

# A Yiddish Shot in the Arm

The Power in Yiddish Songs

– By Leybl Botwinik

In Yiddish:

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A yidish aynshpresentsung – der koyekh in yidishe lider

## **Contents and Songs**

The Power in Yiddish Songs .....	3
<b>Gekumen iz di Tsayt – by Avraham Goldfaden</b> .....	4
<b>Tsu Mayn Folk – by Leib Naidus</b> .....	5
"The day is long, the war is difficult" .....	6
<b>Reb Motenyu – by Aharon Zeitlin</b> .....	7
"When one has no God, one seeks gods, – and these do not supply a Bible" .....	8
<b>Meyn Nisht – by Isaac Leibush Peretz</b> .....	8
Love of the World and Freely Offered Love .....	9
<b>Dem Bal-Shem-Tov's Zemerl – by Moyshe Bassin</b> .....	10
<b>Ale Brider (Di Kalekotke) – by Morris Winchevsky</b> .....	12
<b>Akhdes – by Morris Winchevsky</b> .....	13
<b>Oyfn Pripetshik ("Der Alef-Beys") – by M. M. Warshawsky</b> .....	14
<b>Natsional-Gefil – by Yehoash</b> .....	16
Torah: The Main Source for the Literature in Yiddish .....	16
"Teyleykhu" – You Shall Walk .....	17
<b>Kotsk – (Unknown)</b> .....	18
<b>Zingt Zhe Ale Yidelekh – (Unknown)</b> .....	19
<b>Undzer Shtetl Brent – by Mordkhe Gebirtig</b> .....	20
<b>Zol Shoyn Kumen Di Geule – by Shmerke Kaczerginski</b> .....	21

## **The Power in Yiddish Songs**

In these days of chaos and doubt, misgivings and confusion, dangers and challenges around the world in general, and for the Jewish people specifically, we must not underestimate the power of Yiddish and Yiddish songs.

Yiddish language and culture, in all its colours and genres (humour, drama, prose, poetry, and song), both in its folk form and in its polished literary form, have served for nearly 1000 years to safeguard the Jewish people, and aid them in surviving the dangers and temptations of the times. Like a mother for her child, we find in *mame-loshn* [mother tongue] Yiddish: tenderness, concern, strength, and encouragement for the Jewish individual, as well as for the community at large.

For generations, Yiddish songs have served the Jews. From the lullabies, children, youth, and family songs, to the songs of struggle for human and civil rights and justice for all, Yiddish is sung. In the best of times (during celebrations, Sabbath, and holidays), Yiddish sets the proper mood. In the worst of times (during wars and struggle for survival), it shields, supports, and gives us confidence, both against the physical enemy, and against the crippling yet untouchable shadow of fear, loss of faith, or spiritual decline.

Year in and year out, on the other hand, we read in the Jewish press about the danger of assimilation, about the growing percent of mixed marriages, about weakened Jewish education, moral deterioration of the youth... and worse. At Zionist and general Jewish gatherings and conferences of smaller and larger organizations in Israel, Europe, and in America this is discussed yet again and again... ad nauseum... and no solution is forthcoming.

True, we should strengthen Jewish education. True, we should strengthen and encourage the fundamentals of Judaism... but without one's own language? In foreign languages? There was a time when the youth heard Yiddish, spoke Yiddish, studied in Yiddish (we refer, of course, to those who stem from Yiddish-speaking homes) – so they at least had instilled in them some modicum of Jewishness and Jewish ethics – that which is known as a "Jewish heart". But no longer. In almost all the Jewish communities of the widespread Ashkenazic Jewry, and even in the Israel, Yiddish was buried alive, and the young were dissuaded from contact with Yiddish ... and consequently, with Judaism.

It is written, for example, that it was owing to three things that the Children of Israel survived and persevered as a nation in ancient Egypt under the worst of conditions of slavery and exploitation: their clothing, their names, and their language.

There's a joke about a woman in Israel who was speaking Yiddish to her child. She is asked why she isn't speaking Hebrew with the child, as everyone does. She answers: "I don't want him to forget that he's a Jew".

There is also a well known maxim that the Jew is like a barometer for the state of the world: If the Jews are well, then the world is well. When not, then woe unto everyone... This can be said about Yiddish too: that it is like a barometer of the Jewish people.

Our leaders made a historic mistake, by booting Yiddish out of Jewish life. Unfortunately, they are not even ready to admit this, but again and yet again talk about "saving the day" or "rectifying the situation". Their methods, however, are usually not very effective.

Nevertheless, something can still be done: we need to renew, revive, and blow fresh winds of strength and spirit into those sails of the beaten down, despairing Jewish boats that are wandering around lost over the dangerous seas of life. We need to free, inspire, and encourage the fresh hearts of young, innocent Jewish souls around the world, and via Yiddish, and that precious key – Yiddish song – this can be achieved.

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The goal of this essay is to show the depth, the richness of Yiddish in general, and of the Yiddish song specifically. With respect to Jewish national pride and Jewish devotion/self-sacrifice, these are, perhaps, the most important vessels today to purge assimilationist tendencies that prevent us from remaining good Jews and, honest persons. In this manner, can we "save the day". One need only want to. One need only do.

This essay includes only a small sampling of songs that have inspired previous generations of Jews – and which will inspire many more generations of Jews. The repertoire of Yiddish songs is vast, tremendously rich and varied, and surely not exhausted. There are still thousands of songs that have yet to bloom: poetry to which music needs to be set, and songs still unwritten.

Via Yiddish songs, this thirsty-for-Judaism generation of Jews will discover intensity, morality, humaneness, and religion. These several examples of Yiddish songs that are presented here will, God willing, assist the listener to reach higher spiritual levels, and will lead to renewal and new energies in Jewish life. May this serve as a first-aid shot in the arm for the Jewish people that needs it so desperately.

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**Gekumen iz di Tsayt – by Avraham Goldfaden**

<p><b>Gekumen iz di Tsayt</b> – Music and lyrics by Avraham Goldfaden</p>	<p><b>געקומען איז די צייט</b> – ווערטער און מוזיק פון אברהם גאלדפאדען</p>
<p>Gekumen iz di tsayt Zi iz shoyt nit vayt, Yo, gor nit vayt, Dos land bafrayen Yo, yo, bafrayen, Un dos beys-hamikdesh banayen, Yo, yo, banayen, Dos land bafrayen Oyfboyen oyf s'nay ...</p>	<p>געקומען איז די צייט זי איז שוין ניט ווייט, יא, גאר ניט ווייט, דאָס לאַנד באַפֿרײַען יא, יא, באַפֿרײַען, און דאָס בית-המקדש באַנײַען, יא, יא, באַנײַען. דאָס לאַנד באַפֿרײַען אויפבויען אויף ס'ניי. ...</p>

**Summary: The Time Has Come**

The time is ripe. The land must be freed, yes, freed, and the Temple restored.

These words were composed about 130 years ago by the father of modern Yiddish theatre, Abraham Goldfaden, for his epic *Bar Kokhba*. The theatre piece is about liberating and renewing the Kingdom of Judah that had fallen under Rome about 2000 years ago, and about freeing the Jewish people from assimilation.

How appropriate, how timely these words ring out today, when Jews inhabit the Jewish land, and yet assimilate and move further from Judaism, Jewish values, Jewish ethics.

This song is also a summons to those who follow a Jewish lifestyle, and have not totally been transformed into "Canaanites" – to them also is directed this appeal to renew, to keep themselves strong, and to be proud of everything Jewish.

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Here is another poem, without music, that conveys an important message that we must pay attention to and carry out. It is a call to the Jewish Nation to renew itself, to wake up, shake off the cobwebs, and more...

