JEWS H LOK SONGS
— by —
RUTH RUBIN
17 Yiddish and Israeli Songs

Transliterated Texts, and
Literal Translations (Not To Be Sung)

SIDE I, Band 1: GITARE

GITARE: A young girl, jilted in love, tells her
troubles to her guitar. "First he proposed to
me... Then he jilted me!... The Lord alone
knows
of my heartache."...

I sit and strum on my guitar,
And sing a song about myself.
Of my heartache and the Lord only knows,
Only He knows how deep is my pain.

We went walking together -
Round and round the depot -
That is when he promised,
To marry me, Mother.

We went walking together -
Round and round the city hospital -
When suddenly, he ceased to love me,
Oh so suddenly, Mother.

Ich sitn un shpil mir oyt der gitare,
Um singen mir a lid fun zikh aley.
Oy, mayn stradenge veyst nor Got dem enes,
Oy, mayn stradenge veyst nor er aley!

Shepatzam zenen mir beye gegegen,
Arum un arum dem kaylischlag vagaz.
Oy, tsgeshoyter hot er mir, Oy Mame,
As ich vei zwyn zayn froy un er mayn man.

Shepatzam zenen mir beye gegegen,
Arum un arum dem gorodkoy shpitol,
An uncheyn Mameye, hot er oyf dem gevorf,
An uncheyn, Mameye, Mameye, mit amol!

SIDE I, SHELTM, SHETL ICH DEM TOG

SHELTM, SHELTM ICH DEM TOG: A young seamstress
sings of the bitterness of love. This is a
common theme in the 19th-century Yiddish Love
Song. Interference of parents, the problems of
dowry, social inequalities and all the
ramifications of the "business of marriage"
broke the heart of many a young man and woman
of that day. Especially did this affect
working-girls, who had no social position and
no dowry to offer in a match.

Oh, cursed be the day that I was born!
Oh, cursed be that day forever!
Hathen had my Mother "lost" me then -
When I was still a little child.

When I was still a little girl,
No troubles at all had I.
And now that I am older -
I did so want to play at love...

Three long years we courted,
But oh, we've not yet married -
Oh there's no one to extinguish
The hellish fire in my heart!

Oy, sheltn, sheltn ich dem tog fun mayn gebroyrn,
Sheltn, sheltn ich in his ataim.
Nechay volt mich di mame geven farloyrn,
Behs ich bin geven a kleyn kind.

Ven ich bin a kleyn kind geven,
Oy fun kayn teores hob ich nit gevist.
Um maynt ich bin alter gevorn,
A libe shpiln hot zikh mir farzist.

RUTH RUBIN is known from coast to coast through her
fascinating lecture-recitals, in which she traces the
origin and development of East European and Israeli
folk songs, against a background of a century and a
half of Jewish history. She is also known for her
published essays on modern Jewish folk songs, her
A TREASURY OF JEWISH FOLKSONG (containing 110 Yiddish
and Hebrew songs, published by Shocken Books, New York,
1950), for her two previous albums of 70 R.P.M. re-
cordings of Yiddish and Jewish folk songs and for two
LP (33-1/3 R.P.M.) recordings: JEWISH CHILDREN'S SONGS
AND GAMES (Folkways) and YIDDISH LOVE SONGS (Riverside
Records).

Shoyne dray yor as ir shpiln a libe,
Um zamen, oy vey, kesen mir zikh nit.
Oy, in mayn barton brent an helish fayer,
Um farlekhn ken es keyzer nit.

SIDE I, Band 2: PAPIR IZ DOCH WAYS

PAPIR IZ DOCH WAYS: A "sophisticated" 19th
century youth sings of his lady-love...
"Roses in beauty with my love can compare...
With her eyes so dark and her raven-black
hair."

Paper is white and ink it is black -
My heart yearns for my darling love.
Three days on end I would gladly sit
Holding your hand and kissing your face.

Yesterday, I went to a wedding,
Many pretty girls did I see there.
Perhaps they were pretty, but none could compare
With your dark-black eyes and raven hair!

Your form, your manner, your graceful ways,
Have stirred the passions in my heart.
No one knows of my secret love,
My life now rests within God's hand.

Oh dear Lord, do grant me my wish -
You've given me the rich honor and wealth.
All I ask is a spot on the green,
So my true love and I can dwell therein....

