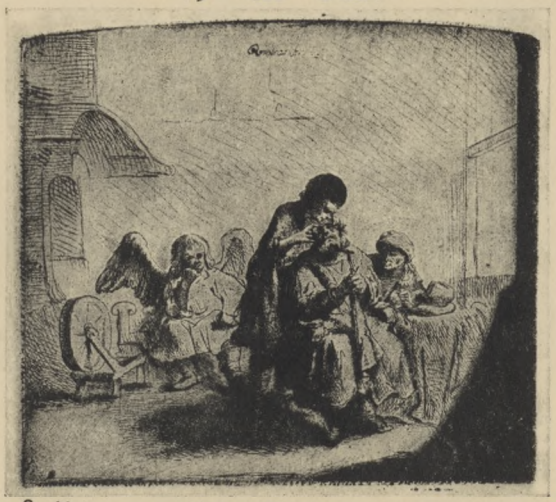
WHEN LOVE PASSED BY
AND
OTHER VERSES

by

SOLOMON SOLIS-COHEN

חכמים יצפנו דעת



Inscribed for my friend
Harry Friedenwald
Solomon Solis Cohen

WHEN LOVE PASSED BY
· AND ·
OTHER VERSES

INCLUDING TRANSLATIONS
FROM
HEBREW POETS OF THE MIDDLE AGES

· BY ·
SOLOMON SOLIS-COHEN

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TO MY WIFE

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Translations from the Hebrew

Anonymous

Solomon ben Judah ibn Gabírol

Moses ben Jacob ibn Ezra

Judah ben Samuel Halevi

Abraham ben Meïr ibn Ezra

Judah ben Solomon Al-Harizi

WHEN LOVE PASSED BY

I was busy with my ploughing,
  When Love passed by.
"Come," she cried, "forsake thy drudging;
Life's delights are few and grudging;
What hath man of all his striving,
All his planning and contriving,
  Here beneath the sky?
When the grave opes to receive him
Wealth and wit and worship leave him—
  Love endures for aye!"
But I answered: "I am ploughing.
  When with straight and even furrow
  All the field is covered thorough,
I will follow."
  Love passed by.

I was busy with my sowing,
  When Love passed by.
"Come," she cried, "give o'er thy toiling;
For thy moil thou hast but moiling—
Follow me, where meadows fertile
Bloom unsown with rose and myrtle,
  Laughing to the sky;
Laugh for joy the thousand flowers,
Birds and brooks—the laughing hours
  All unnoted fly."
But I answered: "I am sowing.
  When my acres all are planted,
  Gladly to thy realm enchanted,
I will follow."
  Love passed by.

I was busy with my reaping,
  When Love passed by.
"Come," she cried, "thou plantedst grieving,
Ripened sorrows art thou sheaving.
If the heart lie fallow, vain is
Garnered store. Thy wealth of grain is
  Less than Love's least sigh.
Haste thee—for the hours fast dwindle
Ere the pyre of Hope shall kindle
  In life's western sky."
But I answered: "I am reaping.
  When with song of youth and maiden,
  Home the hock-cart comes, full laden,
I will follow."
                Love passed by.

I had gathered in my harvest,
  When Love passed by.
"Stay," I called to her, swift speeding,
Turning not, my cry unheeding,
"Stay, O Love, I fain would follow;
Stay thy flight, O fleet-winged swallow
  Cleaving twilight sky!
I am old and worn and weary,
Void my fields and heart—and dreary,
  With thee would I fly.
Garnered woe is all my harvest;
  Sad ghosts of my dead hopes haunt me,
  Fierce regrets, like demons, taunt me—
Stay! I follow!"
                Love passed by.

—1882

WHITHER THOU GOEST

O Love, I cried, Thou saidst thy path was strewn
With roses: and behold, my naked feet
Have tracked with crimson all thy stony street,
And faintness cometh swift upon me. Soon
Shall I fall prostrate in thy cruel way,
With eyes that reck not betwixt night and day—
Nor any joy of all thou toldst is won.
  "Wouldst thou turn back?" said Love.
    Nay, nay, I cried, Lead on!

O Love, I cried, Thou saidst thine air was filled
With unimagined melody; the lays
That poets whisper in their hearts, the praise
Tumultuous, of the happy birds that build.
I hear a burden of all grief and pain—
Harsh discords of reproach, the broken strain
Of one that by a ruined nest makes moan.
  "Wouldst thou turn back?" said Love.
    Nay, nay, I cried, Lead on!

O Love, I cried, These be thy flowers that spring,
Glorious with crimson stain, beneath my feet;
And mine own heart makes melody more sweet
For memoried sorrows, than thy glad birds sing.
Fain would I tarry in this happy place,
But thou still holdest thine unloitering pace
Toward the dark vale beyond the setting sun.
  "Wouldst thou turn back?" said Love.
    Nay, nay, I cried, Lead on!

—1894

ROMPS

Soft white hands that press my cheek,
Great gray eyes with love aglow,
Tell the love lips cannot speak.

I am strong and these are weak:
Whence their power to thrill me so?
Soft white hands that press my cheek.

Eyes in whose gray depths I seek,
All the wondrous answer show—
Tell the love lips cannot speak!

Tyrant boy, though I be meek,
Must your rule the harsher grow?
Soft white hands that press my cheek.

Must I yield to every freak?
Let this kiss *my* lips bestow,
Tell the love lips cannot speak.

Now with laughter as you shriek,
—Oh, the merry games we know!—
Soft white hands that press my cheek
Tell the love lips cannot speak.

—1892

IN HER EYES

Woman and man, cast out
  From the garden of the Lord—
Before them, danger and doubt,
  Behind them, the flaming sword—

Search in each other's eyes:
  Lo, what outweighs the ban!
"We have hope!" the woman cries,
  "We have love!" the word of the man.

—1890

THE WORD OF SOLOMON IBN GABÍROL

"In the heart of the world my song I trace,
So deep that none may the lines efface!"
Said Gabírol the Jew . . And again . . "My rhyme
Shall be lofty . . I write on the brow of Time!"

Poet, shall men remember thee?
Deep and lofty thy song must be!

—1885

IMMORTALITY

I dreamed my spirit broke the bars of sense
That hold the gates of consciousness shut fast,
Threw off the prison-garb of Self, and passed
Into the wonder of Omniscience.
I saw mists rise from ocean and condense
In clouds; in million raindrops melt, and at the last,
Through brooks and rivers join again the vast
Primeval sea. And thus I read the Whence
And Whither of the soul.
When stream meets sea,
Is the swift river wave forever gone?
When souls rejoin All-soul, cease they to be?
Nay, there where All is Thought and Thought is One,
Within the Infinite All, eternally,
The thought once bound in me, lives boundless on.

—1887

LOSS

I work and play; I laugh and sing and jest;
But out of life hath gone some subtle zest.
And when, in the night's stillness, I awake,
Oh, how my heart doth ache, and ache, and ache!

—1914

LOVE CALLED ME NOT AWAY

I

Love called me not away. She came
  Straight to the field where I was plowing,
And laid her hand by mine, the while
  She whispered low her sweet avowing:
"Thy path I'll choose, that I may fill
  With joy the day laborious, whether
On rich-loamed plain or stony hill,
  We guide the furrowing share together."

Shapely the hand I bent to kiss,
  White as a lily long and slender;
And all my soul was aflood with bliss—
  But I laughed in my heart: "Shall a hand like this
Hold the staff of a plow in its grasp so tender?"

Yet days there came, when that hand held true
  The plow wherefrom my grasp had faltered;
Whilst glance and call gave courage new,
  Though frowning skies the world had altered.

And thus are toil and joy made one
  Through Love's high magic, day by day,
Who walks beside me in the field,
  Nor called me from the plow away.

II

Love walked beside me in the field
  Whenas the time had come for sowing;
Or whiles, danced merrily before,
  Right, left, her lavish handfuls throwing.

Like song of bird her laughter rang,
  Like laughter of the brook, her chanting:
"In gladness sow, for who may know,"
  She sang, "The harvest of his planting?
If empty prove the garnered ears,
  If bursting sheaves thy wains o'erburden—
Alike in lean and plenteous years,
  Shall bloom the flowers Love hath for guerdon!"

Bright smiled the eyes that I bent to kiss,
  Through tears with sad, sweet memories laden;
And I thrilled in my heart: "But a fool would miss
  The workday world with its pain-won bliss,
For the dull delights of a toilless Aiden."

And thus it comes to pass that life
  Is full and rich, whate'er the yield
Of acres plowed and sown; for still,
  Love walks beside me in the field!

—1912

LOVE IS THE BEST OF LIFE

Love is the best of life, and laughter next;
And after these, the blessèd gift of tears
And the hot flame of wrath that fills the soul
At sight of wrong to any living thing.
He that hath these, hath all the gods can give,
And though his lot be lowly, needs not crave
The loveless splendor of unsmiling state;
Or, if he bear the burden of high place,
Shall bear it nobly, envying not the clods
Whose narrow selves bound all their joy or pain.

—1909

REMEMBRANCE

(I. N. S.)

Oft in the night I wake, and know not why,
But seem to listen for a fateful cry;
And—like a blind man, driven by vague sense
Of tryst forgotten, with dread consequence,
In stumbling haste along a winding way,
But half-remembered—my bewildered soul
Asks of the formless darkness, "Who am I?
And what this quest that fills me with dismay?"

Then sudden memory comes, and all is clear—
As if a flash of lightning should reveal
To wayfarers the storm-lost path—I hear
Again the low alarum by my bed,
And o'er the wire, the distant, halting voice
That fears to tell, and dares not to conceal
Its grief-fraught word: "Thy brother Jonathan—
Thy brother Jonathan—is—dead!"

—1909

IF LOVE BE DEAD

I

Before me spreads a cheerless waste
And I am weary . . . stay thy haste,
Kind Sun,
Go not down—lest day be done
Ere I find where Love has flown;
Lest the gaunt black wolves that fare
From their terror-haunted lair
In the cold world under wave—
Night, and his fierce twin Despair—
Find me lone, with none to save;
All alone, wert thou withdrawn.

Sun, when in the Orient sky
Thou thy matin-song didst write,
Who so happy in thy sight
As I?

Happy as thy heaven-born bride,
Happy as the glowing dawn!
When thy noon was waxen high,
Did thine all-beholding eye
Find on earth a happier one?
Happy with thy noon's delight—
For then, Love was at my side.

Now, O Sun,
The approach of Night
Chills me, fills me with affright,
For Love is fled.
Far and wide—
Oh, the way is rough and dread—
I have sought him . . . but in vain
Do I call: "Love, come again!"
And I fear me he is dead . . .
Ah, woe is me, if Love be dead!

O false, false lips, my heart belied,
Vainly his kisses, now ye crave;
O coward heart, what boots thy pride,
If Love be lying in the grave!

Love is Joy and Love is Day,
Warm at dawn and bright at noon;
Ah, that noon must fade away,
Ah, that Love must die so soon!

II

Bright was the morn within the wood;
We wandered there in merry mood,
Bright and merry as the May.
Thrilled with joy the golden hours—
Happy hours too quickly sped,
All too quickly sped away—
Whilst Love sought the fairest flowers,
Weaving garlands for my head.

Or when . . . with swelling throat,
Some feathered minstrel of the bowers
With the gladsome day possessed,
Told his mate upon the nest
All the bliss that filled his breast,
All the fresh delights of spring . . .
Trilling thus his roundelay:

"Throstle hen, throstle hen,
Nested the leaves among,
Listen, O listen,
'Tis I that am singing;
Dost thou hear me?
Dost thou see me?
I am near . . . I am here . . .
Here! here! here! here!

Bright the sun,
Clear the sky,
Crisp the air and rife with odor;
Leaf and bloom
Drip with honey,
In the greenwood, life is blithe;
Joy!
Joy! Joy! Joy!
Joy!
Fills my soul,
O'erflows in music,
As from bough to bough I flutter,
Gaily singing . . . singing ever
Dost thou hear me? . . . Dost thou see me?
I am near!
I am here! here! here!
Here! . . . here! . . . here! . . . here!
I am here!"

"List," cried Love, "a bolder note
Will I sing:

"Where thou goest, I will go;
Where thou stayest, I will stay;
Everywhere thy foot shall fare,
Far or near, or high or low,
Look within thy heart . . . for know
I will be there!
There! There! There! There!
Look in thy heart . . . I will be there!"

Laughing then with merry zest,
"*There!*" he cried, "my song is best!"

III

Withered are the leaves, and sere,
Wherewith I was garlanded;
And the only sound I hear
Is the owlet's mournful moan—
Dismal echo of mine own—
For Love is fled . . .
Ah, woe is me, if Love be dead!

Cursèd be the cruel pride
Drove him joyless from my side,
—Oh, his look of pleading pain—
Too late I cried: "Love, come again!"
—Too late I cried.

O false, false lips, my heart denied,
His kisses shall ye crave in vain;
O traitor heart, would thou hadst died
Or ever Love by thee was slain!

Joy and Day with Love are fled,
Cometh Night, with care and dread;
Cometh Night, unhoping morrow,
Cometh Night of endless sorrow,
If Love be dead
If Love be dead!

