

# R Yehudah Halevi I: A Lyrical Life

## Timeline

*Adapted mostly from Scheindlin; he dates Halevi's birth in the 1080s, while most historians date it earlier*

- C.1055 Moshe ben Jacob Ibn Ezra is born in Granada (ruled by the Zirid dynasty)
- 1056 R. Samuel ha-Nagid Ibn Nagrillah, vizier of Granada, dies
- 1066-7 A major anti-Jewish massacre breaks out in Granada
- C. 1075 Judah Halevi was born in either Toledo or Tudela.
- 1070s/1080s Halevi spends his childhood in Christian-controlled Navarre or Castille
- 1080s/1090s As a teenager, Halevi travels south to Granada and joins the circle of Moses Ibn Ezra.
- 1085 Alfonso VI of Castile captures Toledo, incorporating it into Christian Spain
- 1086 Almoravids (al-Murabitun), invited by al-Mu'tamid of Seville, begin conquering land in Spain
- C. 1092 Moshe Ibn Ezra is forced to leave Granada; presumably Halevi has already moved away
- 1103 Halevi composed two poems celebrating R. Joseph Ibn Megas's appointment in Lucena to position of Rosh Yeshiva
- C. 1108 Halevi resides in Christian Spain, potentially in Toledo, where he likely practices medicine
- C. 1128 Halfon ben Netanel, an Egyptian Jewish merchant, visits Spain and develops a close friendship with Yehudah Halevi
- C. 1130 [Some historians believe that Judah Halevi set out on a first attempted journey to the holy land]
- c. 1135 Moshe ibn Ezra composes *Kitāb al-Muḥāḍara wa-al-Mudhākara* in Castille, associating Yehudah Halevi (and Avraham ibn Ezra, likely his son-in-law's father) with the city of Cordoba
- 1140 Halevi sets sail from al-Andalus, intending to settle in the land of Israel
- 1140 (Sept 8) Halevi arrives in Alexandria, where the local Jewish community treats him very well
- 1141 (winter) travels to Cairo, where Egyptian Jews attempt to dissuade him from further travel.
- 1141 (May 8) Halevi returns to Alexandria and boards a ship bound for Palestine but was delayed by winds
- 1141 (May 14) Halevi's ship sets sail from Alexandria, and presumably reaches the port of Acco or Jaffa
- 1141 (July) Judah Halevi is referred to as being deceased very recently
- 1141 (Oct): Nathan ben Samuel, the secretary of the Nagid of Egypt, writes a letter mentioning Halevi's death, referring to him with the honorific "saintly," often used to denote a martyr.

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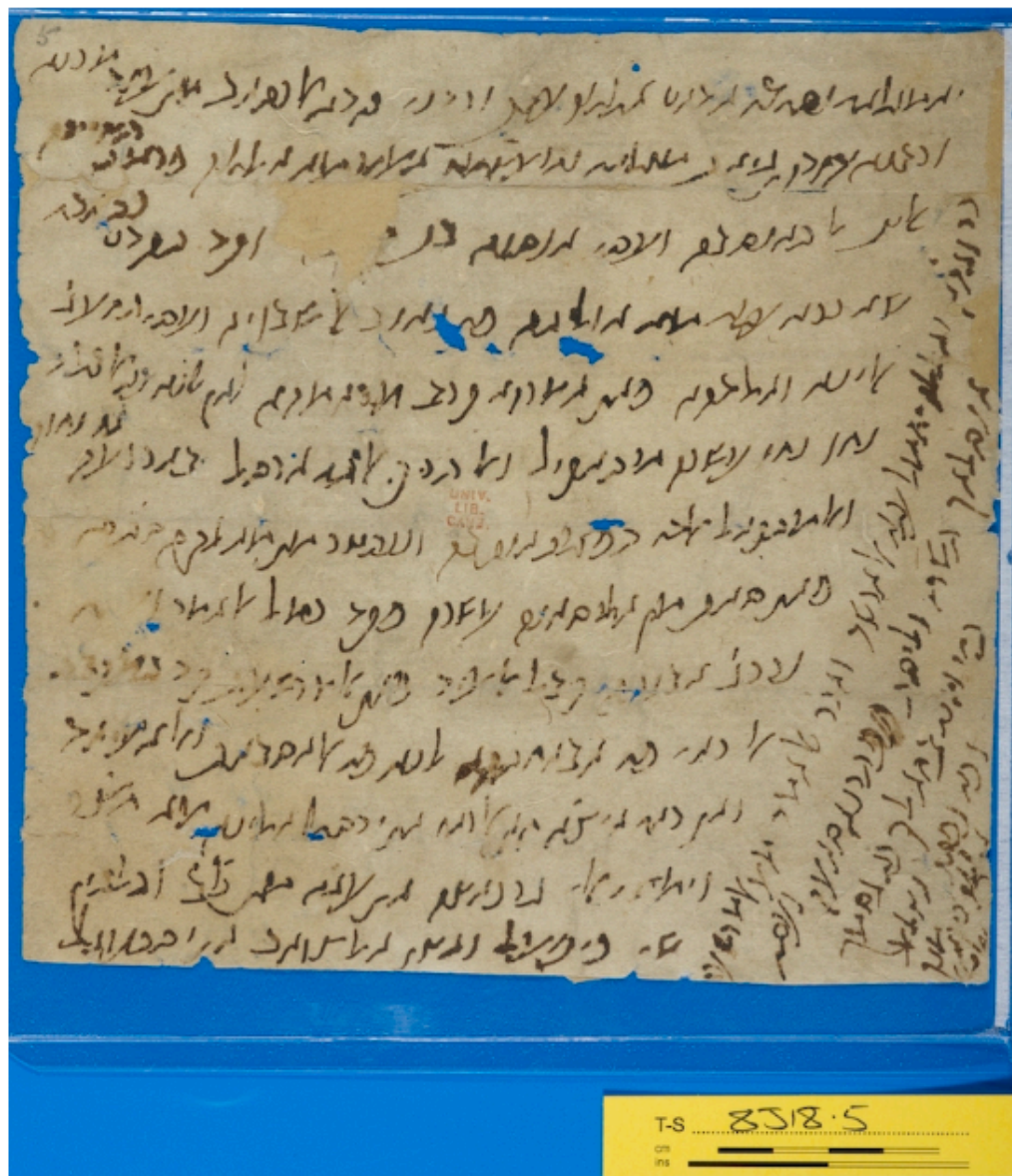
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## 1. Introduction

Link: [Cairo Genizah](#) (Cambridge, Taylor-Schachter Collection) T-S 8J18.5



T-S 8J18.5 (recto): letter by Judah ha-Levi, who is trying to secure the freedom of a young captive woman.

## 2. Biography (Until 1140)

Letter-Poem of Halevi Describing His Arrival in Granada (Rand, *Hebrew Union Annual* 2018; Halkin translation)

He was, he wrote, “making music on the wine cups” one night with some friends who were endeavoring to

compose a girdle song. It was addressed to

“their poet-leader-in-chief

and to be brief,

I made a good start

on the poem’s first part

But after continuing well,

my companions soon fell

into such a confusion

that they cried in profusion,

‘What you’ve started, please end!’

I replied, ‘God forfend!

How can I add one more line

with these poor skills of mine

אך הזמן אלה / לבלתי יעשה כלה

בבית גירותי סעדני / ובשירי ידידות רפדני

וישביעני ביין דודים / אחר שבעתי נדודים

20 ואתחכמה לנגן בגביעים / משוררי שיר נעים

ויהי מנגיד נגינתם / שירה לשר צבאותם

ותהי תחלת השירה / 'ליל מחשבות לב אעירה'

ויטבו נגן בראשיתה / ותבצר מהם אחרייתה

ויתפארו עלי לאמר / הנה החלוננו ואתה תגמור

25 ואומר להם חלילה / אם ארחיב <<פה>> ואם אגדילה

ולא אשתרר בשאיני יודע / פן יחסדני שומע

כי את רגלים רצתי וילאוני / ואיר אתחרה סוסים יבישוני

ואף כי <<אני>> כבד פה וכבד לשון / תרבות דישון [ן] דישון

[עם] נועז ועמק [י] שפה / אי [ן] לים [פתיותם שפ]ה

30 וג[ם] אתם] לשאול הקשיתם / וחתחתים בדבר לא חזיתם

המעט מ[כם] תלאות אנשים / כי החרוזים המבוקשים / מ[ע]ט וקש[ים]

ועד זאת ידעתי כי לא אגע / ולמ[ה] [ה] זה תכל איגע

ומי זה אשר לבו מלאו / לער[ו] שיר אחר שר אבא

כי מה אדם דל וחלך / שיבוא אחרי המלך

ויפצרו בי עד בושתי / ולעשות כפי כחי בקשתי

ואראה כי אין יתרון / היותי בדבר אחרון

וימלך לבי עלי / ויהי מה ארוץ ואולי

להשלים חפץ רעי / אף אני אחזה דעי

**Invitation Extended by Moshe ibn Ezra** (transl. By Hillel Halkin)

One so young / And still unsung / Has shouldered all / Of wisdom’s weight

Come from the North, / His light shines forth / To everywhere / Illuminate.

Have him make haste / (No time to waste!) / To the grounds / Of my estate.

There, where flowers / Scent the bowers / He can rest / And rusticate,

And eat good things, / Love’s offerings, / At no expense / Till satiate,

And live within / My spacious inn, / No matter who / Else shuts his gate.