Papir iz doch ways un tint is doch shvat.
Tou dir mayn zia lebn tait doch mayn harts.
Ich volt ahtendiig gesessen, dray tig, noch anand,
Tou kuehn dagn shoyn ponin un tou balam dagen hant.

Hechten bin ich bay a chassays gvenen,
Filih shveyne maydelekh oben ich dor tzen.
Ay, fil shveyne maydelekh, tou dir kent nit gor,
Mit dayne shvarstse eygelach un mit dayne shvarstse hore.

Dayn talve, dayn mine, dayn eydel fason.
In harten brent a fayer, ven zot dos nit os.
Ay, nito ane setnus, vos sol zeny vi es brent.
Oy, der toyt un dos lebn, zonen bay Got in di bant.

Oy, tayrer Got gib mir mayn farlange,
Dem oyshey gystu kovit mit a shenymen yung.
Ay mir gib a shitsele oyf dem gros dem grinem,
As ich mit mayn zia lebn soin voyzen derinen....

SIDE I, Band 3: FISHELECH KOPF

FISHELECH KOPF: Sung by errant beggars in the
courtyards of the large East European cities,
or at a yard (village fair), this song com-
bines the tender sentiments of a lovelorn youth
and the "devil-may-care" attitude of a gay young
blade.

I went to buy some fish -
And bought a ploverel...
And he who is guilty in my sad love,
May he be smitten out like a candle-flame!

Without stones and without bricks,
One cannot build a house...
Oh, there's not a soul in this world,
Who does not pity me...
When a gambler, plays at cards,
He loses only his money.
I have gambled with my youth.
Dark and dreary is my world ...

Sinn ich mir gegangen fishelech koyfn,
Job ich mir gekoyft a hecht!
Un ver es is shuldig in under libe,
Der zol oyagenen vi a lecht!

On kayn shteyner un on kayn tsigl,
Kum men kayn boys nit saynern.
Ay, s'is nitsho aza sentsh oyf der velt,
Vos er zo ruchnt nit badoyeren ...

As a kartzynshnik akyln in korn,
Farshpilt er doch nor sazy velt.
Ich hob farshpilit zayne yunge yorn -
Finster is doch mayn velt...

SIDE 1, Band 4: BEKHER LID
BEKHER LID: A baker's apprentice boy sings sadly about his first factory job ... "The baker-boss struts in his finery ... While I pine awy in drudgery ..."

Outdoors, there's a drizzling rain,
And the sky is overcast,
Since I have come to this bakery
My head swims and turns.
Oh, a mill-wheel turns and turns,
But it has its moment of rest.
Look at the youngest bakery-lad,
There's not a drop of blood in his face.

The baker-boss and his wife come to the factory,
Dressed in all their finery.
She wears diamond earrings in her ears
And he sports a golden watch and chain!

Indroyen geyt a drohnscher regn,
Ay, di volkene zey bohn sich farshpreyt.
Tseyt ich hov nor di berekay derkend,
Avey nit sich mir der kop farshreyt.

Ay, o mil az zi melt, molt si k'sheyder,
Ay, ir oypehl hot och a menit,
Tit nor a kik oyf dem klenstn berek-yingl,
Tafi farshnet er den a trup blet.

Ay, der berek mit der berek,
Zey kinen in der berekay.
Loyt seyfer raychtn un loyt seyfer shseyteyzer?
Zi geyt ozgein a por brilynte en oytingen,
Un er in a goldenen seyger!

SIDE 1, Band 5: DORTN, DORTN IBERN VASSERL
After three long years of courtship, a lad finds himself in a "distant land" (America perhaps?). He recalls the "sad, sweet evenings" with his beloved and pleads: "With your slender quill-like fingers, darling, write me from afar."

Oh, far away across the water,
Oh, far away across the bridge,
You've driven me into distant lands,
And oh, how I yearn for you, my love.

How many evenings we sat together,
How many evenings into the night,
How many tears we've wept together,
In the first joys of young sweet love.

Oh, help me God, Oh Lord on High,
Oh, help me Lord, I'm feeling bad.
Three long years we courted each other,
But our love was not fulfilled.

I remember your eyes, like little black cherries,
And your lips like pink crêpe paper,
And your slender, quill-like fingers -
Write me darling, from afar!

"In the days, before lipstick," girls would dip some pink crepe paper in a little water, and apply it to the lips.