—1889

Shall the mole, in his night underground, call the beasts from the day-glare to flee?
Shall the owl charge the birds: "I am wise. Come, dwell in the shadows with me?"
Shall a man bind his eyes and proclaim: "It is vain that men weary to see!"

Let him walk in the gloom, whoso will; peace be with him. But whence is his right
To declare that the world is in darkness, because he has turned from the light,
Or to seek to o'ershadow my day with the pall of his self-chosen night?

I have listened, like David's great son, to the voice of the beast and the bird;
To the voice of the trees and the grass; yea, a voice from the stones I have heard;
And the sun and the moon and the stars in their courses, re-echo the word.

And one word speak the bird and the beast, and the hyssop that springs in the wall,
And the cedar that lifts its proud head upon Lebanon, stately and tall,
And the rocks, and the sea and the stars; and "Know" is the message of all.

For the answer hath ever been nigh unto him who would question and learn—
How to bring the stars near to his gaze; in what orbits the planets must turn;
Why the apple must fall from the bough; what the fuel that sun-fires burn.

Whence came life? In the rocks is it writ, and no Finger hath graven it there?
Whence came light? Did its motions arise without impulse? Will science declare,
That the Law ruling all hath upsprung from NoMind, that abideth NoWhere?

"Yea, I know!" cried the true man of old; and whosoe'er wills it, may know.
"My Redeemer—He liveth!" I seek for a sign of His presence, and lo,
As He spake to the light, and it was, so He speaks to my soul—and I know!

—1887

THROUGH THE VALLEY OF WEEPING

They that pass through the valley of weeping have made it a well: yea, rains of blessing fill the pools. From strength to strength they go; they shall appear before God in Zion. Psalm lxxxiv, 7, 8.

Oh, having walked in Eden, having heard
  The voice of God speaking direct and clear,
To fall so grossly! By a brutish sin
  To sear the eye and bar the gateway of the ear!

And now the soul, cast out from Paradise,
  The soul imbrute, that seeth, but is blind,
And heareth, but is deaf to the One Voice,
  Seeks painfully the way; seeks, seeks, but cannot find.

Yet this she knoweth; the dull ways of Sense
  That seers, unseeing, deem so bright and fair,
Mislead to utter loss; the path of Truth
  Hides in the maze of Doubt, o'erhung with black Despair.

The beast doubts nothing, and the innocent child
  Needs nothing doubt. But in the maimèd soul
That played the beast, yet hath not all forgot,
  Divinity survives; and yearning to be whole,

Drives the soul forth to seek the healing spring.
  Then doth she follow Rumor's devious quest,
Search many lands and drink at many wells;
  Perchance a moment's respite wins—but never rest.

Mistrusting, then, it is an old wife's tale
  Or, at the best, a poet's noble theme—
Comes sudden Fear, and cries: "The memoried Past,
  The Garden and the Voice are shadows of a dream!"

Thenceforward walks a chill shape at her side
  And holdeth her in subtle argument;
Once had she yielded, but a sudden fire
  Of passionate words unto her faltering tongue was lent,

Wherefrom, like murky mist chased by the sun,
  The mocker flees; and on her lucent eyes
For one supreme, ecstatic moment, shine
  The rivers and the sward—the Garden of the Skies!

And having seen, what though the vision fade,
  And Fear, returning, whispers: "It was naught
But trick of heated sense; a vain mirage
  That cheats the hope whereof its bodiless shape was wrought—"

She hears impatiently the sceptic voice;
  And One that walketh by her other hand,
Answers: "Not so! Albeit the pilgrim find
  Where seemed the oasis smiled, but waste of burning sand.

"Not vain the vision. Thou dost read amiss,
  It tells thee sooth—the desert is not bare;
And whoso learns to seek aright, shall win
  To palm and well, that shine reflected in the air."

And thus by Hope impelled, warned back by Fear,
  The soul, by these attended either side,
Turns toward the maze of Doubt; with steadfast will
  To find therein Truth's way, whatever else betide.

For this at last she knows: though sense mislead,
  Yet nevermore the child's unquestioning Faith
Returns to guide her steps, that with the Worm
  Hath talked, and plucked the fruit of knowledge and of death.

For her, the vale where tears of them that pass
  Have made a well—O blessèd rains that fill
The pool of Healing. There the soul shall bathe,
  Then mount from strength to strength, Godward—and Godward still!

—1896

THE HELPERS

'Twas the Lord God, listened from Heaven
  To the sounds that were made on earth;
To the cries of hopeless anguish,
  To the shouts of careless mirth—
To the toilers' cries of anguish,
  To the idlers' shouts of mirth.

"Who will help?" God spake to his angels,
  And two stood forth at the word;
The first bare a branch of the olive,
  The last bare a flaming sword—
"To earth," God said, "with the olive,
  "To earth with the flaming sword."

My brothers, God's angels fly swiftly;
  Hark! The sweep of their wings afar!
Two are speeding to be men's helpers,
  And the last bears the brand of war—
Now, which will ye choose for helper,
  The Angel of Peace, or of War?

—1895

THE EMANCIPATOR'S PRAYER

"O Lord of Battles, God of Love," he cried,
"As Thou, aforetime, didst Thy Will declare,
Show it me now; for haltingly I fare
Through doubt to doubt, and Thou alone canst guide.
Be this the sign—Rebellion's rising tide
Sweeps northward, threatening; if Thou bidst me dare
To do the right, and quit my soul of care,
Let the proud waves be stayed, the flood subside."

Back from South Mountain ebbed the unconquered foe;
And Lincoln, awed, said in his soul: "I know—
Righteous and true, O Lord, Thy judgments are;
North sinned with South, Thou chastenest both with War.
Yet hast Thou given the Sign; and this shall be"—
He wrote: " . . . . . thenceforward and forever free!"

—1905

VANITY OF VANITIES

(Ecclesiastes, i, 2; ii, 3.)

O soul,—for I have a soul,—hast thou erred in thy place of birth?
Hast thou missed thy way through the spheres and blundered hither on
earth?

Or if thou wast sent to earth, hast thou blundered, perchance, in thy date—
Come a thousand years too soon—or a thousand years too late?

I dare not think it, O soul; thou durst not answer me, 'Yes'—
Yet we shrink from the maddening whirl, from the ceaseless struggle
and stress;

From the reckless, restless chase, after that which availeth not—
We are in the crowd, with the crowd we must rush, push, crush—but
for what?

"Rapid transit" is the cry of the hour; today o'er the land and the wave,
Through the air, tomorrow! Huzza! And all the while—to the grave!

If a lord of the gamblers' 'Change, still plotting a daring 'deal',
(The language this, of the street, but the simple Saxon were 'steal')

Drop dead, like a vulture balked of his prey by the shaft of Fate,
Let his fellow-vultures take heed. But when one who has saved the state,

By the crowding pygmies behind, at a pace too great is pushed on,
For the over-wrought body and brain, and falls ere his race be done,

Shall we pause but a moment to weep at the victim's bier—and then
With feverish haste, rush back to the death-dealing turmoil again?

"Vain, Vain," cried the preacher of old, "Vain, Vain! It is all in vain
That man burdens his days with toil and his sleepless nights with pain.

"For what does he profit withal? Wealth, wisdom, power or fame?
Lo, the end of the rich and the poor, of the wise and the fool is the same!

"I have searched God's ways; I have proved all the ways of men, that grieve
Their spirits for naught; and this only is good:—That a man, while he live—

("For the living know they must die. But the dead know naught; they have gone
Whither hating and loving are stilled and all jealous strivings are done)—

"Shall be glad of his life and do good. For he, unto whom it is given
To eat and to drink and see fruit of his toil, hath the best gift of Heaven."

—1892

IN DEUM VIVUM EXULTAVERUNT

(Psalm 84—Psalm 19)

God's thought creative moves through infinite ways,
Forms unimagined, unprevisioned deeds,
That pass the search of sages, and the creeds
By priest or chemist framed, in vain essays
To bound the limitless. With reverent gaze,
Like Israel's Shepherd-King, true science reads
The message of the firmament, and heeds
The word night sings to night, day unto days.

The world is one divine adventure; light
And life and man and woman, parts thereof;
Its ceaseless change reveals Unchanging Will
Upbuilding atoms, joining souls in love—
And thou and I, partakers through love's might,
With joy of God's eternal purpose, thrill.

—1907

AT THE GATES OF GOD

With face upturned to Luzon's sky, with back to Luzon's sod,
The body lay—the indignant soul knocked at the gates of God;
And his prayer, the Angel of Wrath upbare, in haste, to the throne of God.

"Justice! Do justice, white man's God! They slay us in Thy Name—
Thy love, their cannons roar; Thy truth, they speak with tongues of flame;
And for light to read Christ's word aright, our pagan rooftrees flame.

"They came as friends, from the Great White Chief and his people over sea;
'Spain fights for land and gold,' they said. 'We fight to make men free;
And our deed is born of a nation's creed, that God wills all men free.'

"Then we clasped our hands with a traitor's hand, we had faith in a liar's faith;
They have kept their word as white men do—they have made us free of death;
And their deed is born of a nation's greed and its pact with Hell and Death!"

All Heaven stood silent. Each on each gazed with expectant eyes,
Till the Angel of Pity bowed his head, and a murmur swelled: "Arise!"
And the shout from gates to throne rang out: "Lord, God of Vengeance, rise!"

And forth of the host came Love and Truth and bent before the Throne:
"Lord, for Thy Name they take in vain, make Thou this cause Thine own"—
And the Word from behind the veil was heard: "I make this cause Mine own."

But the Angel of Wrath at that Word appalled, fell prostrate in his place;
And prayed: "Have mercy, God!" and wept, as he lay upon his face—
There is need for tears, when Wrath must plead, and Pity hide his face!

Yea, men and angels, weep hot tears; but not for the lifeless clod,
And not for the soul untimely sent, with a people's wrongs, to God:—
Be your grief for the soul of the great White Chief, when he stands at the gates of God!

—1899

THY WILL BE MINE*

"Thy will be mine!" This is my prayer;
Although I cannot see or guess
  The destined end,
Still would I tread the way Thou didst prepare.

Yet not as one that unto power doth bend—
  Albeit resignedly—
Wherewith his feebleness may not contend;
  But in all trustfulness
  And all serenity,
As when a child doth take
  His father's hand,
Incurious for what sake,
  Or whitherward, they wend.

Enough for Sarah's son if Abram bid
That he, the wood of sacrifice shall bind
  Upon his back;
And leave the young men and the beasts behind,
  The while they two
Fare on together o'er an unknown track,
  Unto a purpose hid.

  Fain would I do
As Isaac, if I could but know
It is my Father's voice that bids me "Go!"

—1910

TO WARRING THEOLOGIANS

Cease, cease your wrangling, what the lines
  And curves to open Heaven's ward;
Nor yours, nor yours, the truthful key—
  The Gates of Mercy are not barred!

—1886

*"So they two fared on together."—Genesis xxii, 6, 8.

FROM MASTER TO MASTER

I

From the Master of the Law

Nigh to his end the Master lay;
  In grief and awe,
His pupils gathered silent by his bed,
  To hear the Law

Taught by his dying lips, whom men
  Were wont to call
The goodliest fruitage of a noble vine—*
  Abba, the Tall.

Through East and West, all Israel knew
  His learning's fame;
"Master," the single word that any said,
  Who spake his name.

All Israel knew his blameless life
  From youth to age;
Pure as the water summoned from the rock,
  The Torah's page.

Calmly—his pupils gathered close—
  He waited death;
Discoursing still of high and wondrous themes,
  With ebbing breath.

A pause:—"I go," he said, "and now,
  Ere all be done,
And ye, with reverent covered eyes shall say
  'The Lord is One.'

"To this, my last, my weightiest charge,
  Incline your ears:
Take heed, O man, thou cause no woman weep;
  God counts her tears."

*Rabbi Abba ben Aioub, also called Abba Arika (the Tall), traced his descent from Shimei, brother of King David. He died in the year 247 of the common era, at Sura in Babylon, where he had founded the great Rabbinic Academy. He is rarely indicated by name in the Talmud; most of his teachings being quoted with the formula "Rab (Master) said."

II

To the Master of the Pack

Two and thrice five the centuries' tale,
  Since Abba died;
Kings, races, conquering empires rise—They strut
  Their day of pride;

And pass. Only the Word endures
  Forevermore;
And the sworn folk that bear it, age to age,
  And shore to shore.

And with it, over all the earth,
  The treasured page
Close writ with precious comment of the scribe,
  And saint and sage.

And thus in never-broken chain
  From sire to son,
In every land, the dying Master's charge
  Is handed on.

Even there in Magog's* land of night—
  The nations' shame—
Where a crowned coward cheers the mob to deeds
  Without a name;

And the sworn folk draw breath of fear,
  Like wolf-tracked sheep—
Take heed, O Master of the pack! *God sees—*
  And women weep!

—1911

*Magog is used for Russia.

"Woe, that our time should see thy light,
  O sun of song, go down in night!"
To tell our loss o'erpasses speech,
  Far down the years, its shadows reach.
Not so bereft did Zion bide
  On Warsaw's awful Christmastide;*
For through the lurid gloom of fears,
  Through clouds of hate, through rain of tears,
Thy radiance pierced. Faded the "blood-red dawn"†
And in the West, "the bow" of promise shone.

