

Poems

First Part: Between here and there

Rosh Hashone (New Year)

Rosh Hashone – In Yiddish: The New Year.
Jews celebrate the holiday all over the world.
Let Peace arrive with the New Year.
Peace is what is missing – may it spread unfurled.

The year that went by,
Was accompanied by not much luck to earn.
Fatalities of war, fatalities on the roads.
May such a year never return.

Fathers and Mothers ask for a good year.
They pray for the baby in its nappy.
A prayer for those that guard our land.
In the New Year, we should live well and be happy.

Also, peace with the neighboring countries –
And let there be peace in our own land.
A year of prosperity that each wishes for himself.
– A year when weapons need no longer be held in hand.

A year of Peace – let there be no more War.
Such a year, everyone will cheerfully offer a welcome hand.
A year of Peace and joy.
Peace will also benefit our land.

Rosh Hashone has arrived, Jews!
Dress up in your best suits and skirts,
Spread greetings and well-wishes,
Gifts, blessings, and good words.

Spring

When the winds and the cold end,
The winter and the rains have passed by,
The clouds swim away,
Then Spring arrives with a blue sky.

In the light days of Spring
I just want to start singing.
To the flowers yellow, green, red,
To the sheep adorned with tiny bells that are ringing.

Grasses, flower buds, the wakening Sun,
The world is born anew with a greeting.
People become nicer in the Springtime,
And birds welcome you with their tweeting.

You breath in the fresh air,
And get pleasure from Sun and fields of green hues.
Winter has gone, and a warm wind blows.
Put on light-colored clothes, and put away heavy shoes.

What a great gift our People gave us:
The State reawakened in these days of Spring beauty.
Our sons sacrificed themselves
To win back the land in bloody battle – It was their duty.

Yiddish, our beautiful language

We mustn't forget the language of our mothers
Yiddish language is Love – our heart's desire.
Songs and tales of golden peacocks
Or of the Sun setting in flaming fire.

Our mothers spoke Yiddish hale and heartily
The Alef and Beys, the Giml and Shin –
It was a language for praying to God sincerely
Or for a song about forests, dipped in green.

Yiddish, the language we grew up in
Was for generations lingua franca for us all
In this language, we weaned on our mothers' milk.
In Yiddish, we marveled at the stars' call.

In Jewish schools we learnt in this language to speak and to write
And the tang of a song to which children would sing along.
With these sounds, we drove away hunger and gloom.
We, poor Yankeles and Soreles, filled the air with Yiddish song.

With the Yiddish language on their lips, our mothers passed away
On their bones and on the Yiddish language the land became nascent.
By not speaking Yiddish salt is poured on the wounds.
The beautiful language Yiddish is, regrettably, absent.

Autumn

Early morning, the Autumn sun appears.
Spreading yellow rays with raw fire of rebirth.
Unlike Summer, she caresses like a step-mother,
No summer-like threads fall down to Earth.

Autumn – It arrives after Spring and Summer.
Sadly, Spring and Summer have gone their ways.
Autumn – When yellowed leafs from trees fall,
A yearning befalls us for Summer days.

For most, Autumn is no great joy.
Winter is also coming with shorter daylight hours.
One gets older in the Autumn – you can feel it.
As years pass, the way is not strewn with flowers.

In your grey years, you feel each day.
Days of darkness, of Autumn and rain's wraths,
You feel your age more than in Summer days,
You end your walk in dark-grey paths.

In the Old Home, after the Autumn rainfalls,
The Winter would come and cover ground and lair.
Trees and paths white – all with whiteness hidden.
I don't miss the white – it reminds me of my hair.

In the years, that are not a few,
One can love a friend – love quietly, all the same,
That reminds you of old times,
When Winter was but a children's game.

Summer

A new day arrives with the dawning of the Sun.
And strewn about, are her rays like thin thread.
Grasses, flowers all garlanded with the nightly dew.
And tiny rainbows, among the grasses spread.

A day bright like the color of gold,
The fragrances of the floral world abound,
Flowers, grasses, and the buzzing of a bee,
A Summer day renews all around.

When the half-day of the Summer arrives
The air is scorching hot – the Sun stands in Zenith.
The aromas of the floral world disappear,
And flowers, grasses await a Sunset kiss.

The evening arrives and a cool breeze blows.
The floral world awakens: Grasses, flowers.
Under the shine of the evening, life reawakens.
When the hot Sun recedes, there arrive cooler hours.

