

MIRIAM DVORIN

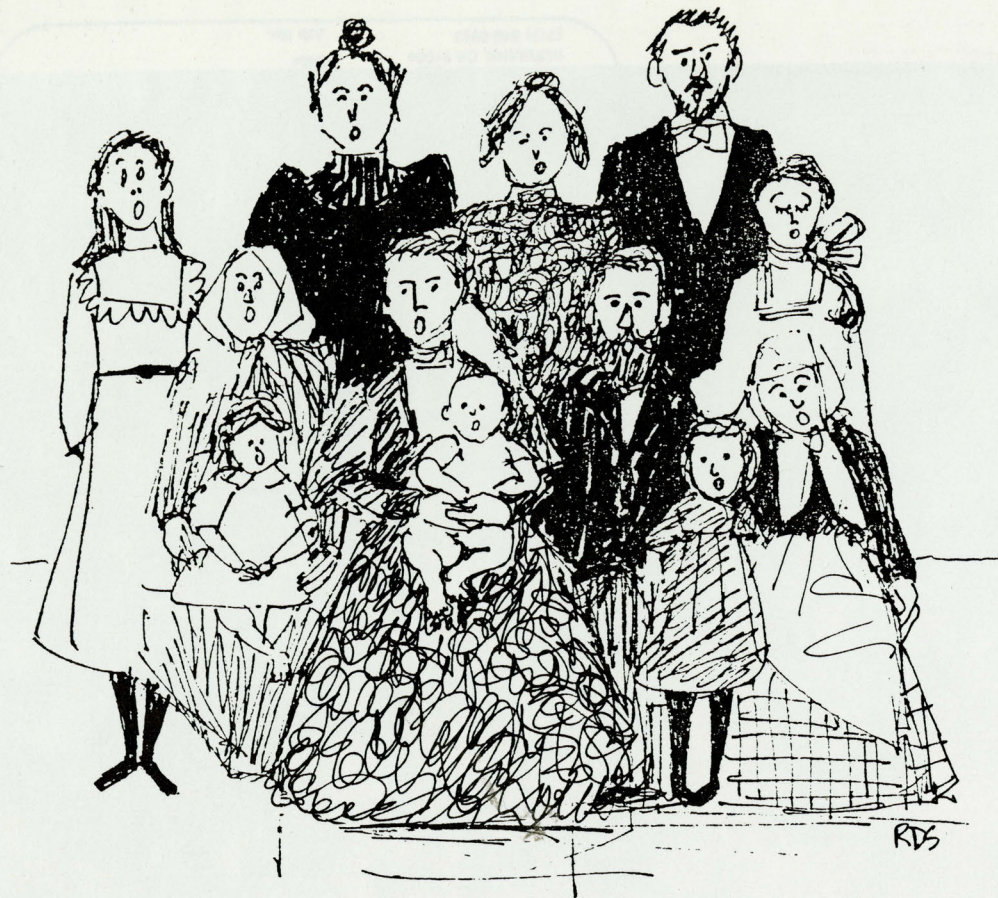
YIDDISH SONGS



GRANDMA SOUP

with illustrated song guide





GRANDMA SOUP SONG GUIDE

UNDZER NIGUNDL

words and music by Nokhem Sternheim

Hobn mir a nigundl,
In nakhes un in freydn,
Zingen mir es,
Klingt es azoy sheyn!
Dos hot nokh gezungen
Di bobbe mitn zeydn,
Ven zey zaynen kinder nokh geven.

CHORUS:

Oy, oy, oy, ot azoy zhe
Vi der nigon klingtsinder,
Aza freylekhs, aza freylekhs
Zingt zhe, kinder,
Ot azoy zhe, vi der nigon klingtsinder
Aza freylekhs lomir ale geyn.

Hobn mir a nigundl,
Zingen mir tsuzamen,
Zingen mir es,
Klingt es azoy sheyn!
Dos hot nokh gezungen
Der tate mit der mamen,
Ven zey zaynen kinder nokh geven.

CHORUS:

Hobn mir a nigundl,
In mazl un in brokhe,
Zingen mir es,
Klingt es azoy sheyn!
Dos hot nokh gezungen
Di gantse mishpokhe,
Ven zey zaynen kinder nokh geven.

