





EUROPE: A BOOK FOR AMERICA

Ma Nomer?

Ma Nedaber?

What shall we say?

What shall we do?

EUROPE

A BOOK FOR AMERICA

by
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d e d i c a t e d t o
CHAYYIM NACHMAN BYALIK

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d e d i c a t i o n

Byalik,
A thousand strange tides heave between us,
But to-day we are as two people walking together
over a clean-green lane hand in hand.

For you and me
It no longer matters what the world will do with
itself.

(No more than it matters to us what the loud
crickets do with their unhatched eggs.)
A mud-puddle is a mud-puddle.

If there is one clean-green lane left in the world
And you come on it, Byalik,
Plant your feet firmly on it,
Look West
And call for me.

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prologue

1

Europe,

After you have made the rounds of your cruelest
lusts and spat out a million devils,

You make a wry face

And clamor for a doctor.

Europe, let me be your doctor!

With a hammer let me break open those iron jaws
and pour a pail of your bitterest spleen down
your throat.

O, I know a way to make eunuchs of the most terrible
men;

For twelve months I would like to feed you on a diet
of dung.

You are a sick, sick Europe.

You need medicine.

Let me be your doctor!

Rome was your father
And Greece was your mother.
Who was Rome?
A leper.
And who was Greece?
A whore.

As Greece ravished the heart of Rome
So, Europe, did you ravish the heart of Asia;
He was a lusty host
And his brood is the fiercest among the beasts on the
face of the earth.

England, France, Russia, Roumania, Germany,
Spain, Belgium, Hungary, Poland and Bulgaria,
In the light of any dawn they may be seen
Pacing the peaceful fields and valleys,
A spear and a firebrand in either hand.

3

England is the first child of your fierce passion,
 England the adroit,
 England who has a noose for every neck in Europe.

John Bull has many talents;
 Amiability is not the least of them.
 He will meet you anywhere,
 In Venice, Paris, and Geneva,
 And he will always wear a kindly face.

But some day,
 Ultimately,
 He will see you in London Tower
 Where he will prove himself,
 Above all else,
 An expert hangman.

France

Your second offspring
Is lovelier than ever Babylon was,
And more licentious.

On every highway and byway has she stationed herself,
She calls out to all passers-by
And he who once pauses
Is accurst forever.

For the tinkling little bells at her ankles
Nations fall away
And sink in the mire
And are forgotten.

5

It was a strange moment when you conceived Italy,
A moment beyond understanding:
Italy the minstrel, the romantic!

He is a strange lad
Who peers over your ghastly towers and is ravished
by your beauty.

O when he wakes up,
When he finds you out!

Poland! New Poland! Republic of Poles!
On this day, the day of your national resurrection,
Take from me my blessing,
The blessing of a Jew without which no republic
should start life.

Poland, you will be accurst.
If there is any vision in your eyes it will break,
If there is any toughness in your bones it will soften
and rot away,
If there is any warmth in your blood it will become
creepy with yellow worms.
Your offspring will limp and lisp.

Come! Poland!
Take up your pleasant station
Between Russia and Germany!

Russia will lean against you and level you to the
mires of Danzig.
The great bear will put his lips to your breasts and
suck you dry.
The swift rider of the Steppes will put his saber
clean through your forehead,

And Germany will always be a leopard haunting your
trail,
You will feel the hot sniff of her breath wherever you
go,
And some day she will devour you and spit you out.

This for the flaunting of your sudden pride in the
face of my people.
This for the contumely you have wrought on the
sons and daughters of my people.

Who would have thought
That even in your basest moment,
Europe,
You could conceive a beast so lustful,
The most terrible of your offspring
(The most terrible because the vilest)—
Roumania—
Who makes the very Danube foul for passing her by

Who will step on this snake
And crush her
Before she grows into a serpent?