The sky lights up in bright fire-flame,
As the Sun goes down in the West.
The crowns of trees are painted in red,
The sky is star-studded and shadows lengthen in rest.

When the Sun Goes Down

The sun descends behind the mountain.
Somewhere, a new day, a new dawn.
Like a flame in the horizon
The peak has a red fire shining upon.

Slowly does the sun fade away.
The rivers and fields welcome the night.
The evening arrives with long shadow steps.
The end-time of a long day is a glorious sight.

The birds hurry back to their nests.
From the field the cowherd and cows return,
As the chickens go back to their coops.
Each cow moos in her own manner, with her own yearn.

The woods in darkness are veiled.
The trees embrace one another.
The shadows arrive like a garnet shroud,
Noises of the darkened forest they smother.

Diamond stars adorn the sky,
Like sparkles with enchanted color.
The lonely moon, with pockmarked face,
Has no appendage to move, no glitter in its palor.

Winter

After the long hot summer,
The winter arrives with rain and cold.
The sun shifts towards the south,
And summer rays are put on hold.

Rain, wind, menacing clouds.
A bolt cuts through the dark night.
Crashing thunder makes the air quake.
Small streams over the ground take flight.

The rain pours over the window panes,
Like tears in a sad day, and the wound is raw.
Also the sound of the falling rain,
Is monotonous, like cutting with a saw.

When Winter, with lightning and rain arrives,
It feels like the entire world is getting soaked.
A greyness over the sky has bedded down.
A thick cloud the Sun has cloaked.

The day is short. It gets dark quickly.
The sun sets early in the West.
The birds have long since gone South.
Wintery dark followed them, abandoning the nest.

Our White Kitten

It happened, that in our yard,
A kitten came to flirt.
White as snow her body was.
But her belly and heart
Were damaged like a crooked word...

Anat, the veterinarian
Who doctored cats and dogs a lot,
Diagnosed the pretty kitten.
She would need to open up her belly,
Not knowing how it will end (dot, dot, dot...)

She gauged and cut, and found
The tiny stomach, liver, and heart,
Were not in their place: a demanding job.
She had to rearrange the “furniture” inside her belly,
And its outcome, later impart...

The doctor was in great doubt
Life or Death, both written in the stars...
Kitty was lucky that the doctor liked her.
She worked hard – Everything was mangled inside.
Kitty was saved, her belly in scars.

Our Yoko

I have a small dog,
My best friend is he.
Yoko is his name.
Washing him is not easy.

His eyes like beacons burn,
With teeth as white as snow.
The end of his nose is a black dot
With two-coloured hairy fur to show.

His tail is like a pointy question mark.
He licks his mouth with his red tongue
After eating the food that he so enjoys.
At mail carriers and cats he barks with full lung.

Wintertime, when it's warm at home
He folds his legs underneath like a ball rolled up.
With his eyes he glances left and right.
Let him hear his name, how quickly he gets up.

Everyone loves him.
Large, like walnuts are his eyes,
His whiskers and nice mouth,
His crooked feet and face so nice.

He ran after me when I went shopping for food
Begged for meat scraps in the store like a pauper.
Sometimes got whacked with a stick.
Once was hit by a radish in his pretty head proper.

The image of my beautiful Yoko
I carry in my heart so strongly.
He was smart and pretty.
I remember him with aching, most longingly.

The Memorial Flag

Hold high the memorial flag,
To honour those murdered during the Holocaust.
For fathers, mothers, and small children,
Those who went their final ways. Those we lost.

Everyone burned – it made no difference.
You managed to miraculously survive,
To carry this memorial flag,
In memory of little children burnt alive.

Hold high the memorial flag, so as not to forget,
Sing louder and louder your song of grief.
Thank your good fortune that you survived
From your family tree, the last leaf.

We bow our heads and lower the flags
For those who were.
Flags that tell of battle and of sorrow,
For the flag-bearers may such an hour not recur.

Do not forget what took place back then.
The tears that we wept have not yet dried.
The last living spark should not be extinguished.
Let but one remain, this poem to have read and cried.

We took the white kitten home.
When regained its strength, did pretty kitty,
It was a day of celebration for us.
Her innards were rearranged, heart, lungs, stomach,
A new life begins. Everything as it should be.

She plays with balls of silver foil
She eats, then stretches her belly – what scenes!
A little longer – it's still too early,
She'll be able to run and catch birds in the yard.
She washes herself a lot, like a princess preens.