**Tsu Mayn Folk – by Leib Naidus**

<b>Tsu Mayn Folk</b> – Lyrics by Leib Naidus	<b>צו מיין פאלק</b> – וערטער פון לייב נײַדוס
-1-	-1-
Shtey oyf der vakh! Hot dikh di sho fun nisoyen getrofn, Nem un bafrish di farrostete vofn, Makh nit di oygn tsu, leyg dikh nit shlofn – Shtey oyf der vakh!	שטיי אויף דער וואַך! האַט דײַך די שעה פון נסיון געטראָפֿן, נעם און באַפֿריש די פֿאַרדאַסעטעטע וואָפֿן, מאַך ניט די אויגן צו, לייג דײַך ניט שלאָפֿן – שטיי אויף דער וואַך!
-2-	-2-
Zay vi a feldz! Der vos farshteyt nor zayn umglik – der kon es. Lyarmen beyz meg der yam fun sakones, Shtey vi farglivert in shtrenger akshones – Zay vi a feldz!	זײַ ווי אַ פעלדז! דער וואָס פֿאַרשטייט נאָר זײַן אומגליק – דער קאָן עס. ליאַרעמען בײַז מעג דער ים פון ספֿנות, שטיי ווי פֿאַרגליווערט אין שטרענגער עקשנות – זײַ ווי אַ פעלדז!
-3-	-3-
Hit dayn farmegn! Zay far dayn binyen a shoymer a trayer, Shits zayne oystsres fun genimshn fayer, Shits dayne perl vos zaynen dir tayer – Hit dayn farmegn!	הײַט דײַן פֿאַרמעגן! זײַ פֿאַר דײַן בנין אַ שומר, אַ טרײַער, שיץ זײַנע אוצרות פון גײַהנומשן פֿײַער, שיץ זײַנע פֿערל וואָס זײַנען דיר טײַער – הײַט דײַן פֿאַרמעגן!
-4-	-4-
Betl keyn treyst! Groys iz der vey fun dayn groyser neshome, Bet nit bay keynem keyn shtral fun nekhome, Makh nit dayn shtolts un dayn heylikeyt tome – Betl keyn treyst!	בעטל קײַן טרײַסט! גרויס איז דער וויי פון דײַן גרויסער נשמה, בעט ניט בײַ קײַנעם קײַן שטראַל פון נחמה, מאַך ניט דײַן שטאַלץ און דײַן הײליקײַט טמא – בעטל קײַן טרײַסט!
-5-	-5-
Gleyb in dayn kraft! Meg zayn dayn kerper tsevundet, tseshtokhn, Gleyb in dayn osed mit festn bitokhn, Gleyb in dayn kinfikn groysn nitsokhn – Gleyb in dayn kraft!	גלייב אין דײַן קראַפֿט! מעג זײַן דײַן קערפֿער צעוואַונדעט, צעשטאָכֿן, גלייב אין דײַן עֶתִיד מיט פעסטן בטחון, גלייב אין דײַן קינפֿטיקן גרויסן נצחון – גלייב אין דײַן קראַפֿט!

**Summary: To My people**

- 1) Stand on guard! If the moment of truth has arrived, renew your rusty weapons. Do not sleep...
- 2) Be like a boulder! He who understands his tragedy knows it. Though the sea churns angrily – stand fast!
- 3) Protect your possessions! Guard them loyally from the Hellfire. Safeguard your precious pearls.
- 4) Do not beg for sympathy. Your pain is great, but ask not for pity. Do not defile your holiness.
- 5) Believe in your strength. Though your body is wounded, gored, believe in your future with steadfast conviction!

This song is well suited to the present time. It can be said about the State of Israel today: "Protect your possessions! Be a loyal guard for your household! Protect your treasures from the hell-like fire..."

Or about the Jews and Yiddish after World War II – after the Holocaust: "Believe in your strength! Though your body is wounded, gored, believe in your future with steadfast conviction!"

– And this was declared by Leib Naidus almost one hundred years ago.

When we look around, read the news, listen to our so-called Leaders, we can conclude that Jews, around the world (and especially in the State of Israel) have lost their pride, their drive.

A wise rabbi recently said in his sermon:

The Passover *Haggadah* states: – "מרור, מצה, פסח" ("**Peysekh, Matse, Morer**" – The Passover sacrifice, the unleavened bread, bitter herbs) – על שום מה? ("Al Shum Ma?" – For what reason?): "**Peysekh**" was the momentous event of our liberation; We baked "**Matse**" in a hurry; but the bitterness of "**Morer**", that was our life in Egypt, took place before the liberation. In other words, chronologically, the word "**Morer**" should appear first (the order, then, should have been: "מצה, פסח, מרור" – ("**Morer, Peysekh, Matse**" – The bitterness, the Passover, the unleavened bread).

The Children of Israel, however, had so acclimated themselves to the terrible conditions and slavery that only after the liberation – after they had left Egypt behind – did they come to realize how bitter their life had truly been.

And this is, unfortunately, the situation today. We play out "see no evil, ..., hear no evil..." pretend not to know..., and compromise (all the while surrendering up ethical Jewish morals). We become accustomed to things today that a few years ago we would probably never have agreed to compromise on, or to sit quietly about,... and this continues,... until one day we will wake up and become aware of how bitter it has become, and how low we have fallen...

However, why should we wait so long? "The writing," as they say ... "is on the wall" – we need only heed the message and do something about it...

**"The day is long, the war is difficult"**

"The day is long, the war is difficult" are a few words from a well known song "Reb Motenyu" by Aharon Zeitlin. Yes, we are truly in a war against assimilation, apathy, and worse. It is therefore high time for *akhdes* – unity, and to reject small minded behavior such as pride, egotism, and jealousy.

When the tribes of Israel were about to enter the land of Israel after 40 years of wandering in the desert, there were several tribes that wanted to remain on the other side of the Jordan river, and not enter the holy land. They had their reasons. However, when it came to the "moment of truth" – to wage war to conquer Canaan and remake it into the Land of Israel – they overcame their personal desires and did not shirk their duty, or apathetically stand aside to let others do the work. Instead, they stood firm and united with their brothers and worked together for the common cause. Later, they went their own way.

We find ourselves, today, in exactly this type of fateful situation: We need to capture the historical moment, and like Pinhas the priest once did (in *Bamidbar* [Numbers] 25:7-13) – not let it slip by, but rather do what needs to be done.

We can draw strength both from the *Torah* and Yiddish songs, and know and understand, that no matter how difficult, the deeds must be carried out. We dare not be satisfied with only fancy speeches and sermons.

### **Reb Motenyu – by Aharon Zeitlin**

<b>Reb Motenyu</b> – Lyrics by Aharon Zeitlin. Music by Shmuel Bogatsh	<b>רב מאטעניו</b> – ווערטער פון אהרן צייטלין. מוזיק פון שמואל בוגאטש
-1-	-1 -
Zogt der rebe, reb motenyu A gut morgn dir, gotenyu Nem arop fun undz dayn kas, Veln mir ton kedim ukhedas.	זאָגט דער רבי, ר' מאָטעניו אַ גוט מאָרגן דיר, גאָטעניו נעם אַראָפּ פֿון אונדז דײַן קעס, { וועלן מיר טאָן פֿאַרן וַכֶּדָּת. } 2X {
-2-	-2 -
<b>Refreyn:</b> Oy, tsadikim. Tsadikim geyen bom. Oy, reshoyim. Reshoyim faln bom. Bom, bom, biri-biri-bom Bim-bom, bim-bom, biri-biri-bom.	<b>רעפּרײַן:</b> אוי, צדיקים. צדיקים גייען באָם. אוי, רשעים. רשעים פֿאַלן באָם. { באָם, באָם, בירי-בירי-באָם } 2X { בים-באָם, בים-באָם, בירי-בירי-באָם. }
-3-	-3 -
Zogt der rebe, reb motenyu A gut-helf dir, gotenyu Der tog iz heys, di milkhome iz shver, Nor men lozt nit aroys dos geveer. <b>Refreyn:</b> Oy, tsadikim. Tsadikim geyen bom...	זאָגט דער רבי, ר' מאָטעניו אַ גוט-העלף דיר, גאָטעניו { דער טאָג איז הייס, די מלחמה איז שווער, } 2X { נאָר מען לאָזט ניט אַרויס דאָס געווער. } <b>רעפּרײַן:</b> אוי, צדיקים. צדיקים גייען באָם... -4 -
-4-	-4 -
Zogt der rebe, reb motenyu A gutn ovnt dir, gotenyu Der tog iz avek, ikh hob alts gemakht, Gib zhe mir a gutinke nakht <b>Refreyn:</b> Oy, tsadikim. Tsadikim geyen bom...	זאָגט דער רבי, ר' מאָטעניו אַ גוטן אָוונט דיר, גאָטעניו { דער טאָג איז אַוועק, איך האָב אַלץ געמאַכט, } 2X { גיב זשע מיר אַ גוטניקע נאַכט. } <b>רעפּרײַן:</b> אוי, צדיקים. צדיקים גייען באָם...

