of our community. Eloquent speaker, poet, teacher, and author of Hebrew books published in Vilna and Jerusalem, he has a place of honor in Jewish letters.” He was the oldest of the Singer siblings.

Gershon (George) Singer. According to the official 1910 census of Buffalo, New York, he and his wife Rachel were living on Cedar Street with their five (possibly six) children. All are listed as English-speaking, and those who were old enough to work were in the trades or retail business.

Berel Chazan went to Buffalo at the same time as his Brother Heschel, but dissatisfied with life in the U.S., he returned to Europe. He maintained a prosperous flax business in Kreutzberg and then in Riga. Several of his descendants suffered under the Communists and fell victim to the Nazis. Some of his descendants now live in Israel and the United States.

Rasha Chazan Super was the only one of the brothers and sisters to spend her entire life in Europe. One of her three children, Zundel, was among several descendants named for her father, Reb Zundel Chazan.

Dina Singer Brownstein, the youngest sibling was raised in Buffalo by her oldest brother, Heschel. She married Charles Brownstein, and they raised their children in Buffalo.

* “Singer,” an English version of the surname “Chazan,” was the name adopted by those of Reb Zundel Chazan’s descendants who emigrated to English-speaking countries.

SINGER SIBLINGS



Joshua Heschel Singer



Gershon Singer



Hyam Singer



Berel Chazan

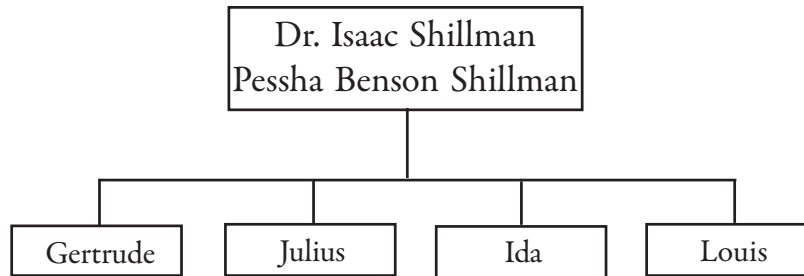


Rasha Chazan Super



Dina Singer Brownstein

GERTRUDE SHILLMAN SINGER AND HER PARENTS AND SIBLINGS



Dr. Isaac Shillman and **Pessha Benson Shillman** both practiced the healing arts in Riga, Latvia. He was a *feldscher*, a medical and apothecary practitioner, and she was a nurse-midwife. They emigrated from Riga to Dublin, Ireland, probably in the late 1880's. In 1904 they came to the United States, making their home in Boyne City, Michigan.

Gertrude Shillman Singer's early years were spent with her family in Latvia in a carefree, relatively affluent environment. She married Hyam Singer while in her teens, and endured some of the terrifying times he described in his journal. Her adoration and devotion to him was profound, but those years were harsh. Life in Dublin offered her the fulfillment of her cultural needs, which were nourished even further when she lived in Chicago. Not only did she speak English with an Irish brogue, but she also spoke Yiddish with an Irish brogue, which bewildered many people. Four of her sons served in the U.S. Navy during World War I, qualifying her as a "Four Star Mother."

Julius Shillman had already settled in Dublin, Ireland, when his sister Gertrude and brother-in-law Hyam Singer arrived there with their children. He and his family stayed in Ireland after his parents and siblings had moved to the United States. The Julius Shillman family became prominent leaders in Dublin's Irish-Jewish community, and much of the family memorabilia is on display today in the Irish Jewish Museum there. Most of his descendants have left Ireland, settling in Canada, South Africa, Australia and the United States.

Ida Shillman Nurko probably came to the United States directly from Latvia. She and her husband and five daughters lived in Detroit. They were deeply involved in the musical world.

Louis Shillman, along with his sister Ida, probably emigrated to the United States directly from Latvia. He lived in Cleveland, Pittsburgh and Detroit. His son Samuel became a reform rabbi.

THE SHILLMANS



Dr. Issac Shillman



Pessha Benson Shillman



Ida Shillman Nurko, Louis Shillman, Gertrude Shillman Singer



Julius Shillman

HYAM AND GERTRUDE SINGER AND THEIR CHILDREN

Hyam and Gertrude Singer had a total of fifteen children. According to Hyam Singer's Journal, five of them died before the family came to the United States. We know that three of these children were named Yitshok, Rishka and Moishe. Of the nine Singer children who lived to adulthood, Anna, Bertha and Rose were born in Latvia. In 1888 the family immigrated to Dublin, Ireland, where Julius, Harry, Frances, Herbert, Erin and Joseph were all born.