Unless you descended into the slimiest pits of hell
Where vermin-dust covers an éven baser clay
And dug your hands deep into it,
How could you have molded Germany
Who mingled the red dust and the white and the
gray
(In the secret caves of her valleys)
And suddenly made a bonfire of the world?

Germany now knows
That to match England one needs more than armies
and navies,—
One must be as good a hangman.

She has indulged terribly, Germany,
But it will be long before she may indulge again.

9

And amidst the ruins
Sits one Ancient in mourning.
A whole world mourns with him,
He is inconsolable.

It is Israel.
His fondest structure, Europe, is shattered.

Has he not built before?
The Pyramids?
The Temple?
Ninevah?

Ah, but these were as dungheaps,
Yes, dungheaps,
Compared with the structure which now rolls in use-
less dust at his feet.

He sits on the new ruins and mourns,
And a whole world mourns with him,
For his eyes will never turn West again.

I
peace

So you have gathered together at another Peace
Table

Saying that you have made Peace?

But is not this Peace Treaty of yours a declaration
of war,

A scribbled paper whirled mournfully along by the
night winds of anarchy which sweep the world?

Has France made Peace with Germany?

England with Egypt, India, Canada and Australia?

Italy with Jugo-Slavia?

Germany with Poland?

Poland with the Ukraine?

America with England?

Europe with her dead?

11

Rub the crocodile scales from your eyes,
Look about you
And ask yourself:
Who are these who have gathered to make peace?

Ask yourself this,
And you will know whether they have made Peace,
Whether peace is possible in Europe.

England is a hawk who has built many nests in the
fields and valleys of the earth.

She has strong wings and she glides through the
warm zones and through the cold.

The air trembles at the approach of her terrible
wings.

England is a hawk who preys on the nests of the
eagles.

She has stabbed her talons into the neck of Spain.
The throat of Ireland bleeds with the fierceness of
her grasp,

She holds a whole continent between her small claws.
And she enforces her rule from her solitary gray
nest in the north sea.

Until the birds in the nests of the hawk grow up and
leave her.

Until the talons of the hawk are broken,
There can be no peace in Europe.

Germany is a wild boar
Who roams the Continent breaking everything be-
fore him and feeding on the broken bits of trees
and boulders.

(When a boar is slain
The bees build their honeycombs on his broad bones.)

Until the wild boar is slain
And the bees may build their honeycombs in his
broad husk
There can be no peace in Europe.

Russia is the vast backyard of Europe.

There all the beasts and fowl of the continent
practice the performance of their various parts
great and small.

Sometimes it is a chanticleer declaiming to the rising
sun;

Sometimes it is a wolf who howls to the moon;

More often it is a swine who wallows about in the
mire grunting sadly as the softness of the slime
touches his soul,

(For this swine has a soul.)

Watch Russia and you will know what will happen
next in Europe.

15

Spain is the White Bull of Europe
Charging everything red flaunted in his face.

Spain is the White Bull of Europe
But something happened to him and he charges no
more.

In fourteen-ninety-two the Jews migrated from
Spain
And the blood flowed out of the arteries of the White
Bull of Europe.

-

France is the great hunter
With an unspeakable contempt for the beasts and
fowl of the continent.

For the gray hawk in the North,
For the wild boar on the East,
And for the white Bull at the South of her
France has only contempt and a rifle.

While the contempt of the hunter persists
There can be no peace in Europe.

When the talons of the gray hawk in the north sea
are broken;
When the wild boar of the East is crushed and the
bees may build their honeycombs in his husk;
When the backyard of the continent is cleared and
swept;
And when the hunter puts up his rifle and buries his
contempt;
There will be peace in Europe,
The profound, undisturbed peace of the dead.

II

a promise

How has this sudden red gathered in the eyes of the
people?

Why do they look so wildly upon the purple chariots
which pass?

Every clown stares at the sun as if to prophesy and
at the moon as if his folly were the certain doom
of the world!

Tell me

Where have the people once so kindly gathered a
passion for ruling?