וְדַעְנוֹנָה, נְדוּד, מִיָּמַי עֲלוּמִים, / וְנָחַל הַבְּכִי – נָחַל קְדוּמִים.  
 הֶרֶב עִם הַזְּמַן עַל לֹא חֶטְאָה? / וְעַם יָמִים? וְאֵין עוֹן לְיָמִים!  
 פְּלָכִים הֵם בְּקוֹ צֶדֶק יְרוּצוֹן, / וְאֵין נִפְתָּל וְעָקַשׁ בְּמִרוּמִים –  
 הַזֶּה חֲדָשׁ? וְאֵין תִּבְלַח חֲדָשָׁה / וְחֻקֶּיהָ בְּאַצְבָּע אֶל רְשׁוּמִים.  
 וְאֵיךְ יִשְׁנוּ דְבָרֶיהָ? וְכֵלָם / בְּטַבְעֶת יָמִין עֲלִיוֹן חֲתוּמִים,  
 וְכָל סִבָּה מִצּוֹאָה בְּמִסְבָּה / וְכָל חֲדָשׁ כְּבָר הִיא פְּעָמִים!  
 וְלֹא חֲבֵר אָנוּשׁ כִּי אִם לִפְרֹד, / לְהוֹצִיא מִלֵּאָם אֶחָד לְאֵמִים,  
 וְלֹאֵל נִפְרְדוּ מֵאֵז בְּנֵי אִישׁ, / אֲזִי לֹא מִלֵּאָה אֶרֶץ עֲמִים.  
 וְיֵשׁ דְּבַר אֲשֶׁר יֵיטֵב וְיָרֵעַ, / וְבוֹ שְׁקוֹי וְרָקֵב לְעֲצָמִים.  
 בְּהִתְקַצֵּף אָנוּשׁ יוֹמוֹ יִקְלַל / וְיִקְבֹּ אֶת רִגְעֵיו הַזְּעוּמִים –  
 וְהוּא הַיּוֹם יִבְרַכּוּהוּ אַחֲרָיו / אֲשֶׁר אוֹתוֹ יִבְלוּ בְּנֵי־עִמִּים.  
 וְכָל מֵאֲכָל בְּפִי בְּרִיא כְּנֶפֶת – / וְהִנֵּפֶת בְּפִי חוֹלָה רִתְמִים,  
 וְדוֹאֵג יִחְשְׁכוּ אוֹרִים בְּעֵינָיו / וְלֹא יִרְאֶם וְהֵם לֹא נִעְלָמִים –  
 כְּעֵינֵי יוֹם שֶׁכֵּן עָנָן עַל־יָהּ / לְנוֹד מִשָּׁה, וְהֵם יוֹרְדוֹת זָרְמִים!  
 מְקוֹר חֲכָמָה, אֲשֶׁר אֲמַצָּא בְּפִיהוּ / מְקוֹם הַפֶּזַ וּמִחֻצַּב הַפֶּתַח־מִים,  
 יְדִידוֹת קִשְׁרָה נִפְשֵׁי בְּנִפְשׁוֹ, / בְּעוֹד רֶכְבִּי נְדוּד אֵינִם רִתּוּמִים,  
 בְּעוֹד לֹא נִסְתָּה נִפְשֵׁי פְרִידָה / וְאִתְּנוּ בְּנֵי יָמִים שְׁלָמִים.  
 יִלְדוּנוּ בְּנוֹת יָמִים פְּרוּדִים, / וְבֵת אֶהְבֶּה יִלְדֵּתְנוּ תְּאוּמִים,  
 אֲמוֹנִים עַל עֲרוּגַת הַבְּשָׂמִים, / וְיוֹנְקֵי שֵׁד שְׂדֵי בֵּת הַפְּרָמִים!  
 זְכָרְתִּיךְ עָלֵי הָרִי בְּתָרִים – תְּמוֹל הָיוּ בֶּן הָרִי בְּשָׂמִים –  
 וְעַפְעָפִי מְגוֹלְלִים בְּדַמְעָה, / וְהִדְמַעְתָּ מְגוֹלְלָה בְּדָמִים.  
 זְכָרְתִּיךְ וְנִזְכָּרְתִּי לְיָמִים / עֲבָרְנוּמוֹ וְהֵינּוּ כְּחוֹלָמִים.  
 הִמְיָרְךָ לִי זָמַן בּוֹגֵד בְּכָל אִישׁ / אֲשֶׁר לְבוֹ קָרֵב וּבְפִיו שְׁלוּמִים,  
 אֲדַבֵּר בָּם, וְאִם אֲמַצָּא בְּפִיהֶם / תְּמוּרַת מִנֵּן חֲצִיר וְשׁוּמִים.  
 חֲמָסִי וְחֲמָתִי עַל פִּתְאִים / אֲשֶׁר הֵמָּה בְּעֵינֵיהֶם חֲכָמִים,  
 אֲשֶׁר קָרָאוּ לְשִׁקְרֵיהֶם אֲמוּנוֹת / וְקָרָאוּ שֵׁם אֲמוּנוֹתֵי קִסְמִים,  
 אֲשֶׁר זָרְעוּ וְקִצְרוּ שְׂבָלֵיהֶם / וְשָׁמְחוּ בָם, וְאִם הֵמָּה צְנוּמִים.  
 וְחִיצוֹנֵי דְבַר חֲכָמָה חֲרָשִׁים / לְכִסּוֹת הַפְּנִינִים הַפְּנִינִים,  
 וְלִי גֵרֹת אֲחַפֵּשׁ-בָם חֲדָרֵי / וְאוֹצִיא מִגְּנָזִיו הַלְּשָׁמִים,  
 וְלֹא אֲשַׁקֵּט עַד־יִשְׁתַּחֲוֶיִן / בְּחֲכָמָה לְאַלְמָתִי אֲלָמִים!  
 וְסָכַל כִּי יִבְקֶשׁ-סוֹד עֲנִיתִיו: / עָלֵי אֵף הַחֲזִיר מֶה לְנִזְמִים?  
 וְאֵיךְ עַל לֹא מְקוֹם זָרַע אֲבָקֶשׁ / עֲנִנִי לְעֶרֶף עָלִיו גִּשְׁמִים?  
 וְצָרְכִי לְזָמַן נֶקֶל, וְנִדְמָה / כְּמוֹ צֶרֶךְ נִשְׁמָה לְגִשְׁמִים,  
 אֲשֶׁר מִדִּי יִכִּילוּהָ תַחֲמִים, / וְאִם נִלְאוּ – עֲזָבְתָם צְלָמִים.

Wander-life, you are an old friend—  
 And the River of Tears has owed for long years.  
 Shall I quarrel with fate? But why fault what is  
 fated?  
 Or with time that goes by? What else should time  
 do!  
 Like a skein from the spindle it runs straight and  
 true,  
 As does all made above. This may not be new;  
 But the world is not new and its laws are writ in  
 God's hand.  
 How expect them to change when they all bear His  
 stamp,  
 And all things run their course and each cause has  
 its cause?  
 Men are joined in order to part—that's how  
 differences start,  
 From which nations are born and the earth is  
 peopled with tribes.  
 Nothing is all good or bad; every potion is also a  
 poison,  
 And the day cursed as paltry by one man, others  
 praise for its bounty.  
 A rich dish is a treat if you're well, hot coals in your  
 mouth when you're ill,  
 And so black is the sight of the man who is vexed  
 that it darkens all light  
 As my eyes are clouded and wet because Moshe is  
 gone.  
 The source of all wisdom, his words were pure  
 nuggets of gold!  
 Our friendship is old; it goes back to when no one  
 harnessed or rode  
 The wagons of wandering's road, and my soul  
 Was unpracticed at parting, and our days were  
 unfractured and whole.  
 Time bore us separately, but Love, which bore us  
 twins,  
 Raised us in her spice garden and nursed us with  
 guzzled wines.  
 When I think of you, many mountains away  
 (why, just yesterday  
 You were my pleasure's peak!),

the blood leaves my cheeks  
 For the tears running down them. I think—and remember the days  
 That once were. Were we dreaming? What a traitor time is!  
 It has taken you from me and given me strife-minded men

Who pretend to be friends.  
The more their manners  
Stink like garlic, the more I miss the manna of your speech.  
Damn the fools who are so wise in their own eyes  
That their own lies they deem the dogmas of true faith,  
And my faith sorcery! They sow and reap empty ears and call it grain;  
With the exteriors of fashion they cover up the gems within.  
But I will mine truth's storerooms for its rarest stones  
And rest not till their sheaves bow down to mine.  
"What? And cast my pearls before the swine?"  
I'll say when they come knocking. "Why on seedless soil  
Let fall my rain?" No, all I need from this poor age is what my soul  
Needs from my body: a place to live in while it lasts,  
And to abandon when it topples and we leave.

Brody, Diwan, 1:224-225 (epistle 7 to Rabbi David of Narbonne)

I have not even had time to respond to his letter, much less to do what he asked. Great deeds are ascribed to me. People exaggerate about me and make great claims about me, and many falsely sing my praises, while the multitude, who will believe anything, look to me for the wisdom of Kalkol and Darda, though I have neither culture nor learning. The result is that I am caught up day and night and in between with the foolishness of medicine, though it can never heal them. This is a great city inhabited by powerful men, hard masters whom I can only satisfy by wasting my days on their whims and using up my years healing their ills. "We have tried to cure Babylon, but she has not been cured." All I ask of God, my only petition to Him, is that He bring about some favorable turn of events of the kind He has in infinite number; that He save me speedily, proclaim my freedom from slavery, find me a place of rest, and exile me to the place of the living waters that surge from your spring, to the fountains of your age's sages whose waters emerge from a sacred source.

"And he wrote this when he drank a potion."

HEAL ME, LORD

Heal me, Lord, and I will be healed.  
Don't let me perish in your anger.  
All my balms and potions are yours  
to guide to weakness or to vigor.  
It's you alone who chooses, not me;  
you know best what's flawed and pure.  
It isn't my medicine on which I rely—  
I look instead toward your cure.

ראב"ד כתוב שם לראש השנה (לדף כ: דף ה ברי"ף)

אמר אברהם: אחר הדברים האלה, ואחר הגליון כלו זה, והריח אשר הריח מן הכוזרי ומחבורי רבי אברהם ב"ר חייא הספרדי כי הם פירשו ההלכות הללו על זה הדרך עצמו והוא מתעטר בעדים שאינם שלו, אין לנו ללמד מדברי מי שאינו מאנשי התלמוד לפי שהם מסבבים פני ההלכה לדבריהם כאשר לא כן.

Citations of R. Yehudah Halevi in Avraham ibn Ezra's Commentaries:

Bereshit (2nd commentary) 1:3, 6:2  
Shemot (2nd commentary) 4:10, 13:14, 20:2, 24:11  
Bamidbar 27:3

Devarim 14:22, 15:9, 26:17-18, 29:18-19, 33:5

Zechariah (1st commentary) 8:6

Tehillim (2nd commentary) 18:5, 30:8, 49:21, 72:20, 73:25, 80:16, 82:8, 139:14, 150:1

Daniel (2nd commentary) 9:2

## Life/Career as a Poet

DYH, 1:89. A muwashshah. In "If Only I Could Be," below, HaLevi employs the same form and similar motifs in a powerful liturgical poem.

The blame then is mine,  
not his who stole my heart,  
and yet my pain was great  
the day that I departed  
from his tents despite  
his pleas that I stay on.  
But Time's thread led me out,  
and onward to another;  
Time despised me so,  
it saw to my departure.

DYH, 2:316; HaShira, #178:2

### WHEN A LONE SILVER HAIR

When a lone silver hair appeared on my head  
I plucked it out with my hand, and it said:

"You've beaten me one on one—  
but what will you do with the army to come?"

שֶׁעַר שִׁיבָה בְּהִרְאוֹת יְחִידִי / עָלִי רֹאשִׁי, קִטְפָּתִיהוּ בְּיָדִי.  
הַשִּׁיבָנִי "יִכְלָתֵנִי לְבָדִי – / וּמָה תַעֲשֶׂה בָּבוֹא אַחֲרֵי גְדוּדֵי?"

"You win against me alone one on one / But what will you do when my army will come"

Riddle of a cloud DYH 2:209

### IV

What cries without an eyelid or eye  
and weeping makes all glad—  
and when it's happy, and sheds no tears,  
with joy makes men sad?

*With its own joy makes all the people sad*

וּמָה בִּכְה בְּלִי עֵין וְעַפְעָף  
בְּבִכְיָה יִשְׁמְחוּ בָנִים וְאָבוֹת  
וְעַת תִּשְׁחַק וְלֹא תִבְכֶּה בְּעֵינָהּ  
בְּשִׁחְקָהּ תַעֲצִיב כָּל-הַלְּבָבוֹת.

## Kuzari and Poetry

Kuzari 5:16 (Hartwig Herschfeld translation)

The consummate philosopher, like the prophet, can only impart little to another person in the way of instruction, and cannot refute his objections dialectically. As to the master of Kalām, learning sheds its lustre on him, thereby inducing his hearers to place him above the pious and immaculate whose learning consists in principles of a creed which allow of no refutation. The final aim of the Mutakallim in everything he learns and teaches is that these principles of creed enter his soul as well as that of his disciples in the same natural form as they exist in the soul of the pious person. In some cases the art of the Kalām does him greater harm than the principles of truth, because it teaches doubts and traditional prejudices. We experience a similar thing with people who apply themselves to prosody and practice scanning metres. There we can hear braying and a babel of words in an art which offers no difficulties to those naturally gifted. The latter enjoy making verses in which no fault can be found. The aim of the former class is to be like the latter who appear ignorant of the art of verse-making, because they cannot learn what the others are able to teach. The naturally gifted person, however, can teach one similarly endowed with the slightest hint. In the same manner sparks are kindled in the souls of people naturally open to religion and approachment to God, by the words of the pious, sparks which become luminaries in their hearts, whilst those who are not so gifted must have recourse to the Kalām. He often derives no benefit from it, nay, he comes to grief over it.