Everyone loves the white kitten,
Her belly, her legs, and green in her eye.
Like a model with long sleek legs,
With a supple body and a thin waist,
A pretty kitten to us came to fly.

These holy people that stepped up and came,
Dried out the swamps. Led to a life that is awesome.
With blood and with sweat, with plow and rifle,
Not sparing their health – gave, so all would blossom.

Those who are gone must be honored:
Ben-Gurion, Golda, Rabin, Eshkol, Sapir,
Laskow, and Dayan. We would recall them all
But there's no more room on the paper – let it be clear.

Fifty years is a date marked for celebration.
Unquenched the joyous songs – Oh happy day!
We are but a small part of a greater world.
With spirit and willpower, we've come quite a way.

To the Jubilee: 50 Years to the State of Israel

For two thousand years we've been dispersed,
So the number fifty is just a tiny slice,
In our history of thousands of years,
Fifty is negligible – and yet, quite nice.

After yearning for two thousand years,
The year 1948 had arrived and a new Storm began.
Not on a platter was a homeland given to us,
But by war with sword, and red blood that ran.

After freeing this holy earth,
Jews began longing for this land.
In the tens of thousands they came,
Building cities over the desert sand.

In the awakened days of Spring, we do not forget.
People from the camps and ghettos they came.
A great boon they were to this land.
Straight from the ship, sent into fire and flame.

Our parents and grandparents worked hard.
They did not seek great wealth or money.
They bent themselves to the plow, and with devotion,
Built for Jews a secure land of milk and honey.

Gal's Bar Mitzvah

Gal has turned thirteen this day.
He is now an independent guy.
I feel as if he was born just yesterday,
And already he's learning his Torah portion with a Rabbi.

Like black plums your eyes.
Lips, like a woman's, red and tender.
Your hands from work and writing will not shy.
Nature has rewarded you with splendor.

News from school is that you have a hundred,
Almost top student in your class – no easy feat!
I bought you a device that you surely will not dread.
When using it, don't run with it out into the street.

Your grandpa has found something to occupy you.
You'll have to write down and contemplate each phrase.
You're learning Yiddish and Hebrew – I'm learning with you too.
You'll write sentences – each in its place.

Your grandma, when alive, would often say:
I want to live to see your Bar Mitzvah day.
It did not come to pass – my heart yearns away.
Her last words I carry deep in my heart to this very day.

For My Granddaughter Maya

Your hair is copper colored.
Your eyes like cherries shine bright.
Your voice resounds like tiny bells.
Your non-stop dancing feet are pretty and light.

Maya went into the great big forest
Bound with a red band was her hair.
Like a flower among the tall grasses,
Embraced by bushes and trees, you're so fair.

You know how to play alone in your room
With Lego you build castles of far-away lands.
You lull your dolls to sleep with a song,
Or clap in time with your tiny hands.

Your Savta Sarah loved you so much.
Your head she hotly kissed.
The copper color of your hair, was just
Like your Savta's mother's who she dearly missed.

Your Saba, is always thinking of you.
He wants to see you all grown up – he made a vow.
With long braids of copper colored hair,
To hear your sweet voice, many years from now.

Savta Sarah loved her mother greatly.
When she looked at you, she would say:
“Long life to you. You look like my mother.
For you to have a better fate than hers, I pray”.

Your father and mother and handsome brothers,
Your old grandfather, Aunt Mira, and Yisroyl,
We all, all, kiss you.
You should grow up in peace and ever be joyful.

Helena Tselovits

I write you a gift-song that you have earned.
My conscience prodded, my hand strained:
Fulfill your duty (should have done it sooner: like a “mentsh”)
You carry the title “Doctor”, not easily attained.

In all events regarding our health
You stand vigilant with a Mother’s goodwill,
And played a critical role in my recuperation
With Dr. Yakov Kashnir, and your help and skill.

People come to you, Helen, when they are ill,
For clinical savvy and motherly charm that is pleasing.
Exiting your room, we already feel better.
We forget our headache, we stop sneezing.

When I come to an appointment – I’m unwell,
And can’t make myself understood,
You know Yiddish, Hebrew, and even Russian.
You help me, and with a laugh you do good.

I must add to this song, a story by YL Peretz:
The town’s rabbi, during the Days of
Atonement instead of going to shul,
he dressed up as a Gentile and went to an old,
sick Jewish woman, lit her stove, and quietly,
in order not to disturb her, he prayed.