Transfigured by thy glory then,
  Lo, he that was despised of men—
Albeit with unshaken faith
  He poured his steadfast soul to death,
Jeered as a crouching, cringing coward—
  Full-statured, Truth's own hero, towered;
The martyr-brow, thorn-crowned with shame,
  Glowed with a world-illuming flame.
Men saw and honored—
  Ah, death's cruel night
Hath quenched in thee a people's risen light.

—1887

GOD SPAKE TO A WAITING SOUL

God spake to a waiting soul:
  "Go, live and work on the earth."
Then the cry that a woman cries
  Was heard—and the child had birth.

In Tarlac, in torn Luzon,
  The brown men's strongsouled chief
Kissed his wife and babe. "O God,"
  He cried, "Is it joy or grief!

"Thou bidst me guard this life,
  Thou badest me build a State;
Alas! for my hands are weak,
  And strong is the white man's hate!

*A pogrom; see her "Crowing of the Red Cock."
†The allusions are to the titles of Emma Lazarus's poems or to phrases therein.

"But I thank Thee, God, for Thy gift,
  And you—little rebel's son—
For the greatest rebel of all,
  Shall be named George Washington."

Glad were the brown men's hearts,
  And they made a joyous feast
To christen their hero's son;
  Nor lacked there, chrism or priest.

But scarce were the solemn words
  Of the rite baptismal said,
And scarce were the blessèd drops
  Outpoured on the infant's head—

When a noise of shots was heard,
  And the rolling alarum drum,
And the shouts of warning, "Fly!
  For the White Chief's hunters come!"

Never, their foemen say,
  Strove the brown men so well;
One to five they were, and they fought
  Till the half of their number fell.

"Heathen and savages"—which?
  The slayers, or these slain,
That died for a mother and child?
  Just God! And they died in vain!

* * *

Cold, on the breasts that had dried
  With the pain and the fear of flight,
Lay the babe that the brown folk loved—
  And its face in death was white!

And the soul returned to God,
  Weeping for work undone—
But I deem God kissed it and said:
  "In my love shalt thou bide, O son."

—1899

With freedom's starlit flag unfurled,
With hand outstretched as friend ye came;
And ever on your lips the name
Of one that died to save the world.

Beneath that flag ye burn and kill,
In that dear name ye waste our land;
The bird that flies your perjured hand
Finds no green thing on plain or hill.

The evil that Spain wrought in hate
Ye overpass in love—who slay
The old man and the child at play,
And her that moans: "Oh, death is late!"

"Not by their words, but by their work,"
Your Teacher said, "God judgeth men;"
His angel writes with equal pen
The deeds of Saxon and of Turk.

Before His throne how shall ye plead
When we accuse you? Will ye there
Deny God's knowledge? Will ye dare
To mask as Faith, your faithless Greed?

Or will ye say, "Such things must be,
For War is Hell?" Why, then, ye knew—
What time ye bade us 'twixt these two
Make choice—Or war, or slavery—

That ye were leagued with Death and Hell
Against our freedom—Yea, and none,
Since Europe flamed behind the Hun,
Hath kept the baleful pact so well!

Perchance ye deem God's justice sleeps—
Oh, blind and foolish then, as base,
Ask Ramses' plundered burial case;
Ask Nippur's mound and Babel's heaps.

Or, haply, from that newer grave,
Where, murdered, lies your chief, who spoke
The word that doomed our feeble folk,
Counsel may come to shrive and save—

Bid cannon hush and reason speak;
From wrong repented, nobly cease;
And reconciled with Truth and Peace,
The olden way of Freedom seek.

—1901

WEAVING

Forth and back, forth and back, the eternal shuttles ply,
Weaving the woof of Time into the warp of Fate.
Planets and suns are the cogs and the wheels of the loom
that is framed of the sky—
But who and where is the Weaver?
Is it puny you or I?

Each with his little thread, over the web we crawl;
What saith the Master Weaver? "See that ye guide it straight.
If ye pause, if ye swerve to the right, to the left, under the
wheels ye will fall."
If we falter not, neither waver?—
—But who may do that, of us all!

—1886

ATONEMENT

I

The judgments of the Lord are true;
They are righteous altogether—Psalm xix, 9.
(Quoted in Lincoln's Second Inaugural)

"How shall we atone?" I said—
Jefferson's and Lincoln's folk,
Guardians of the truth they spoke,
Heirs to the prophetic bell.

"How shall we atone?" I grieved;
Nor found comfort in the thought
Of the selfless good we had wrought,
When our hand was turned from ill—

How we had banished plague and want,
Builded mart and road and school,
Pledged our word to bring self-rule
Under ordered liberty—

Lincoln still forbade my peace;
"Every drop drawn from the black—
North and South must pay it back,
Until blood for blood atones."

II

Let them cause my people to hear my words,
And turn from their evil way,
And from the wrongfulness of their doings.
—Jeremiah xxiii, 22.

Came a summons out of France,
Out of Belgium shrilled a cry;
But we tarried to reply—
Was it shame held back our soul?

Though we tarried to reply,
When we spoke, the word was clear—
"Lafayette," one said, "We are here!"
And our soul came to its own.

There by Marne and Ourcq and Vesle,
In the depths of grim Argonne,
Blood for blood, we paid Luzon,
Freedom gave, for freedom riven.

For the state our sin destroyed,
Ancient states we build anew;
Succoring Moslem, Christian, Jew—
All the feeble folk of earth!

III

*And ye shall proclaim liberty throughout the earth**
Unto all that dwell therein.—Leviticus xxv, 10.

Plant we now the tree of peace:
What if leaf and bud be slow
In their coming? It shall grow,
Age on age, till ages end.

Tree of knowledge, tree of life,
Shall it be for all mankind;
And its fruit shall make the blind—
Yea, the blind of soul—to see

With what vision prophets saw;—
Nations joined in Pact of Right,
Leaders thronging to the light,
And the humblest unafraid

'Neath his figtree and his vine;
All men one in brotherhood,
"Doing justice, loving good,
Walking humbly before God!" —1919

*The Hebrew word 'Ha-aretz' which appears in the original text of the "Liberty Bell" inscription, may be rendered 'the land' or 'the earth.' It is the same word used in Genesis, i, 1; "In the beginning, God created the heavens and *the earth*."

NOW WE GIVE THANKS TO THEE

Thank God! Thank God!
My country's flag shall be
At home and oversea,
The symbol, once again, of liberty!
From Luzon's sod
The voice of brothers' blood
(Spilled in what wanton, meteless flood
By the pale-face Cain—
America, as Spain)
Its clamant cry may cease,
And all the indignant ghosts shall be at peace.

Honor to thee,
Wise leader of the free,*
Brave-souled and true!
Clear-visioned, to pierce through
Sham and pretense,
Cant of benevolence,
And see the immitigable stain
Where lust of power and gain
Had laid polluted touch upon the Red, White, Blue—
Strong-hearted, then to say:
"Cut the unclean away,
Though gap be left and scar."
Nobler that wound, than all the wounds of war!

Nor island folk alone,
Are loosed from chain;
Tyrant and slave
In mutual bondage strain—
The greed-forged links wherewith our treachery bound
The land that Aguinaldo strove in vain
From war's red tide to save,
About our land were wound
Like the snake's crushing coils about Laocoön.

*Written on the occasion of President Wilson's proclamation of independence to the Philippines. Unfortunately, it is a promise unfulfilled.

Our league with Death,
Our covenant with Hell,
Is riven at last. Delivered from that fell
Embracement—pledged anew to olden faith,
Columbia stands
With lips unsealèd and unshackled hands,
(Shield-arm and sword-arm free)
Restored by one brave word
Unto her ancient right
To speak for justice; and, if need shall be,
Her power to smite.

—1913

LINES FOR THE NINTH OF AB

Shall I sorrow, O desolate city,
For thy beauty and glory o'erthrown;
Shall I sing the dread day of destruction,
  When for sins thou didst dearly atone—
When the Lord, from the place He had chosen
  Withdrew the strong shield of His Name,
And its treasures were spoiled by the stranger,
  Its holiness given to shame—
When the shrieks of the daughters of Zion
  Sad echoed the shouts of the foe,
And thy streets, ravished city, ran crimson
  With the blood of thy sons, lying low—
When the scepter departed from Judah,
  From Levi his birthright was riven,
And the people of God were led captive,
  Forsaken of earth and of Heaven!

Or shall I rejoice in the beauty
  And glory, again to be thine,
When thy youth's loving Bridegroom shall ransom
  His promise of comfort divine—
In the courts of God's Temple rebuilded,
  Thy priests, morn and eve, shall proclaim
"He is One!"—and the sons of the stranger
  Shall answer: "And One is His Name!"
In chorus of praise shall thy daughters
  Re-echo the Levites' glad song,
And thy gates, night and day shall stand open,
  For the pilgrims that thitherward throng.
For the scepter returns unto David,
  The mitre to Aaron's proud line;
And neighbor shall welcome his neighbor
  To the shadow of figtree and vine.

Like Akiba, who laughed when the foxes
  Ran out from the Holiest Place,
Saying: "True were the warnings of evil
  And true is the promise of grace,"
My thoughts, on this day of sad memories,
  Turn not back to the past in despair,
But forward in hope to the future
  Where visions of glory shine fair!
When I read in the book of the prophet
  Who voiced fallen Zion's distress,
I seek not alone words of grieving,
  But these rarer, that comfort and bless:
"Hear the word of the Lord, O ye nations,
  In the isles afar-off be it told;
Who dispersed, will again gather Israel,
  And keep—as a shepherd his fold!"

—1878

GOD'S WAY

A nation bows in grief
Before the Eternal throne—
  If we have sinned,
O Lord, if he hath sinned,
  Let this atone!

Hand as in friendship clasped,
To mask a murderer's blow—
  Even so wrought we,
In falseness, over sea—
  O God! Even so.

Forgive, and grant us now
Strength, wisdom, to do right;
  May this day's tears,
For all the future's years
  Make clear our sight;

That we may break our league
With death, our pact with hell;
  That to all men,
Freedom and peace again
  Our flag shall tell.

Faults, frailties, of the dead,
Then may the world forget;
  Strongsouled to say:
"Submit; it is God's way,"
  He paid his debt.

—1901

OUT OF THE BEAST

Out of the beast have we risen; but mark, we have risen
Out of the beast! Who goes out from the darkness—from prison,
  Backward turns never.
Out from the beast and out from the law of the beast kind forever,
  Mark, we have risen.

Nature, through ages of travail, gave birth to the human;
Brute all she bare before. Now on the earth, man and woman
  Up stood, upgazing.
Thrilled and rejoiced all her worlds with the pang of that wondrous,
    upraising,
  Birth to the human.

Not all a dream, is the ladder whose top reaches Heaven:
Hid in the deeps though its base, shall we stop—that have given
  Foot to toil highward?
Stop—to gaze down, till made dizzy we fall—while who strives to the
    skyward
  Top, reaches Heaven!

Preach not alone what we were, O ye wise men, but tell us
What we may be if we will. Yet to rise, show—impel us!
  Man shall be angel.
Brute that was, man that is, God-like can strive—and be. This new evangel,
  Wise men, but tell us.

—1890

ALL THESE WILL I GIVE THEE*

How wouldst thou fall, as from heaven fell Lucifer,
    son of the morning,
My Country, that God chose from nations to give in
    thy hand Freedom's light;
Now would He prove thee, with offer of empire and
    gold for thy scorning—
O, stretch not thy hand, lest thy torch fall, and
    earth become dark in thy night! —1898

*These lines were occasioned by the discussion of peace terms between the United States and Spain, and the proposal to acquire Cuba, Porto Rico and the Philippines.

MACCABEAN BATTLE-SONG

To battle! To battle! Though few be our band,
While the hosts of the tyrant are countless as sand,
  Fear not! For they trust
  In the right arm of dust,
In shields that may shiver, in swords that may rust;
  But our arm of defence
  Is the arm of THE LORD.
His Law is our shield, and His wrath is our sword;
The heroes that lead us are priests of His shrine,
And his glorious Name is our banner divine!

To battle! To battle! Ye proud heathen horde,
Among all the elím* who is like to THE LORD?
  A stone, from the sod
  Ye dig out: "'tis a god!
Quake, earth, tremble, heaven, before his dread nod!"
  Aye, quake earth and skies;
  All ye peoples, be still;
Hark! the loud-rolling thunder! It voices His will
Who fashioned the storm cloud—who speaks not in vain,
And the HAMMER† of God rives Olympus in twain!

To battle! To battle! The cornets ring loud,
Speaking hope to the weak, speaking death to the proud.
  Lo! Jerubbaal's sword
  Unto Judah restored,
Flashes bright at our head as the flame of THE LORD!
  And woe to the foe
  Whom its keen edge shall smite,
No safety remaineth for Javan, but flight;
No help from blind metal, no help from deaf stone—
THE LORD GOD OF HOSTS reigns Eternal, Alone!