## Dreams

### Kuzari, Author's Introduction (my translation based on Shilat and Shvartz)

This king—so it is said—had a dream that kept recurring. In his dream appeared an angel, who spoke to him and said: “Your intentions are worthy in the eyes of the Creator, but your deeds are not.” Now, the king was a scrupulous observer of the religion of the Khazars, so much so that he personally officiated in their temple and offered sacrifices with all his heart. Yet no matter how scrupulous he was, the angel kept appearing night after night and telling him, “Your intentions are worthy but your deeds are not.”

- The Kuzari 1:79, which states that the “conditions which render man fit to receive [the] divine influence do not lie within him.”
- The Kuzari, 4:3: “But our intellect...cannot penetrate to the true knowledge of things, except by the grace of God, by special faculties which He has placed in the senses....To the chosen among His creatures He has given an inner eye which sees things as they really are, without any alteration. . . [The] prophets without doubt saw the divine world with the inner eye... His sight reaches up to the heavenly host directly, he sees the dwellers in heaven, and the spiritual beings which are near God, and others in human form.”

## TRUE LIFE

I run to the source of the one true life,  
turning my back to all that is empty and vain.  
My only hope is to see the Lord, my king—  
apart from Him I fear and worship nothing.

If only I might see Him—at least in a dream—  
I'd sleep forever, so the dream would never end.  
If I could see his face in my heart's chamber,  
I'd never need to look outside again.



לקראת מקור חיי אמת ארוצה,  
 על בן בחיי שוא וריק אקוצה.  
 לראות פני מלכי מגמתי לבד--  
 לא אערץ בלתי ולא אעריצה.  
 מי יתני לחזותו בחלום?--  
 אישן שנת עולם ולא אקיצה.  
 לו אחזה פניו בלבי ביתה  
 לא שאלו עיני להביט חוצה.

Toward the fountain of true life I run,  
 disgusted by this life of emptiness,  
 my only goal to see my sovereign's face.  
 None other do I fear, none else revere.  
 If only I could see Him in a dream—  
 O then I'd sleep forever, never wake.  
 If I could see His face within my heart,  
 my eyes would never bother looking outward!

DYH, 2: 302; HaShira, #202. (with Schindlin's translation, then Peter Cole's, then Hillel Halkin's)  
 Fleischer and Gil suggest that the poem was most likely written in Egypt (HaLevi uVenei Hugo, p. 235)

נמת וגרממת וחרד קמת--  
 מה החלום הזה אשר חלמת?  
 אולי חלומך הראך שונאך  
 כי דל וכי שפל, ואתה רמת.  
 אמרו לבן הגר: אסף יד גאונה  
 מבן גברתך אשר זעמת!  
 שפל ראיתך ושומם בחלום;  
 אולי בהקיץ בן כבד שממת,  
 ושנת תת"ץ תתץ לך כל גאונה,  
 תבוש ותחפר מאשר זממת.  
 האת אשר נקרא שמך פרא אנוש?  
 מה כבדה ידך ומה עצמת!  
 האת מקרא פם ממלל רברבן  
 ואשר בקדישי זבל גלחמת.  
 האת חסף שינא ברגלי פרזלא  
 באחרית באת והתרוממת.  
 אולי נגפך אל באבנא די מחת  
 צלמא, ושלם לך אשר הקדמת.

You dozed and fell asleep and rose in fear;  
 What was this dream you dreamed, already unclear?  
 Perhaps your dream revealed to you your foe—  
 You the master; he humbled and low.  
 Tell Hagar's son, "Let down your haughty hand  
 from Sarah's son, the rival you have scorned.  
 for I have seen you in my dream, a ruin;  
 Perhaps in life, you really are undone.  
 Perhaps this year, eleven-hundred thirty  
 will see your pride thrown down, your thinking thwarted.  
 Yes, you who now are known as 'desert ass':  
 how mighty is your hand, how puissant.  
 Yea, thou are cleped the haughty-speaking mouth,  
 who warrest with the holy ones of heaven—  
 yea, thou the clay mixed with the iron feet,  
 come at the end of days, in pride uprisen—  
 haply He hath hurled the stone, smashed  
 The effigy, requital for thine ancient misdeeds given."

YOU SLEPT, THEN TREMBLING ROSE

You dozed and slept, then trembling rose:  
 What is this dream that you have dreamed?  
 Perhaps the vision showed you your foes,  
 weakened and humbled, with you supreme?  
 Tell Hagar's son: Draw in the hand  
 you raised in pride and anger over

Heart pounding, you wake. Is it as it seemed?  
 What is this dream that you have dreamed?  
 Did its vision truly show  
 Yourself raised high and your foe laid low?  
 Tell Hagar's son, then, "Cease to scorn



The son of Sarah, higher born,  
 For in my dream you were undone.  
 Has your doom so soon begun  
 That in the year 4890  
 Your sway will end in naught also?  
 Proud tyrant! Assailant of heaven!  
 Are you not the one Called 'wild ass of a man'  
 and pum memalel ravrevan,  
 The last to rise against God's Law,  
 Ḥasaf tina be-raglei farzela?  
 Suppose He struck you down with  
 avna di-meḥat  
                     Tsalma,  
 and paid you back for all  
 that you begot!"

נִפְשִׁי לְבֵית אֵל נִכְסְפָה גַם כָּלֶתָהּ,  
 גַּם בְּחִלּוּמוֹת לַחֲזוֹתֶיהָ עָלֶתָהּ.  
 עָלֶתָהּ וְלֹא מִצָּאָה אַרְוֶכָה, כִּי חִלּוֹם  
 לֹא יִחַלִּים נֶפֶשׁ בְּהִקִּיץ חֶלֶתָהּ.  
 חֶלֶתָהּ בַּיּוֹם לֹא חֶלֶתָהּ פָּנִים אֲשֶׁר  
 לוֹלִי יִקְרָם וְהִדְרָם בְּלֶתָהּ.  
 בְּלֶתָהּ לְהִתְחַדֵּשׁ, וַיִּגְעָה לַעֲלוֹת,  
 כִּי לֹא לְתַחֲוֹ גִלְתָּהּ יוֹם גִּלְתָּהּ.  
 גִּלְתָּהּ וּדְלַתִּי מִעֵין פֶּתַחָהּ, וְעוֹד  
 עֵינָה אֵלַי מִים עִמָּקִים תָּלֶתָהּ.  
 תָּלֶתָהּ עָלֵי יִתֵּד וְאֶסֶר אֶסְכָּה  
 בִּלְתֵּעוֹב חֲכָמָה, וְאֶלָּה אֶלֶתָהּ.

My soul is yearning, longing for the House of God,  
 in dreams she tries to rise to see Him—  
 rises, finds no comfort. How can dreams  
 bring healing to a soul in sorrow?—  
 in sorrow since the day she first was barred  
 from visiting the Presence  
 without Whose splendor she would fade away.  
 She fades away to be renewed,  
 and struggles upward—  
 not for no purpose was she exiled.  
 Exiled, she opened a fountain's door,  
 lifts her eye to deeper waters;  
 lifts herself onto a solid perch, makes solemn vows  
 never to abandon wisdom,  
 binds herself with solemn oaths.

From the poem היכל אדני,

שֶׁפָּדָה תְּפִלָּה וְצוּר מִתְעַלֵּם,  
 וְשָׁמַע חֲרָפוֹת וַיְהִי כְּאֵלִים.  
 בְּשׁוֹב שְׁבוּת צִיּוֹן הָיָה כְּחוֹלִם,  
 וּבְהִקִּיצוֹ אֵין פּוֹתֵר חִלּוּמוֹ.

Brody, Diwan, 3:65(?)

My heart beheld You and was sure of You  
 as if I stood myself at Sinai mountain.  
 I sought You in my dreams; Your glory passed  
 before my face on clouds descending, landing.

<p>ישן ולבו ער בער ומשתער צא נא והנער ולכה באור פני</p> <p>קומה צלח ורכב דרך לך כוכב ואשר בבור שכב עלה לראש סיני</p> <p>אל תעלז נפשם האמרים תאשם ציון והנה שם לבי ושם עיני</p> <p>אגל ואסתר אקצף ואעתר מי יחמל יותר מני עלי בני</p>	<p>Asleep yet heart aflame / Wild passion none can tame / Arise, shake off your shame / And walk in my light's glow</p> <p>Rise up and ride with might / A star guides through the night / Who lay in pit's dark site / Now climbs where Sinai shows</p> <p>Let not their souls delight / Who say "Zion's lost quite" / For there my heart burns bright / My eyes forever go</p> <p>I hide, then am revealed / In wrath, then grace I yield / Who loves with greater shield / My children here below</p>
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אלהי! משכנותיך ידידות,  
וקרבתך במראה, לא בחידות.  
הביאני חלומי מקדשי אל,  
ושרתי מלאכותיו החמודות,  
והעולה ומנחתה ונסכה,  
וסביב תימרות עשן כבודות.  
ונעמתי בשמעי שיר לויים  
בסודיהם לסדר העבודות.  
הקיצותי, ועודי עמך אל,  
והודיתי, ולך נאה להודות.

O God, the joy of being near You!—  
for being near means seeing,  
not mere speculation.  
I dreamed that I was in God's Temple  
watching every lovely, holy rite:  
the whole-burnt sacrifice, the meal and wine,  
the thick smoke twisting upward,  
Levites singing, me among them, blissful,  
as they did their service.  
I woke, but still with You, O Lord,  
offering my gratitude.  
How good to give You thanks!

Your dwellings, Lord, are places of love,  
And Your nearness is clear as things seen, not guessed of.  
My dream took me to Your Temple's mount to sing  
In all its lovely worshiping and bring  
My offerings with their libations.  
Around me swirled thick smoke and ministrations  
Sweet to my ears, of Levites at their stations.  
I woke, but when I did You still were there  
For me to thank You as befits my prayer

Brody, Diwan, 3:122–23 (יקר אדון הנפלאות), lines 6–12. Like poem 2, it is an ofan, designed for the qedusha preceding the Shema in the morning service

לְבֹא לְפָנָיו נִקְרְאוּ  
בְּרָא נַפְשׁוֹת נִבְּאוּ  
נָתַן וְכֹלֶת בָּם לִפְגֵּשׁ  
הַמַּחְזוֹת הַנִּקְרְאוּ :

וְיִבְלְמוּ מַלְכוּתוֹ  
עַל-מַחְזִיקֵי בְּרִיתוֹ  
כִּי מִמְּקוֹרֵי חַדְשָׁתוֹ  
יִבְלְמוּ מִשְׁכָּבוֹ

מִלְמַדֵּי סוֹד וְנִבְיאוֹת  
וְאוֹר-פְּנֵי-מֶלֶךְ לְדָרֶשׁ  
בֵּין בְּחִלּוֹם בֵּין בְּמִרְאוֹת  
פֶּתַח אֲדֻנֵּיהֶם צִבְאוֹת :

He has created prophesying souls  
summoned to come before Him,  
and given them the strength to encounter  
the awful vision.

They behold His royal train  
and walk among His angels.

They pour His generous spirit  
over those who are true to His covenant

For they draw rivers of prophecy  
from the sources of His wisdom;  
for they are familiar with mysteries and prophecy,  
both in dreams and visions.

In quest of the face of the King  
they crowd around the gate of their Lord.

נר.  
פזמון למצות עשה.