In light of the severe economic depression throughout the British Isles, Hyam's brother Heschel, already well established in Buffalo, steadfastly urged them to migrate to the United States, the *Goldene Medinah* (Golden Land). They came to the United States beginning in 1901, but they did not all come at once. First came Hyam with Rose and Julius. They went directly to Buffalo before going on to Chicago. The rest of the family followed, and by 1903 they were all together again. In Chicago Hyam and Gertrude had one more child, Arthur, who died at age four as the result of an accident.

Even though the brothers and sisters became geographically scattered, they remained very close, traveling to Michigan and Ohio in the pre-turnpike 1920's to attend reunions of "The Singer Fraternity."

Anna Singer Edelstein and her husband Simon lived in the resort town of Harbor Springs, Michigan, where together they owned and operated an exclusive men's store, "The Hub." They were observant Jews in a town with few Jews, so Anna taught religious school at the synagogue in nearby Petosky, where she was also able to obtain kosher meat. After she became a widow she opened a tourist home in her own charming residence . . . a precursor to today's bed and breakfast lodgings. When her grandfather, Dr. Isaac Shillman, died she inherited his collection of medical books.

Bertha Singer Landy and her siblings attended the academically rigorous St. Bride's School in Dublin. Although she was in training to be a nursery school teacher, she never pursued her career because her father forbade her from working on the Sabbath. In Chicago she married Samuel J. Landy, a Torah scribe and scholar whose cantorial voice could be heard assisting at synagogue services. They lived in Cleveland, where they owned and operated a dry goods store which also specialized in Hebrew religious items. Like her siblings, Bertha loved singing, certainly appropriate for the Singers!

Rose Singer Woodman, known for her lilting voice and contagious laugh, was married to Louis Woodman, who gave her the nickname "Peppy." Lou was a Canadian citizen who had been a fur trader in the Canadian Klondike. They lived in Buffalo, Chicago and Cleveland. Rose worked in the fine china department at Carson Pirie Scott & Company, one of Chicago's leading department stores. She became a connoisseur and collector of china and crystal, and her nieces and nephews are still enjoying some of her treasures today.

Julius Singer and his sister Rose came to Buffalo with their father in 1901, but when the family went on to Chicago Julius did not join them until he finished training for his Bar Mitzvah with his uncle, Rev. Heschel Singer, in Buffalo. From the time he was a young boy he had a keen interest in the arts, having begun violin lessons in Buffalo, but for practical reasons he studied business administration. Julius was quite an innovative businessman, starting up his own companies and even developing the then-new concept of the gift certificate. He was married to Mary Schindler Singer, a distant cousin from Tennessee. They lived in Chicago in a duplex house with his parents, Hyam and Gertrude Singer.

Harry Singer, the vaudevillian of the family, loved to perform, and always enlisted his brothers and sisters to join him. He had a natural inborn humor, combined with his talent as a pianist, composer, lyricist and dancer. He invented his own hilarious language and loved the challenge of miming famous people. Among his most appreciative fans was his wife, Sara Shanbaum Singer, an avid theater-lover. Harry became an optometrist and practiced in Dallas, Texas.

Frances Singer Ruby pursued a secretarial career, one of the few fields open to women in the working world of the 1920's and 30's. She was an accomplished pianist, playing ballads and jazz from sheet music or by ear. She loved to accompany family and friends as they surrounded her in song. Her husband George conducted his own business, a training program for freight traffic managers.

Herbert Singer, the bachelor of the family, was a prize-winning wrestler. He and his brothers were "physical culture" enthusiasts, constantly working out in their basement, which was equipped with a punching bag, boxing gloves and dumbbells. They were active in the Gym Club at the Chicago Hebrew Institute. Allon Schoener features one of their team pictures in *The American Jewish Album: 1654 to the Present*. In the 1930's and 40's Herb did promotional work for *Apparel Arts*, a subsidiary of *Esquire* magazine.

Erin Singer changed the spelling of his name from Aaron to Erin to acknowledge his Irish birthplace and heritage. He studied journalism at the University of Illinois and social work at New York University. After settling in New York City he married Hannah Feldman, a businesswoman. In the 1940's he established his own publication, "The Jewish Theatrical News," featuring his interviews with many famous Jewish celebrities, including George Jessel, the Marx Brothers and Harry Houdini. He was friendly with many of the songwriters of Tin Pan Alley. Erin was a writer for many publications, a public relations specialist for charitable organizations, a speechwriter, poet, bibliophile, researcher and all-around wit. He wrote a series of short poems entitled "That Thing Called Man—Half Pint Essays." He was passionate in his research about George Henry Lewes, husband of the 19th century novelist George Eliot.