CHORUS:

*We have a little tune,
In pride and joy,
We're singing it,
It sounds so nice!
This was even sung
By the grandmother and the grandfather,
When they were still children.*

CHORUS:

*Oy, oy, oy, this is the way
The tune sounds now,
Such rejoicing, such rejoicing,
Sing it, children,
This is the way the tune sounds now,
We're going to have such a good time.*

*We have a little tune,
We're singing it together,
We're singing it,
It sounds so nice!*

*This was even sung
By the father and the mother,
When they were still children.*
CHORUS:

*We have a little tune,
We're singing it together,
We're singing it,
It sounds so nice!
This was even sung
By the whole family,
When they were still children.*
CHORUS:

HU TZA TZA

Ikh vel zingen far aykh a lid,
Hu tza tza, hu tza tza,
Eyb dos lid vet zayn git,
Hu tza tza, hu tza tza,
Eyb dos lid vet aykh gefeln,
Hu tza tza, hu tza tza,
Zolt ir mit mir ale makhn
Hu tza, tza, hu tza tza.

A grine kumt in land arayn ...
Vet er bald a 'single man' ...
Krikt er nor a shtikl 'job' ...
Fargest er in di heym der vayb ...

Mayn shkhneyne zagt zi hot mikh lib ...
Ikh kim arayn tsu ir in shtub ...
Zi hot mikh fayn oyfgenumen ...
In mitn iz ir man gekumen ...

In a 'restaurant' bin ikh geven ...
Amuzirt zikh zeyer fayn ...
Der esn hot mir shtark geshmekht ...
Fun shlaf bay nakht hot dos mir oyfgevekt ...

Oyf a khasene bin ikh geven ...
Amuzirt zikh zeyer sheyn ...
A mitzvah tentsel tantn ale ...
Un mir shlept arayn di kale ...

In bod bin ikh gezetsn heykh ...
Gezungen mitn gantse keykh ...
Mit heyse vaser hot a Yid ...
Mir in gantsn opgebriht ...

Dem smukn cost yetst zeyer tayer ...
Farbren ikh nit mayn gelt in 'fire' ...
Ikh zits mir oyfn 'roof' gants heykh ...
Un tsi fun keymen umzist dem reykh ...

Ge-endikt hob ikh shoyen mayn lid ...
Eyb dos lid iz geven git ...
Eyb dos lid hot aykh gefelt ...
Mekt ir mit mir ale makhn ...

*I am going to sing for you a song,
Hu tza tza, hu tza tza,
If this song is good,
Hu tza tza, hu tza tza,
And if this song appeals to you,
Hu tza tza, hu tza tza,
Then everyone say with me
Hu tza tza, hu tza tza,*

*A greenhorn comes into the land ...
Right away he becomes a single man ...
He gets a small job ...
He forgets his wife at home ...*

*My neighbor says she loves me ...
I come into her home ...
She treats me very kindly ...
And in the middle her husband comes in ...*

*I was in a restaurant ...
I amused myself thoroughly ...
The food smelled so strong to me ...
It woke me from sleep ...*

*I was at a wedding ...
I amused myself very nicely ...
Everyone danced a ceremonial dance ...
And we dragged the bride in ...*

*I was sitting very high in the bath ...
I was singing with my whole strength ...
With hot water a Jew ...
Scalded me entirely ...*

*Smoking is very expensive now ...
I do not burn my money in fire ...
I sit high on the roof ...
And draw the smoke from the chimney for nothing ...*

*Now I have ended my song ...
If this song has been good ...
If this song satisfied you ...
Everyone might as well say ...*

BOBE UN ZEYDE

words and music by Mark M. Warshawsky

S'iz haynt akurat gevorn fuftsik yor,
Vi zey lebn zikh in eynem dos alte por.
Zey hobn zikh ge-eltet, kukt aykh tsi:
Akhtsik er un zibetsik zi.

Got hot zey mit oysher un koved baglikht,
In lebn hobn zey zikh keyn mol nit gekrigt.
Nor "Notele", nor "Bobele" rufn zey zikh tsi.
Akhtsik er un zibetsik zi.

Der oylem hot genumen tsu biselekh vayn.
Dem zeydn mit der boben in rod arayn.
Di mume iz gegangen antkegn oyf a kni.
Akhtsik er un zibetsik zi.

Azoy hot men gehulyet a halbe nakht,
Bobele - zagt der zeyde - A gute nakht,
Shlof mir gezunt un dek zikh tsi.
Akhtsik er un zibetsik zi.

Di bobbe hot ongehoyn dremlen mit a mol.
Ir kholem vel ikh aykh dertseyln an andersh mol.
Lomir zey beyde lozn tsu ri.
Akhtsik er un zibetsik zi.