#### **Summary: Rabbi Motenyu**

- 1) Reb Motenyu greets God: Good morning. Remove your wrath, and we will follow the laws.
- 2) **Refrain:** The saintly rise, the wicked fall.
- 3) Reb Motenyu: Good day God. The day is hot, the war is difficult, but we do not lay down our arms.
- 4) Reb Motenyu: Good evening God. The day has passed. Give us a good night's sleep.

**"When one has no God, one seeks gods,  
– and these do not supply a Bible"**

How vast was the love of our national literary giant and wordsmith Isaac Leibush Peretz for the tools of Judaism: The small prayer book (*siderl*), and bible (*tanakhl*) – and his belief in God. Many people don't know this. They don't know how dear Judaism, and the Jewish people, were to him. They believe that he was far from Judaism, even against it. This is not so. When he criticized, it was not Judaism or Jewish tradition that he disapproved of, but rather the leadership. He loved his people, and he loved his God and his Torah.

Here, for example, is one of his many brilliant sayings:

**"When one has no God, one seeks gods – and these do not supply a bible"**

– How deep, how thoroughly Jewish this thought is.

Here is a song where Peretz cries out, demanding Justice. He warns that the world is not an anarchy: There is someone who is monitoring everything... Words like those of a prophet of old.

**Meyn Nisht – by Isaac Leibush Peretz**

<p><b><u>Meyn Nisht</u></b> – Lyrics by Y.L. Peretz Music by Meyer Bogdanski</p>	<p align="center"><b><u>מיינ נישט</u></b> – ווערטער פון י.ל. פרץ מוזיק פון מאיר באגדאנסקי</p>
<p align="center">-1-</p> <p>Meyn nisht, di velt iz a kretshme – bashafn Tsu makhn a veg mit foystn un negl Tsum shenkfas, un fresn un zoyfn, ven andere Kukn fun vaytn mit glezerne oygn Farkhalesht, un shlingen dem shpayekhts un tsiyen Tsuzamen dem mogn, vos varft zikh in kramfn! – O, meyn nisht, di velt iz a kretshme!</p>	<p align="center">-1-</p> <p>מיינ נישט, די וועלט איז אַ קרעטשמע – באַשאַפן צו מאַכן אַ וועג מיט פּוּיסטן און נעגל צום שענקפּאַס, און פּרעסן און זויפּן, ווען אַנדערע קוקן פון ווייטן מיט גלעזערנע אויגן פאַרחלשט, און שליונגען דעם שפּייַעכץ און ציען צוזאַמען דעם מאָגן, וואָס וואַרפט זיך אין קראַמפּן! – אַ, מיינ נישט, די וועלט איז אַ קרעטשמע!</p>
<p align="center">-2-</p> <p>Meyn nisht, di velt iz a berze – bashafn Der shtarker zol handlen mit mide un shvakhe, Zol koyfn bay oreme meydlekh di bushe, Bay froyen di milkh fun di bristn, bay mener Di markh fun di beyner, bay kinder dem shmeykhl, Dem zeltenem gast oyf vaksenem ponim – O, meyn nisht, di velt iz a berze.</p>	<p align="center">-2-</p> <p>מיינ נישט, די וועלט איז אַ בערזע – באַשאַפן דער שטאַרקער זאָל האַנדלען מיט מידע און שוואַכע, זאָל קויפּן ביי אַרעמע מיידלעך די בושע, ביי פּרויען די מילך פון די בריסטן, ביי מענער די מאַרץ פון די ביינער, ביי קינדער דעם שמייכל, דעם זעלמענעם גאַסט אויף וואַקסענעם פּוּנים – אַ, מיינ נישט, די וועלט איז אַ בערזע!</p>
<p align="center">-3-</p> <p>Meyn nisht, di velt iz a hefker – bashafn Far velf un far fuksn, far royb un far shvindl; Der himl – a forhang, az got zol nisht zen! Der nepl – me zol oyf di hent dir nit kukn! Der vint – tsu farshtikn di vilde geshreyen; Di erd – ayntsuzapn dos blut fun korbones – O, meyn nisht, di velt iz a hefker!</p>	<p align="center">-3-</p> <p>מיינ נישט, די וועלט איז אַ הפּקר – באַשאַפן פאַר וועלף און פאַר פּוקסן, פאַר רויב און פאַר שווינדל; דער הימל – אַ פאַרהאַנג, אַז גאָט זאָל נישט זען! דער נעפּל – מע זאָל אויף די הענט דיר ניט קוקן! דער ווינט – צו פאַרשטיקן די ווילדע געשרייען; די ערד – איינצוזאַפּן דאָס בלוט פון קרבנות – אַ, מיינ נישט, די וועלט איז אַ הפּקר!</p>
<p align="center">-4-</p> <p>Di velt iz keyn kretshme, keyn berze, keyn hefker! Gemostn vert ales, gevoygn vert ales! Keyn trer un keyn blutiker tropn fargeyen, Umzist vert keyn funk in keyn oyg nisht farloshn! Fun trern vert taykhn, fun taykhn vert yamim Fun yamim – a mabl, fun funken – a duner – O, meyn nisht, leys din veleys dayin!</p>	<p align="center">-4-</p> <p>די וועלט איז קיין קרעטשמע, קיין בערזע, קיין הפּקר! געמאָסטן ווערט אַלעס, געוואויגן ווערט אַלעס! קיין טרער און קיין בלוטיקער טראָפּן פאַרגייען, אומזיסט ווערט קיין פּונק אין קיין אויג נישט פאַרלאָשן! פון טרערן ווערט טייכן, פון טייכן ווערט ימים, פון ימים – אַ מבול, פון פּונקען – אַ דונער – אַ, מיינ נישט, ליט דיין וליט דיין!</p>



**Summary: Do Not Assume**

- 1) Do not for a moment believe that the world is a tavern created for some to beat their way with fists and nails to the beer barrel, and gorge themselves, while others look on weakly, with thirst and hunger.
- 2) Do not believe the world is a stock exchange for the strong to deal with the weak, and buy the shame of maidens, the milk of women's breasts, the marrow of men's bones, the rare smile on children's faces.
- 3) Do not believe that the world is abandoned to wolves and foxes, to robbery and swindle; the sky a curtain, God should not see; the wind to drown out the screams; the earth to drink the blood of victims.
- 4) The world is not a tavern, stock exchange, abandoned. Everything is measured, weighed. No tear or bloody drop is misplaced: Tears become rivers, seas, floods. Do not assume that there is no Law, no Judge!

In his writings, essays, and stories, and in his thinking, speeches, and proclamations, and surely in his activities, we see that he indeed retains his Jewishness. This inspired pride in hundreds of thousands of Jews to keep the traditions. This also influenced others to strengthen their commitment to a traditional Jewish lifestyle.

Zalmen Yefroykin writes about this in the biographical introduction of the book *Fun Peretses Oytser* [from Peretz' treasury], published in 1952 in honour of the 100th birthday of Peretz:

"*Khshidish* [stories about Hasidim] and *Folkstimlekhe geshikhtn* [folktales] became a source for belief, bravery, and spirit for the Jewish people in Peretz' times. They are also for us today, and will be so for future Jewish generations, just as all the great spiritual works that Jews have created.

And just like "Bontshe Shvayg" [Bontshe the Silent One] and Peretz' realistic tales aided the Jewish worker and the Jewish masses to uplift themselves and awaken in them their honour as human beings, in this manner – and perhaps more so – did *Khshidish* and *Folkstimlekhe geshikhtn* uplift their spirit, their Jewish courage."

In the final periods of Peretz' life, writes Yefroyken:

"... the problems of Judaism troubled him all the more: What should be the makeup of a Jewish world presence, and its place on this planet... what is its historic role?"

What indeed?

**Love of the World and Freely Offered Love**

There is so much to learn from Yiddish literature, and especially from Yiddish songs. They encapsulate ethics, and teach us how to be both good Jews and good human beings. We learn about how to conduct oneself with one's fellow man/woman, and we learn about how to have a rapport with God.

We find this, for example, in a song like "Tayere Malke" ["Dear Malka"] by M. M. Warshawsky where he writes:

**"I drink for my enemies, but don't let them know,  
Look. Tears are pouring out of the goblet ...."**

Who ever heard of such a thing? – Which people toast their enemies? Why have Jews always been at the forefront of the struggle for civil and human rights, justice, and equality?