Once there was light on the plains of Canaan.
Sheep grazed peacefully on the even slopes
And every shepherd knew his master.

It is long since the vision leaned out of the skies of
Canaan.
Over the hills of Canaan clouds crawl over clouds,
Over the fields of Canaan a hot sun scorches the
gentle grasses.

Earth cries in the agony of her bereavement:
In the midst of the day night came like a thief suddenly,
And I search in vain for lost treasures.
Earth cries out
And there is a stirring in the bones of men,
There is a quaking in the hearts of men,
And fury looks out from the eyes of men with fear.

Man is sick of the rôle of the terrible destroyer.

He has seen how far his guns can shoot.

He has seen how great is the resistance of the heart
of man against all shooting.

Man is sick with the grief of old things and old
masters.

Man is at heart a good son of a good mother.

Man at last understands the bitter cry of the earth.

So shall the dawn some day climb over the roofs
of Moscow

And the light glide down the white towers of Vienna,
And the gold drip from the walls of Westminster
As sure as the vision once leaned out of the skies
of Canaan.

III

democracy

Come, you ardent disciples of triumphant Democracy!

You trumpeters of the rights of little nations!

You hoarse proclaimers of the rights to self-determination of the weaker peoples!

Come,

You have won a decisive victory!

Autocracy is humbled to the dust.

The mightiest of the kings is in exile.

Thrones are toppling every day,

And democracies are springing into the light like mushrooms after a night's rain.

Come, all you,

Wilson,

Lloyd-George,

Clemenceau,

Orlando,

For you have made noble clamor for the rights of the weaker and smaller peoples!

You, Wilson, will proclaim to the world that henceforth Haiti, the Philippines, and Mexico are sovereign nations with the power to choose their own destinies and their own markets.

You, Lloyd-George, will say to Ireland: You are a people of warriors and statesmen, therefore what need is there of an English Government in Dublin?

Clemenceau, you will not look with envious eyes into the Saar Valley and you will not send an army into Africa, for the peoples there are hard working and what is worth owning there they can themselves take care of.

And Orlando, you will extend the brotherly hand to the new-born Jugo-Slav Republic; you will gladly grant it the best Adriatic seaports for its self-development—for there is nothing on earth more sacred than a new republic striving for the international light.

25

But why the surprise?
Why this grave shaking of heads?
You even smile!

I do not blame you for not giving up what you have
seized by the might of your arms and manipulated by the cunning of your statesmanship,
For if you were self-sacrificing you would not be
the worthy offspring of Rome and Greece.
God forbid that there should ever be honesty in
Europe!
It is your dullness I cannot understand and will not
forgive,
Your blundering about your own purposes, your
supreme stupidity!

Come, my democrats,
What will you do with your victory?
People the parks of Europe with statues of the great
generals, of course!
Exile the Kaiser to another St. Helena, of course!
But after that, O democrats,
After all your parading,
What will you do?

You will give the workers their rights?

What are the rights of workers?

Shorter hours?

Greater remuneration?

Better labor conditions?

Do you think these will suffice?

The workers are swine—like yourselves,

They will have everything or nothing!

What can you do for them?

You will give women their rights?

What are the rights of women?

To labor like men?

To vote like men?

To take their pleasures like men?

Ah, but above all, to take to them husbands and
beget children.

Where will you find husbands for them?

You cannot beget children with the dead?

But I have not really done you justice.
You have one noble task to perform.
You will build beautiful schools
And you will open these schools to all the children,
poor and rich alike.

Tell me,
How will you explain to the children that there are
no more kings on earth?
Will you let them believe that the breed of man has
degenerated so low?

Some day,
When the East Wind has ceased to blow through
the heart of the world,
There will be a better understanding in the minds
of men concerning certain glories,
And men will learn to understand the grace of kings,
And then they will realize that the good nature of a
people, not the silly body that sits the purple
throne, is crowned in the king.