וּמִחֲבֹשׁ לְעַצְבוֹתֵינוּ  
אֶל-אֶרֶץ מוֹשְׁבֵתֵינוּ  
נִדְרֵינוּ וְנִדְבָתֵינוּ  
אֶת-קִרְבָּנוֹת חוֹבוֹתֵינוּ :

וְהַפְּלֵאִים הַקְּדָמוֹנִים  
בְּעֵלֹם זוֹלָתָהּ אֲדֻנֵּים  
וְחִסְדֵּי הָרִאשִׁימִים  
עֲמָנוּ פָּנִים בְּפָנִים  
אֶת-שְׁנֵי לוֹחַת הָאֲבָנִים  
סָפְרוּ לָנוּ אֲבוֹתֵינוּ :

יְדַע מִכֹּאֲבֵינוּ  
שׁוּבָה אֶת-דְּבָבֵינוּ  
וְשֵׁם גַּעֲלָה עֲלוֹתֵינוּ  
וְשֵׁם גַּעֲשָׂה לְפָנֶיךָ  
וְהַזְכִּירוּ הַיּוֹם אֲמֹנִים  
וְאַנְחוּ הַבָּנִים  
אֵיזָה בְּרִית אֵל לְאַתָּנִים  
בְּדַבְרוֹ מִשְׁמֵי מְעֹנִים  
וּבִתְלוֹתוֹ בְּיַד צִיר אֲמֹנִים  
וְאַיֵּה כָל-נַפְלְאוֹתָיו אֲשֶׁר-

From time's beginning you were love's dwelling;  
wherever you dwelled, my love would rest.  
My rivals' taunts are sweet through your Name:  
they torture one whom you have tortured,  
and because they learned their wrath from you  
I love them for hounding one you've stricken.  
Since you scorned me I've scorned myself,  
for how could I honor what earns your disdain,  
until—indignation passes . . . and you send  
redemption to a people you once redeemed.

מֵאִז מְעוֹן הָאֱהָבָה הָיִיתָ – / חֲנוּ אֱהָבִי בְּאֶשֶׁר חֲנִיתָ.  
תּוֹכָחוֹת מְרִיבֵי עָרְבוּ לִי עַל שְׁמֶךָ, / עֲזָבְם – יַעֲנוּ אֶת אֲשֶׁר עֲנִיתָ.  
לְמַדּוֹ חֲרוֹנֶךָ אוֹיְבִי – וְאֱהָבָם / כִּי רָדְפוּ חָלַל אֲשֶׁר הִכִּיתָ.  
מִיּוֹם בְּזִיתָנִי בְּזִיתִינִי אֲנִי, / כִּי לֹא אֶכְבֵּד אֶת אֲשֶׁר בְּזִיתָ –  
עַד יַעֲבֹר-זַעַם וְתִשְׁלַח עוֹד פְּדוּת / אֶל נַחֲלָתְךָ זֹאת אֲשֶׁר פָּדִיתָ.

Adapted from an Arabic poem by Abu-l-Shis. Cf Scheindlin (Gazelle, pp. 79–83).

See also The Kuzari, 1:115: "If we bear our exile and degradation for God's sake, as is meet, we shall be the pride of the generation which will come with the Messiah, and accelerate the day of the deliverance we hope for."

**Letter (Brody Diwan, translated by Scheindlin "Song" p. 130-132)**

My deeds are diminished, my thoughts are lost and find no vision from God. I cannot find the children of my mind. I regret ever having begotten them, for they have gone rebellious on me like the house of rebellion, setting their faces hard, closing their eyes, and stopping their ears. . . . I spread my net and drew my bow, when no one was with me, meaning to draw them to do my will and to bring them into the folds of my rein. I summoned them in your name, set riders on them and, lo! They came running, one after one, for now the divine vision was everywhere: Who could not prophesy? Thus I have come today to send you greetings, to attend you in your place, and to proclaim to my lord how sorry I am that I ever left you, since I love you. When I think of you, I seek you, but do not find you... And may the two of us return to the delights of wine and the delusions of the eye . . . for you and I both remember the poems we used to compose in the days of our youth, so fine, now flown. You ask, "Can it be done when the heart is youthless and no longer feckless, when one looks around and sees no gleam of light, and when spring rains fall no longer?" One day, your friends were busy drinking and firing the brazier of love. They gave me something to drink, too, and we talked of old times. I awoke speaking verses, uttering words fit for princes, poems of friendship, with a particular delightful man in mind. So now, in your kindness, take this offering, cense yourself with its fragrance, and forgive its shortcomings.

**Letter to R. Habib (published by Y. Ratzhaby, translated by Scheindlin "Song" p. 16)**

I call this place "Busy," for it keeps me on the run. It makes me the watchman of others' vineyards while I neglect my own, makes me have dealings with healing, diverts me from the prophets' words. . . . I wish, I wish, I wish the Merciful One would restore me to what I was before and bring back my youth! I would go back to studying [what I failed to study] and achieve a wisdom I failed to achieve before. I would stay among the columns and listen like the students. . . . But what can I do, now that the white hairs have overwhelmed the black, tender youth has turned to tinder, and dawn has turned to sunset? Now that the turn of years has altered me and the seasons made me falter and set me on coals? I have aroused myself and shaken out my clothing and rowed hard to get back to the dry land, yet I have failed. I have searched out my conscience and laid bare my hidden self; but no vision came, and my meditations brought no revelation from God.

## Piyyut

One line from מי כמוך - פיוט לכבוד פורים

קשב רב קשב צרור המור (שיר השירים א יג)  
מסריסי המלך הקבועים לשמור  
והנם חושבים על המלך לאמר  
הבה נתחכמה לו (שמות א י')

**יה שמע אביוניך / ר' יהודה הלוי**

יְהִי שְׁמֵעַ אֲבִיוֹנֶיךָ הַמַּחֲלִים פְּנֶיךָ  
אֲבִינוּ לְבִנֶיךָ אֶל תַּעֲלֵם אֶזְנֶךָ

יְהִי עִם מַמְעַמְקֵי יִקְרָאוּ מְרֹב מְצֻקִים  
אֶל נָא תְּשִׁיבֵם רַקִּים הַיּוֹם מִלְפָּנֶיךָ

הֹוֹתֵם וְעֹנֵם מַחֵה נִרְבִּי זְדוֹנָם



ואם לא תעשה למענם עשה צורי למענך

ומחה היום חובם ורצה כמו שי ניבם  
ולך תכין לבם וגם תקשיב אזנך

דמעת פניהם תשעה ותאסוף עדר תועה  
ותקים לך רעה ופקוד בטוב צאנך

הולכי בדרך נכחה תבשרם היום סליחה  
ובתפלת המנחה המציאם חנך

### רסג

-----  
יום שבתון אין לשלח  
זכרו פריח הניחוח  
יונה מצאה בו מנוח  
ושם ננוחו יגיעי כח  
-----  
היום נכבד לבני אמונים  
5 זהירים לשמרו אבות ובנים  
חקוק בשני לוחות אבנים  
מרב אונים ואמיץ כח  
ומתוך ערפל האיר אפל  
ועל עב הרים יושבי שפל  
ומגדל צרי אראה נופל  
אף אנכי מלאתי כח  
-----  
10 דרך פנעל אויבים וצרים  
וגם המער קרסלי זרים  
ואז יענו לך עמי בשירים  
אל המהלך על פנפי רוח  
-----  
העם אשר נע וכצאן תעה  
זכר לו ופקד ברית ושבועה  
15 לבל יעבר בו מקרה רעה  
כאשר נשבע על מי נח.

מְקוֹמְךָ נִעְלָה וְנִסְתָּר  
בְּבוֹרְךָ מְלֵא עוֹלָם

יְהוָה אֵנָּה אֲמַצְאָךְ  
וְאֵנָּה לֹא אֲמַצְאָךְ

Where, Lord, will I find you:  
your place is high and obscured.  
And where  
won't I find you:  
your glory fills the world. . . .

I sought your nearness:  
with all my heart I called you.  
And in my going  
out to meet you,  
I found you coming toward me.

Where, God, could I find you  
Your place is exalted, obscured  
Yet where would I not find you  
Your glory fills the world

וְעַל מַלְכוּתְךָ עָלָם  
וְאַתָּה נוֹתֵן אֲכָלָם  
בְּכָל לְבִי קָרָאתִיךָ  
לְקָרְאֲתִי מִצְּאֲתִיךָ  
בִּקְרֹשׁ חַיִּיתִיךָ

מִי זֶה לֹא יִירָאָךְ  
אוֹ מִי לֹא יִקְרָאָךְ  
דְּרֹשְׁתִּי קִרְבְּךָ  
וּבִצְאָתִי לְקָרְאֲתִיךָ  
15 וּבִפְלְאֵי גְבוּרָתְךָ

...  
I sought your nearness  
Called with all my heart to you.  
And when I went to greet you,  
Coming to meet me I found you!  
In the wonders of your might  
Your temple is in my sight.  
Who says he has not seen you?  
But the heavens and their hordes  
Are speaking of your glory

Without their voices being heard

## Expressions of Religious Longing

SQYH, #28; HaShira, #225

# כח

— — — — —

עָבַד אֱלֹהִים עוֹשֵׁנִי  
כָּל יוֹם וְהוּא יִקְרִיבֵנִי

נִפְשִׁי וְגוֹי קִנִּיתָ  
וּמִחְשְׁבוֹתַי רָאִיתָ  
וְכָל דְּרָכַי יָדִיתָ

מִי זֶה אֲשֶׁר יִכְשִׁילֵנִי  
מִי בִלְתָּךְ יִתִּירֵנִי

לִהְיוֹת קְרוֹבִים אֵלֶיךָ  
יִרְחָקוּם מֵעֲלֶיךָ  
מֵעַל נְתִיב מַעְגְּלֶיךָ

בְּאַמְתָּךְ הִדְרִיבֵנִי  
בְּדִין וְאֵל תִּרְשִׁיעֵנִי  
לַעֲשׂוֹת רְצוֹנְךָ מִתְרַפֶּה  
מֵה זֶה אֲיַחֵל וְאֲצַפֶּה  
כִּי עֲמֶךָ אֵל הַמִּרְפָּא

זִקְנָה וְכַחַי יִנְשָׁנִי  
צוּרִי וְאֵל תַּעֲזֹבֵנִי

אֲשֶׁב וְחָרַד לְרַגְעִי  
אֱלֹהִים בְּחִבְלֵי תַעֲתוּעָי  
מִרֹב חֲטָאִי וּפִשְׁעִי

עוֹזֶן אֲשֶׁר יִבְדִּילֵנִי  
לְרֵאוֹת בְּאוֹרְךָ עֵינִי

— — — — —

מִי יִתְגַּבֵּנִי  
וְיִרְחָקֵנִי

יּוֹצְרִי וְרוֹעִי  
בְּנֶתֶךָ לְרַעִי  
5 אֲרָחִי וְרֹבְעִי

אִם תַּעֲזֹבֵנִי  
אֲוֹ תַעֲצֹרֵנִי

הֵמוּ קִרְבִּי  
אִוִּלָּם עֲצָבִי  
10 יִטּוּ נְתִיבִי

יְהִי לְמִדָּתִי  
וְלֹאִם נִחַנִּי  
וְאֲנִי בְּעֶדְנָה  
אֲפִי כִי בְּזִקְנָה  
15 אֵל נָא רַפָּא נָא

יוֹם תִּתְשָׁנִי  
אֵל תִּתְשָׁנִי

דָּבָא וְאִמְלֵל  
עָרוֹם וְשׁוֹלֵל  
20 וְאֲנִי מִחוּלָל

בִּינָךְ וּבִינִי  
וְיִחְשְׁכֵנִי

If only I could be  
a slave to God who made me;  
though others drive me away,  
He always draws me near.

My shepherd, my creator,  
you formed my frame and soul,  
you've understood my mind,  
you've seen all that it holds.  
You circumscribe my ways,  
my wandering and repose.  
If you came to help me,  
who could cast me down?  
And if you hold me back,  
who would set me free?

My heart within me yearns  
to have you draw it near,  
but all my cares just drive it  
further from you still.

