

YIDDISH AFTER THE HOLOCAUST

Edited and introduced by Joseph Sherman

BOULEVARD

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**'A SMILE LEARNED IN SADNESS': THE POETRY OF RIVKE
BASMAN BEN-HAYIM**

Zelda Kahan-Newman

The Holocaust, a cataclysmic event in Jewish history and the near death-knell of Yiddish literature, is one topic that is never discussed directly in Rivke Basman Ben-Hayim's poetry. Nevertheless, it lurks in the background of her work at all times. Born in 1925, Rivke Basman was a young teenager when the Nazis overran Poland. She spent two years in the Vilna Ghetto, and the rest of the war in a work-camp for women and young girls. While in the labour camp, she and two others decided that each would do something every day to lift the spirits of the women in the camp: each day, one sang a song, one danced, and one recited a poem she had composed. Rivke Basman, then a teenager, composed and recited a poem every day. This is the poem she wrote about that experience:

Dermonung

*zey gedenken vi kh 'fleg shraybn lider
veynen lider,
shvaygn lider
afn roytn bruk
gedenken mikh baym shtekhlployt
fun shtikhlshpitsn oys getatuiert
mayn yunge hoyt,
tsu zen a fedeml fun zunfargang
fun eygenem fargang in letster zun.
gezungen hob ikh demolt
un mayn lid
gevezn iz undzer zun.*

Remembrance

They remember how I used to write poems
Crying poems,

Silence poems
 On the red cobblestones.
 Remember me at the barbed fence
 My young skin
 Tattooed from barbed points,
 To see a teeny-thread of sunset,
 Of my own setting in the last sun.
 I sang then
 And my poem
 Was itself our sun.¹

This poem is one of the few in which Basman comes close to telling her Holocaust story. She never does tell that story. However, its presence is felt in the lyrical evocation of lingering pain and loss, and in the ghosts of those loved ones who died but continue to haunt her memory.

For the survivors of the Holocaust, building a 'normal' life and establishing a new home were of the essence. To do that, they needed to marshal all their newly found energy into building and creating. Had they allowed their pain and their anger to overtake them, they would have been overcome with a paralyzing rancour, or, as Basman puts it in the following poem, they would have been in danger of swallowing 'the light of the night':

Dertseyln

*dertselyn,
 meynt vider zikh lozn in veg
 un kumen tsum tehom
 fun nekhtike teg.*

*dertseyln,
 meynt vern ze-evdik vakh
 vi a sove,
 vos shlingt dos likht
 fun der nakht.*

*dertseyln,
 meynt geyn tsu a blindn gefekht
 un blaybn mit vund un mit
 shlofloze
 nekht.*

To Tell

To tell
Means to allow one's self again on the ways
And to come to the chasm
Of yesterday's days.

To tell
Means to become wary
As an owl,
Which swallows the light
Of the night.²

To tell,
Means to go to a blind swoop
And remain with wound and with
Sleepless
Nights

Having been so deeply traumatized by their experiences in the Holocaust, survivors often made what seemed to outsiders an amazing 'recovery'. They usually married, and often had families. They worked and built new homes and created, just like those who had never been through the Holocaust. This recovery, however, is spurious. It is a surface matter, and very deceptive. While all seems quiescent on the outside, inside, within the survivor's psyche, the pain churns on. Basman says as much in the following poem:

Dnoen

*mayn tsheshplitertn oyberflakh
hostu farrikht,
farklept un fareynikt,
biz s'hot zikh antplekt
a flemele likht,
un ikh hob fargesn fun zikh.*

*koyim kh'bin farheylyt,
nor di dnoen—
zey hobn nokh gornit
dertseylyt.*

The Depths

You've stitched
My ripped surface,
Pasted and gathered,
Until there appeared
A tiny light,
And I forgot about myself.