Have you ever heard of a king to whom his subjects
did not attribute some rare grace?

The grace of the king shines in the soul of his
people.

Have you ever heard of a king to whom his people
did not grant some beautiful valor?

The valor of the king radiates in the market-places
of his people.

Have you ever heard of a king to whom the poets
of the nation have not sung a new song?

Have you ever heard of a king who was not a legend
to the childhood of the nation?

But who has ever heard of grace in a Republic,
Valor in a President,
A legend in a democracy?

33

Wise and happy is that people
Which hangs its counsellors
And adds new gems to the crown of its king!

IV

d e c a y

The dust of decay blows about your face, Europe,
It is blinding your eyes,
It is breaking your clenched fist.

Strength does not now matter, pride does not now
matter,
For to one who now comes upon you, armies and
navies are mere playthings,
To this new terror gentleness and kindliness are huge
jokes.

The dust of decay which blows about your face
Is only the herald of this new foeman.

Must you know your ailment, Europe?
I will tell you.

The trouble with you is not Bolshevism
Nor Socialism
Nor Militarism
Nor Lloyd-George
Nor Futurist Art.

You've simply caught cold
And you're going to die.

You don't believe it?
Tell me,
If a child may die of cold,
Why not a continent?

Rejoice, Europe,
That there is no judgement bar before which you
will be called to answer for your conduct.
How would you answer half the questions asked of
you!

How, pray, would you answer Jesus
Should He ask you concerning his own people whom
he entrusted to your mercies together with the
rest of His ritual?

37

Meanwhile

You may sing to yourself:

I am dying.

Soon there will be left of me only dissipated breath
and dissipated dust.

I was never much more than that.

I will now be less.

By my life I swear to you
That I love beauty better than bread
And wisdom is dearer to me than worldliness.

And rather would I keep silent counsel than trace
this ugliness;
Rather would I pray to the little still joys left to
me
Could I keep silence.

But silence is a serpent.
She has gnawed and gnawed in my bosom
And now she has broken through.

See what you have done!
You have made of beauty a public house wherein
men come to pour out their lust,
And wisdom you have dismissed from you so that
she stands by shame-faced.

I would liken you to an indolent inheritor of great
wealth
Who builds himself a house on the cemetery of his
ancestors
And keeps therein all his mistresses with whom he
wanders and lies among the tombstones.

And you once-proud European
What has become of you?

Your faith like your pride was granite.
Switzerland, Holland, England you thought were
names written indestructibly on the wall of
eternity,
So you thought your pride would endure forever.

But your faith was in dust,
And now your mouth is full of it,
You are choking with it.

Your faith,—

That was the most terrible of your weapons.

O I can forgive you anything!

The breaking of bones on the Yser,

The cries of the drowning in the Masurian Lakes

(will those cries ever die out of the world?)

The fainting of the stricken wanderers out of Serbia,

All this I can forgive you.

But your faith is unforgivable.

To have dreamt an immortality of Europe—

That was your worst insolence,

Your greatest cruelty!

V

the european

41

Would you like to know
How much of you is man,
How much of you is monkey?

Ask your hands,—
They know.

Come,
Any one,
Here's a pleasant pastime.

Take a spear,
(A sharpened one preferably),
And bury it in the left breast of the first woman you
meet.
I guarantee you at least one quart of blood.

Or take some children,
(Half a dozen golden-headed little girls),
Lead them up to the top of Eiffel
And toss them down one by one.

There won't be as much blood,
But it will be so much more fun.

You build high towers
And firm beautiful walls ;
You adorn your walls with art
And your towers you make into observatories of the
 heavens.

But you have not deceived me.

I have watched you at your work, you cunning ones,
And I can see what it is all about,
That you are merely concealing one thing—
Your bed.

Observe,
Of all the beasts on the face of the earth
Man is the most numerous.
He is more numerous than lice and fleas.

