

1) When Father Beats Me/ *Ven der tate mikh shlogt*

Mama why, when father beats me,
And I come to you crying,
You say - He wants me to grow up to be a mensch,
A child who doesn't obey, must be beaten.

Does the Rabbi also want me to become a mensch?
He beats me so often while drilling me;
But you, Mama, are so cruel,
You don't want me to become a mensch.

2) Two Worlds/ *Tsvey veltn*

You have two worlds,
But in neither do you have joy.
Here, you are destined no good;
There, you aren't worthy of any.

Release from your sufferings
Will not be granted in either world:
Not in heaven, not on earth,
You are, poor man, worthy of pity.

3) For your Birthday/ *Tsu dayn geburstog*

If on the day you were born,
You had known what life would bring,
Surely you would have turned back,
And not yearned for this world.

Because anguish and agony
Never let you rest,
They open your eyes
And they close them too.

4) The Soul/ *Di neshome*

Every night, for years now,
When I begin to drift off:
My soul soars free
Throughout the heavens.

Oy! How the thought plagues me,
Poisons and preys on my mind,
That someday my soul will lose itself,
And not find its way back...

Oy! How I am plagued by the thought,
Every limb trembles:
What if my soul were to descend, just once, too late,
And my body already lies in the grave...

5) A Hot Tear/ *A heyse trer*

Kind, old gravedigger,
I want to be certain of it:
Show me the exact place,
Where my grave will be.

Bring your shovel with you, right now,
And prepare the grave:
I want to see my final dwelling,
The time is near.

I want to see my final dwelling,
But before I move there-
I warm my cold grave,
With my hot tear.

6) Time Off/ *Urloyb*

I begged my boss,
For some time off.
The whole year I slaved away,
Just one week to rest.

"You want time off? Are you sick?"
Screams my boss angrily,
"You sat in mourning for eight days,
Didn't you rest enough?"

7) The Bells' Ring/ *Glokn klang*

The bells are ringing
D-I-N-G-D-O-N-G

D-I-N-G-D-O-N-G

As if someone were asking,
How much longer, how long?
How much longer, how long?
Will man be a beast,
Will man be a disgrace,
Will man be wanton,
In the hands of the Devil.
How much longer?
How long will He rule?

The bells are ringing
D-I-N-G-D-O-N-G
D-I-N-G-D-O-N-G
As if someone were answering,
Not much longer, not long!
Not much longer, not long!
Will the Devil rejoice.
Thanks to Him,
The world is in flames.
Ding-dong-ding-dong
Not long now!
His defeat is near!

Lagiewniki, October 1941

8) Shifrele's Portrait/ *Shifreles portret*

On the wall to the left of my bed,
Hangs my daughter Shifrele's portrait.
Often in the middle of the night,
When I long for her and reflect,
I see how she looks at me,
I hear her speak...
"Daddy! I know how you suffer.
The war will not last much longer.
I will come to you soon,
Spring is already knocking at the door."
She smiles when she speaks to me,
Shifrele's portrait.

Krakow, December 2, 1939

9) Enough Crying/ *Genug geveynt*

Enough! Stop! I won't sing
Any more sad songs!
They bore me,
And probably you as well.

I will sing happy songs,
A little march (it's authentic).
You'll laugh yourself silly,
You'll be gasping for air.

Enough crying! You will now hear
Me sing a joyful song!
You will faint from joy,
And laugh until you cry.

10) Send a Flood/ *A mabl shik*

God, Ruler of the world,
Wake your ancient rage!
Send a flood! Break the oath
That you once swore!

Send a flood! Drown the world!
The people, your children!
Cain's blood flows through their veins,
Evil ones! Only sinners!

And the ark, don't build it,
A useless waste and effort!
Because it will stand empty
Longing for its Noah.

11) A Day of Revenge/ *A tog fun nekome*

I tell you brothers, remember what I say!
This is the only comfort and consolation.
There will come - do you hear me - there will come a day
Which will take revenge for us.

Revenge for our suffering and pain,
For blood that the enemies spill,
Revenge for those whose remains
No one will ever find.
Revenge for deeds unheard of in Sodom,
For mothers, orphans, widows.
Revenge will scream out from the earth
The blood of millions sacrificed.

Man will awake, I have no doubt,
And comprehend the horror of war.
Like one of our prophets he will sound an alarm:
Revenge! I will take revenge!

The day will come, yes, I hope and believe,
I see, brothers, its distant arrival.
And it will bring us, like Noah's dove,
A message of peace.

12) A Sunbeam/ *A zuniker shtral*

A sunbeam fell upon my bed,
The first harbinger of beloved spring.
Gently, it began to wake me.
“Get up! The days breaks, the rooster has already crowed!
Spring, the king of love and joy,
Is approaching from all four corners of the earth.”

“Get up! The day breaks,” says the sunbeam,
Caressing me gently with warmth.
“Go out and spread the news:
In the forests and the fields,
for every bird, every man, and the entire world,
soon and quickly it will be here - the long awaited salvation.”

“Get up! The day breaks,” says the sunbeam,
Caressing me gently with warmth.
“Spring, the herald of freedom,
Soon, its gaze will make the fields blossom,
And soon, the world will be bright and free -
For everyone! And also for you, Jews.”

Lagiewniki, May 1941

All texts by Mordechai Gebirtig (1877-1942).

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Texts from

Gebirtig, Mordechai, Alexander Bogen, and Natan Gross. *Mayn Fayfele: Umbakante Lider*. Tel-Aviv: Keren Avraham Y. Lerner, 1997.

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