I'm no longer broken
But the depths –
They haven't yet spoken.³

While it is true that the memories of the destroyed world keep recurring, and lost family members and a loved teacher are memorialized in Basman's poetry – see 'To Arele' in *Di shtilkeyt brent*⁴ and 'My Teacher Rive' in *Likhtike shteyner*⁵ – life in the new, strange world, together with the opportunity to watch things grow, provided therapy for the soul – see 'In the desert'⁶ and 'Refuge',⁷ both again in *Likhtike shteyner*. Basman found another comfort in the moments of poetic inspiration – see 'If you can and you will' in *Tseshotene kreln*.⁸ Most important, however, are the possibilities of friendship and love. Let us first examine a poem on friendship:

Yinger fun di yorn

*faran an alte frayndshaft
yung in blik
vos kumt un redt zikh durkh
fun karshntsvit,
farhit di zaftn
vos a honikbin
hot lang farlorn –
faran an alte frayndshaft
yinger fun di yorn.
zi kumt un fregt zikh oys
oyf yedern bazunder.
a shtilkeyt a bahaltene
bafrilingt dem zikorn:
faran an alte frayndshaft
yinger fun di yorn.*

Younger than time

There exists an old friendship
 Young in look
 Which comes and speaks
 Of cherry blossoms,
 Preserves the sap
 Which a honeybee
 Has long lost –
 There exists an old friendship
 Younger even than time.
 It comes and inquires
 About each separately.
 A silence that is concealed
 Rejuvenates the mind:
 There exists an old friendship
 Younger even than time.⁹

In the following poem, ‘With you I am calm and close’, we find a human bond that provides the ultimate comfort: a rootedness in ‘streaming wonder’ and a unity that destroys the divisions of time, and brings with it ‘endless green’, eternal growth:

Mit dir bin ikh ruik

*mit dir bin ikh ruik un noent
 un kh'darf nit bahaltn keyn verter,
 vi bleter in zuniker kroyn
 farankert tsu zeyere erter.*

*mit dir bin ikh durkhoys mit zikh
 farvortsht tsum shtromikn vunder,
 vos nestikt in tropns fun likht
 afile baym vern farshvundn.*

*mit dir iz der tog nit tsesheydt,
 nit bazunder der haynt un der nekhtn,
 onsofike grinkayt bakleydt
 un du bist der eybiker vekhter.*

With You

With you I am calm and close
 And I need not withhold any words
 Like leaves in a sun-lit crown

Anchored in their earth.

With you I am entirely with myself
Rooted to streaming wonder
Which nestles in drops of light
Even as it goes under.

With you the day's not divided
No separate yesterday and now
Clothed in endless green
And you're the eternal sentry.¹⁰

While it is true that Basman found comfort in the possibility of love, she is no doe-eyed romantic, as is clear from a poem about love that has appeared in her latest anthology, *Oyf a strune fun regn*:

In shpurn fun libshaft

*in shpurn fun libshaft
geyt men ek velt,
afile az yamen un berg
farshfelt.*

*in shpurn fun libshaft
geyt men ariber
vulkanen vos farshiitn
mit lave di shtiber.*

*men geyt vi gefangen
fun lavone-barir,
an eybikn gang
fun farlir tsu farlir.*

For a bit of love

For a bit of love
One goes world-wide
Even when seas and hills
Are disguised.

For a bit of love
One even roams
O'er volcanoes that throw
Lava over homes.

One walks as though drugged
 By the moon's course
 An eternal walk
 From loss to loss.¹¹

There is much that is suggested here, and much that is ambiguous. What exactly does one lose in the search for love – one's self? one's security? One's illusions? Perhaps Basman is speaking here of physical decay and the inevitable decline of strength and vigour. She does not say, and as is usually the case with poetry, we are free to decide for ourselves.

The animal kingdom also provides Basman with material for her poems. Often she empathizes with the creatures around her and imagines how they feel and why they behave as they do. In one sample volume of her verse, *Likhtike Shteyner*, we find the animal world represented in such poems as 'The loneliness of dogs' (p. 35), 'Head against the sea' (a poem about mussels, p.34), and 'Glow-worm in the grass' (p.52). A careful examination of only one of these poems repays the reader generously:

Letoyves a volf

*s'kumt nit dem volf
 bilbulim fartsaytike;
 s'iz hunger
 di eyntsike sibe
 vos traybt
 az der volf
 zol fartsukn.
 afile in thomikn hunger
 a volf
 vet zayn bisn bakukn.
 tomer iz gants
 on a pgam
 gots yetsire –
 vet der volf
 keyn mol nit rirn.
 un oyser dem
 veys men genoy:
 der gevoy fun a volf
 iz zayn bentshn,
 beshas
 er vert nitsl
 un maydt oys
 a mentshn.*

In favour of a wolf

Wolves don't deserve
 The bad-mouthing they get,
 Hunger is
 The one thing
 That drives
 A wolf
 To devour.
 Even in the depths of hunger
 A wolf
 Will examine his food
 And if it happens
 To be flawless
 God's creation —
 Then the wolf
 Will not touch it.
 And besides this
 We know for sure:
 The howl of a wolf
 Is his thanks
 When
 He's been saved
 And he avoids
 Man's ranks.¹²