We have our Torah to thank for this. In Yiddish, these teachings are mirrored in folklore, literature, and songs.

Take, for instance, the following beautiful song, where the characters walk, ride, and rush about with great fervor, and equally with *ahavas oylem* [love for the world] to carry out whatever form of world-improving activity they are capable of.

**Dem Bal-Shem-Tov's Zemerl – by Moyshe Bassin**

<p><b>Dem Bal-Shem-Tov's Zemerl</b>                      – Lyrics by Moyshe Bassin                      Music by Joseph Rumshinsky</p>	<p><b>דעם בעל-שם-טובס זמרל</b>                      – ווערמער פון משה באסין                      מוזיק פון יוסף רומשינסקי</p>
<p>-1-                      Ikh vel a zemerl dir zingen, gotenyu.                      Ikh vel dir zingen fun dayn shusterl.                      Geyt a shusterl in veg baginen,                      – Shusterl, mayn shusterl, vu geystu?                      – Ikh gey, ikh gey,                      Far vayb un kind oyf broyt fardinen.                      – Shusterl, mayn shusterl, vos neystu?                      – Ikh ney, ikh ney,                      Far mentshn oreme, tshobotes.                      Gots kinder geyen, nebekh, borves,                      Un di velt iz ful mit blotes.</p>	<p>-1-                      איך וועל אַ זמרל דיר זינגען, גאַמעניו.                      איך וועל דיר זינגען פון דיין שוסטערל.                      גייט אַ שוסטערל אין וועג באַגינען,                      – שוסטערל, מיין שוסטערל, וואו גייסטו?                      – איך גיי, איך גיי,                      פאַר ווייב און קינד אויף ברויט פאַרדינען.                      – שוסטערל, מיין שוסטערל, וואָס נייסטו?                      – איך ניי, איך ניי,                      פאַר מענטשן אַרעמע, טשאַבאַטעס.                      גאָטס קינדער גייען, נעבער, באַרוועס,                      און די וועלט איז פול מיט בלאַטעס.</p>
<p>-2-                      Ikh vel a zemerl dir zingen, gotenyu.                      Ikh vel dir zingen fun dayn soykherl.                      Fort a soykherl in veg baginen,                      – Soykherl, mayn soykherl, vu forstu?                      – ikh for, ikh for,                      Gots bidne mentshn tsu badinen.                      – Soykherl, mayn soykherl, vos firstu?                      – Ikh fir, ikh fir,                      Dem Shoyr Habor mit dem Levyosn.                      Gots kinder laydn, nebekh, hunger,                      Vet oyf der velt zayn simkhe vososn.</p>	<p>-2-                      איך וועל אַ זמרל דיר זינגען, גאַמעניו.                      איך וועל דיר זינגען פון דיין סוחרל.                      פאַרט אַ סוחרל אין וועג באַגינען,                      – סוחרל, מיין סוחרל, וואו פאַרסטו?                      – איך פאַר, איך פאַר,                      גאָטס בידנע מענטשן צו באַדינען.                      – סוחרל, מיין סוחרל, וואָס פירסטו?                      – איך פיר, איך פיר,                      דעם שור הבר מיט דעם לוויחן.                      גאָטס קינדער ליידן, נעבער, הונגער,                      וועט אויף דער וועלט זיין שמחה ושעון.</p>
<p>-3-                      Ikh vel a zemerl dir zingen, gotenyu.                      Ikh vel dir zingen fun dayn melamedl.                      Yogt a melamedl in veg baginen,                      – Melamedl, mayn melamedl, vu yogstu?                      – Ikh yog, ikh yog,                      Dos harts fun mentshn tsu gevinen.                      – Melamedl, mayn melamedl, vos trogstu?                      – Ikh trog, ikh trog,                      Gots toyre trog ikh shtolts un munter.                      Es zol di velt, di velt, kholile                      Fun derekh-hayosher nit arunter.</p>	<p>-3-                      איך וועל אַ זמרל דיר זינגען, גאַמעניו.                      איך וועל דיר זינגען פון דיין מלמדל.                      יאָגט אַ מלמדל אין וועג באַגינען,                      – מלמדל, מיין מלמדל, וואו יאָגסטו?                      – איך יאָג, איך יאָג,                      דאָס האַרץ פון מענטשן צו געווינען.                      – מלמדל, מיין מלמדל, וואָס טראָגסטו?                      – איך טראָג, איך טראָג,                      גאָטס תורה טראָג איך שטאַלק און מונטער.                      עס זאָל די וועלט, די וועלט, חלילה,                      פון דרך-הַיִשָּׁר ניט אַרונטער.</p>
<p>-4-                      Ikh vel a zemerl dir zingen, gotenyu.                      Ikh vel dir zingen fun dayn klezmerl.                      Shpant a klezmerl farbenkt baginen,                      – Klezmerl, mayn klezmerl, vu shpanstu?                      – Ikh shpan, ikh shpan,                      Dos lidele fun sholem tsu gefinen.                      – Klezmerl, mayn klezmerl, vos brengstu?                      – Ikh breng, ikh breng,                      Dos fidele fun dovid hameylekh.                      A lidele der velt tsu shpiln,                      Az oyfn harts zol vern freylekh.</p>	<p>-4-                      איך וועל אַ זמרל דיר זינגען, גאַמעניו.                      איך וועל דיר זינגען פון דיין קלעזמערל.                      שפּאַנט אַ קלעזמערל פאַרבענקט באַגינען,                      – קלעזמערל, מיין קלעזמערל, וואו שפּאַנסטו?                      – איך שפּאַן, איך שפּאַן,                      דאָס לידעלע פון שלום צו געפינען.                      – קלעזמערל, מיין קלעזמערל, וואָס ברענגסטו?                      – איך ברענג, איך ברענג,                      דאָס פידעלע פון דוד המלך,                      אַ לידעלע דער וועלט צו שפּילן,                      אַז אויפן האַרצן זאָל ווערן פריילעך.</p>

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<p>Ikh vel a zemerl dir zingen, gotenyu.          Ikh vel dir zingen fun dayne yidelekh.          Loyfn yidelekh mit freyd baginen,          – Yidelekh, gots yidelekh, vu lofyt ir?          – Vos heyst, vos heyst?          Dos land fun yontev tsu gefinen.          – Yidelekh, gots yidelekh, vos koyft ir?          – Vos heyst, vos heyst?          Dos koyfn mir dokh shalekh-mones.          Gots mentshn greytn zikh oyf yontev,          Tsetrogn mir der velt matones.</p>	<p>איך וועל אַ זמערל דיר זינגען, גאָמעניו.          איך וועל דיר זינגען פון דיַינע ייִדעלעך.          לויפן ייִדעלעך מיט פרייד, באַגינען,          – ייִדעלעך, גאָמס ייִדעלעך, וואו לויפט איר?          – וואָס הייסט, וואָס הייסט?          דאָס לאַנד פון יום-טוב צו געפינען.          – ייִדעלעך, גאָמס ייִדעלעך, וואָס קויפט איר?          – וואָס הייסט, וואָס הייסט?          דאָס קויפן מיר דאָך שלח-מנות.          גאָמס מענטשן גרייטן זיך אויף יום-טוב,          צעטרעגן מיר דער וועלט מתנות.</p>

**Summary: The Bal Shem Tov's Tune**

- 1) I will sing you a tune, God, about your cobbler who goes out in the morning. Cobbler where do you go, what do you sew? I go to earn bread for my wife and child. I make boots for God's barefoot children because the world is full of mud.
- 2) Merchant, where do you ride? I ride forth to serve God's people, and bring them the legendary wild Ox and Leviathan, because God's children are hungry, and I would help them to be happy.
- 3) Teacher, where are you rushing off to? I rush to win people's hearts, and I proudly carry the Torah, so that the world should not, God forbid, stray from the righteous path.
- 4) Musician where are you off to so forlorn? I am off to search for the Song of Peace. I carry King David's harp, to play for the world and to cheer people up.
- 5) Jews, where are you running to? We are running to find the land of holiday. We're off to buy "shalakh-mones". God's people are preparing for holiday, and we would like to offer the world gifts.

If the Jewish people truly have a humane and historical mission to carry out in this life – to bring the God-blessed gifts of ethical and humane behaviour, conscience, and broadheartedness to the world at large – then this can be only achieved when the Jewish Nation is united.