I didn’t just randomly select this tale.
There is a clue, a reminder of you, in the story.
Your workday is longer than normal.
You enjoy your job. You don’t expect riches and glory.

Tenth Year after Sarah's Passing

Ten years have passed, but the sorrow has not left me,
I'm proud that I can remember you,
Though as I get older, I don't remember everything.
The grandchildren miss you, the kids, and me too.

Ten years have passed, since July 'Ninety-two.
Every year I take a step further, down Life's ladder.
I'm getting closer to you, stepping quickly – I come!
I don't forget your wise words – I am their keeper – they matter.

Raize and Tovia came to visit the grave
Of their sister, accompanied by tears.
We were reminded of our long ago Springs.
We avoid thinking now of those days and fears.

Times changed for me, but you haven't abandoned your father.
Dear Mira and Israel, you gave me a room, a bed – and bread.
Exactly like a family member in all things at home.
I feel as if I had been living in that flat for years in good stead.

Tovia's sister: Tears erupt for losing your Shmuel.
Like stones on a mountain that would roll downhill if they could.
There are no scales that can weigh and measure the pain.
Shmuel the family head - a father, a grandfather, a person of Good.

Ten years is a lengthy slice of time.
The shadow of transitory people has passed me by.
I'm now free from liars and dishonest people,
Though they safeguarded my health in sad days gone by.

Father, mother, sisters two - they lie deep in my heart.
Unknown is the exact date of the last day of your life.
I remember you, whether asleep or awake
And when I light a candle for my unforgettable wife.

With life-threatening perils during the war
I did not think that such a time might arrive,
To remind us of storms that have passed,
That the world after the storm would again come alive.

The war's storm is over.
Through heavy battle, the enemy was defeated.
For the handful of Jews who survived
The victory, with pain we greeted.

When old age has arrived,
Of the days gone by, we tend to remember,
About the horrors of war.
How did we remain alive – though few in number.

Old Age

Images appear before my eyes,
Experiences of a younger day.
Like a rainbow, my unforgettable past
has since faded away.

To whom should I express my thanks,
For the depths of remembrance and contemplation.
From my earliest youth to this ripe age,
The red line leads to its final destination.

Youthful exuberance makes way for old age.
Under such circumstances – life is but a monotone.
Day in, day out the same,
Preoccupied with thoughts of times long gone.

The greater part of my life has passed.
A road not with flowers strewn.
I left my home during War's menace,
With the hope of returning soon.

The tiger had sharpened its claws.
Poland was just a foreplay of the war.
The air spread the wartime odor,
With zest, the war introduced its bitter horror.

Like a thunder crash, the storm arrived.
The gruesome conflict, its dark wings spread wide.
In the clear sky of a hot summer's day,
The sky blackened, sown with dark clouds that multiplied.

White Doves

The song of the white doves
About Love and Peace, I did write.
The song sings out from my heart.
This song, my loneliness put to flight.

White doves that coo.
Feathers soft like snow fluff.
Red beaks that kiss.
This poem sings about their love.

This song released me from loneliness.
Through the window, two white doves came to settle.
They presently kiss and coo.
Doves white as a flower's petal.

My eye becomes intoxicated,
When they kiss and entwine.
I am reminded of my first love.
My youth gone – such love will never again be mine.

I like this song,
It was sung by my beloved mate.
The song like a lovely hymn,
In her room the song did resonate.

Poems
Second Part: In the depths of memory

Stars and Death

A star was extinguished ...
Vanished, as if it had not ever been.
No longer will there be its pristine glow,
As if it had never been seen.

People were killed by murderous hands.
At their deaths, their stars were snuffed out.
Their stars were extinguished in red.
And glowing red stars soon burn out.

Why were my parents slain?
Father-Mother worked hard for a piece of bread.
Were honest. Never harmed anyone.
Why tormented? Butchered? – A death to dread.

Their stars flickered entirely red.
A star that is shrouded blood-red soon dies.
Their prayers were to God, to the stars.
Their last wish was made with tear-filled eyes.

Red skies. Stars covered in darkness.
At night, almost to a gallop they were chased,
Over sharp stones, bloodying their feet,
Struck with rubber rod and cane – and debased.

With pleas to preserve the lives of the children.
Children that don't understand Death's call.
Driven to the walls of the stones.
The stones that became blood-flecked, red overall.