Among the beasts the rat alone challenges us.
Life has become a struggle between man and rat.
Soon there should be enough common sympathies
To warrant an alliance.

Once the tide of life flowed swift and red in the
arteries of mankind.
Religions were founded,
Stately cities were reared,
Cathedrals as authentic as pine woods covered the
earth and overshadowed the valleys.
The names of great men became sacred and mem-
orable.

Today

The cities of the world are crumbling with dust,
The cathedrals are draped in black,
Religion has become a matter of gossip for cynics,
And the greater the business of men the lower do
they sink in the esteem of mankind, the more
swiftly do their names disappear in the maw of
Oblivion.

But don't worry;

When women will have entirely lost their luster
They will grow the bigger, milkier breasts for the
feeding of greedy sucklings,

And when men will have finally lowered their heads
Their toes will spread out, their backbones will
broaden;

Only

There will be no one to milk or ride the silly beasts.

VI

people

When Europe was very young
She had a young king,
His name was Charlemagne.

And as Europe grew old
Charlemagne grew old
And he still haunts certain dear ruins in the French
Pyrenees.

Come out into the light, Charlemagne!
All Europe is a heap of cinders!
There are wider, statelier ruins to wander in.

48

I like to think
That now when everything is broken
The old cynics will keep quiet.

Bernard Shaw, Anatole France and your kin,
There's nothing left for you to say.
What you have said cannot possibly be as beautiful
as the silence of the things you might say but
will leave unsaid.

And
Have you not yet learned
The utter uselessness of speech?

There is a light wherever you go,
Woodrow Wilson, President of the United States.

There is a light over your collected speeches to Con-
gress
And a light over your dense history of these states.

You are really an awkward fellow,
But the light in your path is sure as the light in the
pathways of old Æneas.

The next future of the world will be in America.

VII

for my own people

What can I say to you, my people,
Trembling under the axes of Poland and Roumania,
What can I say to you,
I, a poor Jew, with no power and little speech,
I, who have only contempt for those whose power is
for the increase of madness, and a loathing for
those whose speech is rapid and vain?

How can I comfort you who am myself comfortless?
What can I say to you who are beyond comfort?

What have I heard from you during the fifteen years
in which I have been exiled from you?
Once you were slaughtered by the Russians,
Then by the Roumanians,
Then by the Greeks,
Then by the Ukrainians,
And now by the Poles—
A plague on them all!

This is all I hear of you
And people inquire why I go about like a madman
instead of enjoying the excellent landscapes of
Manhattan.

God! God! God!

How will all this end?

Are we no better than swine for slaughter,

We who once called ourselves the chosen!

Are we fit for nothing but the rack,

We who gave earth a law of kindliness?

God! how will it all end?

Are we who saw Egypt, Babylon and Assyria to bed

And witnessed the last fires of Rome on the shores
of the Mediterranean,

Are we at last to fall at the hands of the Poles?

My dear ones! my dear ones!
Torn out of your warm homes,
Driven like foul beasts into the bare woods!
Ravaged to the tenderest!
What will you do? what will you do,
Now that earth is barer than man?
And if you do not keep the faith how shall we live?

The faith!
If the miracle does not happen,
If our enemies do not wither away like the dry grass
 in a prairie fire,
Wither the tongue that shall mention the faith again!

See, they have banded together against you.
They have joined hands again.
The Finns with the Ukrainians,
The Poles with the Roumanians;
Darkness has joined unto darkness to destroy you!

Lift up your bowed head, Israel.
Speak the old word again.
It needs no power to drive off this swarm of gnats
and fleas.

God,
You have been idling so many centuries,—
Here is your grand opportunity.

Stretch out an almighty arm and lift up a few of
these beautiful, these thoughtful ones ;
Stretch out an almighty arm and raise up from the
hardening ground a few of these fallen bodies,
a few of these earthly ones who all their lives
sang your praise.

You must do something, God,
To show that you're not a pauper like the rest of us.