*Today it is exactly fifty years,
That they live as one, this old pair.
They have gotten older, see for yourself:
Eighty he and seventy she.*

*God bestowed them with riches and honor,
In their whole life they never fought.
Only "Notele" and "Bobele" they called each other.
Eighty he and seventy she.*

*The guests took a little wine.
The grandfather and the grandmother came inside
the circle.
The aunt went in front of them on her knee.
Eighty he and seventy she.*

*This is the way they carried on for half the night.
Bobele — said the grandfather — Good night,
Sleep in good health and cover yourself.
Eighty he and seventy she.*

*The grandmother began to dream about the past.
I'll tell you about her dream another time.
Let's let both of them rest.
Eighty he and seventy she.*

OYFN PRIPETSHIK

words and music by Mark M. Warshawsky

Oyfn pripetshik brent a fayerl,
Un in shtub iz heys.
Un der rebe lernt kleyne kinderlekh
Dem alef-beyz,
Un der rebe lernt kleyne kinderlekh
Dem alef-beyz.

CHORUS:

*Zet zhe, kinderlekh, gedenkt zhe, tayere,
Vos ir lernt do,
Zagt zhe nokh a mol un take nokh a mol:
Komets-alef: ol
Zagt zhe nokh a mol un take nokh a mol:
Komets-alef: ol*

*Lernt, kinder, mit groys kheyshek,
Azoy zog ikh aykh on,
Ver s'vet gikher fun aykh kenen ivre,
Der bakumt a fon ...*

CHORUS:

*Az ir vet, kinder, elter vern,
Vet ir aleyn farshteyn,
Vift in di oysyes lign treyn,
Un vi fil geveyn ...*
CHORUS:

*Az ir vet, kinder, dem goles shlepn,
Oysgemutshet zayn,
Zolt ir fun di oysyes koyekh shepn,
Kukt in zey arayn ...*
CHORUS:

*On the hearth burns a fire,
And indoors it's hot.
And the teacher is teaching small children
The alphabet.
And the teacher is teaching small children
The alphabet.*

CHORUS:

*See, children, and remember, dear ones,
What you are learning here.
Say it one more time and yet again:
Komets-alef: ol
Say it one more time and yet again:
Komets-alef: ol*

*Learn children, with great patience,
What I'm telling you,
Whoever can understand Hebrew quickly,
Gains a heritage ...*
CHORUS:

*As you get older, children,
Then you yourself will understand,
On how many letters there will be tears,
And on how many weeping ...*
CHORUS:

*As you, children, are burdened with exile,
You will be weary,
From the letters you will get strength,
Look to them ...*
CHORUS:





DIRE GELT

words and music by Y. L. Cahan

CHORUS: TWICE

Dire gelt un oy oy oyl
Dire gelt un bozhe moyl
Dire gelt un gradavoy,
Dire gelt muz men tsoln!

Kumt arayn der balebos,
Mit dem grobn shtekn;
Un az me git im keyn dire gelt,
Shtelt er aroys di betn.
CHORUS: TWICE

Kumt arayn der struzh,
Nemt er arop dos hitl;
Un az me tsolt keyn dire gelt,
Hengt er aroys a kvitl.
CHORUS: TWICE

Far vos zol ikh aykh gebn dire gelt
Az di kikh iz tsebrokhn?
Far vos zol ikh aykh gebn dire gelt
Az ikh hob nisht oyf vos tsu kokhn?
CHORUS: TWICE

CHORUS: TWICE

Rent money and oy oy oyl
Rent money and oh my God!
Rent money and the policeman,
Rent money we have to pay!

In comes the landlord,
With a thick cane;
And if we give him no rent money,
He throws the beds outside.
CHORUS: TWICE

In comes the building superintendent,
He takes his hat off;
And if you do not pay any rent money,
He hangs up an eviction notice.
CHORUS: TWICE

Why should I give you rent money
As the stove is broken?
Why should I give you rent money
As I have nothing on which to cook?
CHORUS: TWICE

A FIDDLER

S'hot der tate fun yaridl
Mir gebrakht a naye fidl.
Do re mi fa so la si,
Shpil ikh fidl di di di.

Kh'halt dos kepl ongeboygn
Un farglots di beyde oygn.
Do re mi . . .

Rekhtn trot faroy's abisl,
Klapt dem takt tsu mitn fisl.
Do re mi . . .

Kvelt un vundert zikh di mame —
Yitskhak Perlman vakst mistamel
Do re mi . . .