As absurd and exaggerated as this may sound, this can actually be achieved via Yiddish song. Songs in general have a power to them: whether one sings inspirational national anthems, or just in collective sing-alongs, and especially in prayer, it is well known that singing brings people together, instills courage, and penetrates souls. Music and singing are well known therapies and remedies for a downtrodden spirit.

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example, when two families unite, and particularly since the song itself refers to: "un mir libn zikh dokh ale, ... vi a khosn mit a kale..." [and we all love each other... like a bride and groom...]

The background to this song, however, is little known. In the Mloteks' wonderful publication *perl fun der yiddisher poezye* [pearls of Yiddish poetry], it states that Morris Winchevsky, one of the young American Jewish socialist poets originally wrote a song (published in 1890) called *Akhdes* [union] from which the song "ale brider" later evolved from.

It is worthwhile to take a look at some of the verses of the original song:

**Akhdes – by Morris Winchevsky**

<p><b>Akhdes</b> – Lyrics by Morris Winchevsky</p>	<p><b>אחדות</b> – ווערטער פון מאָריס ווינטשעווסקי</p>
<p>-1- Yo mir zaynen ale eynik! Tsi mir hobn fil tsi veynik, Un mir zaynen ale brider, Un mir davnen fun eyn sider, Say mir shnaydn pantalones, Say mir shnaydn op kupones, Eynik zaynen ale mir, Glaykh der evyoyn mitn gvir!</p>	<p>-1- יאָ, מיר זײַנען אַלע אייניק! צי מיר האָבן פיל צי ווייניק, און מיר זײַנען אַלע ברידער, און מיר דאַוונען פון איין סידור, סײַ מיר שניידן פאַנטאַלאָנעס, סײַ מיר שניידן אָפּ קופאָנעס, אייניק זײַנען אַלע מיר, גלייך דער אביאָן מיטן גביר!</p>
<p>-2- Kurtse peyes, lange peyes, Yidn mit un on matbeyes, Dare un gefilte kishkes Hoyle hertser un manishkes, Frume kep un kep fun zinders, Kep in yarmlkes, tsilinders. Ale zaynen mir eyn folk, Vi soldatn in eyn polk.</p>	<p>-2- קורצע פאות, לאַנגע פאות יידן מיט און אָן מטבעות, דאַרע און געפילטע קישקעס היילע הערצער און מאַנישקעס, פרומע קעפּ און קעפּ פון זינדערס, קעפּ אין יאַרמלקעס, צילינדערס. אַלע זײַנען מיר איין פּאָלק, ווי סאַלדאַטן אין איין פּאָלק.</p>
<p>-3- Frum un link, fareynikt ale, Vi der khosn mit der kale, Vi der bezem mitn shtekn, Vi di tsitses mit di ekn, Vi di tir mit der mezuze, Vi der talye mit der bluze, Vi der khumesh mit der Rashi, Vi der kugl mit der kashe, Vi der takhshit mitn glants, Vi der klezmer mitn tants !</p>	<p>-3- פרום און לינק, פאַראייניקט אַלע, ווי דער חתן מיט דער כלה, ווי דער בעזעם מיטן שטעקן, ווי די ציצית מיט די עקן, ווי די מיר מיט דער מזוזה, ווי דער טאַליע מיט דער בלוזע, ווי דער חומש מיט דער רש"י, ווי דער קוגל מיט דער קאַשע, ווי דער תכשיט מיטן גלאַנץ, ווי דער פלי-זמר מיטן טאַנץ !</p>

**Summary: Unity**

- 1) We are united, whether we have a lot or a little, and we are all brothers and pray from the same Sidur [prayer book] ...
- 2) ... Religious heads, and heads of sinners, with yarmulkes or top hats...we are all one people, like soldiers in a regiment.
- 3) Religious and Left, united all, like the groom and the bride, like the broom and its stick ... like the door with its *Mezuzah* ... like the *Khumash* [Bible] and the Rashi [Bible commentary].

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Probably the most popular and most beautiful Yiddish song is known as "Oyfn Pripetshik" (its original title was "Der Alef-Beys" [The (Jewish) alphabet]), by M. M. Warshawsky).

At first – in its simplicity – it sounds like a nostalgic song about childhood (about learning in the *kheyder* [children's religious school]), or even a lullaby. When one reads into the complete text, however, one discovers very deep thoughts about the Jewish people and Jewish survival. Many essays and research papers have been written about this song, and it can be discussed and analyzed for hours.

**Oyfn Pripetshik ("Der Alef-Beys") – by M. M. Warshawsky**

<p><b>Oyfn Pripetshik (Der Alef-Beys)</b> – Music and lyrics by M. M. Warshawsky</p>	<p><b>אויפן פריפעטשיק (דער אלף-בית)</b> – ווערמער און מוזיק פון מ.מ. ווארשאוסקי</p>
<p>-1- Oyfn pripetshik brent a fayerl, Un in shtub iz heys, Un der rebe lernt kleyne kinderlekh Dem alef-beys.</p>	<p>-1- אויפן פריפעטשיק ברענט אַ פֿײַערל, און אין שטוב איז הייס, און דער רבי לערנט קליינע קינדערלעך דעם אלף-בית.</p>
<p>-2- <b>Refreyn:</b> Zet zhe kinderlekh, gedenkt zhe, tayere, Vos ir lernt do; zogt zhe nokh amol, un take nokh amol: komets alef – o.</p>	<p>-2- <b>רעפריין:</b> זעט זשע קינדערלעך, געדענקט זשע, טײַערע, וואָס איר לערנט דאָ; זאָגט זשע נאָך אַ מאָל, און טאַקע נאָך אַ מאָל: קאָמץ אַלף – אַ.</p>
<p>-3- Lernt kinder, mit groys kheyshek – Azoy zog ikh aykh on: Ver s'vet gikher fun aykh kenen ivri, Der bakumt a fon. <b>Refreyn:</b> Zet zhe kinderlekh, ...</p>	<p>-3- לערנט, קינדער, מיט גרויס חשק – אַזוי זאָג איך אײַך אָן: ווער ס'וועט גיכער פון אײַך קענען עברי, דער באַקומט אַ פֿאָן. <b>רעפריין:</b> זעט זשע קינדערלעך, ...</p>
<p>-4- Lernt kinder, hot nit moyre – Yeder onheyb iz shver: Gliklekh iz der, vos hot gelernt toyre Tsi darf der mentsh nokh mer? <b>Refreyn:</b> Zet zhe kinderlekh, ...</p>	<p>-4- לערנט, קינדער, האָט ניט מורא – יעדער אָנהײב איז שווער: גליקלעך איז דער, וואָס האָט געלערנט תורה. צײַ דאַרף דער מענטש נאָך מער? <b>רעפריין:</b> זעט זשע קינדערלעך, ...</p>
<p>-5- Ir vet, kinder, elter vern, Vet ir aleyn farshteyn, Vifl in di oysyes lign tremn, Un vi fil geveyn ... <b>Refreyn:</b> Zet zhe kinderlekh, ...</p>	<p>-5- איר וועט, קינדער, עלטער ווערן, וועט איר אַליין פאַרשטיין, וויפל אין די אותיות ליגן טרעמן, און ווי פיל געוויין... <b>רעפריין:</b> זעט זשע קינדערלעך, ...</p>
<p>-6- Az ir vet, kinder, dem goles shlepn, Oysgemutshet zayn, Zolt ir fun di oysyes koyekh shepn, Kukt in zey arayn... <b>Refreyn:</b> Zet zhe kinderlekh, ...</p>	<p>-6- אַז איר וועט, קינדער, דעם גלות שלעפן, אויסגעמוטשמעט זײַן, זאָלט איר פון די אותיות כוח שעפן, קוקט אין זײ אַרײַן... <b>רעפריין:</b> זעט זשע קינדערלעך, ...</p>
<p>-7- Oyfn pripetshik brent a fayerl, ...</p>	<p>-7- אויפן פריפעטשיק ברענט אַ פֿײַערל, ...</p>

**Summary: At the Fireplace**

- 1) The house is warm, and the rabbi teaches the Alef-Beys [Hebrew alphabet] to small children.
- 2) **Refrain:** Remember children, what you learn here. Repeat again and again: komets-alef – "o".
- 3) Study passionately: Whoever learns Hebrew first, will get a flag
- 4) Do not be afraid to study. Every beginning is hard. Fortunate is the person who has studied Torah.
- 5) When you are older you will understand how many tears and how much grief lie in these letters.
- 6) When you carry the burden of the Exile, may you draw strength from the letters.