The cellar offered us up its final mercy,
When my father from Lithuanians and Germans fled.
My mother sent my father downstairs into the cellar.
“My husband is not home,” she said.

How long did my father stay in the cellar?
No one knows. The family from the houses around
Were all force-marched to Ponar one night,
And my father remained in the cellar alone, as if bound.

I came back to my home town from the army
Looking for my family, my son, my wife,
I first came to my house, where I was born –
In its place, a ruin stroked by the wailing wind of strife.

But the cellar remains as a symbol, a memorial,
Of brothers and sisters, of my father and of my mother,
With memories of bricks and walls, darkness and webs.
In my dream, flames burst from the cellar – my memories they smother.

The Cellar

Our cellar was the house secret.
A deep place of which no stranger was aware.
Not the door, nor the stairs that took you down
No one from the outside had ever been there.

The door was covered by a dark cloth,
Hidden well from an unfriendly stare.
Against the cloth, a table and chair were placed,
So maybe only a fly could discover the secret lair.

During great heats of Summer,
We would place foodstuff on the cellar stairs,
Because there it was cool and dark
Like an icebox laid out with jars and wares.

Through the tiny cellar window
That was almost hidden, on one side,
We would toss coal, wood, and potatoes,
through that opening, at eventide.

When my brother left for Israel,
The cellar became for his funds a windfall.
He sold all its rags, and covered his expenses.
He left us, for the Land that he prized above all.

In times of danger, the cellar protected us.
Our entire family could find shelter there.
Its obscurity and solidity protected us from harm,
Its quiet darkness, with us it did share.

Our Lovely Bobe

I once had a grandmother and a grandfather – Bobe and Zeyde
My Bobe had a bun of long white hair so fine.
My Zeyde with a short beard and short sideburns.
If not for the war, they would have lived a long time.

Bobe's bed was adorned with nickeled jingle bells
And beautiful pillows with figures white as snow.
A runner of dark cloth spread out long and wide.
She would get up from bed when the Rooster would crow.

My Bobe hid a small sum of money tied in a cloth
For a rainy day – who knew for what or for when?
Maybe a golden watch for a grandchild becoming a bride...
Let her groom come and request it, then.

There was always a jar of candies for the grandchildren
Green and red, as small as nuts, and very sweet.
Bobe would hand them out to us when we came to visit
On pieces of paper, like tiny saucers, spread out nice and neat.

Bobe was like a vendor handing out Shabes fruit candies.
We all treasured our lovely Bobe,
In her large white scarf with a pin in her hair,
And blue earrings – a lovely old lady like no other.

What harm did my Bobe do to the Germans?
Pulled from her bed and force-marched to Ponar.
Because of her age, she could barely keep up,
And beaten with sticks, her tired body could not go far.

She barely dragged her feet on her final journey to Death,
And shared the same fate of everyone: A march to Hell.
She had not even the strength to reach the shooting ditch,
And saying a prayer, her hands spread out, she just fell.

My Sisters

Why was I chosen to remain alive,
I neither met the murderers nor experienced the fire.
Fate has sheltered me and I've reached old age
But with great horror I fathomed what did transpire.

Two of my dear sisters – my own flesh and blood,
Could have escaped, but wouldn't abandon Mom and Dad.
One was thirty-three, the other but twenty.
Into the flames were they driven by a fate so sad.

Day in, day out, thoughts of my sisters lie heavy on my heart.
More than 60 years after the Holocaust, the wounds still ache.
My blood seethes and mixes with the blood of their wounds,
A picture that I incessantly kiss, is my one keepsake.

Mom and Dad told them to escape the fire.
The devoted children did not let them face the Storm alone.
They shared the same fate: butchered parents and sisters two.
There is no grave, no remnant of a single bone.

The youngest of our family – like a sapling of 20 years,
With face and voice of angels, she was the troubadour.
The family mirrored itself in her beautiful hair and eyes.
She stayed, to stop the murderers from breaching our parents' door.

My oldest sister, with her Shmulik in her arms,
Fought against the bandits. She tried to protect one and all.
Too weak against the slayers, Shmulik was the first to die.
With her own body, she tried the death of our parents to stall.

Before the Storm, my dear mother took care of us all.
She never once complained, though times were bad.
No one around was aware of our terrible condition.
My mother did not want others to know what little we had.