From the fair Father brought
A new fiddle for me.
Do re mi fa so la si,
I play fiddle dee dee.

I hold my head bent down
And both eyes are staring.
Do re mi . . .

Right step forward a little,
Beating the measures with the foot.
Do re mi . . .

Beaming with wonder is Mother —
Perhaps (another) Itzhak Perlman is growing!
Do re mi . . .

SHPIIL KLEZMERL

Shpil zhe mir a nigundl oyf Yiddish,
Es meg zayn Misnagdish oder Khassidish,
Az di bobenyu aley'n zol kenen dos farshteyn
Un take a tentsele geyn.

CHORUS:

Oy, oy, oy,
Shpil, shpil, klezmerl, shpil,
Vi a Yiddish harts mit gefil.
Shpil a tensele far mir,
Shpil, ikh bet dikh, mit neshomo, mit gefil.

Shpil zhe mir a nigundl fun pleytim,
Fun a folk tsezeytn un tshespreytn,
Az kinder groys un kleyn zoln kenen dos farshteyn
Un take a tentsele geyn.
CHORUS:

Shpil zhe mir a nigundl fun sholem,
Es zol nit zayn a kholem nor a sholem,
Az kinder groys un kleyn zoln kenen dos farshteyn
Un take a tentsele geyn.
CHORUS:

Play for me a tune in Yiddish,
It could be either 'Misnagdish' or 'Hassidic',
So the grandmother herself will be able to
understand it
And even do a little dance.

CHORUS:

Oy, oy, oy,
Play, play, musician, play,
Like a Yiddish heart with feeling.
Play a dance for me,
Play, I'm asking you, with soul, with feeling.

Play for me a tune about refugees,
From a people widely scattered,
So children large and small will be able to
understand it
And even do a little dance.
CHORUS:

Play for me a tune of peace,
It shouldn't be (just) a dream, but peace,
So children large and small will be able to
understand it
And even do a little dance.
CHORUS:

A BRIVELE DER MAMEN

words and music by Solomon Shmulowitz

Mayn kind, mayn treyst, du forst avek,
Ze zay a zun a guter,
Dikh bet mit trem un mit shrek
Dayn traye libe muter.
Du forst, mayn kind, mayn eyntsik kind,
Ariber vayte yamen;
Akh kum ahin nor frish gezunt
Un nit farges dayn mamem.
Yol For gezunt un kum mit glik.
Ze yede vokh a brivl shik,
Dayn mames harts, mayn kind, derkvik.

A brivele der mamem
Zolstu nit farzamen,
Shrayb geshvind, libes kind,
Shenk ir di nekhome.
Dayn mame vet dayn brivele lezn
Un zi vet genezn,
Heylst ir shmarts, ir biter harts,
Derkvikst ir di neshome.

My child, my comfort, you are riding away,
Be a good son,
I am asking with tears and with fear
Your faithful loving mother.
You are going, my child, my only child,
Over far oceans;
Come there fresh and healthy
And don't forget your mother.
Yes! Go in good health and come there with
happiness.
And every week send a letter,
Your mother's heart, my child, to refresh.

A letter to mother
Don't delay this,
Write soon, beloved child,
Give her consolation.
Your mother will read your letter
And she will be comforted,
Ease her pain, her bitter heart,
Renew her spirit.

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DONA DONA

words by Aaron Zeitlin, music by Sholom Secunda.

Oyfn furel ligt a kelbl,
Ligt gebunden mit a shtrik;
Hoykh in himel flit a shvelbl,
Freyt zikh, dreyt zikh, hin un tsurik.

CHORUS:

Lakht der vint in korn,
Lakht un lakht un lakht;
Lakht er op a tog a gantsn
Un a halbe nakht.
Dona dona dona dona . . .

Shrayt dos kelbl; zogt der poyer —
Ver-zhe hey'st dokh zayn a kalb?
Volst gekent dokh zayn a foygl;
Volst gekent dokh zayn a shvalb.
CHORUS:

Bidne kelber tut men bindn
Un men shlept zey un men shekht;
Ver s'hot fligl flit aruf tsu,
Iz bay keynem nit kayn knekht.
CHORUS:

On a little cart lays a calf,
Lays tied up with a rope;
High in the sky flies a little swallow,
Joyfully flitting back and forth.

CHORUS:

The wind laughs in the rye,
Laughs and laughs and laughs;
He laughs a whole day
And half the night.
Dona dona dona dona . . .