Oy, dortn, dortn ibern vasserm, oy, dortn, dortn ibern brik.
Fartshnobostye mit di in vaytene lender,
Um benken, benk ich noch dir teurik.

Oy, vifil ovntech, tausamen gesessen,
Oy, vifil ovntech, shpeyt in der musch.
Oy, vifil treterlech mit rohne fargossen,
Bis mir hohn di libe tausamen gebracht.

Oy, helf mir Gotensm, oy Got in hini,
Oy, helf mir Gotensm, s'is mir nitsh hit.
Einsh yontshayt dray yorelesch vi mir ayplein a libe,
Un oys-ayplein di libe kenen mir nit.

Oy, dayne ogyelech, vi di alsharte kerelech,
Un dayne lipelech vi roysve papir.*
Un dayne fingerlech, vi tint un vi feder,
Oy, shroytn solisti otte bryt tsau mir.

SIDE 1, Band 6: BAY DEM SHTEL
BAY DEM SHTEL: A little boy, skipping about in the backyard of his little house "at the edge of town," tells us about his family, the wonderful gifts his Daddy brings home, and the miracle of a clucking hen that hatched live chicks!

Near the village there stands a hut,
With a bright green roof,
And around the hut there grow
Many little trees.

And my Daddy and my Mommy,
Sister Chanele and I,
All together now have lived
For a long time here.

And my Daddy works so hard
All the long, long years,
And when he comes he brings
The loveliest of things!

Brings a pony and it neighs -
We have named it Mutsik.
Brings a poney and it neighs -
And we named it Tantsik!

Brings a goose with a long neck,
Feathers white as snow,
Brings a hen that clucks and clucks
Till it lays an egg!

Mother then takes all the eggs,
My, but it's a trick!
She puts them under the setting-ben,
And then - we have new chicks!

Bay dem shtelt, shteyt a shhitl,
Mit a driness dach,
Um arum dem shhitl nakan
Behmelekh a sakk.

Un der tate mit der messen,
Chanele mit mir,
Shoyns a lange tsayt ineyn,
Vovenen nil fir.

Un der tate horevet, horevet,
Ave yorn zayne,
Un er koyst umt um er brentg ums
Zachm sheyn, fayne!

Brengt a huntelech, vos se haevket,
Mits nomen Mutsik,
Brengt a ferdi vos se hirschet,
Mits nomen Tantsik.

Brengt a ganslech mit a langm halds,
Federlekh vays vi shney.
Brengt a sin vos kwocket, kwocket,
Bis zi leyn t oy!

Nest di nane, ot di eyer,
Ay, is dos a moystes!
Zest zi oyf oyf sey a kwocket,
Hobn mir noye oyfes!
A woman who has loved and lost bewails her lonely, loveless life. She compares herself to a little brook that has dried up, to an earthen pot that is empty.

All the little brooks flow away, The ditches remain empty. There's no soul in all this world Who understands my sorrow.

The years go by, the years fly away, Time disappears like smoke. Oh, when I recall your dear sweet face, I am weak with yearning.

And when a maiden plays at love, Her face blurs and blooms, But when her love is not fulfilled, She may die.... And when the little pots are dry, They, too, remain empty. When a maiden's love is not fulfilled, She is doomed forever....

ALE VASERLECH
FILIS AVEK,
Di grebelech blauhn leydi.
Kito ael menshech oyf gor der velt,
Vos sol farshleyn gen leydi.

Dy yorelech tse-en, dy yorelech fle-en,
Dy tsvayt getey avek wi royeh.
Un as iz nich sem-en ohr nem zis-lehn,
Getz mir oys der neshehn.

Un as a meyleleh shpil an libe,
Shpilin ir ale farba.
Un as si shpil di libe nit oys -
Koylz si chollere noch shtern.

Un as di teplelech trizenen oys,
Vern zey ale leydi,
Un as a meyleleh shpil ir libe nit oys -
Vert si faraln oye eybign.

TOWN, TOWN ANTKEH MIR: Taught me by my Mother, this Bessarabian children's song consists of nonsense rhymes, against a description of a traditional Jewish wedding.

My sleeve, it can't lift anymore, It broke altogether.
My shoes are torn as torn can be, In socks I dance much better!

Dance, dance toward me, And I will dance toward you, You will take the son-in-law, The daughter-in-law for me!

The noodle-pot it broke in two, The chick-pea burned inside, All the women are dancing In a ring around the bride.