Father, when I think of you, I burst out in tears,
Everyone loved you, but none more than I.
My love towards you cannot be written down.
You were a hero - To help everyone you were quick to try.

Shifra, my sister, you chose Death.
You were young when the Storm did start.
I could not find my way to you.
I was too far to see you – yet close to my heart.

Sister Sonia, your treasured Shmulik is with you.
Your son is a part of you. To die together, your fate.
You tried to hide him from their murderous glances,
But to no avail. Both driven into the flames by their hate.

My oldest brother, was far away, somewhere in Israel.
Another, in the Polish army, against the Germans he fought.
The youngest, beyond the Volga, hammered out victory.
Awake, or dreaming, my heart is with them in every thought.

Only I remain – the last, your eternal mourner.
These lines are written with longing and tears.
Who will read this poem about you, when I will no longer be?
No one remains, that will hear the story of your tragic years.

August 13th, 1941 – The day that marks their deaths

Sixty Years after the Extermination of My Family

I perpetuate the memory of my dear family that was wiped out.
The Lithuanians, Poles, and Germans cold-bloodedly shot and burnt them,
so that no sign of them should remain. I carry revenge deep in my heart.
I clench my fists and shout to myself – NEKOME! Revenge!

Memories are still fresh – their looks, walk, and speech.
They stand in front of me, as if I just saw them today.
I will remember them. Cry for them. Take revenge.
Sixty years after the Holocaust – as if it was yesterday.

How can I otherwise – too dear, those who I lost.
I must forever remember them, with constant resolve...
Even when friends are critical: You are eternally grieving,
And express their deaths in sorrow too painful to absolve.

I have no rest. The memories and the yearning.
I remain the last one. Everyone is long lost.
For as long as I live, I will remember them with tears.
I clench my fists in anger, in revenge for their pain, for the cost.

I sensed my heart – it stirred me up.
About all this, about what happened there and then.
My mother, my sisters, struggled against the bandits.
Also others heard about what happened with the evil men.

My very soul remembers everything and it weeps...
We abandoned cities that flame and smoke did smother.
Beyond the Dnieper we battled the enemy,
Too far to help my sisters, my father, my mother.

My sister Sonia leads her son Shmulik in their walk.
He's the greatest gift accorded her, and God-given.
A wonder-child of great beauty and intelligence,
In shorts and a red-yellow shirt, that she knit him.

My youngest sister Shifrele.
Your singing and dancing remain in my memory.
In light-colored Summer dress, swirling in the wind,
You kiss, embracing Yisroylik. You are young and free.

All of you were drowned, burned, or shot to death.
Nothing remains for us to keep.
Only a family picture hanging on the wall
That I stare at and weep, with pain so very deep.

My Family that is No More

I often remember, and cry.
In such a short period everyone died.
Father, Mother, Sisters, Bobe, and Zeyde.
I feel as if they are standing at my side.

After losing my most dearest –
A sea of hot stormy tears that I cannot quell.
The tempest erupts more than once a day.
Like great big waves, the tears begin in me to swell.

Can tears make the dead arise?
Their memory will never disappear.
The fire's flame will not be extinguished.
You lit them in us, Mother and Father dear.

When Spring and Summer arrived,
In his best summer wear, my father did shine.
With a light colored hat sewn from cloth,
And a walking stick with a handle of ivory fine.

My mother in a dress of a light color,
With a brooch that would shine from a distance,
With white leather shoes on her feet,
Her handbag, on a chain at her side, would dance.

They go for a stroll through the park to the river,
My mother's straw hat has a wide brim and band.
While walking, they smile and talk quietly.
My father holds my mother's hand.

Our Zeyde Avrom Zelik

Our grandfather, Zeyde Avrom Zelik,
Is younger than his age.
He has already hit the big Eighty a while back,
But even so, a man in his years, and still doesn't age.

Zeyde, even though he has a white beard,
And his face divulges the years he's seen.
His soul is still young.
From his walk and trot, thirty – not even.

If he walks quickly past you on the street,
“Zeyde, why are you walking so fast?” just shout.
He will answer you with a bright smile:
“The cobbler fixed my shoes. I must try them out.”

He doesn't walk – he runs.
His walking stick held lightly in his hands,
His coattails are blowing in the wind,
As he holds onto the edge of his pants.

My Zeyde is like a youngster.
Sings, leading the prayer, like a man in his youth.
Raises a glass during a holiday or Bris celebration.
Bobe laughs: “A young man without a tooth.”