—1879

*Literally "the Mighty" including possibly the deities of the heathen. The phrase—quoted from the Song of Moses—was inscribed on the banners of the Hasmoneans and from its initial letters (in Hebrew)—M C B I—their designation of Maccabee is said to come.

†Another explanation of the surname of the Hasmonean leader, Judas Maccabeus, derives it from the Aramaic 'makkaba' (Hebrew 'makkebet'), meaning hammer.

TWO VOICES IN ZION

First Voice

No hand for vengeance—but to save
A million naked swords shall wave.
Emma Lazarus—"The Banner of the Jew."

Men of Israel, sleep no longer—
  Ye, whose sires a Joshua led,
Ye, before whose handfuls, stronger
  Foes than Russia's Tsar have fled!

From its scabbard, centuries-rusted,
  Draw the Maccabean sword;
Call on Him whom Gideon trusted,
  Shout the war cry of The Lord!

To the four winds of the corners,
  Judah's lion-flag unfurl;
Like young lions, on the scorners
  Let its gathered thousands hurl.

As that sacred flag waves proudly
  Once again, o'er men in fight—
Hark! what sudden shout rings loudly!
  Lo! whence spring those forms of might?

Phineas sounds the trump of onset,
  Fiery Joab leads the fray,
Red the field as summer's sunset,
  Yon, where Saul and David slay.

Rouse ye, arm ye, sons of freemen,
  Yours is more than mortal might;
Forty centuries bid you "Be men—
  Up, for faith and freedom—Fight!"

Second Voice

The angry sword he will not whet,
His nobler task is—to forget.
Emma Lazarus—"The Crowing of the Red Cock."

Nay, for ours is Peace—the passion
Of the vision of the seer;
Plowshare from the sword to fashion,
Pruning hook from murderous spear.

Strong we were—we are—to suffer;
Think you that God doth not know?
Coat with cloak we give—we offer
Both cheeks to the oppressor's blow.

When her penance is completed,
Zion shall forgiveness win—
When the chastening Hand hath meted
Twofold recompense for sin.

Then shall comfort fall upon her—
He hath promised it, the Lord—
Then shall hers be passing honor,
Never yet was won by sword.

For gross darkness earth shall cover,
Nations be enwrapped in gloom,
But God's glory shall above her
Shine—His light her face illume.

Then the peoples, filled with longing,
To that Only Light shall turn;
And the kings of men go thronging
Zion's courts, her Law to learn.

Till that time shall come, to suffer
Are we strong—God wills it so;
Cloak with coat we give—we offer
Both cheeks to the oppressor's blow.

—1890

SPEAK TO THE PEOPLE THAT THEY GO FORWARD

(Exodus, xiv, 15)

First Voice

"How long, O Lord, how long?"
Each age repeats the cry;
For still the might of wrong
Endures beneath the sky.
Comes not our voice on high?
Surely, Thine arm is strong!
O Father, wherefore dost Thou yet deny
To save Thy children in their misery?

Second Voice

Yea, I have heard, and I hear;
Men are born and men die,
And forever they weary Mine ear
With the voice of their cry—
"Save us, O save!"
Heed ye the answer I gave
Unto him that led forth Egypt's slave,
When he paused on the brink of the sea;
Rose the mountains to left and to right,
Behind pressed the Pharaoh in might,
And before, rolled the wave.
Paused the leader, but not in despair,
And he poured forth his great soul in prayer,
Pleading not; wrestling, conquering Me there.
And I said: "Wherefore cry unto Me?
Bid thy people go on, and be free!"

—1896

AT THE END OF DAYS

A Hebrew Legend*

It is the day when earth, a robe outworn,
Shall crumble, and the sky shall fade as mist,
That in fulfilment of God's longtime word,
New earth, new heavens shall be.

In paradise,
A feast delectable is spread, whereto
Are bidden all the souls that dwell in bliss,
Saint and forgiven sinner.
Angels serve,
Captained by Michael and by Gabriel.

Before they sit, 'tis Adam breaks the bread,
And speaks the words of blessing o'er the cup
Of fellowship; and after, Abraham
The father of the faithful, who begins
The accustomed rite of thanks:
"Let us bless God
Whose bounty feedeth us;" and all respond,
Michael and Gabriel leading: "Blest is God
Whose bounty feedeth us and by Whose grace
Immeasurable, we live. Amen."

In hell,
A sudden stillness falls; the demons hold
Their hands from torturing, and the imprisoned souls
Are silent with the joy of pain's surcease.
Satan lifts up his head, and stretching forth
Mute, pleading hands on high, stands motionless.

And now, in heaven,
The tender, stammering voice of Moses speaks:

*See L. Ginzberg, "The Legend of the Jews."

The citations from the Hebrew "grace after meat" are nearly literal. It is taught by some Rabbis that the Ten Commandments were announced at Sinai, not by sounds like those of human speech, but by a special Voice created for that time and purpose on the sixth day, just before the first Sabbath. Others say that there was no sound, but that each Israelite heard the words "in his heart" (*i. e.* mind).

"May He, Most Merciful,
Bless every one among, us as He deigned
To bless our fathers; Abraham in all,
Isaac from all, and Jacob alway—So
May it be His will to bless us all and each
With perfect blessing. And say ye, Amen."

Then, led by Michael and by Gabriel,
The souls emparadised and all the host
Of serving angels cry with mighty voice:
"Amen! Amen!"
And at the thunderous sound
The walls of hell fall down, as did the walls
Of Jericho at Joshua's trumpet blast;
And cooling breezes, laden with the scent
Of Eden's flowers, pour in.

Then all the souls
And hosts of hell, fall prostrate, worshiping;
And Satan stands alone, mute, motionless,
With pleading hands upraised.

In Eden, now,
A harp sounds sweet and low, and David sings:
"Blest is the man who strongly trusts in God,
For God shall be his Trust—Who satisfies
The longing of the thirsty soul and fills
With good the soul that hungers. O give thanks
Unto the Lord, for He is very good;
Forevermore, His mercy shall endure!"

And all the souls and hosts of heaven and hell
Take up the word: "His mercy shall endure
Forevermore!"
Now Satan bows his head,
And murmurs low: "His mercy . . . evermore."

"Amen!" the word comes not from angels' lips,
Nor soul of saint, nor sinner saved at last;
Nor is there speech or sound; yet each one hears,
As heard the tribes of Israel, at the Mount
Of the Ten Words.

And lo, there is no hell,
Nor paradise; nor earth, nor sea, nor sky,
Nor sun, nor moon, nor stars.
The universe
Becomes one, infinite, expanse of bliss,
Where sin and sorrow have no memory.

And Satan waits before the Throne of Grace,
Rejoined with Michael and with Gabriel.

—1919.

TRANSLATIONS FROM THE HEBREW

ANONYMOUS

Chiefly 12th and 13th Centuries

EVENING PRAYER*

(Hashkibenu)

Our Father, grant us to lie down in peace
And let us rise in peace again, O King,
To happy life beneath Thy sheltering Tent
The name whereof is Peace; and send us forth
With goodly counsel to our daily tasks.

O hasten, for Thine Own Name's sake, the day
Of our deliverance; shield us, shelter us
With Thine o'ershadowing Mercy and Thy Peace.

Blessèd art Thou, O Lord, who with Thy Tent
Of Peace dost shelter us that pray, and all
Thy folk of Israel, and Jerusalem. Amen.

—1907

AN UNFAIR EXCHANGE

"Time," she said, "you are a cheat, a knave,"
"Time," she said, "you do not bargain fair;
"Gold you took from me, and silver gave—
"Silver for the red gold of my hair!"

—1902

THE DOCTOR'S METAMORPHOSES†

Godlike, the doctor, when his aid is sought—
Archangel, when the cure is partly wrought;
The cure complete, a man like you and me—
The very Devil when he asks his fee.

—1902

*This version of Hashkibenu is in the Sefardic Liturgy. The prayer is ancient, being mentioned in Berakot 4b.

†This appears in many forms in many languages. One English version is not very different from this translation.

CREATION*

Creator, God alone art Thou,
Infinite, Incomparable; for how
Shall shaped to Shaper likened be,
Or all Thy spheres encompass Thee!

. . . . . .

Matter was not, before Thou wrought;
Thy Spirit's Will called worlds from nought
And placed them where there was no place
To swing through new-created Space.
Thine Everlasting Arms upbear
All, through all time, unwearied e'er.
For Thee is naught too hard; Thy Will
In all things doth Thy Power fulfil.
Yet is Thy work not like to Thee—
Beyond compare, Thy Majesty!
None was, whose work Thou built upon;
Thy Wisdom planned the whole. And none—
Save Thou allot their being's span—
Can be. And none can change Thy plan,
To add or take away; for naught
With Thee is wanting or forgot.
In all Thy works, nor glut nor dearth
Is found; nor thing devoid of worth.
Thou hast approved and who can blame,
To this or that, apportioning shame?
Beginning as Thy Wisdom's thought,
In Knowledge to completion brought,
Perfect from first to last, Thou viewed
Creation all—and all was good!

—1916

*From the Hymn of the Unity for the Sixth Day (Ashkenazic Liturgy). It is ascribed by Rapoport to Berechiah ha-Nakdan, the famous fabulist whom Zunz and others regard as a Provençal (1260); while Joseph Jacobs identifies him with Benedictus Le Puncteur of England (1194). Some ascribe the hymn to Samuel of Regensburg and others to his son Judah Hasid (12th Century). It has also been attributed to Solomon ibn Gabírol.

LORD OF THE UNIVERSE

(Adon 'Olam)

Lord of the Universe, He ruled
  Before created thing was framed;
When all was shaped unto His Will,
  "He rules!" Creation's Voice proclaimed.

And when all things return to naught,
  Awesome, He still shall rule—The One
Who was, Who is and Who will be,
  In timeless glory, God alone!

Perfect His Oneness—none there is
  To rival Him or share His reign;
Without beginning, without end,
  To Him all strength, all sway pertain.

Unimaged, and beyond compare,
  From chance, from change, forever free—
Implural, Indivisible,
  His Power, His Infinite Majesty.

My God, my living Savior, He,
  Rock of my strength when woes befall;
My Standard high, my Refuge nigh,
  Meed of my cup, what time I call.

Into His Hand my soul I trust,
  And sleeping, waking, know Him near;
And with my soul, its clay: The Lord
  Is with me—naught can make me fear!

—1916

EPITAPH UPON JUDAH HALEVI

Honor, Faith and Tenderness, whither have ye flown?
Vainly do I seek you; Learning, too, is gone!
"Hither, are we gathered," they reply as one,
"Here we rest with Judah!"

—1894

LIFE FROM DEATH

Ye who love this life on earth,
Know ye not your love is vain?
Death the seed whence life had birth—
All that blooms must seed again!

—1887

THE LORD IS KING*

(Adonai Melek)

Ere space exists, or earth, or sky,
The Lord is King!
Ere sun or star shone forth on high,
The Lord was King!
When earth shall be a robe outworn,
And sky shall fade like mists of morn,
Still shall the Lord fore'er be King!
The Lord is King! The Lord was King! Forever shall the Lord be King!

When earth he flings mid star-filled Space,
The Lord is King!
When living creatures there found place,
The Lord was King!
When homeward from earth's corners four,
He calls the scattered folk once more,
Then shall the Lord fore'er be King!
The Lord is King! The Lord was King! Forever shall the Lord be King!

—1907

*A Holy Day Hymn from the Sefardic Liturgy.

SOLOMON BEN JUDAH IBN GABÍROL

(*AVICEBRON*)

Born at Malaga about 1021

Died at Valencia about 1058

LAYS OF THE DEW*

I

The Dew of Mercy

Thy people, scorched by sun of hate,
Scourged by oppressors, Lord, compassionate!
Let healing mercy fall on fevered brow
And cruel wounds, as dew from Heaven. For Thou
Art God who hears Thy faithful servants' plea,
  Shield unto all that trust in Thee.

Thy quickening spirit on our flesh outpour,
Her pristine beauty to our land restore,
Thy saving grace bestow on us, as dew—
  Return, O Lord, and make us live anew!

—1909

II

And the Heavens Shall Yield Their Dew

O Thou, that art the Trust, the Strength,
  The Shield of all that live,
Who givest food to man and beast,
  Our year's perfection give—
The crowning cloud of summer rain,
  Or, from night's cloudless blue,
The gentle drops whereof Thou saidst:
"And the heavens shall yield their dew!"

On waving grain, on mead and wood,
  Let drops of blessing fall,
That all Thy children may have bread
  And healing be for all;
But them that study in Thy Law
  And to Thy Charge are true,
Exalt in splendor like the stars,
Whilst Thy heavens shall yield their dew!

*These poems are taken from the Order of the Prayer for Dew in the Sefardic Liturgy for the first day of Passover. The Hebrew titles are: I. 'Shezufat Shemesh;' II. 'Mibtah Kol Hayezur;' III. 'Leshoni Bonanta;' IV. 'Lek Leshalom.'

Make green the pastures of the wild,
  Girdle the hills with mirth;
With bright-hued zone of budding flowers
  Cincture the gladsome earth.
All they together shall rejoice
  And sing His praise anew,
Whose loving bounty shall not fail;
Whose heavens shall yield their dew!