Green's folks, bride's folks, Everyone is here - Dancing at the wedding. Blessed and full of cheer.

Hot sich mir di zip tsoypt Un hot sich mir telsoypt
Hot sich mir di shich toersenn,
Tonta ich in di boyle sonk.

Refrain:
Tonta, tonta antkeh mir,
Un ich antkeh dir,
Di'ist nemen den eydin,
Un ech'i nemen di shnir.

Tsebroch is der lokers-top,
Chum's tsoy un koles's tsoy,
Fartent der nahlt,
Tonta di machesanemess,
Di koles in der mit!

SIDII, Band 1: VIIZED
The shooting of some four thousand Jews on April 5, 1943 at Ponary (near Vilna), left a lasting impression on the sensitive poet, Leah Snehitsky (born 1916), who herself perished at the hands of the Nazis that year. A three-year-old child was saved from the massacre and Leah wrote this lullaby for it.

Birds are sleeping on the bough, Sleep, my precious child. At your cradle in the dugout, A stranger sits and sings to you. Your cradle once did have a home, Gathered out of happiness, Now your Mother, oh, your Mother, Never will return to you.

I did see your father fleeing, Under a hail of stones. Across the fields there flew His bitter lonely cry.

S'ierenen feygel oyf di teveyn,
Shlof mayn tazer kind.
Bey dayn viys, oyf dayn nowe,
Zit a frenze un kinesh-lyu-lyu.
SIDE II, Band 4: YAFIN HALELOT

On a hillside, a shepherd guards his flock from marauding jackals. Popular among early pioneers in Palestine.

A lamb and a kid went into the field together, At noon, they scattered in the well to drink water.
One was white, the other black, with long, curly locks, Little strings of bells tinkling round their neck.
To the well, run the flock.

On the ground the shepherds eat resting, Eating bread, and oil, and an orange,
Run, you little rascals, have your fun now,
Soon we must return home, for evening is high.
Li, li, li, li, play, my little rascal.

Se ogé'i, g'di nasa, yachav yado' al hasade, In ha'shivaya ek no-rin, ron no lehshin mayin.
Echad lavan, sheni sh charchar, In tal'ley osheyin,
Pe-nahmin n's'akla'im al toshrey rahayim, Em ha'shivaya ek no, lehshin.

Ya'avor l'avoro haro'im ha sh'nlam, Pat beshenim bo-enin v'sh'vay tosh'pi-yach.
U'shuro, g'di, sh'vayim, b'hemshin ko teray,
Bbashayin ak no, sh'vayin, bine ha'erov....
Li, li, li, li, rahem sh'vayin.

SIDE II, Band 5: ZIGNU GALIM

This song came to Palestine with the early pioneers from Eastern Europe. Translated almost literally from the Yiddish, it describes a youth on the bank of a quiet stream, singing of his beloved.

Plof, little waves downstream, Through hill and dale.
Bring greetings to my beloved, Blessings without end.

Tell her, tell her, little wave, Of my endless love!
Now full of longing is my heart,
When she is far away.

Tell her, gentle little wave, Saper, saper pedeg la, Of my beating heart. Ota ma chay!
That without her, life is gray Kama k'chura naqhei va, And empty all around. Ta-amari no hu rav.

Zignu galim pedeg aron, Saper, saper pedeg no-in la, Derech har vagay, Et ga-agu-yon don, Le-shovati na shalom, Bilashkha cheapy na, Bracha ad l'liv day, Saviv rok shokem....

SIDE II, Band 6: SHIR HA-AVORN


The sea and the sky, oh lovely Jerusalem.
The heavens are bright from Neger to Kallil.
The sun streams its light on us, its light.
The plough digs deep into the earth,
We dig a furrow, deep, so deep.
From early morning until night.

We sing, we sing together, Our beams singing along.
Our ploughs they ring in tones so sweet.
The work is one bright song.

Kachol yam haymanim, mava Y'rushalayim, Orim ha'khashaya al Neger v'Kallil.
Ha'khashaya orim la, orim, Chirish be'telem va'anorim, Ha'mashreha ivri avori, Ad layla leyli ya-amir.

Refrain: Shir, shir alayna, Bapatiashim nagen, nagen, Banamcheshot reneren, Bashir in tam hui rak mat-chil!

The music for Songs Nos. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15 and 16, can be found in A Treasury of Jewish Folk Songs by Ruth Rubin, Schocken Books, New York 1950.