Joseph Singer was a salesman extraordinaire who launched his career in Cleveland, working for his brother-in-law, Samuel Landy. He went on to become a top salesman for Sansabelt Men's Trousers. His irresistible charm was evident in a comment from one of his clients: "Who can say no to Joe Singer?" He married Evelyn Yasinow in Cleveland, and they lived in Youngstown, Ohio, and Chicago, before settling in the idyllic town of Hart, Michigan. In Hart he opened a trouser factory of his own. They also purchased extensive acreage for a cherry orchard, selling the cherries to pie-making and canning companies. Evelyn enjoyed playing the piano as the two of them sang the songs from operas, operettas, and popular musicals. Throughout his life Joseph remained a pious and observant Jew.

THE SINGER FAMILY IN DUBLIN

1895



Back: Anna, Bertha
Middle: Gertrude, Hyam, Frances, Rose
Front: Herbert (on lap), Harry, Julius

THE SINGERS IN CHICAGO

1916



Back: Julius, Erin, Herbert, Joseph, Bertha, Harry
Middle: Rose, Hyam, Anna, Gertrude, Frances
Front: Bernice (Anna's daughter), Adele (Bertha's Daughter)

GRANDEATHER HYAM
AND
EUDICE LANDY GILMAN
Chicago 1918



A SINGER FAMILY REUNION

Montpelier, Ohio 1929



- | | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. Toby Yasinow | 12. Erin Singer | 23. Josephine Edelstein Breckstein |
| 2. Sarah Shanbaum Singer | 13. Bernice Edelstein Stone | 24. Earl Ruby |
| 3. Gertrude Shillman Singer | 14. Simon Edelstein | 25. Eudice Landy Gilman |
| 4. Herbert Singer | 15. Julius Singer | 26. Joseph Singer |
| 5. Adele Landy Brown | 16. Harry Singer | 27. Pessha Singer Snedecker |
| 6. Louis Woodman | 17. Rudi Singer Berlin | 28. Jay Louis Singer |
| 7. Rose Singer Woodman | 18. Frances Singer Ruby | 29. Arlene Landy Ellis Friedman |
| 8. Mary Schindler Singer | 19. Hyam (Hy) Singer | Not Pictured: Samuel Landy |
| 9. Judy Singer Vane | 20. Miriam Edelstein Barg Fennessy | George Ruby |
| 10. Anna Singer Edelstein | 21. Evelyn Yasinow Singer | Hannah Singer |
| 11. Bertha Singer Landy | 22. Marion (Mickey) Landy Kabaker | |

FAMILY MEETING

New York City 2005



Descendants of Hyam Singer and of Hyam's siblings Dina Singer Brownstein and Berel Chazan gather at the Center for Jewish History to get acquainted and re-acquainted, and to share their interest in Cantor Hyam Singer's Journal.