To clothe with leaf and deck with bud
  The naked, tender vine,
That weary souls may be refreshed
  With heartening draughts of wine,
And hungry souls be filled with good,
  And toil its strength renew
By luscious feast of ripened fruit—
Bid Thy heavens to yield their dew!

The trees of God are full of sap
  In valley and on hill;
The threshing floors piled high with corn,
  Wine, oil, the vats o'erfill;
Where ruin was, a ransomed folk
  Upbuilds its homes anew;
And all the land resounds with song—
"And the heavens shall yield their dew!"

—1909

III

The Cry of Israel*

Thou knowest my tongue, O God,
  Fain would it bring
A precious gift—the songs
  Thou makest me sing!

Thou guidest my steps from eld;
  If boon too high
I ask—Thou gavest me speech,
  Spurn not my cry!

My thought hast Thou made pure
  As whitest fleece:
Thou wilt not that mine heart
  Shall ne'er have peace.

O, be my refuge now,
  Even as of yore.
My God, my Savior, Thou—
  Tarry no more!

—1916

IV

Depart, O Rain

O rain, depart with blessings,
  With blessings come, O dew,
For Mighty to deliver
  Is He that sends the dew.

With psalm and song I'll praise Him,
  In rhythms like the dew;
My Rock, my Strong Deliv'rer,
  He is, that sends the dew.

Hasten, O God, Thy promise—
  "I will be Israel's dew"—
And Mighty to deliver,
  Let fall, this day, Thy dew!

—1902

*This poem occurs also in other parts of the Liturgy, as in the Prayer for Rain upon the Eighth Day of Solemn Assembly.

SONG OF THE WIND AND THE RAIN*

O Thou, that dost cover the heavens
  With a garment of cloud; by Whose word
Ever season succeeds unto season—
  Creator, Sustainer and Lord—
'Twas Thy Spirit's inbreathing† that gave us
  Our life; Thou dost give it again
When Thou openest Thy treasury of blessings
  To send us the wind and the rain.

  Open now the rich store of Thy treasures,
    Send life to Thy creatures again;
  For the wind is Thy Spirit's returning,†
    And Thy blessing descends as the rain!

To Thee, all the world of Thy creatures,
  Of land and of wave and of air,
With the man Thou hast formed in Thine image,
  Are turning their faces in prayer;
'Tis the season of wind—send Thy Spirit,
  Renewing the wonder of birth;
'Tis the season of rain—pour the waters
  Of life o'er the face of the earth!

  Open now the rich store of Thy treasures,
    Send life to Thy creatures again;
  For the wind is Thy Spirit's returning,
    And Thy blessing descends as the rain!

Let the wastes of the earth know Thy mercies;
  The desert, the drought-withered sod,
At the kiss of Thy rain-laden breezes
  Shall bloom as a garden of God;
And the beast of the field, gaunt with famine,
  And the man, in whose heart hope was stilled,
Shall praise Thee in grateful hosannas
  As they eat from Thy Hand, and are filled.

*Pizmon in the Order of Prayer for Rain in the Musaf Service of Shemini 'Azeret—the Eighth Day of Solemn Assembly concluding Sukkot, the Festival of Booths—Sefardic Liturgy. The Hebrew title is 'Mekaseh Shamaim.'

†Ruah (Heb.) means either "wind," "breath" or "spirit." *E.g.* Gen. i, 2, Ezek. xxxvii, 9.

Open now the rich store of Thy treasures,
Send life to Thy creatures again;
For the wind is Thy Spirit's returning,
And Thy blessing descends as the rain!

And that land of our love and our longing,
Now barren, deserted, forlorn—
Bereft of palm, citron and myrtle,*
Of olive, of grape and of corn—†
Let Thy Spirit caress her parched furrows,
Send Thy pitying, life-bringing rain,
That her hills may smile newly in vineyards
And her fields laugh in ripples of grain.

Open now the rich store of Thy treasures,
Send life to Thy creatures again;
For the wind is Thy Spirit's returning,
And Thy blessing descends as the rain!

O Father, in mercy unfailing,
To pardon the souls that have strayed,
Loose Thy dove from the net of the fowler—
Let Thy folk sing Thy praise, unafraid!
No merit we plead, but Thy promise
That we bind on our brow, on our hand,
That we write on our gates—"*In their seasons*†
I will send you the rains of your land!"

Open now the rich store of Thy treasures,
Send life to Thy creatures again;
For the wind is Thy Spirit's returning,
And Thy blessing descends as the rain!

—1909

*The special products of the earth used in the rites (specially the "Hosha'ana" circuits) of the synagogues at the Festival of Booths (Lev. xxiii, 39–43).

†Deut. xi, 13–15, 18–21.

MOSES BEN JACOB IBN EZRA

(*ABU HARUN MUSA*)

Born at Granada about 1070

Died in the first half of the 12th century

GOD THAT DOEST WONDROUSLY

(El Nora 'Alilah*)

God, that doest wondrously,
God, that doest wondrously,
Pardon at Thy people's cry,
As the closing hour draws nigh!

Few are Israel's sons, and weak;
Thee, in penitence, they seek.
O, regard their anguished cry,
As the closing hour draws nigh!

Souls in grief before Thee poured,
Agonize for deed and word;
"We have sinned: Forgive!" they cry,
As the closing hour draws nigh!

Heal them! Let their trust in Thee
Turn aside Wrath's dread decree;
Doom them not, but heed their cry,
As the closing hour draws nigh!

Mercy, grace, for these low-bowed!
But upon the oppressor proud,
Judgment for his victims' cry,
As the closing hour draws nigh!

For our fathers' righteousness,
Save us now in our distress;
Make us glad with freedom's cry,
As the closing hour draws nigh!

Join, O Shepherd, as of old,
Zion's with Samaria's fold;
Call Thy flock with tend'rest cry,
As the closing hour draws nigh!

*Pizmon introductory to the Ne'ilah (concluding) Service of the Day of Atonement, Sefardic Liturgy, attributed in some rituals to Moses Ibn Ezra.

Elijah, Michael, Gabriel,
Come! the hoped-for tidings tell;
Let 'Redemption!' be your cry
As the closing hour draws nigh.

God, that doest wondrously,
God, that doest wondrously,
Pardon at Thy people's cry,
As the closing hour draws nigh.

—1908

HAPPY THE MAN OF STEADFAST FAITH

Happy the man of steadfast faith,
His peace no sorrow 'minisheth,
Such peace what treasure purchaseth?
Let him not glory then, that riches hath.

God's name alone is strong and sure,
What earth deems good, shall not endure;
Honor, like wealth, an empty lure—
The great man sleeps—his fame evanisheth.

Wealth is a lie; the world's high dower
A fleeting dream, a fading flower;
To naught, at last, comes all man's power—
In one flock foldeth all, grim shepherd Death.

Prepare—for day and way, prepare—
That rich and poor alike must fare;
Beggar and king are equal, there,
Within the earth—the worm all welcometh!

—1883

THE WORKS OF GOD

Awesome are the works of God,
Marvels beyond meting-rod.
Him we cannot see, but they
Tell of Him by night and day—
Only in such wonder-tongue
May His praise be fitly sung!

—1916

TO A PLAGIARIST

Admire thy wreath?* And wherefore should I not,
Since leaf and bloom are from my garden plot?
Take just pride in thy pearl-string: Every gem
Is perfect; and with care I polished them!

—1890

ON HIS SORROWFUL LIFE

Sorrow heaped on sorrow, ruin on disaster,
Cruel words from Eber's sons—from every stranger.
Time that draws friends closer, time that scatters sorrows,
Bids my friends be scattered, draws my sorrows closer.
Boaz and Jacin in the pit are sunken,
Sun and moon are cold, in the grave are buried,
Like a dream departed, seem the years they brightened;
Death that dream hath ended, death my hopes hath shattered.
I had hopes—shame seize me, if I e'er forget them—
Be my woes yet greater, if one hope is left me.
Dost thou seek the man, who, of Eber's children,
Knoweth most of sorrow? I am whom thou seekest.

—1888

SPRING

The garden dons her robe of many hues;
The mead her broidered carpet hath unrolled;
In splendor of green leaf the woods are clad—
What wondrous scene is this mine eyes behold?

The new-born flowers acclaim the new-born Spring,
And forth to meet his coming, laughing throng;
High in their midst on sovereign throne they bear
The Rose, the flowret's queen—queen of my song.†

From prisoning leaves she bursts, and casts aside
Her captive garb, in royal robes to shine;
I drink to her; nor Heaven forgive the wretch—
If such there be—who spares his choicest wine!

—1883

*Arabic poets and the Hebrew poets of Mohammedan lands often called their collections of verse "wreaths" and "pearl-strings."
†In the Hebrew—*king*.

STANZAS FROM THE BOOK "TARSHISH"*

By friendship's waters, with a chosen few,
Noble of soul, of jocund heart and true,
Drink, to the sound of laughter, lute and song,
And joy in precious talk of old and new.

Come friends, within—the cheerful cup to drain;
The world is bleak without: November's rain
Beats on chill fields, of their green mantle stript,
And boughs are bare, and furrows void of grain.

Drink with me, till the magic of the wine
Makes this a palace-court, where we recline;
Yon sound of water is the fountain's plash—
And hark! The nightingale in song divine!

Drink!—Whilst the rain-drenched earth for summer yearns,
And shivering forests dream that spring returns,
The ruby wine glows in its crystal cup
Like flame of God, amidst the hail that burns.

See how the lightnings of the cup leap forth
To smite my serried sorrows. Floods of mirth
Beat down my troubles, as the floods of heaven
Level the ridges of the furrowed earth.

O spirit, ransomed of the bowl, burn bright
For these my friends! Shine through the starless night,
A beacon to guide hitherward their joys
And put the shadows of their cares to flight!

Come, Ophrah, fill my cup—but not with wine,
The splendor of thine eyes therein let shine;
So shall the draught thou pour'st this night in Spain,
Bear to far lands and days, thy fame—and mine!

Beautiful as the pomegranate is the white face
of Ophrah when she blushes;
And I, that must part from her, weep—
Until the hot flame of my grief dries up my tears.

*See note concerning this book on p. 62.

Awake, my soul, let's to the tavern go,
Where stand the shining goblets all a-row;
Hast thou a wound? These shall give light to find it,
Then of their fullness, will I lave and bind it!

Now do my days put off their suit of woe;
See! like a bridegroom's is their brave array—
With wine I break Misfortune's prison bars,
And in my heart make straight the crooked way.

Doff melancholy, friend; yield to the spell
Of Ophrah's voice, that flute-like trills: "All's well!"
The bitter time is when no wine's in bowl—
It is the songless day afflicts the soul!

For him that plants the vine, my soul I'd give;
My life, that they who tend and pluck may live;
Life, soul, for him, that still unbowed by wrong,
From grapes of sorrow treads the wine of song.

Why should I grieve? The purling of the brook,
The throstle's song, I hear. On couch of blooms,
More brilliant than the weave of Persia's looms,
I lie beneath the myrtle's shade, and look
On the bright necklace of the turtle dove—
And dream—and dream, ah me, of my lost love.

Rise before the dawn
  And seek Ophar in the garden.
Inhale its sweet odors,
  And the fragrance of the old wine
That he brings thee in a goblet of crystal;
  And drink, whilst yet Misfortune's eyes are closed,
And Fate, forgetful of thee, sleeps.

Man is a weaver all his days;
Hope the thread, and life the weft;
When the weaver's task is done,
Neither life nor hope is left.

Haste thee! They sell the daughter of the vine—
An thou give all thou hast to make her thine,
Thou'lt best the vintners. While the roses bloom,
Drink to their beauty, that must soon decline.

And heed not them that warn or chide thee. Hark!
A tenfold sweetness fills the dawn and dark—
Robin and throstle vie with turtle dove,
The nightingale is singing with the lark!

"O youth," they sing, "the roses' days are thine.
Ah, rosy days; ah, days of youth that shine;
The rosy days are numbered, numbered all—"
Tell thou their number, then, in cups of wine!

Drink, friends, the days of wintry chill are done,
Earth thrills to the embraces of the sun
And drops her mask of age. O'er hill and dale,
The green-clad hosts of youth are marching on.

Greensward for couch; the leafy shade
  Of oakboughs overhead;
To stay our souls, a jug of wine;
Thy cheek, dear maid, close-pressed to mine—
  What need of bread!

A beautiful woman, a cup of wine, and a garden;
The song of bird and the sound of murmuring waters;
These are balm to a lover, and joy to the sad one, and welcome
    to the stranger,
And wealth to the poor, and healing to the sick.

I went out into the garden in the morning dusk
When sorrow was heavy upon me like a cloud;
And the breeze brought to my nostril the odor of spices,
As balm of healing for a sick soul—
Then a sudden dawn flamed in the sky, like lightning,
And its thunder surged like the cry of a woman that gives birth.*

*The woman whom the poet loved, married another and died in child-birth. The comparison and the writing of the stanza in a tone of sorrow, suggest an allusion to this loss.