My road, now, has turned  
far from your own will.  
Lord, my God, instruct me,  
guide me on your path,  
and lead me gently into  
judgment: don't condemn me.

If I, within my youth,  
am slow to bring you pleasure,  
what then in decline  
could I expect or hope for?  
Heal me, Lord, heal me—  
my cure's with you alone.  
When old age roots me out  
and strength no longer knows me—  
My Rock, O my Lord,  
please, do not forsake me.

Abject and weak I'll sit,  
 at every moment trembling,  
 naked, I'll go stripped,  
 vain in my delusion,  
 bruised within my sin,  
 wounded in transgression.  
 Between us now my trespass  
 has raised a great divide,  
 and so I'm kept from seeing  
 your light with my own eyes.

Incline my heart to offer  
 in service of your kingdom,  
 and purify my thoughts  
 to bring me toward your heaven.  
 In my hour of pain  
 come quickly with your healing.  
 Hear me, now, my Lord,  
 don't withdraw or hurt me.  
 Redeem me once again—  
 and tell me: *Here I am.*

לַעֲבֹד עֲבוֹדַת מַלְכוּתְךָ  
 טָהֵר לְדַעַה אֱלֹהוּתְךָ  
 אֵל נָא תֹאחֶר וּרְפֹאיוֹתְךָ  
 אֵל תִּחְשָׁה וּתְעַנְנִי  
 וְאָמַר לְעַבְדְּךָ הִנְנִי.

הִטָּה לִבִּי  
 וּמַחֲשַׁבִּי  
 25 וּבָרְצַת כְּאָבִי  
 אֵלִי עֲנֵנִי  
 שְׁנִית קִנְנִי

Incline my heart to serve  
 The service of your sovereignty  
 And my thoughts purify  
 To know your divinity  
 God, answer me  
 Don't be silent at my pain  
 At the hour that I ache  
 Do not delay, for you can heal  
 Remake me anew  
 And say to your servant, "I am here"

## 6. Exile

SQYH, #330; HaShira, #190. An ahava.

של

— — — — —  
 אוֹהֶבָה כּוֹעֵס וְלָמָּה צָחָקָה  
 הַמְבַקְשׁוֹת לְחֶשֶׁק יוֹד חֲשָׁקָה

יַעֲלֶה עַל הַצָּבִי הַתְּרַפָּקָה  
 הַבְּרִית אֵי הַשְׂכִּינָה דְּבָקָה  
 כִּי תִכְבּוֹה וְהִיא אֵשׁ נִשְׁקָה.

— — — — —  
 יַעֲלֶה חֵן מִמְּעוֹנָה רָחֵקָה  
 צָחָקָה עַל בֵּית אָדוֹם וּבְנוֹת עָרֵב

הֵן פְּרָאִים הֵם וְאֵיךְ יִדְמוּ אֵלֵי  
 אֵי נְבוּזָה אֵי מְנוּרָה אֵי אֲרוֹן  
 5 אֵל מְשֻׁנָּאִי אֵל תִּכְבּוֹ אֶהְיָה



## A DOE FAR FROM HOME

That graceful doe so far from her home  
is laughing although her beloved is angry.  
Her laughter's aimed at the daughters of Edom  
and Hagar—who long for him with envy.

How could desert asses compare  
to a doe who leaned once on her hart?  
Where are their prophecies? Where is their lamp?  
Where is His Presence above the Ark?

Don't seek, my foes, to smother this love,  
whose flame your envy only fans.

## תא

ולא פי אלשאם וכצאיץ א"י ופצאילה (ולו על ארץ ישראל, סגולותיה ומעלותיה).

— — — — —

דורשי שלומך והם יתר עדריך	ציון הלא תשאלי לשלום אסריך
רחוק וקרוב שאי מכל עברריך	מים ומזרח ומצפון ותימן שלום
הרמון ונכסף לרדתם על הרריך	ושלום אסיר תאנה, נותן דמעיו כטל-
שיבת שבותך אני כנור לשירריך	לבפות עניתך אני תנים ועת אהלם
ולמחנים וכל פגעי טהורריך	לבי לבית אל ולפניאל מאד יהמה

נגלו אלהים לחורריך וצריך	10 מי יתגני משוטט במקומות אשר
אנוד לבתר לבבי בין בתריך	מי יעשה לי כנפים וארחיק נדד
ניך מאד ואחונן את עפרריך	אפל לאפי עלי ארצך וארצה אב-
תטח בחברון עלי מבחר קברריך	אבכה בעמדי עלי קברות אבותי ואש-
עודך ואשתוממה אל הר עברריך	אעבר ביערך וכרמלך ואעמד בגל-
אורים גדולים מאירריך ומורריך	15 הר העברים והר ההר אשר שם שני

20 אֵיךְ יַעֲרֹב לִי אֶכֶל וְשָׂתוֹת בְּעֵת אַחֲזָה כִּי יִסְחָבוּ הַכְּלָבִים אֶת כְּפִירִי:  
אוֹ אֵיךְ מֵאוֹר יוֹם יְהִי מְתוֹק לְעֵינַי בְּעוֹד אֶרְאֶה בְּפִי עוֹרְבִים פִּגְרֵי נִשְׁרִי:  
כּוֹס הַיְּגוֹנִים לֹאט הָרָפִי מַעַט כִּי כָבֵד מָלְאוּ כְסֵלִי וְנִפְשִׁי מִמְּרוֹרֶיךָ

תב

— — — — —  
אֵיךְ אֶטְעָמָה אֶת אֲשֶׁר אֶכֶל וְאֵיךְ יַעֲרֹב  
צִיּוֹן בְּחֶבֶל אֲדוֹם וְאֲנִי בְּכֶבֶל עָרֹב  
יִקָּר בְּעֵינַי רְאוֹת עֲפָרוֹת דְּבִיר נִחְרָב.

— — — — —  
לְבִי בְּמִזְרַח וְאַנְכִי בְּסוֹף מַעֲרָב  
אֵיכָה אֲשַׁלֵּם גְּדָרֵי וְאַסְרֵי, בְּעוֹד  
יִקַּל בְּעֵינַי עֹזֵב כָּל טוֹב סִפְרָד, כְּמוֹ

# **Raymond Schindlin's translation:**

My heart in the East, and I in the West,  
as far West as west can be!  
How can I enjoy my food?  
What flavor can it have for me?  
How can I fulfill my vows  
or do the things I've sworn to do,  
while Zion is in Christian hands  
and I am trapped in Arab lands?  
Easily I could leave behind  
this Spain and all her luxury!—  
As easy to leave as dear the sight  
of the Temple ruins' dirt would be to me

## **Birds**

SQYH #246

הוֹמוֹת בְּפִתְחוֹן	יוֹנֵי גֵּאִיוֹת
וְנִקְלָה נִכְבְּדוֹן	גָּלָה מִחֲמִדוֹן
לִיתְרוֹ וְחִמְדוֹן	יתְרוֹ וְחִמְדוֹן
הַצְּבִי לְבָדוֹן	לְהַרְגֹּ וְאַבְדוֹן
צְנִינִים בְּצִדוֹן	5 זֶה אֶלֶף שָׁנִים
וְיִסְפְּרוּ כָּל חֲלָדוֹן	כִּי לְדִינּוֹ אִין דּוֹן

SQYH #326

<p>יונתי לילה רחבות סבבה</p> <p>הלכת לבקש את שאהבה</p> <p>הרפה לה תתן בבכי קולה</p> <p>כי מחלה עצם כעצם מעלה</p> <p>ספרה לה אלף ולא סר עליה</p> <p>רבתי עם כשכולה ישבה</p> <p>מהפכת קץ אחרי קץ חשב</p>	<p>My dove strays about the streets at night, Seeking her love with all her might;</p> <p>Her voice pours forth in tearful song, Her pain as deep as faith is strong;</p> <p>A thousand years, her yoke remains, Like childless mother wrapped in pains;</p> <p>She counts each end that fails to show, Each promised time that comes and goes.</p>
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Hillel Halkin's translation:

Far-wandering, the woodward-strayed dove

Flails in the boughs and can't find her way out,

Flounders and flings herself all about,

Frantically beating her wings toward her love.

A thousand years have now passed—yet her term

Is not over, her dreams have been dashed.

Brody, Diwan, 4:222–23 (poem 112), translated by Scheindlin

<p>יונת רחוקים, נגני הישיבי,</p> <p>ולקוראך טוב טעמד השיבי!</p> <p>הנה אליהך קראך. מהרי,</p> <p>השתחוי ארץ ושי הקריבי,</p> <p>ופני אלי קנך לדך אהלך,</p> <p>ציון, וציון בעדך הציבי.</p> <p>דורך אשר הגלך לרע פעלך</p> <p>הוא גואלך היום, ומד-תריבי?</p> <p>התיצבי לשוב לארץ הצבי,</p> <p>ושדה אדום ושדה ערב הכאיבי.</p> <p>בית מחריבך באף החריבי,</p> <p>ולאוהבך בית אהבה הרחיבי.</p>	<p>Distant dove, sing your song well, and give good answer to Him who calls you. Your God it is Who calls, so hurry, bow low to the ground, and make your offering. Back to your nest! Retrace your steps to Zion, where your tent awaits you; set clear way-posts along the road.</p> <p>Your lover turned you out because you sinned— today He redeems you! Why do you complain? Arise, return to the Lovely Land. Ruin the fields of Edomite and Arab! Destroy the home of your destroyers, but make your love a wide and loving home.</p>
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Brody, Diwan, 2:171–72 (poem 12), translated by Scheindlin

זֶה רוּחְךָ צַד מְעַרְב רָקִיחַ--  
 הַנִּרְדִּי בְּכַנְפוֹי וְהַתַּפּוּחַ.  
 מֵאוֹצְרוֹת הָרוּכְלִים מוֹצֵאָךְ,  
 כִּי אֵינְךָ מֵאוֹצְרוֹת הָרוּחַ.  
 כְּנָפֵי דְרוֹר תִּנְיֶף, וְתִקְרָא לוֹ דְרוֹר,  
 וְכָמַר-דְרוֹר מִן הַצִּרּוֹר לָקִיחַ.  
 מֶה נִכְסְפוּ לָךְ עִם אֲשֶׁר בְּגִלְלֶךְ  
 רָכְבוּ בְּגִב הַיָּם עָלֵי גִב לִוְיָ!  
 אֵל נָא תִרְפֶּה יָדְךָ מִן הָאֲנִי  
 כִּי יַחְנֶה הַיּוֹם וְכִי יָפוּחַ,  
 וְיִרְקַע תְּהוֹם, וְיִקְרַע לִבָּב יָמִים, וְגַע  
 אֵל הַרְרֵי קֹדֶשׁ, וְשֵׁם תִּנּוּחַ.  
 וְגַעַר בְּקָדִים הַמִּסְעֵר יָם עָדִי  
 יִשִּׁים לִבָּב הַיָּם כְּסִיר נָפוּחַ.  
 מֶה יַעֲשֶׂה אֲסוּר בְּיַד הַצּוֹר אֲשֶׁר  
 פַּעַם יְהִי עֲצוּר וְעַת שְׁלֹוֹחַ?  
 אֵךְ סוֹד שְׁאֵלָתִי בְּיַד מְרוֹם, וְהוּא  
 יוֹצֵר מְרוֹם הָרִים וּבוֹרֵא רוּחַ.

This wind of yours is a perfumed wind, O West,  
 with saffron in its wings and apple scent,  
 as if it came from the perfumer's chest,  
 not from the chest of the winds.

The wings of swallows flutter to your breath.  
 You set them free,  
 like myrrh-tears, from a bundle poured.  
 And how we long for you,  
 we who ride a board on the back of the sea!