As is often the case with translation, there are culture-specific words in the Yiddish original that have no exact English translation. The poem tells us that the wolf's howl is *zayn bentshn*. I have translated this as 'is his thanks', but this translation (and, I believe any English translation of the line) misses an important nuance. The Yiddish word *bentshn* is traditionally used for the English word 'blessing'. When a woman lights *shabes* candles on Friday night, we say *zi bensht likht* — she is blessing (making a blessing over) the candles. When a man puts his hands on his children's heads that same night and recites the proper Biblical verse, we say *er bensht di kinder* — he is blessing his children. But when the word *bentshn* is used alone, as it is after a meal when one calls out *raboysey, mir veln bentshn* — 'My friends, let us say the Grace after Meals', then the word *bentshn* describes the traditional Jewish prayer of thanks offered to God after eating. In Basman's poem, the wolf's howl is *not* a form of thanks for a meal; instead it becomes a form of thanks for not having been made into a meal. One has to

read Basman very carefully. In her poetry, ordinary words are often put to unusual uses.

Basman is a singularly non-ideological poet. She elected to live in Israel after the Holocaust, and from her poetry it is clear that she feels rooted in Israel. The political movements and social trends of her second home are absent from her poetry, however. She is an independent thinker with her own, often non-conformist, take on life. Three poems well illustrate the air of the unexpected that we find in her poems. The first, a relatively recent poem, is entitled: 'One must sometimes renew old paths'. It is a truism of pundits that one cannot – indeed, should not – 'look back'. Pop psychologists tell us that we must 'move forward'. But as Basman would have it, it is sometimes the right thing to return to old paths. We, her readers, are free to understand this claim as urging a return to old friends/lovers, or former social circles or activities. The message is one of daring to do the unexpected:

Men darf a mol

*men darf a mol banayen alte vegn
un optreyslen di groykaytn fun hor,
men meg a mol bay keynem gor nit fregn
un onklapn in tir fun far a yor.*

*araynshpringen ahin, af keyn zakh mer nit vartn,
fun oln oyston zikh un vern shrekleh gring.
zikh onshparn on boym, tsu im in hartsn
araynkrayzn vi ring in ring.*

*un oykh dem boym keyn kashes mer nit fregn.
mit zayne bleter oysputsn di hor.
men meg a mol banayen alte vegn
un blaybn bay a shvel fun far a yor.*

One must sometimes

One must sometimes renew old paths
And shake out grey from hair
One may sometimes not even consult
And knock on the door of have-been-there.

Spring right in, wait for no thing,
Throw off the yoke and be ready to dart.

Take refuge in a tree, and like ring
Upon ring encircle its heart.

And ask no questions of the tree
With its leaves decorate your hair.
One may sometimes renew old paths.
And remain at the threshold of have-been-there.¹³

The second poem, taken from an older collection, is a eulogy. Commonly, a eulogizer mourns the death of the deceased. But in this poem Basman says she will not weep, and she explains why:

Lezeykher Rokhl Fishman

*Rokhl,
du host azoy lib gehat
lakhn
to vi zoln mir veynen?
vi zoln mir veynen
az dayn gelekhter tsaytikht
vi zise vayntroybn,
dayn gelekhter kayklt zikh
vi a farkisheft shteynde
fun har Gilboa—
du host azoy
lib gehat tsu lakhn
to vi
zoln mir
zingen
troyer?*

27.8.1984

In memory of Rokhl Fishman

Rokhl,
You so loved
To laugh
Then how can we cry?
How can we cry
If your laughter lives on
As sweet grapes.
Your laughter rolls on
Like a magical pebble
From Mount Gilboa –

You did so
 Love to laugh
 Then how
 Can we
 Sing
 Sorrow? ¹⁴

To see how effective Basman is at compression, it is finally worth glancing at a short poem that says much in only seven lines. To understand it, one must know that during the 1950s, the Hula valley, a natural swamp located in the Galilee, was drained of its water (and mud) and converted into farmland. At the time, few commented on the death of the ecosystem that had formerly thrived in the valley. By the 1990s, when ecologists realized how great and unique a system had been lost through this land reclamation project, pressure was brought to bear on the authorities to re-flood the area and thus restore the original ecosystem. Basman, ever the individualist, sees both sides. She admits the drainers did not '[think] of birds', but she also comes to the defence of those who believed that the 'greenness / [would] stroke/ tear-ridden eyes':