Patience! patience!

We must arm ourselves with patience and with
endurance as with steel,

It is our only defense.

The dogs will bark, the fleas will bite and the wolves
will growl,

But all of them must go down soon, altogether, into
the maw of Oblivion.

The face of Israel will shine with power when Europe
will be a name difficult to remember.

VIII

f o r a m e r i c a

“One must have chaos within to give birth to a dancing star; I tell you, you still have chaos within.”
Friedrich Nietzsche.

Once the world was divided into East and West.
East debauched and fainted away;
West debauched and fainted away;
Now there is only America.

Between the ancient ruins of the East
And the new ruins of the West
You stand, America,
You who are neither East nor West—
Remember that.
Remember above all else,
America,
That you have nothing to do with East or with
West,
That you are America,
That you are alone,
That just as the world was once separately Babylon,
Nineveh, Jerusalem, Athens and Rome,
The world is to-day America.

You have been playing, America!

You have been a spectacle on the face of the Earth.

You have made yourself a butt of the ridicule of
the world.

Why?

Because you have not yet known your power.

Because you have not yet known your proper pride.

You have made a clown of yourself aping Europe.

Can you imagine the Greeks building pyramids?
Or the Egyptians writing tragedies?
Can you imagine the Jews embattling the world?
Or Rome going into a wilderness to try out her moral
endurance?

But you have tried to be like Europe.
You have played the politics of Europe.
You have written the books of Europe.
You have even fought the battles of Europe.

60

Remember—

You are America.

That means a new world.

The old politics is dead.

The old poetry is dead.

The old wars are dead.

61

Rehearse this carefully,
Repeat it solemnly,
Let all the world hear and believe:

Once the world was Babylon,
To-day the world is America.

It does not matter who you are or what you believe.
You are an American.

Republicans, democrats, socialists, bolshevists, single-taxers, birth-control advocates, syndicalists,
The more conservative you are the profounder is
your Americanism,
The more radical you are the profounder is your
Americanism.

63

What is America?

You have searched everywhere and you have not
found her.

So you ask in despair,

What, where is America?

Would you like to know why you have not found
America?

Only see where you have been looking for her!

You have searched for the American novel,
For the American opera,
The American poem.

As well search for the Prophets in Rome!
For the statues in Jerusalem,
For the lions in Athens.

Yet there is no doubting Jerusalem,
There is no doubting Rome,
There is no doubting Athens.

Now you shall cease to doubt America.
You will begin to understand America.
And the world will know its master.

Yes,
America will go on writing novels.
They will be bad novels.
America will go on producing operas.
They will be bad operas.
America will continue to produce minor poets.

But let not this disturb you.
Novels, operas and poems are of Europe.
Europe has done well by them.
Europe will be remembered by these things.

But what have you to do with novels, operas or
poems?

67

For you, America,
There is a greater work at hand
Than the glory of writing operas and poems.

You, America, are to make earth a worthy habitation
for mankind.

They thought you were idling
When you stretched your arms over the gray dust
of the Diamond,
When you pounded the brown earth of your Grid-
iron,
When you made a wrestling ground of every back-
yard and basement.

The wise ones,
The eternally knowing ones
Said:
All this is a waste of time—
Baseball,
Football,
Boxing,
Are idleness and an abomination.

But these wise ones
Will soon see their folly.

These wise ones
Will bow their heads in shame
Before the terrible wisdom
Of Baseball,
Football
And Boxing

Like the blind ones who survived in Galilee
They will beat their foreheads
And stab out their eyes
For not having perceived the glory.

Nor were these your only preparations,
America.

Many were your maneuvers which I observed with
joyful eyes,
Marveling at their cunning,
Fearing only
Lest you lose your great restraint
And inundate the world with light
Before the world has washed out her eyes
For seeing.

Greatest of all your preparations, America,
Is the play of your consuming good nature:
You have made a joke of the troubles of the world.