In analyzing the verses, one can begin with a general conclusion: the song is educational. Its content covers the education of children, and one learns also about the singularity of Yiddish, of the Jewish people, and of their endurance.

In analyzing the verses further, one can say the following:

- 1) The first verse talks about children. Not just any children, but the very youngest.  
["kleyne kinderlekh" = small children]
- 2) The refrain that serves to reiterate and teach – as is naturally carried out in pedagogical circumstances – itself contains repetitive phrases.  
["zogt zhe nokh amol, un take nokh amol" = say again, and yet again]
- 3) The third verse teaches us, that one should learn Hebrew with passion... How many Hebrew songs teach us to study Yiddish (and with great passion)?...  
["lernt mit groys kheyshek" = learn with great passion]
- 4) In the fourth verse, Warshawsky underscores the principle that is passed on from generation to generation, that to learn Torah is good.  
["gliklekh iz der vos hot gelernt toyre. Tsi darf der mentsh nokh mer?" = fortunate is the one who has studied Torah. Does Man need more than that?]
- 5) Beginning with the fifth verse, and continuing on to the sixth, the teacher, the "rebbe" no longer addresses the children, but talks to himself, and to the listener. He talks over the children's heads. They can understand the concept of 'flags', but what do they understand about "vifl in di oysyes lign trern" [how many tears lie in these letters], or: "az ir vet kinder dem goles shlepn" [when you, children, will carry around the burden of the "Goles" [exile]] – What can they understand about these concepts? – Only when they will be older, will they grasp how difficult it is for Jews. He does, however, provide them with a lifeline, and states that if they will only look into the letters of the *Alef-beys*, they will be able to draw strength when they require it. In the sixth verse it clearly states, "zolt ir fun di oysyes koyekh shepn" [May you draw strength from the letters].

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One of the most beautiful, but also little known songs of national endurance is the song by Yehoash about a flower that is likened unto the Jewish Nation. The song talks about how the flower survives storms and tempests. In the final verse, he divulges the secret of the flower's survival, strength, and power: "di blum heyst libe tsu dem folk" [the flower is called love for the Jewish people]

This is the secret from which the Jewish people in the diaspora drew their unflinching strength: love of and for the Jewish people – the people who with so much devotion love their Torah and their God.

**Natsional-Gefil – by Yehoash**

<b>Natsional-Gefil</b> – Lyrics by Yehoash, Music Unknown	<b>נאַציאָנאַל-געפֿיל</b> – ווערטער פֿון יהואש, מוזיק אומבאקאנט
<p>-1- Ikh veys a blum vos shprotst un blit, Un vakst on toy un regn. Zi darf keyn frische vintn nit, Keyn zun vos shaynt antkegn...</p>	<p>-1- איך ווייס אַ בלום וואָס שפּראַצט און בליט, און וואַקסט אָן טוי און רעגן. זי דאַרף קיין פּרישע ווינטן ניט, קיין זון וואָס שײַנט אַנטקעגן...</p>
<p>-2- Zi vakst in shturem un in shney, Ven ale blumen shtarbn, Der shturem git ir zaft un kraft, Gerukh un zise farbn...</p>	<p>-2- זי וואַקסט אין שטורעם און אין שניי, ווען אַלע בלומען שטאַרבן, דער שטורעם גיט איר זאַפט און קראַפּט, גערוך און זיסע פאַרבן...</p>
<p>-3- Un ven es hoglt, dunert, blitst, Un shtarke beymer faln, Dan heybt zi ersht tsu leb on, Dan heybt zi on tsu shtraln...</p>	<p>-3- און ווען עס האַגלט, דונערט, בליצט, און שטאַרקע ביימער פאַלן, דאָן הייבט זי ערשט צו לעבן אָן, דאָן הייבט זי אָן צו שטראַלן...</p>
<p>-4- Di blum heyst libe tsu dem folk, Zi shprotst aroys in shturem Zit tsit khiyune funem shmarts Un nert zikh fun yesurim...</p>	<p>-4- די בלום הייסט ליבע צו דעם פֿאָלק, די שפּראַצט אַרויס אין שטורעם, זי ציט חיונה פֿונעם שמאַרק און נערט זיך פֿון יסורים....</p>

**Summary: National Sentiment**

- 1) I know a flower that blossoms and grows without dew or rain, and needs no fresh winds or sun.
- 2) It grows in storms and snow when other flowers die. The storm gives it strength, scent, and colour.
- 3) When there is hail, thunder, and lightning, and mighty trees fall, it just begins to live – to shine.
- 4) The flower is called Love for the (Jewish) nation. It blossoms in storms, and is nurtured by suffering.

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**Torah: The Main Source for the Literature in Yiddish**

In his book *oyfkum un antviklung fun yidish un fun der yidish-literatur bizn mitn fun nayntsetn yorhundert* [The rise and development of Yiddish and Yiddish literature until the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century], Moshe Klein, writes:

"The main source of the literature in Yiddish was, at first, from the Tanakh [Bible], the Talmudic legends, and the Midrashic tales..." (pp. 47-48).

He continues with:

"In Yiddish literature, since its beginnings, two directions held sway. The one, drew from traditional sources, and the second streamed out from the neighbouring non-Jewish literatures – from the Germanic, and later from the Italian. There were periods when the focal point was on secular themes, and at other times, in the religious sphere" (p. 49).

Yiddish was, in other words, a bridge between two worlds: the Jewish and the non-Jewish.

It should be noted, however, that Yiddish shielded the Jew from the temptations of the non-Jewish world. It "Judaized" and infused everything with a "Jewish heart" and perspective, and softened the harsh non-Jewish surroundings. In this way, Yiddish safeguarded the Jew. Outside thoughts and ideas entered via Yiddish, but with a Jewish twist – with a Jewish taste and flavour.



Even among the Jewish socialists there were great writers that fed their membership and audiences with Jewish wisdom, and Jewish heart. Take for example, one of Y.L. Peretz' disciples – Abraham Reisen. In his songs and stories (for example *gmone nign* [Gemarah melody], *o, gikher moshiekh* [Oh, Quicker Messiah], *zog maran* [tell me, Marrano], or in the short Sukkes story *farshpetikt* [tardy]), one encounters Jewishness, and the Jewish conscientiousness, Jewish bravery, and Jewish humaneness.

Avraham Walt-Liesin – say the Mloteks in their book *perl fun der yiddisher poezye* [pearls of Yiddish poetry] (pg. 160) "... fired up the listeners... with his speeches that were rooted in Jewish history, in the morality of the Prophets, and in the martyr-actions of generations of Jews that sacrificed themselves in God's name, for their faith". – Were then not the Prophets of the Bible, fighters for social justice and integrity?

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### "Teyleykhu" – You Shall Walk

If we should want to select one Torah portion as a fitting representation of our wandering nation of Jews, with its vagabond language Yiddish, and its voice – the Yiddish song – it would have to be the one that starts with the words: "im bekhukosay teylekhu" [If you (shall) walk with my laws] (Vayikra [Leviticus] 26:3).

In the word "**teylekhu**" [you shall walk], one discerns a **dynamic** activity. In contrast, terms such as "**Lishmor**" [to guard/protect], or "**Lehakhzik**" [to keep], are passive activities. One can, for example, keep something in a bank, or safekeep something shut in a drawer.

The term "**Derekh**" is similar: a path, or way (manner) to do things. For example: "**Derekh-erets**" [respect], or "**derekh hayoysher**" [path of Justice]. And even though "**derekh**" is not an activity, a Jew "**walks**" the generations-old "**path**" of his/her forebears.

In a later weekly Torah portion, this is explicitly written: "ve shomarto es mitsvoys hashem eyloykekho lolekhes bidrokhov uleyiro oysoy" [Thou shalt keep the commandments of God your God, to walk his paths, and to fear him] (Parshas Eykev, Dvorim [Deuteronomy] 8:6).

Let us compare this concept with the charming Hasidic song about the village where the Rabbi of Kotsk resided. It says (in the dialect of Polish Jews): "ka kotsk furt man nisht, ... ka kotsk darf man oyle-reygl zan..." [One does not ride to Kotsk, ...one ascends (as in the thrice-yearly pilgrimage to Jerusalem)]. Further on, various interpretations of the word "**Regel**" are given: as in "**Hergel**" – a habit, "**Regel**" – an important date (event or holy day).