My hand, that enfolded the hand of the beautiful one,
Has become fragrant as myrrh or cassia,
  Behold how the light of the sun
  Fades in her presence,
  And the proud cedar bows down before her
  Even as the humble bulrush.
  When she lets down her tresses,
  Her face behind them,
Is like the splendor of the moon, half-hidden by the clouds.

I gaze upon the beauty of the stars that cover the face of the sky,
And think of them as a garden of blossoms—
Until the white dawn rises like a dove,
From beneath the wings of a raven that flees away.

If I take pride in my so-meager fare,
In clothes, the naked would not wish to wear—
It is because the man these crusts sustain,
These patches cover, is a man full fain
Of truth and right—albeit he hath a mind, too,
Could trick the tricksters, if he had a mind to!

Gold in purse I envy not,
  Silver that in bags you keep;
Dear to me, my soul—all else,
  Pebbles, gathered in a heap.

Walk in the precepts, and content thyself
  With hearthcakes and a little salt thereto;
Array thy soul in truth, nor be ashamed
  If worn and patched the garments that men view.

The poor I love; but much mislike the paunch
  Of the sleek, rich churl. His favor must I sue,
Or bare and hungry go? Mine honor, then,
  Shall serve my soul for meat and covering too.

Lodge in the lair of lions; roam the hills
  With the leopard; couch thee with the meadow-snake—
But from the rich man's dwelling keep afar,
  And of his hand, nor gift nor honor take.

Hands open to the poor, lend to the Lord;
  But hands against a brother's need shut fast,
Clutch treasured dross in vain. They, too, must go,
  Unclenched and empty, to the grave at last.

Ask not the bounty of the son of dust*
Who treads the earth, like thee, a moment's space;
And envy not his wealth—for by God's grace
Alone, he holds it; and thereof hath just
His food and raiment and a bed—and moil;
Like any ox that draws the high-heaped wain
To the barns—and hath his fodder of the grain,
And straw to lie on till the morning's toil.

Him ask, who knows thy need; and in Him put
Firm trust, though hunger gnaw thy bosom—though
Fierce pangs of thirst lay hold on thee; for know
His treasure-chests are full, His granaries
Exhaustless as the rain of heaven, and these
His mercy hath ordained in every place;
Nor ever hath He given command to shut
His door of bounty in the suppliant's face.

There be, that barter honor for a bit
  Of Greatman's bread, a sip from Greatman's bowl;
Liefer had I the dust for food, than sit
  At feast with prince, bereavèd of my soul.

Take courage, friends, there yet remains our blood
  To drink—the shadows of our flesh for food.
What though we die? Our dead eyes shall not spill
  Before a trothless churl,† their precious flood.

Of what avail the poet's perfect art,
  If fear of man be ever in his heart?
The flawless form by craftsman's cunning wrought,
  Remains a lifeless thing—words, void of thought.

*Several stanzas embodying similar ideas with variants, are here condensed into two.
†Hebrew, 'nokel.' In modern slang, a "welsher." See Malachi, i, 14.

Omar dwells at the end of the world,
But his word has gone out to its uttermost borders;
Far in the East he mingles the spiceries of his song,
Far in the West I inhale their fragrance.

The loom of life is in thy hand—O make
Virtue its warp; and Understanding take
For weft-thread: Wisdom be thy pattern fair,
Nor loathly tint of lewdness suffer there.

Who will restore me unto youth?
With him I'll make a covenant of truth;
And if he be a leper, white as snow,
Then for his Jordan, shall my heart's blood flow.

In my youth, a raven, nested on my head;
Now, like fleeting shadows, bird and youth are sped.
Vain are my lamentings, vain the eager chase—
For see! A snowy falcon hath the raven's place!

Summers and Winters have I seen and sung,
And Spring and Autumn praised with pen and tongue—
All are glad seasons when the wine-skin's full,
And all are drear when the last drop is wrung.

If the rain after winter destroy the foliage of the gardens,
Despair not; it will again clothe them in beauty.

—1917-24

NOTE—The 'Sefer ha-Tarshish', also known as 'Anak' (necklace) is a collection of stanzas which, save in scattered instances, have no organic connection or necessary sequence, except that in the original, they are arranged in groups loosely related by some predominant idea —as Friendship, Wine, Song, Love, Nature, Youth, Faith, Fate, etc. The number of genuine lines (there are, in the mss. some of doubtful ascription) is given as 1210; and the Hebrew letters corresponding to *T R Sh I Sh* have that numerical value. Such playing with letters was considered felicitous among Hebrew writers, and took many forms. Thus the "number of the beast" 666, indicates The Emperor Nero (NRON KSR).

JUDAH BEN SAMUEL HALEVI

(*ABUL HASAN IBN ALLAWI*)

Born at Toledo in the last quarter of the 11th century
Died in the Orient in the middle of the 12th century

MEDITATION ON COMMUNION WITH GOD

My thought awaked me with Thy Name,
  Upon Thy boundless love to meditate;
    Whereby I came
The fullness of the wonder to perceive,
  That Thou a soul immortal shouldst create
To be embound with this, my mortal frame.
  Then did my mind, elate,
Behold Thee and believe;
    As though I stood among
    That hushed and awe-swept throng,
And heard the Voice and gazed on Sinai's flame!

    I sought Thee whilst I dreamed;
    And lo, Thy glory seemed
To pass before me; as, of old, the cloud
    Descended in his sight, who heard
    The music of Thy spoken word.
Then from my couch I sprang, and cried aloud:
"Blest be Thy glorious Name, O Lord!"

—1921

ISRAEL'S LOVE FOR GOD

Sweet be the music of my song to Thee, and my words pleasing,
O Loved One, that art estranged from me by mine illdoing.
Awesome Thou art, in Mystery; yet will I lay hold upon Thy Grace,
As though I were clinging, suppliant, to a garment's hem.
This boon, alone, I ask—to glory in Thy Name,
Albeit reward too high for mine endeavor.
Wilt Thou increase my sorrows? Then will I increase my love yet more,
For passing wondrous is Thy love to me.

HYMN FOR ATONEMENT DAY

(Yah Shema' Ebioneka*)

Lord, Thine humble servants hear,
  Suppliant now before Thee;
Our Father, from Thy children's plea
  Turn not, we implore Thee!

Lord, Thy people, sore oppressed,
  From the depths implore Thee;
Our Father, let us not, this day,
  Cry in vain before Thee.

Lord, blot out our evil pride,
  All our sins before Thee;
Our Father, for Thy Mercy's sake,
  Pardon, we implore Thee.

Lord, no sacrifice we bring,
  Prayers and tears implore Thee;
Our Father, take the gift we lay,
  Contrite hearts, before Thee.

Lord, Thy sheep have wandered far,
  Gather them before Thee;
Our Father, let Thy shepherd love
  Guide us, we implore Thee.

Lord, Thy pardon grant to all
  That in truth implore Thee;
Our Father, let our evening prayer
  Now find grace before Thee.

Lord, Thine humble servants hear,
  Suppliant now before Thee;
Our Father, from Thy children's plea
  Turn not, we implore Thee!

—1907

*This poem, uncertainly attributed to Halevi, is a Pizmon in the Minhah Service of Yom Kippur; Sefardic Liturgy.

O LORD, WHERE SHALL I FIND THEE

O Lord, where shall I find Thee?
  Hid is Thy lofty place;
And where shall I not find Thee,
  Whose glory fills all Space?

Who formed the world, abideth
  Within man's soul alway;
Refuge to them that seek Him,
  Ransom for them that stray.

Oh, how shall mortals praise Thee,
  When angels strive in vain—
Or build for Thee a dwelling,
  Whom worlds cannot contain?

Yet when they bow in worship
  Before Thy throne, most high,
Closer than flesh or spirit,
  They feel Thy presence nigh.

Then they, with lips exulting,
  Bear witness Thou art One—
That Thou art their Creator,
  Ruler and God alone.

Who shall not yield Thee reverence,
  That holdest the world in thrall?
Who shall not seek Thy mercy,
  That feeds and succors all?

Longing to draw anear Thee,
  With all my heart I pray;
Then going forth to seek Thee,
  Thou meetest me on the way!

I find Thee in the marvels
  Of Thy creative might,
In visions in Thy temple,
  In dreams that bless the night.

Who saith he hath not seen Thee,
  Thy heavens refute his word;
Their hosts declare Thy glory,
  Though never voice be heard.

Dare mortal think such wonder?
  And yet, believe I must,
That God, the Uncreated,
  Dwells in this frame of dust.

That Thou, transcendent, holy,
  Joyest in Thy creatures' praise,
And comest where men are gathered
  To glorify Thy ways.

And where celestial beings
  Adore Thee, as they stand
Upon the heights eternal—
  And Thou, above their band,

Hast set Thy throne of Glory—
Thou hearest when they call;
They sing Thine infinite wonders,
  And Thou upholdest all.

—1893

SABBATH, MY LOVE

I greet my love with wine and gladsome lay;
Welcome, thrice welcome, joyous Seventh Day!

Six slaves the week days are; I share
With them a round of toil and care,
Yet light the burdens seem, I bear
  For thy sweet sake, Sabbath, my love!

On First-day to the accustomed task
I go content, nor guerdon ask,
Save in thy smile, at length, to bask—
  Day blest of God, Sabbath, my love!

Is Second-day dull, Third-day unbright?
Hide sun and stars from Fourth-day's sight?
What need I care, who have thy light,
  Orb of my life, Sabbath, my love!

The Fifth-day, joyful tidings ring:
"The morrow shall thy freedom bring!"
At dawn a slave, at eve a king—
  God's table waits, Sabbath, my love!

On Sixth-day doth my cup o'erflow,
What blissful rest the night shall know,
When, in thine arms, my toil and woe
  Are all forgot, Sabbath, my love!

'Tis dusk. With sudden light distilled
From one sweet face, the world is filled;
The tumult of my heart is stilled—
  For thou art come, Sabbath, my love!

Bring fruits and wine, and sing a gladsome lay,
Chant: "Come in peace, O blissful Seventh Day!"

—1892

FALSE KISSES

Love came. I took him on my knee;
He stood tiptoe mine eyes to see;
He kissed mine eyes—Could falser be?
His mirrored self he kissed—not me!

—1888

WAKE, MY DARLING, FROM THY SLUMBERS

Wake, my darling, from thy slumbers,
Wake and fill my day with bliss:
Didst thou dream some daring lover
Ravished from thy lips a kiss?
I am skilled in dreams and omens,
And thy vision, love, means—this.

—1889

FORTUNE'S TREACHERY

When Fortune's shield protects thee, then beware—
Tomorrow, for thy foot she sets a snare.
Her gift, an eaglet's pinion—now thy flight,
Anon, the lethal arrow—to upbear!

—1900

THE FIRST WHITE HAIR

I spied a white hair lurking in my beard,
And straightway plucked it thence. "Thou'rt brave,"
it sneered,
"'Gainst a lone scout—quite brave. But wilt thou be
As plucky, when my troop comes, seeking me?"

—1883

TO THE WESTERN WIND

(On the Voyage to Jerusalem)

Wind of the West, that fans with fragrant wing,
  Of nard and citron redolent, sea and earth,
Thou, from the merchant's spicy stores didst spring—
  In the chill cave of winds ne'er hadst thou birth!

Free as the swallow's and as swift, thy flight;
  With breath of myrrh,* thou bidst me, too, "Be free!"
Thy waited coming, with what wild delight
  They hail, who mount the deck to ride the sea!

Cease not to urge the ship when day is o'er,
  Rend the deep sea, tread down the surging crest;
Swift speed us onward to Judea's shore;
  There, on the holy mountains, mayest thou rest.

Rebuke this bleak and blustering wind, that sweeps
  Tempestuous from the East, to bar our path;
Vexing the sea, until its inmost deeps
  Seethe like a boiling cauldron, in their wrath.

Vain words! What power is in this lifeless air,
  Now sent its Master's errand, now confined?
But Thou dost hear, and Thou canst grant my prayer,
  O Maker of the hills and sea and wind!

—1882

*The Hebrew word 'deror,' here used, means both 'swallow' and 'freedom' and is also used for (free-flowing) myrrh. Word-plays of this kind, often involving Scriptural allusion as well, are frequent in mediæval Hebrew poetry; making it impossible to preserve the true flavor in translation, and difficult to give the meaning without addition and paraphrase.

IN THE EAST IS MY HEART

In the East, in the East is my heart, and I dwell
at the end of the West—
How may I join in your feasting? How can I
share in your jest?
How may my offerings be paid—my vows with
performance be crowned,
While Zion pineth in Edom's bond, and I am
pent in the Arab's bound?*
Less than dust are the glories, the treasures, of
Spain in mine eyes;
But the dust of the Lord's ruined house, as a
treasure of glory, I prize.

—1881

IMMORTAL ISRAEL

The sun and moon, that ceaselessly obey
The unchanging ordinance of night and day—
For you, O Jacob's sons, these signs on high,
Nation eternal, ye shall not decay.
If with His left hand He hath thrust away,
Still with His right hand doth He draw you nigh.
Say not: "We languish: we are near to die,"
But know your strength immortal. So shall ye
Endure till day and night shall cease to be!

—1916

TIME-SERVERS

Time-servers are the cowering slaves of slaves,
Alone on earth, who serves the Lord is free,
Each soul shall win the gift that most it craves;
Seek God, my soul—God shall thy portion be!