He could have lived many more long years.
Instead, with everyone else, he is now dead.
Murderers caught him on the street,
For Bobe and himself he sought a bit of bread.

In Honour of My Good Mother

My good mother took care of everyone,
With bread and earnings the children she did raise.
If there wasn't money, then she borrowed.
It's a wonder, how we survived those trying days.

To keep her little sheep alive,
She made a gruel, practically out of thin air.
Mixed some potato peels brought from the street,
With some dark flour, from who knows where.

We children grew up tall, with curly hair.
Our good mother took care of one and all.
Tearfully prayed for my sister to find a good groom,
Provided for my brother when he left for Israel.

When I left Lita, with her hot tears
My dear Mom accompanied me, her son.
Those tears are engraved into my very soul.
She is gone now. She shared Death with everyone.

A curse upon those who killed my dear Mom.
Driven to the pits, she held her daughters fast,
And sang them songs on their forced final journey.
I don't forget their end, though years have passed.

The 9th of May

I lived to see with my own eyes, the victory parade,
Of brave sons and daughters of the Liberators' Army.
My heart sang out in me with joy.
I was there too. Each one of them is dear to me.

I see before me a picture of days gone by.
In the Army of the Liberator, I was a soldier.
With rifle in hand and faith in my heart, I survived.
With friends and a will to avenge, I escaped the fire.

The memory of that experience made me cry.
In frontline battle at that time, there was no rest.
The earth was mixed with blood, smoke, and fire,
We were hunted by the enemy in swamp-like forest.

I wept tremendously in those dreadful days.
I did not know the fate of my family. I was cut off.
Did someone survive the blood-drenching Storm?
Day and night, in the Red Army, I recalled them, oft.

With a strong desire to see Father and Mother,
My family memories drive every move I make.
With every action, with hatred, we hit the enemy.
The harshest task, with will and love we undertake.

Sought but Not Found

On thorny paths I walked, with quiet pain in my heart.
Great distances, over sharp stones that rend.
Seeking a family member – Did anyone avoid death?
Each step, thinking terrible thoughts without end.

Through dark forests I sought a spark.
Reached flat swamps, where each tread was a strain.
The road has ended. No signs of a survivor.
Even the sun was covered with remorse and pain.

Through mountains, valleys, and icy snow,
I ran like the wind in a tempest,
Like deer escaping the hunter.
I ran from Hell. I avoided agony, with no rest.

Like dust from long past mists,
Wandering from foreign tent to tent.
Ground by sandy storms,
By water, flames, and cold that rent.

I finally reached a foreign land.
The sky is strange, as is everything around.
No longer on my own bed, just homeless nights.
Hunger, thirst, I complain in silent sound.

Vilna

I want to see Vilna before the Great Storm.
Everything is in my memory – written like in a tome,
Both dark and sunny streets,
My place of birth – my home.

I remember where my bed stood,
Where light from the sun never shined.
In the dark room a scent of dampness and mold.
No sunshine, just a lamp on the table you would find.

Gates that creaked when they closed.
Walls over a century old – maybe more.
The plaster on the walls that has long since vanished,
Traffic of horses and steel-wheeled carriages of yore.

Looking at stores in dark narrow streets,
And reading the Yiddish signs on stores.
Walking the groaning boardwalks,
Where generations of Jews lived behind closed doors.

More than a half-century has passed,
I dream while awake of Vilna – oh, city mine.
From sandy paths in the surrounding woods,
And Vilna's gardens and orchards fine.

The rivers and bridges of Vilna's yesteryear,
Ostrobrom where Christian prayers and chants rang.
Many churches with frightening crosses,
Sorrowful tones of the ringing church bell clang.

Vilna's coat of arms – the Fortress mount.
Hills whose white crosses around tell a story.
The Viliya currents, Mickiewicz's statue on its bank,
Mickiewicz that wrote up our city and its glory.

The Red Liberators shielded and saved me.
A shirt was lent, or bread – split evenly – was shared.
I'll never forget that time of terrible Storm,
In villages, welcomed by rich and poor, we fared.

The Red Liberators are often accused of evil conduct.
It's not true. Their souls shine bright as day.
We were gladly taken in, those days, offered the best,
With food, cots, even pillows stuffed with hay.

I did not see these holy men in that glorious moment,
When the cursed Swastika flags lay in the mud.
And the murderers crushed, their houses felled.
The Red Liberators shattered their sword of blood.