**Kotsk – (Unknown)**

<b><u>Kotsk</u></b> – Music and lyrics unknown	<b><u>קאצק</u></b> – ווערטער און מוזיק אומבאקאנט
<p>-1- Keyn kotsk fort men nisht, Keyn kotsk geyt men. Vayl kotsk iz dokh bimkoym hamikdesh. Keyn kotsk darf men oyle-regl zayn.</p> <p>-2- "Regel" iz dokh der taytsh – a fus. Keyn kotsk darf men geyn tsufus, Zingendik un tantsndik. Un az khsidim geyen keyn Kotsk, Geyt men mit gezang.</p> <p>-3- "Regel" iz dokh der taytsh – a geveynshaft. Me darf zikh geveynen tsu geyn keyn kotsk, Zingendik un tantsndik. Un az khsidim geyen keyn kotsk, Geyt men mit a tants.</p> <p>-4- "Regel" iz dokh der taytsh – a yontev. Gut yontev, gut yontev, gut yontev. Un az khsidim geyen keyn kotsk, Iz a groyser yontev.</p>	<p>-1- קיין קאצק פארט מען נישט, קיין קאצק גייט מען. ווייל קאצק איז דאך במקום המקדש. קיין קאצק דארף מען עולה-רגל זײן.</p> <p>-2- "רגל" איז דאך דער טײַטש – אַ פוס. קיין קאצק דארף מען גיין צופוס, זינגענדיק און טאַנצנדיק. און אַז חסידים גייען קיין קאצק, גיט מען מיט געזאַנג.</p> <p>-3- "רגל" איז דאך דער טײַטש – אַ געוויינשאַפּט. מע דארף זיך געוויינען צו גיין קיין קאצק, זינגענדיק און טאַנצנדיק. און אַז חסידים גייען קיין קאצק, גיט מען מיט אַ טאַנץ.</p> <p>-4- "רגל" איז דאך דער טײַטש – אַ יום-טוב. גוט יום-טוב, גוט יום-טוב, גוט יום-טוב. און אַז חסידים גייען קיין קאצק, איז אַ גרויסער יום-טוב.</p>

**Summary: Kotsk**

- 1) One does not ride to Kotsk, one walks, since it is like the Holy Temple and one makes pilgrimage to it
- 2) "Regel" is like a foot – So one walks, and sings, and dances. Hasidim go to Kotsk, while singing.
- 3) "Regel" means to be accustomed to. One needs to make this a habit, and sing and dance, like Hasidim.
- 4) "Regel" is also an important date. So when Hasidim go to Kotsk, it is a festive occasion.

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Since we are already on the topic of "foot", and going on a pilgrimage by foot, one must recall our eternal city Jerusalem, because "*ki mitzion teytse toyro*" [From out of Zion (Jerusalem) shall the Torah emerge].

Following is a song that was often sung in the early 1930's in Vilna – *yerusholayim d'lite* [Jerusalem of Lithuania]. This song is suitable for almost any occasion. It is not even difficult to learn, because the lines and melody repeat continuously. The lively and simple refrain is also a boon to learning and enjoying this song.

The song talks about the thrice-yearly pilgrimage to Jerusalem. It says that if we will behave the way we should, and really walk the Jewish path, then God, the Creator of the World, will be pleased, and he will permit us to build the *beys hamikdesh* [Holy Temple], and erect the *mizbeyekh* [sacrificial altar].

**Zingt Zhe Ale Yidelekh – (Unknown)**

(This song was sung in Vilna, in the 1930's)

<u>Zingt Zhe Ale Yidelekh</u> – Music and lyrics Unknown	<u>זינגט זשע אלע יידעלעך</u> – ווערטער און מוזיק אומבאקאנט
-1-	-1-
Oyf di hoykhe berg, karmel, har hazeysim, Shpatsirn kinder kleyne, yisroyl am-kedeysim.	אויף די הויכע בערג, כרמל, הר הזיתים, (2X){ שפאצירן קינדער קליינע, ישראל עם-קדושים. (2X){
-2-	-2-
<b>Refreyn:</b> Zingt zhe ale yidelekh, Dem nign, dem nayem, Lernt zikh di lidelekh fun yerushalayim.	<b>רעפריין:</b> זינגט זשע אלע יידעלעך, (2X){ דעם ניגון דעם נייעם, (2X){ לערנט זיך די לידעלעך פון ירושלים. (2X){
-3-	-3-
Dray mol in yor veln mir oyle-regl zayn. Nesokhim veln mir gisn fun dem bestn vayn.	דריי מאָל אין יאָר וועלן מיר עולה-רגל זײַן, (2X){ נסכים וועלן מיר גיסן פון דעם בעסטן וויין. (2X){
<b>Refreyn:</b> Zingt zhe ale yidelekh, ...	<b>רעפריין:</b> זינגט זשע אלע יידעלעך, ...
-4-	-4-
Demolt vet got zogn: “Azoy iz mir gefeln. Dem beys-hamikdesh zolt ir boyen Dem mizbeyekh zolt ir shteln.”	דעמאלט וועט גאָט זאָגן: “אַזוי איז מיר געפעלן (2X){ { דעם בית-המיקדש זאָלט איר בויען, { דעם מזבח זאָלט איר שמעלן. (2X){
<b>Refreyn:</b> Zingt zhe ale yidelekh, ...	<b>רעפריין:</b> זינגט זשע אלע יידעלעך, ...

**Summary: Sing All you Jews**

- 1) On Mount Carmel and the Mount of Olives, small children stroll – the holy folk of Israel.
- 2) **Refrain:** Sing this new tune, Jews. Learn the songs of Jerusalem.
- 3) Three times a year we will celebrate and pour of the best wines.
- 4) Then God will say: “This pleased me. Build the Temple and erect the Mizbeyekh [altar].”

From Jerusalem, God's word will resound for all Jews and for the non-Jewish world too. And if His songs are sung – the songs of Jerusalem– and we follow His Word, and truly walk with His commandments, then He will permit us to rebuild the *beys-hamikdesh* and erect the altar – and then everything will be good for the people of Israel, as well as for the whole world.

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How can we complete such a work about Yiddish and Yiddish songs, without mentioning the greatest tragedy for the Jewish people since the fall of the second Temple – and surely the greatest tragedy for Yiddish and Yiddish culture: The Holocaust and the destruction of European Jewry during World War II?

One of the most important songs identified with the Holocaust was written in 1938, even before the great tragedy took place. The prophetic words of one of the most important folk-poets, Mordkhe Gebirtig, thundered out in a call to the people, to wake up and stop being apathetic to what was happening around them.