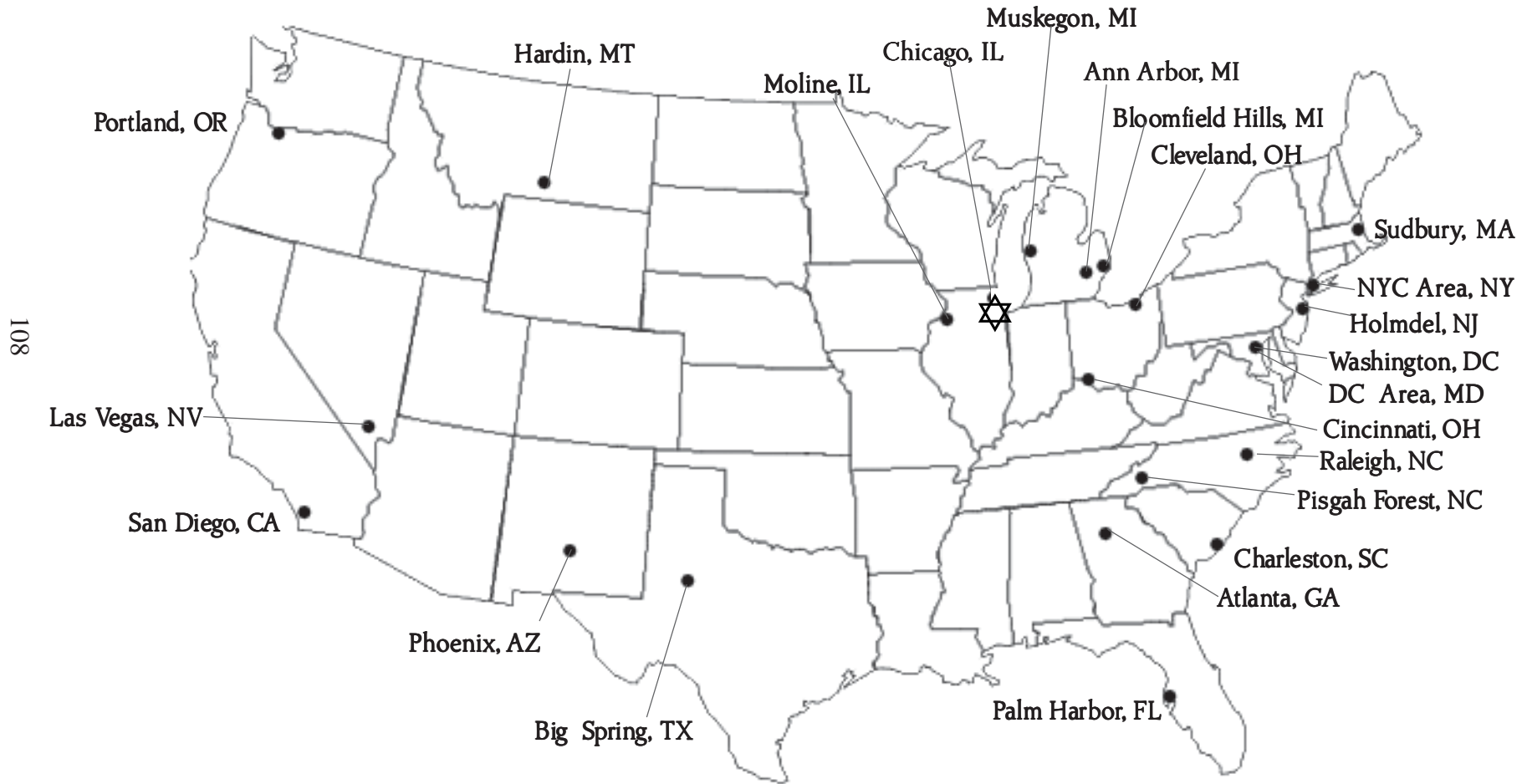
Back Row: Ken Gilman, Shale Brownstein, Adam Vane, Yosef Feigelson.

Front Row: Marlene Krause, Eudice Gilman, Judy Lusterman

Shale Brownstein is Dina Singer Brownstein's grandson. Josef Feigelson is Berel Chazan's great-grandson. Eudice Gilman and Judy Lusterman are Hyam Singer's granddaughters. Adam Vane, Ken Gilman and Marlene Krause are Hyam Singer's great-grandchildren.

A FAMILY'S JOURNEY

The Singer Diaspora



Hyam Singer's journey took him from Lithuania to Latvia to Ireland to Chicago.
In the United States his family's journey continues . . .

ABOUT THE TRANSLATORS

Chana Pollack, a filmmaker and the head photo archivist for the Forward Association, has recently participated in compiling an art book of photographs from the Forverts archive that will be forthcoming from Norton in 2007. She has an MFA from the San Francisco Art Institute and a BA from Hampshire College, where she studied Yiddish and Filmmaking. Chana was born in Montreal, where she received an orthodox Jewish education. She also lived in Israel, where she served as a translator in the Israeli army. Chana has shown films in festivals around the world, including the United States, Canada and Israel, and has spent a year in Poland as a Fulbright scholar.

Myra Mniewski is a poet, translator and native Yiddish speaker born in Lodz, Poland. She has an MA in Creative Writing. Her poetry and translations have appeared in literary journals and anthologies such as *Bridges, Bloom and Woodfish*. She has taught English as a Second Language in New York City and in Seoul, South Korea, where she spent a year teaching, writing and studying Zen Buddhism. She is currently the director of Yugntruf-Youth for Yiddish, a non-profit organization that promotes the Yiddish language by creating environments in which Yiddish can be spoken and studied as a living language.



Chana Pollack (l) and Myra Mniewski (r) with Eudice Gilman
at the Center for Jewish History in New York