—1901

*The play on words, "bond"—"bound(ary)," parallels the Hebrew original—'hebel'—'kebel.'

ZION*

II

O Zion, still the beauty-crowned,
  Sad captive though thou art,
To thee in fervent love is bound
  Thy children's steadfast heart;
Thy joy was theirs, and theirs is now thy woe;
And for thy wounds their tears incessant flow.

As prisoners long for light and air,
  For thee, thine exiles yearn:
When bowed before God's throne in prayer,
  Still toward thy gates they turn;
Or banned, and hunted over hill and dale,
Tell of thy palm trees' shade, the wistful tale.

What is the greatness of the Moor?†
  And what the Frankish might?
Vainglory that shall not endure—
  But thine are Truth and Light!‡
What king of all the nations shall they dare
With thine, the Lord's anointed, to compare!

Like an ill dream, the hosts of Wrong
  Pass utterly away;
Thy prophet's word, thy Levite's song
  Shall last for aye and aye.
Desired thou wast, God's dwelling place to be—
Happy the man He grants to abide with thee.

Yea, happy he that hopes and waits,
  And sees with mortal eyes
Thy light resurge through the Orient gates,
  Thy new dawn mount the skies—
Who witnesses thy chosen ones' reward,
And joys in thy joy over youth restored!

—1889

*This is a somewhat free version of the second Part of Halevi's celebrated ode. Elsewhere the whole is rendered without rhyme.

†Halevi, following the expedient custom of the day among Hebrew writers, speaks not of Frank and Moor, but in Biblical style of Shinar and Patros. It seems best to give the actual meaning.

‡Urim and Thummim.

EXCERPTS FROM "PARTING"

I

Wilt thou yet grant no word, O cruel fair,
  To him whose breast thy beauty fills with pain;
Who hath, of God or Fate, one only prayer—
  To hear love's greetings from thy lips again!

Or if it be decreed that we must part,
  Tarry in pity for mine eyes, that strain
To see thy face once more; I wot mine heart
  Hath fled my breast to follow in thy train.

Now by Love's life! bethink thee how delight
  In me, once filled thy day; as I shall keep
The memory of thy kisses in the night,
  And count the weary hours till dreamful sleep
Brings to my longing gaze thy beauteous seeming—
Ah, would that I might enter in thy dreaming!

II

'Twixt thee and me, what raging billows toss!
  A sea of tears—I cannot breast its tide;
But if thou shouldst draw nigh, that flood to cross,
  Beneath thy feet the waters would divide.

III

How canst thou plead that thou art innocent
  Of mine heart's blood? Behold! Against thee speak
Two witnesses, in silence eloquent—
  The ruby and the rose—thy lips, thy cheek!

IV

Though I were dead, mine ears would surely know
  The music of thy garment's bells of gold;
Or if, perchance, my name thou breathedst low,
  Saying: "I loved him, loved him well, of old"—
I'd hear thee in the grave and straight reply:
"I love thee with a love that cannot die!"
Yea, though I heard no sound, my heart would beat
To the remembered rhythm of thy feet.

—1892

DOVE BESIDE THE WOODLAND RILLS

Dove beside the woodland rills,
Eyes and heart thy beauty thrills!

Lo, silver hath its vein, but where
  Shall dove like mine
Be found? Thou art as Tirzah fair,
Jerusalem's splendor, bright and rare,
  My love, is thine!

Why dost thou turn about thy face
  From side to side,
To seek in tents a dwelling place?
Behold my heart hath ample space—
  There, safe abide!

Thy bosom draws from mine, my heart—
  Such potent spell,
What wizard did to thee impart?
Pharaoh's magicians knew their art,
  Not half so well.

Venom to honey, turn for me,
  Enchantress mine!
And though men woo with golden plea,
Heed not. My heart I give to thee—
  Now doubly thine!

—1883

A RIDDLE
(The Needle)

Who is't, that wanders with unseeing eye,
Here, there, back, forth, by any tyrant thrust;
And, naked ever, slaves to clothe the world—
Then goes, at last, blind, naked, to the dust?

—1895

THE GARDEN

(From a Birthday Poem to a Friend)

But yesterday, Earth, like a tender babe,
Drank from full-bosomed clouds the winter rain;
Or, like a bride by tyrant Winter stol'n,
And prisoned close in his so-dark domain,
Yearned for the time when Summer's fond embrace
Should ease her bruisèd heart of all its pain.

Now, like a lass that joys in bright attire,
She merrily displays brocades of gold
And linens wrought in curious tracery—
Each day her broideries new designs unfold,
Each day she decks herself with blossoms new,
Like shining gems of ever-varied hue;
Now, white as pearl—now, like the emerald, green—
Now, red as rubies, or the flame that glows
In beauty's cheek at the first kiss of love.

So rare the brilliance of her flowers, I ween
She hath purloined the stars from heaven above.

—1890

ON PARTING WITH MOSES IBN EZRA

Since thou art gone, my friend, I seek in vain for peace;
At thy leave-taking, my heart joined thee, to share
thy wanderings.
Were it not that love may hope for the day of thy return
The day of parting had been unto me, the day of death.
O Light of the West, come back unto thy West,
Be again a seal on every heart, a signet on every arm!
Behold, the mountains that divide us will testify
That my tears are more abundant upon them, than the
rains of heaven.
O, Scintillant of Speech, how canst thou dwell amid them of
tongue uncouth!
How shall the dew of Hermon fall upon anathemate Gilboa!

ZION

I

Zion, why art thou silent? Thine exiles,
The remnant of thy fold, greet thee with "Peace!"
But thou returnest not in answer, "Peace!"

From East, from West, from North and from the South,
From far and near, they greet thee, crying "Peace!"
Echoes the word from all thy borders—"Peace!"

He too cries "Peace" that, captive, clings to hope,
And whilst his tears, like dew on Hermon, fall,
Longs but to let them rain upon thy hills.

Harsh as the owl's my voice, to sing thy woes;
But, whiles, I dream thy captives are restored,
And I—the harp that sounds thy lays of joy.

O Bethel, House of God, thou hast my heart!
For Peniel, before God I make moan—
For Mahanaim and the holy courts.

There dwelt with thee The Presence; and thy gates
Thy Maker opened toward the gates of Heaven.

God's glory was thine own, thine only light,
Nor sun, nor moon, nor star, thy luminary.

O would that there I might outpour my soul,
Where on thy chosen ones God's spirit poured.

House of the King, Throne of the Lord, art thou—
How then dare slaves usurp thy heroes' seats!

O would that I might wander up and down,
A pilgrim, seeking every holy spot
Where, to thy seers and prophets, God appeared!

O who will make me wings—far, far to fly,
Through all thy land, thy breaches seeking out—
To mend them with the fragments of my heart!

Then would I prostrate fall on thy loved earth,
Embrace thy stones, and kiss thy sweet, sweet, dust.

Yea, I might stand beside my fathers' graves—
Reverent in Hebron, where thy greatest sleep;

And cross into thy forest, and behold
Thy Carmel's beauty; in thy Gilead stand,
And marvel at thy mountains, seen afar—

Mount Abarim and Mount Hor, where lie at rest
Thy two great orbs, thy teachers and thy lights.

Thine air, it is the very breath of life;
Thy dust is powder of the choicest myrrh;
Thy waters, drippings of the honeycomb.

'Twere soul-felt joy to me, unshod and bare,
To wander 'mid the ruins of thy shrine,

Where, erst, thy ark was treasured, and within
Thy holy chambers, dwelt the cherubim.

My crown of locks I cut and cast away,
That I may curse the fate that has profaned
Thy Nazirites in a polluted land!

When I behold thy lions torn by dogs,
How shall I pleasure me in meat and drink?

How shall the light of day rejoice mine eyes,
That see the ravens rend thy eagles' flesh?

O Cup of Sorrow, hold thee from my lips;
A moment's respite grant—for all my frame
And all my soul are filled with bitterness!

But now I think on Aholah—O Cup,
Give me again thy gall! Aholibah
Do I remember, and I drain thy dregs!

II

Zion, in beauty perfect, from of eld
Are love and grace bound unto thee; and fast
Unto thy soul thy children's* souls are bound,

That in thy welfare joyed, that agonize
To see thy desolation, and lament
Over thy ruins, shedding bitter tears—

That from the captive's pit still yearn for thee,
And when in prayer they bow, turn toward thy gates—

Thine outcast, scattered sheep, that ruthless driven
From hill to dale, from dale to barren hill,
Have ne'er forgot the quiet of thy fold—

That, dreaming, grasp thy garment's hem and strive
To seize upon the branches of thy palms.

Shinar and Patros†—can they rival thee
In greatness; their illusions be compared
With Urim thine, and Thummim—Light and Truth?

Whom shall they liken to thine anointed King?
Unto thy prophets, Levites, psalmists, whom?

The Powers of Nothingness shall change and pass,
But thine is strength Eternal, and thy crown
From age to age shall gloriously endure.

Thee did thy God for dwelling-place desire,
And happy is that man whom He shall choose,
And bring anear within thy courts to dwell.

Happy, who hopeful waits, and lives to see
Thy new dawn break, and thine arising light—

Who sees the guerdon of thy chosen ones,
And in the joy of thy rejoicing shares,
When thou returnest to thy pristine youth.

—1887

*Literally, 'companions'.
†Meaning Islam and Christendom.

ABRAHAM BEN MEÏR IBN EZRA

Born in Spain about 1092

Died in 1167

OUT OF LUCK

'Twas sure a luckless planet
  That ruled when I was born—
I hoped for fame and fortune,
  I have but loss and scorn.

An evil fate pursues me
  With unrelenting spite;
If I sold lamps and candles,
  The sun would shine all night.

I cannot, cannot, prosper
  No matter what I try—
Were selling shrouds my business,
  No man would ever die!

—1879

FREEDOM

He that to God's law doth cling,
Shall be free as any king;
He that wealth and power craves,
Shall become a slave of slaves.

—1925

TO GOD, THE GREAT, THE ADORED

I

To God, the Great, the Adored,
  Incessant will I cry,
From out my straitness and my misery,
  Until He speak the word:
    'Rebuild,
  Rebuild the house beloved and beautiful,
  That once My Glory filled';
    Until He come again,
  Therein, my Rock, to dwell,
  Therein, my King, to reign.

II

O God of Grace,
But in Thy Name I trust,
No refuge mine, but Thee;
From Thine exalted place,
Look down and see
Thy servant, sore distressed—
By trials new, tested continually.

Albeit the chart of mine iniquity
Is spread before Thee in Thy Height,
Yet, till the day arrive
When Thou wilt doom or shrive,
Thus will I pray:
My King Thou art, my Refuge and my Rock;
Behold my folk oppressed,
My harried flock—
Nor meed for meed requite,
Lest, with my remnant, I be swept away,
And perish utterly.

III

Thou, Who art Merciful to all
That go astray,
Thy covenant recall,
Made with my faithful ones of olden day.
How long shall impious foes profane Thy Name
Unto my face—and I
Endure in silent shame;
Nor dare their blasphemies deny,
Lest torture be the swift reply!

Despoiled am I, stript bare;
With ruthless hate
Thrust out, eachwhere
I seek a place of rest—
As though I were a thing contaminate,
Unclean, unblest.

IV

Will not the Almighty free
His chosen people from the nations' scorn;
And from His heavenly Height shine gloriously,
To recompense with good, His son, first-born?
The downtrodden folk
He will compassionate,
And in His sacred border reinstate.

Then will the old man and the babe rejoice,
What time the trumpet's voice
Proclaims throughout the lands, my liberty.
And in my House of Prayer
Sweet songs shall be—
Like incense rare—
Thank-offerings of the free!

V

Most High,
The sorrow-laden people seek Thy Face,
They stretch forth suppliant hands;
How long must they yet wait
The appointed hour of grace,
When Thou in loving kindness shalt fulfil
The Message, comfort-fraught,
Of prophecy?
How long—in what far lands,
Must they redeemed from Egypt wander still,
Before the sign is shown,
The wonder wrought?

Oh, sanctify
Thy Name, that men profane,
And cause it in mine oracle
To dwell again;
Then shall The Glory seek its ancient home,
And all the nations to my light shall come!

—1928

JUDAH BEN SOLOMON AL-HARIZI

Born in Spain in the 12th century
Died in the 13th century

THE DAUGHTER OF THE VINE

Come, friend, with me, into the garden's shade,
Myrtle and roses round thy brow I'll twine,
And to delight us, see, the only maid
Charms most in age—the daughter of the vine!

A year with God is nothing—so they say—
A thousand years with him are but a day;
Would I might linger with the winecup here,
Until it seemed to God about a year.

—1888

IMMANUEL BEN SOLOMON BEN JEKUTHIEL SIFRONI

(IMMANUEL DI ROMA)

Born at Rome about 1270

Died at Fermo about 1330

THE BALLAD OF EPHRON, PRINCE OF TOPERS

Ye hills give ear, my song to hear; 'tis of a merry wight—
The prince of topers then and since, Lord Ephron he was hight;
He was the man that laid the ban on scholars, that they might
  Not drink a drop—a single drop—of water!