**Undzer Shtetl Brent – by Mordkhe Gebirtig**

<p><b>Undzer Shtetl Brent</b> – Music and lyrics by Mordkhe Gebirtig</p>	<p><b>אונדזער שטעטל ברענט</b> – ווערטער און מוזיק פון מרדכי געבירטיג</p>
<p>-1- S'brent! Briderlekh, s'brent! Oy, undzer orem shtetl, nebekh, brent! Beyze vintn mit yergozn Raysn, brekhn, un tseblozn Shtarker nokh di vilde flamen – Alts arum shoybn brennt! Un ir shteyt un kukt azoy zikh Mit farleygte hent, Un ir shteyt un kukt azoy zikh – Undzer shtetl brennt!...</p>	<p>-1- ס'ברענטו ברידערלעך, ס'ברענטו אוי, אונדזער אָרעם שטעטל, נעבעך, ברענטו! בייזע ווינטן מיט ירגוזן רייסן, ברעכן, און צעבלאָזן שטאַרקער נאָך די ווילדע פלאַמען – אַלץ אַרום שוין ברענטו! און איר שטייט און קוקט אַזוי זיך מיט פאַרלייגטע הענט, און איר שטייט און קוקט אַזוי זיך – אונדזער שטעטל ברענטו!...</p>
<p>-2- S'brent! Briderlekh, s'brent! Oy, undzer orem shtetl, nebekh, brent! S'hobn shoybn di fayertsungen S'gantse shtetl ayngeshlungen, Un di beyze vintn hudzhen – S'gantse shtetl brennt! Un ir shteyt un kukt azoy zikh Mit farleygte hent, Un ir shteyt un kukt azoy zikh – Undzer shtetl brennt!...</p>	<p>-2- ס'ברענטו ברידערלעך, ס'ברענטו אוי, אונדזער אָרעם שטעטל, נעבעך, ברענטו! ס'האָבן שוין די פייערצונגען ס'גאַנצע שטעטל איינגעשלונגען, און די בייזע ווינטן הודזשען – ס'גאַנצע שטעטל ברענטו! און איר שטייט און קוקט אַזוי זיך מיט פאַרלייגטע הענט, און איר שטייט און קוקט אַזוי זיך – אונדזער שטעטל ברענטו!...</p>
<p>-3- S'brent! Briderlekh, s'brent! Oy, s'kon, kholile, kumen der moment: Undzer shtot mit undz tsuzamen Zol oyf ash avek in flamen, Blaybn zol, vi nokh a shlakht – Nor puste, shvartse vent! Un ir shteyt un kukt azoy zikh Mit farleygte hent, Un ir shteyt un kukt azoy zikh – Undzer shtetl brennt!...</p>	<p>-3- ס'ברענטו ברידערלעך, ס'ברענטו אוי, ס'קאָן, חלילה, קומען דער מאָמענט: אונדזער שטאָט מיט אונדז צוזאַמען זאָל אויף אַש אַוועק אין פלאַמען, בלייבן זאָל, ווי נאָך אַ שלאַכט – נאָר פוסטע, שוואַרצע ווענטו! און איר שטייט און קוקט אַזוי זיך מיט פאַרלייגטע הענט, און איר שטייט און קוקט אַזוי זיך – אונדזער שטעטל ברענטו!...</p>
<p>-4- S'brent! Briderlekh, s'brent! Di hilf iz nor in aykh aleybn gevendt: Oyb dos shtetl iz aykh tayer, Nemt di keylim, lesht dos fayer, Lesht mit ayer eygn blut – Bavayzt az ir dos kent! Shteyt nit, brider, ot azoy zikh Mit farleygte hent, Shteyt nit, brider, lesht dos fayer – Undzer shtetl brennt!...</p>	<p>-4- ס'ברענטו ברידערלעך, ס'ברענטו די הילף איז נאָר אין אייך אליין געווענדט: אויב דאָס שטעטל איז אייך טייער, נעמט די כליים, לעשט דאָס פיייער, לעשט מיט אייער אייגן בלוט, – באַווייזט אַז איר דאָס קענטו! שטייט ניט, ברידער, אַט אַזוי זיך מיט פאַרלייגטע הענט שטייט ניט, ברידער, לעשט דאָס פיייער – אונדזער שטעטל ברענטו!...</p>

**Summary: Our Village is Burning**

- 1) My brothers, our poor village burns. While winds churn and break things, you stand idly by and watch.
  - 2) Our poor town has been swallowed up by the flames, and you stand and watch with folded arms.
  - 3) It may happen that the town with us together will be consumed, and only black walls will remain.
  - 4) If the town is dear to you, take the vessels and put out the fire, even with your own blood.
- Don't stand idly by – Our village is burning!

We know only too well what happened to European Jewry during WWII. There is a vast amount of Holocaust literature in many languages, and particularly in Yiddish – most of it readily translatable to other languages. However, there is also a large repertoire of Yiddish songs about the destruction and also about the resistance that is virtually unknown to our youth. Like prayers, these should be taught and studied in their original language.

One of the most important creative figures from the Holocaust era was the Vilna-born partisan and poet Shmerke Kaczerginski. His songs of struggle and resistance against the Nazi beast encouraged and raised the hopes of the Jews in the ghettos and forests. After the war, his songs gave new energy also to the downtrodden survivors who sought a new home in the newborn Jewish state.

Kaczerginski, however, was himself moved by the invigorating words of the first Head Rabbi of the Jewish settlement, Rabbi Avrohom Yitskhok Hakoyen Kook: "zol shoy'n kumen di geule, moshiekh kum shoy'n bald" [Let the redemption arrive, Messiah come soon]. With these words, and Rabbi Kook's own matchless melody, Kaczerginski was given an injection of creative energy that inspired him to incorporate this as the refrain, and wrote one of the most moving Yiddish songs in the repertoire of the Holocaust survivors.

### Zol Shoy'n Kumen Di Geule – by Shmerke Kaczerginski

<u>Zol Shoy'n Kumen di Geule</u> – Lyrics by Shmerke Kaczerginski Melody and refrain words by Rabbi Avrohom Yitskhok Hakoyen Kook (ztz"l)	<u>זאל שוין קומען די גאולה</u> – ווערטער פון שמערקע קאטשערגינסקי ניגון און רעפריין-ווערטער פון הרב אברהם יצחק הכהן קוק (זצ"ל)
-1-	-1-
Ongezolyet oyfn hartsn, makht men a le'khayim. Oyb der umet lozt nit ruen – zingen mir a lid. Iz nito keyn bisl bronfn – lomir trinken mayim, Mayim-khayim is dokh khayim – vos darf nokh a yid?	אָנגעזאָלעט אויפן האַרצן, מאַכט מען אַ לחיים. אויב דער אומעט לאָזט ניט רוען – זינגען מיר אַ ליד. איז ניטאָ קיין ביסל בראַנפן – לאַמיר טרינקען מים, מים-חיים איז דאָך חיים – וואָס דאַרף נאָך אַ ייד?
-2-	-2-
<b>Refreyn:</b> Zol shoy'n kumen di geule, Moshiekh kumt shoy'n bald!	<u>רעפריין:</u> זאָל שוין קומען די גאולה, { 3X { משיח קומט שוין באַלדו! } 2X {
-3-	-3-
S'iz a dor fun kuley-khayev, zayt nit keyn naronim – Un fun zindikn – Moshiekh gikher kumen vet! Akh du tatele in himl, s'betn bney rakhmonim: Ze moshiekh zol nit kumen a bisele tsu shpet...	ס'איז אַ דור פון פולו חייב, זייט ניט קיין נאַראַנים – און פון זינדיקן – משיח גיכער קומען וועט! אַך, דו טאַטעלע אין הימל, ס'בעטן בני רחמים: זע משיח זאָל ניט קומען אַ ביסעלע צו שפעט... <u>רעפריין:</u> זאָל שוין קומען די גאולה,...
-4-	-4-
S'tantsn beymer in di velder, shtern oyfn himl, Reb Yisroyl, der mekhutn, dreyt zikh in der mit, S'vet zikh oyfvekn moshiekh fun zayn tifn driml. Ven er vet derhern undzer tfiledike lid. <b>Refreyn:</b> Zol shoy'n kumen di geule,...	ס'טאַנצן ביימער אין די וועלדער, שמערן אויפן הימל, ר' ישראל, דער מחותן, דרייט זיך אין דער מיט, ס'וועט זיך אויפוועקן משיח פון זיין טיפן דרימל ווען ער וועט דערהערן אונדזער תפילהדיקע ליד. <u>רעפריין:</u> זאָל שוין קומען די גאולה...

#### Summary: Let the Redemption Come

- 1) If the sorrow does not leave us, then we sing a song. We make a toast with water if there is no liquor.
- 2) **Refrain:** Let the redemption come. Messiah come now!
- 3) This is a generation of guilty persons. God, make sure the Messiah does not arrive a little too late...
- 4) The trees and the stars are dancing. The Messiah will wake up when he hears our prayer-filled song.

Especially poignant are Kaczerginski's last two lines in the third verse:

**"Akh du tatele in himl, s'betn bney rakhmonim:**

**Ze moshiekh zol nit kumen a bisele tsu shpet..."**

**[Oh, dear Father in Heaven, your compassionate children beg of you:**

**See that the Messiah does not come a little too late...]**

But it is not too late, and there is yet hope: the generations-long Jewish hope of the *Ani Maamin* [I believe].

We must, therefore, never stop singing, in order to realize that which is written in the final two lines of the song:

**"S'vet zikh oyfvekn moshiekh fun zayn tifn driml**

**Ven er vet derhern undzer tfiledike lid."**

**[The Messiah will wake up from his deep sleep**

**When he will hear our prayer-filled song]**

It is therefore imperative that this Yiddish song injection – this shot in the arm – should be given to our Jewish brethren as soon as possible, both in the Land of Israel, and across the Jewish Diaspora.