Never release your grip from the ship  
 when the day makes its camp, when the day blows away.  
 Flatten the deep, rip the heart  
 of the seas, hit the holy mountains  
 and there take your rest,  
 wind of the west!  
 Shout down the east wind when it makes  
 the ocean break and creates  
 a seething pot in the heart of the sea.

What can a man, God's captive, achieve,  
 who is sometimes shut in and sometimes let free?  
 All my desire I entrust to Him,  
 Who shaped the mountains, Who made the wind,  
 Who knows man's heart and its mysteries.



## Mid-Life Crisis?

Still chasing fun at fifty

הִתְרַדַּף נְעוּרוֹת אַחֵר חֲמִשִּׁים,  
וַיִּמֶיד לְהִתְעוֹפֵף חֲמִשִּׁים?  
וּתְבַרַח מֵעֲבֹדַת הָאֱלֹהִים,  
וּתְכַסֶּף אֶל עֲבֹדַת הָאֲנָשִׁים?  
וּתְדַרֵּשׁ אֶת פְּנֵי רַבִּים, וְתַטֵּשׁ  
פְּנֵי אֶחָד לְכָל חֶפֶץ דְּרוּשִׁים?  
וּתַעֲצֹל לְהַצְטִיד לְדִרְכָּךְ,  
וּתִמְכּוֹר חֶלְקְךָ בְּנִזִּיד עֲדָשִׁים?  
הֲלֹא אִמְרָה לְךָ עוֹד נִפְשֶׁךָ "הוֹן!"  
וְתֹאמְרוּתָה תִּבְכֶּר לְחֻדָּשִׁים?  
נָטָה מֵעַל עֲצָתָהּ אֶל עֲצַת אֵל,  
וְסוּר מֵעַל חֲמִשַּׁת הָרִגְנִים,  
וְהִתְרַצָּה לְיוֹצֵרְךָ בִּיתֵר  
יְמוֹתֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר אֵצִים וְחָשִׁים.  
וְאַל תִּדְרֹשׁ בְּלֵב וּלֵב רָצוֹנוֹ,  
וְאַל תִּלָּךְ לְךָ לְקִרְאָת נַחְשִׁים.  
הֲיִיה לַעֲשׂוֹת רָצוֹנוֹ עַז כְּנֹמֶר,  
וְקַל כְּצִבִּי, וְגִבּוֹר כְּלִישִׁים.  
וְאַל יִמוּט בְּלֵב יָמִים לְבָבְךָ,  
וְהָרִים תַּחֲנוּה מָשִׁים וּמָשִׁים,  
וּמַלְחִים יִדְיָהם כְּמַלְחִים,  
וְחֻכְמֵי הַחֲרָשִׁים מַחְרִישִׁים--  
שְׂמֻחִים הוֹלְכִים נֶכַח פְּנִיָּהם,  
וְשֹׁבִים אֶל אַחֲרֵיהֶם וּבֹשִׁים--  
וְאוֹקֵינוֹס לְפָנֶיךָ לְמָנוֹס,  
וְאֵין מִבְּרַח לְךָ כִּי אִם יְקוּשִׁים,  
וְיִמוּטוּ וְיִנּוּטוּ קָלְעִים,  
וְיִנּוּעוּ וְיִזּוּעוּ קָרָשִׁים,  
וְיִד רֹחַ מְצַחֶקֶת בְּמִים  
כְּנוֹשְׂאֵי הַעֲמָרִים בְּרִישִׁים,  
וּפַעַם תַּעֲשֶׂה מָהֶם גִּרְנוֹת,  
וּפַעַם תַּעֲשֶׂה מָהֶם גְּדִישִׁים--  
בְּעֵת הַתִּנְבָּרָם דָּמוּ אֲרִיּוֹת,  
וְעַת הַחֲלָשָׁם דָּמוּ נַחְשִׁים--

Still chasing fun at fifty, like a boy!—  
and yet your time could run out any day.  
You flee God's service,  
have no better aspiration  
than to be a slave to men.  
You seek the favor of the many, turn away  
from One who has it in Him  
to answer every man's desire,  
if they would only ask.  
You won't be bothered gathering provisions for your journey,  
but lightly trade the banquet of eternity  
for lentil stew.  
When will your appetite say, "Enough"?  
When will your lust  
stop growing back her maidenhead every month?  
Turn from her advice to God's,  
abandon those five senses.  
Make peace with your Creator  
while your remaining days are speeding by.  
Do not expect halfhearted deeds will please Him,  
or go to serpent-oracles to learn your fate.  
To do His will, be tiger-fierce, gazelle-fleet, lion-mighty.  
And do not lose heart in the heart of the sea,  
when mountains seem to be sliding, shifting,  
when sailors' hands are limp as rags  
and skillful seamen silent, helpless  
(they were jaunty sailing forward;  
cross now, thrust backward).  
You've nowhere but the ocean to escape to,  
the trap of doom your only refuge.  
The sails are tilting, slipping,  
boards shift and tremble.  
The wind toys with the water  
like harvesters bringing sheaves to threshing,  
pats the water flat as a threshing floor,  
then heaps it up like mounds of grain.  
The waves surge up like lions leaping,  
then recede in foam that coils like serpents.

ועם יתפללו כל איש לקדשו,  
ואת פונה לקדש הקדשים.  
ותזכר מפלאות ים סוף ויורה,  
אשר על כל לבבות הם חרושים.  
תשבח למשביח שאון ים  
בעת שיגרשו מימיו רפשים.  
ותזכר לו זכות לבות טמאים,  
ויזכר לך זכות אבות קדשים.  
יחדש נוראותיו כי תחדש  
לפניו שיר מחול מחלים ומושים,  
וישיב הנשמות לפגרים,  
ויחיו העצמים היבשים.  
ורגע ישתקו גלים, וידמו  
עדרים על פני ארץ נטושים.  
והליל, כבוא שמש במעלות  
צבא מרום--ועליו שר חמשים--  
כבושית משבצות זהב לבושה,  
וכתכלת במלואת גבישים.  
וכוכבים בלב הים נבוכים  
פגרים ממעוניהם גרושים,

Each man is praying to whatever he holds holy,  
but you are facing God's own Holy Temple,  
remembering the Sea of Reeds, the Jordan—  
miracles engraved on every heart—  
and praising Him who smoothes the sea  
when it churns up scum.  
You beg that He may purify your heart.  
He will spare you for the sake of holy ancestors,  
renew His miracles as you renew  
the Levites' dance and song to Him.  
He will restore the souls to bodies,  
put back life in desiccated bones.  
At once, the waves are calm;  
they seem like flocks of sheep  
scattered on a meadow.  
The sun is setting and the stars are rising,  
with the moon as captain, watching over them.  
The night is like a Moorish woman dancing,  
wearing an embroidered cloth with eyes,  
cloth of sky-blue set with crystals.  
Lost in the heart of the sea, the stars  
dart and wander, like men compelled  
to leave their homes as exiles;

וכדמותם בצלמם יעשו אור  
בלב הים כלהבות ואשים.  
פני מים ושמים עדיים  
עלי ליל, מטהרים לטושים.  
וים דומה לרקיע בעינו;  
שניהם אז שני ימים חבושים,  
ובינותם לבבי ים שלישי  
בשוא גלי שבחי החדשים.

they make little lights in their own image,  
little flames and flares in the heart of the sea,  
pairs of ornaments on sky and water  
to adorn the night.  
Sea and sky, so like in color, seem to merge,  
while in between  
my heart makes yet another sea,  
as my new songs and praises upward surge.

אדני! נגדך כל- תאזתי,  
ואם לא אעלה על שפתי.  
רצונך אשאלה רגע - ואגוע,  
ומי יתן ויבוא שאלתי,  
ואפקיד את- שאר רוחי בידך  
וישנתי וערבה לי שנתי!  
ברחקי ממך - מותי בחי,  
ואם אדבק בך - חיי במותי,

אֲבָל לֹא אֵדְעָה בְּמָה אֶקְדֵּם,  
וּמָה תִּהְיֶה עֲבוּדָתִי וְדָתִי.  
דִּרְכֶיךָ, אֲדֹנָי, לִמְדֵנִי,  
וְשׁוּב מִמַּאֲסֵר סִכְלוֹת שְׁבוּתִי,  
וְהוֹרֵנִי בַּעֲדֵי יֵשׁ-בִּי יִכְלֹת  
לְהִתְעַנּוֹת, וְאַל תִּבְזֶה עֲנוּתִי,  
בְּטָרֵם יוֹם אֶהְיֶה עָלֶי לְמִשָּׂא,  
יוֹם יִכְבֹּד קִצְתִּי עַל קִצְתִּי,  
וְאֶכְנַע בְּעַל כְּרָחִי, וְיֵאכֹל  
עֲצָמֵי עֵשׂ, וְנִלְאוּ מִשְׁאָתִי,  
וְאֶסַּע אֶל מְקוֹם נָסְעוּ אֲבוֹתִי,  
וּבְמְקוֹם תַּחְנוּתָם תַּחְנוּתִּי.  
כִּגְר תּוֹשֵׁב אֲנִי עַל גֵּב אֶדְמָה,  
וְאוֹלָם כִּי בְּבִטְנָה נִחַלְתִּי.  
נַעֲוִירִי עַד הָלוֹם עָשׂוּ לְנַפְשָׁם,  
וּמָתִי גַם אֲנִי אֶעֱשֶׂה לְבֵיתִי?  
וְהָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר נָתַן בְּלִבִּי  
מִנְעֵנִי לְבִקֵּשׁ אַחֲרֵיתִי.  
וְאֵיכָה אֶעֱבֹד יוֹצְרִי בַּעֲוֹדִי  
אֲסִיר יוֹצְרִי וְעֹבֵד תַּאֲוֹתִי?  
וְאֵיכָה מַעֲלָה רָמָה אֲבַקֵּשׁ  
וּמִחָר תִּהְיֶה רָמָה אַחֲוֹתִי?  
וְאֵיךְ יֵיטֵב בְּיוֹם טוֹבָה לְבָבִי  
וְלֹא אֵדַע הֵיטֵב מִחֲרָתִי?

But still I do not know what gift to bring,  
what service to perform, or how to live.

Teach me Your ways, O Lord, and turn  
me back from being folly's captive.  
Teach me while I still have strength  
to bear my penance, one You will not scorn,  
before I turn into a burden to myself,  
my limbs too weak to hold each other up,  
my bones like cloth moth-eaten,  
too frayed to carry me—  
when piety is all that's left to me—  
before I go the road my fathers traveled,  
and make my camp where they encamped before.

For I am but a traveler here,  
lingering briefly on this surface—  
my real home is within.  
Till now, the youth in me looked out for its own needs.  
The time has come to look out for myself,  
seek my eternal home.  
And yet this world is present in my heart,  
preventing me from tending to the next.  
How can I serve my Maker—I,  
prisoner of urges, slave to desire?  
Why do I seek honors, when I know  
that soon I will have worms for company?  
How can I enjoy a day of pleasure,  
not knowing what that everlasting day to come will be for me,

# Brody, Diwan, 2:248 (poem 27)

If you will put your hope in God alone,  
why worry at the troubles Time can bring?  
If you would truly trust in God's own name,  
the things that Time can do  
would make you neither glad nor sorry.  
You've made your home among the graves of lust,  
and turned your back on right behavior,  
lived in mindlessness,  
pent in such darkness that you cannot  
even see the place of light. How then can you tell  
the good from bad?  
Soon you must travel on. Choose the right path—  
why wander to the right or to the left?

Time will betray you; better if you  
betray her first!—Then you'll do well.  
Go for a treasure  
You can keep forever;  
spurn the one you must bequeath  
to those who follow.