The calf wails; says the farmer —
Who told you to be a calf?
If only you could have been a bird;
If only you could have been a swallow.
CHORUS:

Wretched calves are being tied up
And they drag and slaughter them;
Whoever has wings flies upward,
Is no one's slave.
CHORUS:

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ABI GEZUNT

words by Molly Picon, music by Abraham Ellstein

Eyner zukht ashires,
Eyner zukht gevires,
Aynemen di gantse velt,
Eyner maynt dos gantse glik
Hengt nor op in gelt,
Zoln ale zukhn,
Zoln ale krikhn,
Nor ikh trakht bay mir,
Ikh darf dos ales oyf kapures,
Vayl dos glik shteyt bay mayn tir.

A bisl zun, a bisl regn,
A ruig ort dem kop tsu legn,
Abi gezunt ken men gliklekh zayn.
A shukh, a zok, a kleyd on lates,
In keshene a dray fir zloten,
Abi gezunt ken men gliklekh zayn.
Di luft iz fray,
Far yedn glaykh,
Di zun zi shaynt far yedn eynem,
Orim oder raykh.
A bisl freyd, a bisl lakhn,
Amol mit fraynt a shnep'sl makhn,
Abi gezunt ken men gliklekh zayn.

One searches for wealth,
One searches for power,
To conquer the whole world,
As far as some people are concerned all happiness
Depends on money,
Let everyone look,
Let everyone crawl,
I think to myself,
I have no use for all of this,
Because happiness stands by my door.

A little sun, a little rain,
A resting place to lay the head,
As long as one is healthy one can be happy.
A shoe, a sock, and clothes without patches,
In the pocket three or four coins,
As long as one is healthy one can be happy.
The air is free,
The same for everyone,
The sun shines for each one,
Poor or rich.
A little joy, a little laughter,
Sometimes having a little drink with friends,
As long as one is healthy one can be happy.

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illustrations © 1984 Rebecca Dvorin Strong
translations © 1984 Miriam and Harriette Dvorin





With complete translations and transliterations* inside jacket



When we were kids we loved to go to Grandma's house. In the small apartment above Grandpa's tailor shop the sounds of Yiddish songs mingled with the appetizing aroma of what we kids called Grandma Soup.

Some years later I experienced warm memories when I again heard these melodies as D.J. for "Chalil" on WYBC-FM, New Haven, Connecticut. Listeners would lend their treasured 78s and LPs to me to share with the weekly radio program's Sunday morning audience. The instrumentals "Mazel Tov" and "Russian Sher" and the song "Shpil Klezmerl" were some of the many recordings we sampled on "Chalil".

Other selections for Grandma Soup were found in Grandma's little paperback songbooks. "Dona Dona", "Undzer Nigundl", and "Bobe un Zeyde" (also known as "Akhtsik Er un Zibetsik Zi") came from "Zingen Mir", published in 1954 by Sam Liptzin with the cover price "50 cent". "A Fiddler" was found in "Lomir Zingen", published by the Arbeter Ring (Workmen's Circle, 1937) whose more recent publication, "Mir Trogn a Gezang" (Workmen's Circle Education Department, 1972), includes "Oyfn Pripetshik" and "A Brivele der Mamen".

My first recollection of "Hu Tza Tza" is a 6½ inch 78 disc with a hand-written Yiddish label made on Aunt Tillie's Philco home recording machine. Mom sang the verses and my aunts, uncle, and grandparents answered in a chorus of voices. You're invited to join the chorus in this taste of Grandma Soup, that mysterious blend of culinary and cultural delights we are still trying to appreciate fully.

UNDZER NIGUNDL

Our Little Tune

HU TZA TZA

BOBE UN ZEYDE

Grandma and Grandpa

MAZEL TOV

OYFN PRIPETSHIK

On the Hearth

DIRE GELT

Rent Money

A FIDDLER

SHPIK KLEZMERL

Play, Musician

RUSSIAN SHER

A BRIVELE DER MAMEN

Mother's Little Letter

DONA DONA

ABI GEZUNT

As Long as You're Healthy

Miriam Dvorin: vocals, violin, guitar,
mandolin, autoharp, electric guitar,
electric bass

Produced by Miriam Dvorin

Musical arrangements: Miriam Dvorin

Design and illustrations:

Rebecca Dvorin Strong

Notes and translations:

Miriam and Harriette Dvorin

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* The transliterations in the Grandma Soup Song Guide follow the rules for Yiddish orthography formulated by the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research and adopted by the Library of Congress.

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