Life,
Death,
Immortality,
You have mentioned only in your comic journals.

That is good.
Life,
Death,
Immortality,
Are not as important
As Baseball,
Football,
Boxing,
When the world is to be prepared for the habitation
of mankind.

epilogue

Thus Saith the Lord

I

Put them aside,
Your broken pen and your crumpled paper.
Put them aside, far out of reach,
And sit up and think:
Are you so broken for not being able to continue
your writing?
How shall it be with me, your Creator, who cannot
any longer create?
Put them aside, far out of reach, your broken pen
and your crumpled paper,
As I have long ago put aside the irrepressible well
of universal dawn, the everlasting drift of bud-
ding green, and the unmolded chaos of purple
mist waiting to be dropped into the folds of a
million skies.

No, I do not need to see what you have written.
I know what you wanted to say the moment your
eyes first startled outside the womb.
From that moment I have lived in fear and trem-
bling for the day when you would sit down as
to-day you did to write it down and you would
not be able to,
For you can only write as I your God create.

You were about to write and you did not write;
A feeling of oldness crept into your blood,
A sense of futility stole into your mind.
Old words, old words you murmured,
And you struck your brow never doubting my power,
only doubting your own which had stopped be-
cause my power, the power of your God, had
ceased long ago.

II

Now it has come, the moment I have awaited with
fear and trembling,
The moment when you would come to the shore of
that abyss,
The moment when you would see the ashes of that
star,
And you would realize that what you had thought
a vision was a memory and a dead one,
And that the greater number of your people had
entirely forgotten the memory,
And God himself had become a mourner over a deso-
late valley of rotten bones and wandering winds.

And every day my fears were renewed,
For every one conspired to strengthen in you the
ancient faith,
They all pointed to the top of that great mountain
beyond which was the land where the sun regu-
larly returns to rest from wandering over the
face of the earth and some day will cease from
wandering to remain there forever.
You climbed that mountain.

III

Never was youth as beautiful as yours!
I who have seen them all rise out of the womb of
flesh to descend back into the womb of rock,
I sat many days and marveled at your youth which
exceeded the fairest of my creations in beauty.
What hills did you not overcome,
What storms did you not face!
You knew the rivers and valleys of your country as
other youths know their playthings,
And you looked into the skies with such freedom
and earnestness that I, your God, whose earnest
is only of darkness and desolation, dared not
look out often for fear of meeting your eyes.

I remember the day you first learned to sing your
song of songs.
There was a storm that lifted the rocks from the
sides of the hills
And lightning that dried up the little pools and
lakes of your valley
And thunder that melted the tops of the mountains
like ice.
You sat in a tree-top in your orchard and sang,
And I did not see the lightning for seeing your face,
And I did not hear the thunder for listening to your
voice as you sang your first song of songs!

IV

Then came a day
When you left the fields and hills of your valley to

lock yourself up in an old study-house that
gleamed with old dust and the webs of spiders.
Four long years, you stood in your place at the
Eastern Window where a thousand pleasures
beckoned to you but never reached you over
the wild growth of the neglected garden, and
only a young fresh moon looked kindly on you.
Four long years you stood at the Eastern Window
bowed over the great yellow book, murmuring
"Thus Saith the Lord"

And in your young strong heart it was as though
the little winds that sweep over the young
grasses in April caressed and fumbled, and there
were not about you the glitter of old dust and
the webs of ancient spiders.

One night they broke in on you, the *goyim*,
They came with sharp axes and flaming torches,
they broke and burned,
They put young girls and their mothers to shame
before your eyes, the heads of old men they
broke open and filled with nails, little sucklings
they hewed to pieces,
All this you saw from your place at the Eastern
Window. . . .

A long, terrible night. . . .
You stood there silent, anguish-stricken, straining
to clutch at the throat of the bestial foe,
But something had made you powerless.
It was not you that was powerless,
I, your God, was powerless.