## **Making the Dream a Reality**

**Letter sent to Samuel ben Hanania from Alexandria** (early 1141; reconstructed by Scheindlin, p. 156-158)

And now, permit my tongue to speak confidentially to my lord about the thoughts that drove me out of my homeland. After giving thanks and making confession to Him who granted me favors and answered me amply, I dedicated to Him my heart's praises and my mind's gratitude, while . . . vows . . . the lower soul in its calculations, the spirit in its . . . and the higher soul in its delights. All these came together . . . to trap the truth in a narrow confine from which there is no escape right or left, no room for escape.

And the philosophy of the Greeks, so praised, / is merely crazed; / it claims to shed light / but yields only blight. One of its spokesmen says this and the other says that: one praises pleasure—the lute and the flute—while the other says, "Better to go to the house of mourning," while a third says, "Both pleasure and sorrow are hollow." Disagreement rules; doubt and darkness dominate. There is no one to settle an argument, no one to make a clear statement or proclaim an answer. But then came the pure lamp, the Torah, and opened men's eyes and ears, confounding their opinions and spoiling their thoughts, and said, Upside-down! You give counsel according to your own interest. My thoughts and my ways are not yours; there is no wisdom, no insight, no counsel in the face of God's. Not every living creature is a human being, not every human being is an Israelite, not every Israelite is a priest, and not every priest is Moses or Aaron; not every land is Canaan, not all of Canaan is the gates of heaven, and not all the gates of heaven are Jerusalem. Not all days are festivals, not all festivals are the Sabbath, not all Sabbaths are the Day of Atonement. Not all service of God is sacrifice, not all sacrifices are whole offerings, not all whole offerings are offered in the inner chamber. But there are holy men in the Holy Land. . . . Therefore there is no adding or taking away: the laws are righteous ones, authenticated by tradition, not to be transgressed or doubted. The evidence—the wonders and miracles seen by the eyes, heard by the ears in the wilderness and in Egypt, a sign and a testimony for past and present. So I said, "I have come, I have heard, and I believe. I shall not question or test the Lord." Seeing that all Israel bows toward the House of God, my heart yearned for my father's house and my soul longed for the Holy Mountain—to prostrate myself to it nearby, among the priests, where the ark lies buried, and to say to the Lord: "Rise and have mercy on Zion! For Your servants take pleasure in her stones and cherish her soil." My love was stirred . . . lest my face be one of those turned aside from God at the sound of the call: "For who will have mercy on you, Jerusalem? Who will mourn you? Who will turn aside to ask about your welfare? There is none to care for her!" If you desire to get me my desire, send me to my master; let me go. For nowhere will my foot find rest until I make my home inside His home. Do not detain me from the journey, lest disaster overtake me. All I ask is shelter underneath God's wings, a grave among my fathers' graves

**Brody, Diwan, 2:164–66 (poem 6)**



דְּבָרֶיךָ בְּמֹר עוֹבֵר רְקוּחִים  
 וּמִצּוֹר הָרָרִי הַמּוֹר לְקוּחִים,  
 וְלָךְ וּלְבֵית אֲבוֹתֶיךָ חֲמוּדוֹת  
 אֲשֶׁר יֵלְאוּ לְהַשְׁיֵגם שְׂבָחִים.  
 פִּגְשָׁתִּי בְּמִדְבָּרִים עֲרָבִים  
 בְּתוֹכָם אוֹרְבִים נוֹשְׂאֵי שְׁלָחִים--  
 דְּבָרִים אֲרָבוּ תוֹכָם דְּבוּרִים,  
 וְחוֹךְ יַעֲרַת דְּבֶשׁ קוֹצִים כְּסוּחִים,  
 וְאִם כִּי לֹא שְׁלוֹם שָׁלֵם יִבְקֹשׁ  
 בְּעוֹדָה מְלָאָה עוֹרִים וּפְסָחִים,  
 לְמַעַן בֵּית אֱלֹהֵינוּ נִבְקֹשׁ  
 שְׁלוֹמָהּ, אוֹ בְּעַד רַעִים וְאֲחִים.  
 וְאִם כֵּן-הוּא כְּדִבְרֶיכֶם, רְאוּ חֲטָא  
 עָלַי כָּל כּוֹרְעִים נִגְדָה וְשׁוּחִים,  
 וְחֲטָא הוֹרִים שְׁכֵנוֹתָ כְּגֵרִים  
 וְקָנוּ שָׁם לְמִתְיָהֶם צְרִיחִים,

Your words are scented with perfume of myrrh—  
 words quarried, as it were, from great myrrh-mountains—  
 and you and all your people have such qualities  
 that praise exhausts itself in praising you.  
 Now you come to meet me in a wilderness—  
 a wilderness of honeyed words,  
 where warriors lurk with swords—  
 words concealing bees,  
 honeycomb studded with thorns.  
 Is Zion really no concern of ours  
 because the blind and halt inhabit it?  
 Surely we should care for what is left  
 of the House of God, for friends and kin still there.  
 If you are right, then it must be a sin  
 to bow toward it or to reverence it.  
 If you are right, our ancestors were sinners,  
 when they went there to live as strangers,  
 bought caves there for graves.

וְלָנוּ גַם לְכַנִּינוּ יַעֲדָה,  
 וְאִם צִיִּים שְׁכֵנוֹתָ וְאֲחִים.  
 הֲלֹא כֵן נִתְּנָה קֶדֶם לְאֲבוֹת,  
 וְכִלְיָה נִחַלַת קוֹצִים וְחֲחִים,  
 וְהֵם מִתְחַלְּקִים אֶרְפָּה וְרַחֲבָה  
 כְּמִתְחַלְּלִד בְּפֶרֶדֶס בֵּין צִמְחִים,  
 וְהֵם גֵּרִים וְתוֹשְׁבִים, וְדוֹרָשִׁים  
 מְקוֹם קָבֵר וּמִלֹּחַן שָׁם כְּאוֹרְחִים,  
 וְשָׁם הִתְחַלְּכוּ לִפְנֵי אֲדָנִי  
 וּלְמַדּוֹ הַשְׁבִּילִים הַנִּכְחִים.  
 וְאָמְרוּ כִּי רָפְאִים שָׁם יְקוֹמוּן  
 וַיֵּצְאוּ שׁוֹכְנִים תַּחַת בְּרִיחִים,  
 וְכִי שָׁם תִּעֲלֶזְנָה הַגּוֹיֹת,  
 וְתִשְׂבְּנָה נַפְשׁוֹת לְמִנוּחִים.  
 רְאֵה נָא גַם רְאֵה דוּדֵי וְהִבֵּן,  
 וְסוֹר מִמוֹקְשִׁים צָנִים וּפְחִים,  
 וְאַל תִּשְׁיָאֵךְ חֲכַמַת יוֹנִית  
 אֲשֶׁר אֵין לָהּ פֶּרִי כִי אִם פְּרָחִים.  
 וּפְרִיָהּ כִּי אֲדַמָּה לֹא רְקוּעָה,

He promised it to us,  
 though only owls and jackals haunt it now.  
 What was in that place but thorns and thistles  
 when God bestowed it on our fathers long ago?—  
 And yet they paced its length and breadth  
 like people strolling in a flower garden,  
 lived in it as strangers, transients,  
 each night seeking somewhere to put down their heads,  
 always on the lookout for some plot  
 where, dead, they might be buried.  
 There they learned to walk before the Lord,  
 adopted ways of righteousness.  
 They said that there the dead will rise,  
 that those who lie beneath the barriers will emerge,  
 that there the bodies will rejoice again,  
 and souls return to those who lie at rest.  
 Look here, friend, use your judgment, think it over,  
 save yourself from mental traps;  
 above all, don't let Greek philosophy seduce you;  
 it may have flowers, but it never will bear fruit.  
 Or if it does, it only comes to this:

וְכִי לֹא אֶהְיֶה שָׁחַק מִתּוֹחִים,	the world was not created;
וְאִין רֵאשִׁית לְכָל מַעֲשֵׂה בְּרָאשִׁית,	and no one stretched the heavens like a tent;
וְאִין אַחֲרִית לְחִדּוּשׁ הַיָּרְחִים.	in the beginning there was no Creation;
שָׁמַע דְּבָרֵי נְבוּנִיָּה נְבוּכִים,	the moon will wax and wane forever.
בְּנוּיִים עַל יְסוֹד תְּהוֹ וְטָחִים,	Just hear the incoherence of their doctrines,
וְתִשׁוּב לְךָ בְּלֵב רִיקָם וְנִעוֹר,	constructed out of chaos and pretension;
וּפֹה מְלֹא בֶּרֶב שִׁינִים וְשִׁיחִים.	they only leave a hollow in your heart,
וְלָמָּה זֶה אֲבַקֵּשׁ לִי אֲרָחוֹת	and nothing in your mouth but syllogisms.
עַקְלָקְלוֹת וְאֶעֱזֹב אֶם אֲרָחִים?	Why should I go following such twisting trails,
	abandoning the mother of all highways?

### Kuzari 2:23-24 (Hartwig translation)

23. Al Khazari: If this be so, thou fallest short of the duty laid down in thy law, by not endeavouring to reach that place, and making it thy abode in life and death, although thou sayest: 'Have mercy on Zion, for it is the house of our life,' and believest that the Shekhinah will return thither. And had it no other preference than that the Shekhinah dwelt there five hundred years, this is sufficient reason for men's souls to retire thither and find purification there, as happens near the abodes of the pious and the prophets. Is it not 'the gate of heaven'? All nations agree on this point. Christians believe that the souls are gathered there and then lifted up to heaven. Islām teaches that it is the place of the ascent, and that prophets are caused to ascend from there to heaven, and, further, that it is the place of gathering on the day of Resurrection. Everybody turns to it in prayer and visits it in pilgrimage. Thy bowing and kneeling in the direction of it is either mere appearance or thoughtless worship. Yet your first forefathers chose it as an abode in preference to their birth-places, and lived there as strangers, rather than as citizens in their own country. This they did even at a time when the Shekhinah was yet visible, but the country was full of unchastity, impurity, and idolatry. Your fathers, however, had no other desire than to remain in it. Neither did they leave it in times of dearth and famine except by God's permission. Finally, they directed their bones to be buried there.

24. The Rabbi: This is a severe reproach, O king of the Khazars. It is the sin which kept the divine promise with regard to the second Temple, viz.: Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion' (Zachariah 2:10), from being fulfilled. Divine Providence was ready to restore everything as it had been at first, if they had all willingly consented to return. But only a part was ready to do so, whilst the majority and the aristocracy remained in Babylon, preferring dependence and slavery, and unwilling to leave their houses and their affairs. An allusion to them might be found in the enigmatic words of Solomon: I sleep, but my heart waketh (Song of Songs 5:2-4). He designates the exile by sleep, and the continuance of prophecy among them by the wakefulness of the heart. 'It is the voice of my beloved that knocketh' means God's call to return; 'My head is filled with dew' alludes to the Shekhinah which emerged from the shadow of the Temple. The words: 'I have put off my coat,' refer to the people's slothfulness in consenting to return. The sentence: 'My beloved stretcheth forth his hand through the opening' may be interpreted as the urgent call of Ezra, Nehemiah, and the Prophets, until a portion of the people grudgingly responded to their invitation. In accordance with their mean mind they did not receive full measure. Divine Providence only gives man as much as he is prepared to receive; if his receptive capacity be small, he obtains little, and much if it be great. Were we prepared to meet the God of our forefathers with a pure mind, we should find the same salvation as our fathers did in Egypt. If we say: 'Worship his holy hill--worship at His footstool--He who restoreth His glory to Zion' (Psalms 99:9, Psalm 99:5), and other words, this is but as the chattering of the starling and the nightingale. We do not realise what we say by this sentence, nor others, as thou rightly observest, O Prince of the Khazars.