When sate at board, this jolly lord, they always brought him first,
A bowl of twenty flagons, for to slake his royal thirst;
Then he'd fall to, and crunch and chew, until you'd think he'd burst—
  But never stop to drink a drop—of water!

Each morn Prince Ephron said his prayers before he broke his fast—
"Good Lord!" he'd cry, "My mouth is dry, my tongue and lips stick fast;
My throat's on fire, my heart's a pyre, my frame's a furnace vast,
  Oh, quench my flames with drink—but not with water!

"Sweet friends, make haste, no moment waste, if that you love my soul,
And fetch me wine of Helbon in my lordly silver bowl;
Oh, that's the thing to heart a king, and make a sick man whole—
  But soil it not, and spoil it not, with water!

"The harm that water does to folk, if that you doubt," said he,
"There's quite a bit in Holy Writ, for him that runs to see—
Examples four—it needs no more—will make you all agree
  That danger lurks in every drop of water.

"There's Noah's flood—that near made mud of all the world then known—
The Nile—wherein by tyrants vile, our baby boys were thrown—
And the Red Sea—where Pharaoh's host went down like any stone—
  Now what were flood, and Nile, and sea, but water!

"There's Moses—meekest shepherd he, of an unruly flock—
Yet lost the Land because his hand in anger smote the rock;
If blame to him, no shame to him, for sure 'twas quite a shock
  To hear the people grumble so—for water!"

"Look ye, how pride," he often cried, "makes for contracted view;
Your glass-blowers, now—from potters well might learn, and tinkers, too!
This thing they call a wine-glass, pah! 'Twould hold a drop of dew—
  But I'm not drinking dew—or any water!"

Prince Ephron kept the sacred days of Israel's faith. At least,
If fasts him irked, he never shirked a single holy feast;
And on the Days of Penitence, was none in West or East
That, more than he, kept gullet-free—from water.

Tebèth[1] would make him whine and fret; through Támmuz[1] he would bawl;
And sore he'd moan, and fast he'd groan, in Ab[1] for Zion's fall,
Till by the Ninth[2] too weak he'd grown to try to fast at all;
Yet still he strict abstained—from drinking water.

Yom Kippurìm,[3] his eyes went dim,[4] with anguish of the soul,
So by the Din[5] it was no sin to call for plate and bowl;
But down his cheeks in salty streaks, the tears of guile would roll—
And once in every year, he tasted water!

Amends, indeed, he made full meed. Each month he'd keep Purìm[6]
The four cups he made forty—every night Lel Shemurìm[7]
Sukkòt,[8] Sh'buòt,[9] Kiddùsh[10] and Hàbdalàh[11] were good to him—
Be sure his cup of blessing wasn't water!

When skies would frown or rain come down, at home did Ephron stay;
"If clouds were wine-vats or their showers strong drink," he used to say,
"I'd hie me out the storms to flout, and bask in them all day—
"But what's the use of 'ifs,' " he said,—"or water!"

[1]Hebrew names of months in which fasts occur.

[2]The fast of Ab, in commemoration of the fall of Jerusalem, occurs on the 9th of that month, Tish'ah be-Ab.

[3]Day of Atonement.

[4]It is a Talmudic law that one affected with "bulmos" (the same as our modern bulimia or pathologic (excessive) appetite, such as is manifested in some cases of diabetes) and in whom hunger causes such faintness that sight becomes dimmed, need not fast on Atonement Day.

[5]The Jewish law, or rather, decisions of the authorities.

[6]The Feast in commemoration of the deliverance through Mordecai and Esther, from Haman's plotting. There is a Talmudic saying that on this occasion a good Jew may properly drink until he is unable to distinguish between "Blessed be Mordecai" and "Cursed be Haman." "Keep Purìm" (*Kippurìm*) imitates one of the word-plays in which the original abounds, but which are lost in translation.

[7]"Night of watching," a Biblical term applied to the eve of Passover, when at the family board prayers and hymns are said and sung in celebration of the deliverance from Egypt, and each participant must drink "four cups" of wine.

[8]Feast of Tabernacles.

[9]Feast of Weeks (Pentecost).

[10]Sanctification of the Sabbath Eve.

[11]Conclusion of the Sabbath.

"If 'stead of brine, the waves were wine, of vintage fine," quoth he,
"I'd wish to be a Jonah's fish, aswimming in the sea;
None other Eden would I ask, to all eternity—
  But for our sins, God made the sea of water!

"For had He sent a flood of wine—in Noah's time, you know,
Our patriarch had built no ark, to be shut in, below;
In such a tide, Oh, none had died—but all cut up Dido—
  And that's why rivers, rains and seas are water!"

* * * * *

Prince Ephron (peace upon his soul!) lies sleeping in the dust,
Until that day when, sages say, the sinful and the just
Shall rise to meet their due reward; then, let us humbly trust,
  Nor he nor we, shall crave in vain for water!

—1915

ON THE WALL

And on the wall was limned a mouldering corse,
A thing of horror. Mottled, shriveled skin
Flaked from the rotting flesh; the rotting flesh
Left bare the crumbling bone—and over all
Worms crawled and feasted. In the horror's hand
A scroll was clutched, whereon these words were writ:

O thou, that layest thy head
Upon a gilded bed,
Wake, if thou'rt sleeping still!

See! the worm drinks my blood
And makes my flesh his food,
That yesterday, like thine,
Was lush with meat and wine.
Bethink thee of thy way,
Repent, amend, today—
Tomorrow thou shalt be
Here in the pit with me.
Wake, if thou'rt sleeping still!

Proud one! What wilt thou say
Upon that bitter day,
Thou see'st, with anguished eyes,
The smoke of Hell arise!
There shall thy soul be tried
In flame, and purified;
Or, if it be but dross,
Cast out to utter loss.
Wake, if thou'rt sleeping still!

To whom, then, wilt thou cry?
Thine own lips testify
Against thee; thine own tongue
Accuses thee of wrong.
To Him On High, return,
The world's enticement spurn;
Her lies, her lewdness, fly—
Her guileful lullaby
That soothes thee unto shame,
Whilst she prepares thy flame!
Here canst thou see the end
Whereto her wiles intend—
Wake, if thou'rt sleeping still!

—1919

ISAAC BEN ZERAHIAH HALEVI GERONDI

Early Part of 12th Century

THE OPPRESSOR'S ONLY THOUGHT

Gold! Gold! Gold!
It is the oppressor's only thought;
Give! Give! their ceaseless cry.
And thus they rob me of the priceless hours
I fain would spend in study of Thy Law,
More precious far, than gold.

—1918

MORDECAI BEN ISAAC

13th Century

ROCK OF MY SALVATION
(Ma'oz Zur Yeshu'ati*)

Mighty, praised beyond compare,
Rock of my salvation,
Build again my house of prayer,
For Thy habitation!
Offering and libation, shall a ransomed nation
Joyful bring
There, and sing
Psalms of Dedication!

Woe was mine in Egypt-land,
(Tyrant kings enslaved me);
Till Thy mighty, out-stretched Hand
From oppression saved me.
Pharaoh, rash pursuing, vowed my swift undoing—
Soon, his host
That proud boast
'Neath the waves was rueing!

To Thy Holy Hill, the way
Madest Thou clear before me;
With false gods I went astray—
Foes to exile bore me.
Torn from all I cherished, almost had I perished—
Babylon fell,
Ze-ru-ba-bel
Badest Thou to restore me!

Then the vengeful Haman wrought
Subtly, to betray me;
In his snare himself he caught—
He that plann'd to slay me.
(Haled from Esther's palace; hanged on his own gallows!)
Seal and ring
Persia's king
Gave Thy servant zealous.

*This Hanukkah song is from the Ashkenazic Liturgy.

When the brave Asmonéans broke
    Javan's chain in sunder,
Through the holy oil, Thy folk
    Didst Thou show a wonder—
Ever full remainèd the vessel unprofanèd;
    These eight days,
    Lights and praise,
  Therefore were ordainèd.

Lord, Thy Holy Arm make bare,
    Speed my restoration;
Be my martyr's blood Thy care—
    Judge each guilty nation.
Long is my probation; sore my tribulation—
    Bid, from Heaven,
    Thy shepherds seven
  Haste to my salvation!

—1914

SOLOMON HALEVI ALKABIZ

Of Safed, 16th Century

HYMN OF WELCOME TO THE SABBATH

(Lekah Dodi)

Come, my belovèd, with chorus of praise,
Welcome Bride Sabbath, the Queen of the days.

"Keep and Remember!"—in One divine Word
He that is One, Alone, made His will heard;
One is the name of Him, One is the Lord!
  His are the fame and the glory and praise!

Sabbath, to welcome thee, joyous we haste;
Fountain of blessing from ever thou wast—
First in God's planning, though fashioned the last,
  Crown of His handiwork, chiefest of days.

City of holiness, filled are the years;
Up from thine overthrow! Forth from thy fears!
Long hast thou dwelt in the valley of tears,
  Now shall God's tenderness shepherd thy ways.

Rise, O my folk, from the dust of the earth,
Garb thee in raiment beseeming thy worth;
Nigh draws the hour of the Bethlehemite's birth,
  Freedom who bringeth, and glorious days.

Wake and bestir thee, for come is thy light!
Up! With thy shining, the world shall be bright;
Sing! For thy Lord is revealed in His Might—
  Thine is the splendor His Glory displays!

'Be not ashamed,' saith the Lord, 'nor distressed;
Fear not and doubt not. The people oppressed,
Zion, My city, in thee shall find rest—
  Thee, that anew on thy ruins I raise.'

Spoiled shall thy spoilers be; banished afar,
They that devoured. But in thee, evermore,
God shall take joy; as the bridegroom, what hour,
  Blushing, the bride lifts her veil to his gaze.

Stretch out thy borders to left and to right;
Fear but the Lord, Whom to fear is delight—
The man, son of Perez, shall gladden our sight,
  And we shall rejoice to the fullness of days.

Come in thy joyousness, Crown of thy Lord;
Come, bringing peace to the folk of the Word;
Come where the faithful in gladsome accord,
  Hail thee as Sabbath-Bride, Queen of the days.

Come where the faithful are hymning thy praise;
Come as a bride cometh, Queen of the days!

—1908

ABRAHAM HAZZAN (GERONDI)

13th century

HYMN FOR THE EVE OF THE NEW YEAR*

(Ahot Ketannah)

Thy stricken daughter,† now, O Lord, prepares
—Bowed 'neath the rod—
Her songs of fervent praise, her tearful prayers—
Heal her, O God!
Heal her—deliver her from all her woes—
A year of sorrows draweth to its close!

The psalmist's lay, the prophet's word sublime,
To Thee pertain;
And ancient litany and poet's rhyme
Prolong the strain.
Hide not thine eyes, forever, Lord, but see
Her deep distress, who pours her soul to Thee,
Whilst tyrants scourge her flesh with cruel blows—
A year of sorrows draweth to its close!

When wilt Thou draw Thy daughter from the pit
Of misery,
And break her prison-yoke and bid her sit
With them made free?
Display Thy wonders! From Thy ruined fold,
Drive out the ravening beasts. There, as of old,
Gather Thy scattered sheep and guard from foes—
A year of sorrows draweth to its close!

Despoiled and mocked, sport of the heathen's wrath,
But constant still,
The foot of Israel swerves not from Thy path,
Nor ever will.
Her song is hushed, but all her soul on fire
With frustrate longing; Thou art her desire!
Her breaking heart with love of Thee o'erflows—
A year of sorrows draweth to its close!

*Pizmon for New Year Eve, version from the Sefardic Liturgy.
†Heb.: The little sister (Song of Songs, viii, 8.).

Lead gently, to the bower of blissful rest,
    Her, so long torn
From her Belovèd; bid that anguished breast
    Cease, now, to mourn.
Thy precious vine, whose clusters ruthless men
Have stript, that beasts have trampled, lift again;
Behold! Even now, the buds of hope unclose—
  A year of sorrows draweth to its close!

Be strong, ye faithful, joyously endure,
    For wrong shall cease.
Trust still the Rock; His Covenant is sure,
    His paths are peace.
Yet shall He lead you Zionward, and say:
"Cast up! Cast up! Make firm and broad the way!"
  O may the approaching year behold that day!
Begin, New Year—and bring that joyous day!

—1908

AN AGE OF SORROWS DRAWETH TO ITS CLOSE

(Imitative Paraphrase* of the Pizmon
for the Eve of New Year)

Now dost Thou lift thy daughter from the pit
Of misery,
And break her prison-yoke and bid her sit
With them made free.
Now are thy wonders seen. From out thy fold,
The ravening beasts are fled; there, as of old,
Thy ransomed flock shall dwell, secure from foes—
An age of sorrows draweth to its close

O ye, whose faith gave courage to endure
Till wrong should cease,
Rejoice! The Covenant ye trust is sure—
God gives you peace!
Now shall ye turn you Zionward and say:
"Cast up! Cast up! Make firm and broad the way!"—
Let the new age of hope begin, today!

—1920

*In the original, the future tense is used, whereas the paraphrase gives the theme in the present. Only two stanzas of the original eight are used and in the refrain "year" is changed to "age."

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