V

So you left the old study-house

And you wandered into the new world and there
gave yourself to the longings of your youth
which were never to become old in you.

At the age when men have learned to follow closely
in the narrow path of some studied usefulness
you were like a child and you saw with young,
unblurred eyes the splendors of the renewing
seasons,

And you wandered through the fields and by the
waysides,

But when you put out a hand to stay them in their
furious rushing about the empty circles of in-
dustry they laughed or they grew wroth and
spoke harshly,

And you were always alone as you wandered about
the deserted roadsides.

Such was your loneliness till that day

When news reached you of the convening of the
great powers of the earth in a distant city.

And because they were too weary of wrangling to
share it amongst themselves, they had pro-
claimed that the land of your fathers was yours
again for your people to inhabit and govern,

For them to return to it that they might live there
as a people lives on its own plain and in the
shadow of its own hills.

And the old glory broke out in your blood

And you rose and shouted so that the windows of

the Western city shook as at a breaking up of
the crust of the earth

And joy in you was stronger than the chains that
bind the tides to the moon.

VI

And you went forth to your people.

Had anything more wonderful transpired on the
face of the earth than this that the old Jew, the
cross bearer of the ages, was about to be ac-
companied, with the reverence of nations listen-
ing, to his old homeland?

Mountains that had grown old pointing to the sky
shook with emotion. . . .

It was beyond understanding,

But it was true, it was true. . . .

And your feet glided like the morning light over
the earth to spread the news among your peo-
ple,

Your eyes broke the cordons of space that barred
you from the presence of the least and the
meanest of your people.

You came,

And a cry issued forth from the midst of your peo-
ple,

A cry of dread,

Dread as of a terrible doom.

Behold, they moaned, he comes to destroy from be-
neath us the secure foundations of the little
happiness which we have reared for ourselves
in the new world,

He is not one of us though he speaks in our name,
He is not one of us though he asks these things for
us,
He is a stranger, a loathed stranger.

And some came to you and said:
Come let us go to Zion—
But their eyes were small and round, and the corners
of their mouths lodged envy and bitterness and
deceit.
And you turned from them
And you sat down to write the curse that would
shrivel up the impending ages as fire shrivels up
the old stalks and the young grasses of the
prairies,
And you began *Thus Saith the Lord*
And you could say no more,
And now you know everything!

VII

It is true! it is true!
I, your God, wearied of watching from the skies the
creeping ways of lice and men, and in one ter-
rible moment the keys of creation slipped from
my fingers down into the fathomless depths of
chaos, and I knew that henceforth though men
would strain with all the might of their eyes
they would not see and though they strained
with all the might of their hearts they would
not really know,
But I dreaded only your coming.

For of all the creatures that strut between the cave
and the city I have loved only you,
And for you I have strained to reach into the depths
of chaos to regain the keys of creation.
Now I crawl on my knees to you to ask your for-
giveness.

Forgive your God who is even poorer than you are,
Because of his great love of you forgive him.

It is I who need comfort now, even more than you,
For I have watched your mournful journeying over
the face of the earth.

And when they, your people, derided you, my heart
cried out against it,

And when they ridiculed you I wanted to destroy
them.

I saw all your contumely, how they sported their
smugness in your face, waved their neat ribbons
in your face, and said to you: there are none
wiser, none fairer than we. . . .

I was always at your side,

I was always with you,

And now I declare to you there shall be redress.

VIII

For that they sneered at your youth

And mocked your manhood,

I will smite them;

For that they, your people, have been content to
remain as the kine in the fields and as the rats
under the foundations of the houses of the
world,

I will smite them;

And because of the shame that they heaped on you,
my beloved,
I will ascend once more on high, I will ascend once
more on high,
And out of the sun will I snatch the fire-fury for
power;
And out of the clouds will I suck the thunder for
power;
And out of the lightning will I wrest the swiftness
for power,
And I will raise up my arms once more
And they will yet know that I am the Lord!

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