### Kuzari 4:27 (Hartwig translation)

27. The Rabbi: Just so, O King of the Khazars, by God! This is the truth, the real faith, and everything else may be abandoned. Perhaps this was Abraham's point of view when divine power and unity dawned upon him prior to the revelation accorded to him. As soon as this took place, he gave up all his speculations and only strove to gain favour of God, having ascertained what this was and how and where it could be obtained. The Sages explain the words: 'And he brought him forth abroad' (Genesis 15), thus: Give up thy horoscopy! This means: Forsake astrology as well as any other doubtful study of nature... As soon as Abraham had understood, meditated, discerned and clearly grasped, the Lord of the universe revealed Himself to him, called him His friend and made a covenant with him between the ten fingers of his hand, which is the covenant of the tongue; and between the ten toes of his feet, which is the covenant of circumcision, and He pronounced upon him the word: 'Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee' (Jeremiah 1:5).

### Kuzari's concluding section (5:22-28)

אך השכינה הנסתרת הרוחנית היא עם כל ישראל אחריו ועם כל בעל דת האמתית, זך המעשים, טהור הלב, נפשו ברה לאלהי ישראל. וארץ כנען מיוחדת לאלהי ישראל, והמעשים לא ישלמו כי אם בה, והרבה ממצות ישראל בטלות ממי שאינו דר בארץ ישראל, והלב והנפש אינם טהורים וזכים כי אם במקום שיודעים בו שהוא מיוחד לאלהים, ואלו היה זה בדמיון ובמשל, כל שכן שהוא אמת כאשר קדם באורו. ותתעורר התשוקה אליו ותטהר הנפש בו, כל שכן מי שהולך אליו ממקום רחוק, וכל שכן למי שקדמו לו עונות, והוא מבקש כפרת האלהים, ואי אפשר לו בקרבנות אשר היו קבועים לכל עון ועון מזדון ושגגה, ויסמך על מה שאמרו רבותינו: "גלות מכפרת עון", כל שכן אם יהיה הגלות למקום רצוי אבל הסכנה בים וביבשה אינה נכנסת באמרו: "לא תנסו את יי אלהיכם", אך סכנה שהוא מסכן כמו מי שתהיה לו סחורה מקנה שירויח בה. ואלו היה מסכן יותר מזה כפי תשוקתו וקוה הכפרה, היה הדין עמו בהכנסו בסכנות, אחרי אשר חשב עם נפשו והודה על מה שעבר מימיו, הסתפק בו והחזיק בשאר ימיו ברצון אלהיו ויכנס בסכנה; ואם יצילנו אלהיו ישבח ויודה, ואם ימיתו בעונותיו. ורואה אני זה יותר עצה טובה מאשר יסכנו בנפשים במלחמות בעבור שיזכרו בגבורה, או בעבור שיקחו שכר גדול, ושיותר קלה היא הסכנה הזאת מאשר יכנסו במלחמת הרשות כדי לקבל שכר על המלחמה.

22. The Rabbi was then concerned to leave the land of the Khazari and to betake himself to Jerusalem. The king was loth to let him go, and spoke to him in this sense as follows: What can be sought in Palestine nowadays, since the divine reflex is absent from it, whilst, with a pure mind and desire, one can approach God in any place. Why wilt thou run into danger. on land and water and among various peoples?

23. The Rabbi answered: The visible Shekhināh has, indeed, disappeared, because it does not reveal itself except to a prophet or a favoured community, and in a distinguished place. This is what we look for in the passage: 'Let our eyes behold when Thou returnest to Zion.' As regards the invisible and spiritual Shekhināh, it is with every born Israelite of virtuous life, pure heart, and upright mind before the Lord of Israel. Palestine is especially distinguished by the Lord of Israel, and no function can be perfect except there. Many of the Israelitish laws do not concern those who do not live there; heart and soul are only perfectly pure and immaculate in the place which is believed to be specially selected by God. If this is true in a figurative sense, how much more true in reality, as we have shown Thus the longing for it is awakened with disinterested motives, especially for him who wishes to live there, and to atone for past transgressions, since there is no opportunity of bringing the sacrifices ordained by God for intentional and unintentional sins. He is supported by the saying of the Sages: 'Exile atones for sins,' especially if his exile brings him into the place of God's choice. The danger he runs on land and sea does not come under the category of: 'You shall not tempt the Lord' (Deuteronomy 6:16); but the verse refers to risks which one takes when travelling with merchandise in the hope of gain. He who incurs even greater danger on account of his ardent desire to obtain forgiveness is free from reproach if he has closed the balance of his life, expressed his gratitude for his past life, and is satisfied to spend the rest of his days in seeking the favour of his Lord. He braves danger, and if he escapes he praises God gratefully. But should he perish through his sins, he has obtained the divine favour, and may be confident that he has atoned for most of his sins by his death. In my opinion this is better than to seek the dangers of war in order to gain fame and spoil by courage and bravery. This kind of danger is even inferior to that of those who march into war for hire.

24. Al Khazari: I thought that thou didst love freedom, but now I see thee finding new religious duties which thou wilt be obliged to fulfil in Palestine, which are, however, in abeyance here.

25. The Rabbi: I only seek freedom from the service of those numerous people whose favour I do not care for, and shall never obtain, though I worked for it all my life. Even if I could obtain it, it would not profit me--I mean serving men and courting their favour. I would rather seek the service of the One whose favour is obtained with the smallest effort, yet it profits in this world and the next. This is the favour of God, His service spells freedom, and humility before Him is true honour.

26. Al Khazari: If thou believest in all that thou sayest, God knows thy mind. The mind is free before God, who knows the hearts and discloses what is hidden.

27. The Rabbi: This is true when action is impossible. Man is free in his endeavours and work. But he deserves blame who does not look for visible reward for visible work. For this reason it is written: 'Ye shall blow an alarm with the trumpets, and ye shall be remembered before the Lord your God (Numbers 10:9) . . . They shall be to you for a memorial (Numbers 10:10) . . . A memorial of blowing of trumpets' (Leviticus 23:24). God need not be reminded, but actions must be perfect to claim reward. Likewise must the ideas of the prayers be pronounced in the most perfect way to be considered as prayer and supplication. Now if thou bringest intention and action to perfection thou mayest expect reward. This is popularly expressed by reminding, and 'the Tōrāh speaks in the manner of human beings.' If the action is minus the intention, or the intention minus the action, the expectation [for reward] is lost, except in impossible things. It is, however, rather useful to show the good intention if the deed is impossible, as we express this in our prayer: 'On account of our sins have we been driven out of our land.' This sacred place serves to remind men and to stimulate them to love God, being a reward and promise, as it is written: 'Thou shalt arise and have mercy upon Zion, for the time to favour her, yea, the set time is come. For thy servants take pleasure in her stones and embrace the dust thereof' (Psalms 102:14 sq.). This means that Jerusalem can only be rebuilt when Israel yearns for it to such an extent that they embrace her stones and dust.

#### **Rav kook siddur page 374**

יעירוני רעיוני  
וסוד לבי ומשאלו  
הגות דברי תחנוני  
בזמרת אל ומהללו  
ולא אתן שנת לעיני  
חצות לילה בגללו  
לחזות בנעם ה'  
ולבקר בהיכלו

Roused by my thoughts and driven to profess  
God's praise in song and plead my neediness,  
From my eyes I brush midnight's sleepiness  
To seek the pleasure of the Lord's palace

R. Avraham Yitzhak Kook, Orot 1:1

האמוץ האמתי של רעיון היהדות בגולה בא יבא רק מצד עמק שקיעו בארץ ישראל, ומתקנות ארץ ישראל יקבל תמיד את כל תכונותיו העצמיות. צפית ישועה היא כח המעמיד של היהדות הגלותית, והיהדות של ארץ ישראל היא הישועה עצמה.

R. Avraham Yitzhak Kook, Orot 1:6

כל מה שקשה יותר לסבל את אור חוץ לארץ, כל מה שמרגישים יותר את רוח הטמאה של אדמה טמאה, זהו סימן לקליטה יותר פנימית של קדשת ארץ ישראל, לחסד עליון, אשר לא יעזב ממנו מי שזכה להסתופף בצלצח של ארץ חיים, גם בהתרחקו ונודו, גם בגלותו וארץ נדידתו. הדורות שמרגישים בחוץ לארץ הרי היא מקשרת יותר את כל חשק הרוח הפנימי לארץ ישראל וקדשתה,

הצפיה לראותה מתגברת וציור חקיקת תבנית הקדש של ארץ אשר עיני ד' בה תמיד, מראשית השנה עד אחרית שנה, מתעמקת יותר ויותר, ועמק תשוקת הקדש של חבת ציון, של זכירת הארץ, שכל המודות בה קשורות, קשה היא מתגברת בנשמה, אפלו יחידית, הרי היא עושה פעלת נביעה מעינית לכל הכלל, לרבבות נשמות הקשורות עמה, וקול שופר של קבוצ נדחים מתעורר ורחמים רבים מתגברים, ותקות חיים לישראל מתנוצצת, וצמח ד' הולך ופורח, ואור ישועה וגאלה מתפצל ומתפשט, כשחר פרש על ההרים.

## The Journey

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תי	
וקאל פי תשוקה לאהלה ווטנה (ואמר על תשוקתו לבני ביתו ולמולדתו).	
— — — — —	— — — — —
לְשַׁחַר אֶת מְקוֹם פְּסָאוֹת מְשִׁיחִי	הַצִּיקְתָּנִי תְּשׁוּקָתִי לְאֵל חִי
בְּנֵי בֵּיתִי וְאֵת רְעִי וְאֶחָי	עָדִי כִּי לֹא נָטַשְׁתָּנִי לְנֶשֶׁק
וְהִשְׁקִיתִיו וְהַצְּלִיחוּ צָמְחִי	וְלֹא אָבָה עָלַי פְּרֶדֶס נִטְעָתִיו
שְׁנֵי פָּרְחֵי יָקָר מִבְּחַר פָּרְחֵי	וְלֹא אָזַכְרָה יְהוּדָה וְעֶזְרָאֵל
יְבוּל שְׁמֶשֶׁי וְטוֹב גֶּרֶשׁ יְרֵחִי	וְאֵת יִצְחָק אֲשֶׁר בֶּבֶן חֲשַׁבְתִּיו
אֲשֶׁר הָיוּ בְּמִדְרָשׁוֹ מְנוּחִי	וְכִמְעַט אֲשַׁכְּחָה בֵּית הַתְּפִלָּה
וְהַדְרַת מוֹעֲדֵי וְכְבוֹד פִּסְתִּי	וְאֲשַׁכַּח תַּעֲנוּגֵי שַׁבָּתוֹתִי
וְאֶעֱזֹב לַפְּסִילִים אֶת שַׁבְּתִי	וְאֶתֵּן אֶת כְּבוֹדִי לְאַחֵרִים
וּבְמִשׁוֹכַת סֶבֶף חֶסֶן בְּרִיחִי	הַמִּירוֹתִי בְּצֵל שִׁיחִים חֲדָרִי

## PREFACE<sup>38</sup>

*Franz Rosenzweig*

Dear reader, learn Greek and throw  
my translation into the fire!

—Friedrich Leopold von Stolberg,  
From note on VI, 484 of  
his translation of Homer's *Iliad*



ויום הרפורים לפי שגם בהם חפול השאלה ודע כי נפל מחלוקת בין הראשונים מאי זה מקום מתחיל היום וגם מאי זה מקום מתחיל יום השבת עיין במ"ש בספר הכוזרי ובעל יסוד עולם ולדעת כולם השוכנים בקלה המזרח השבש להם קודם השוכנים במערב ונמלאו אלו מותרים במלאכה בזמן שאלו אסורים אלא לריכים אנו לומר כי השבת יתן לכל ח' מישראל כפי מקומו שימנה ו' ימים שלמים וישובת בשביעי ובזה יש סבר