Mir hobn getriknt zumpn

*mir hobn getriknt zumpn
 un nit geklert fun feygl,
 mir hobn gevolt a grinkayt
 zol gletn
 farrerte oygn.
 mir hobn zikh shir nit dertrunken
 in zumpikn leym.
 mir hobn geboyt a heym.*

We have drained swamps

We have drained swamps
 And not thought of birds
 We wanted a greenness
 To stroke
 Tear-ridden eyes.
 We nearly drowned in swampy loam.
 We have built us a home.¹⁵

One searches in vain in Basman's poetry for poems with specifically

Jewish content; there are none such. Yet the elements of her poetry are sometimes so Jewish that they defy translation. As was the case with the poem, 'In favour of a wolf', it is often the key words, drawn from the traditions of *yidishkeyt*, that give her poems their inimitably Jewish flavour.

There is a poem of Basman's that I would love to translate, but I cannot, specifically for this reason. It is substantial poem of two pages entitled 'Der yid fun matseyves', literally, 'the Jew of the grave-sites', and it begins with the following dedication: 'For the old man, Reb Leyb, who guards the graves and protects Jewish memories in a sack of *sheymes*¹⁶ [slung] over his shoulder'.¹⁷ Basman spent the years 1963-65 in Moscow. At that time, the Soviets persecuted Jews and everything Jewish. At the Moscow Jewish cemetery, Basman encountered an old man who guarded the graves. From the poem we understand that he was thrilled to hear her speak Yiddish. The poem describes the old man, his dress, his demeanour, their encounter and her feelings. I tried to translate this poem, but stopped short at the sixth line. I found that line so laden with terms rich in the connotations of *yidishkeyt* that I could find no reasonably pithy translation for them. The sixth line contains five words: *farkhasmet mit remez un pshat*, literally, 'sealed with *remez* and *pshat*.' *Remez* is the Hebrew-derived Yiddish word for 'hint', while *pshat* is the Yiddish word, derived from Hebrew-Aramaic, for simple or straightforward understanding. But this literal translation can in no way capture the connotation or spirit of the terms. The fact is, there is no way to capture the rich associations of these terms without a thorough grounding in the complex of sacred and profane texts, Jewish law, lore and custom, all of which are integral to the warp and weave of what is known as *yidishkeyt*.

Of all the texts, the one accorded the highest degree of holiness is the Jewish Bible, known to scholars as the Pentateuch (the five books of Moses) and to the folk as *khumesh* / *khimesh*. Scribes who pored over the Biblical text counted and re-counted the number of verses in each chapter, and the words of each verse were counted and re-counted. Alternate spellings of variant copies were duly noted and recorded. Because this text is believed to be God's word to Moses, special attention is paid to the morphology of each phrase and to the syntax of each sentence, and Jewish lore and law are based on the way the rabbis have interpreted its stories and commandments. Four of the possible modes of interpretation of the holy

text are said to be found in the consonants of the Hebrew word for 'orchard', *PaRDeS*. The P is said to stand for *pshat*, the literal or straightforward understanding of the text; the R for *remez*, the non-simple understanding of the text as a hint of or symbol for other, usually more spiritual concepts, the D for *drash*, seeing the text as a springboard for a story or a non-literal interpretation which has only been hinted at in the text, and the S for *sod* (secret), seeing the text as a reference to mystical or kabbalistic terms or ideas. Seen this way, *remez* and *pshat* are two of the four trees in the orchard of traditional Jewish interpretative modes. When *pshat* is taken as the interpretative mode, attention is focused on the words of the text, and only on them. Attention is paid to the rules of Hebrew morphology and syntax, and interpretations are assigned in accordance with the known rules of Hebrew grammar. If, however, *remez* is chosen, one can ignore aspects of contextual grammar, and instead bring to bear one's knowledge of other kinds of Jewish wisdom. Occasionally this entails noticing how parts of the text resonate with or suggest other sections of the Bible or other extra-Biblical lore. To be able to use the interpretive mode called *remez*, one must have access to a wide range of non-contextual knowledge.

To be sure, even in pre-Holocaust Europe, not so many Jewish men (and far fewer Jewish women) were able to come up with innovative *pshat* and *remez* interpretations for the multi-layered verses of the Bible. But any man who attended *kheyder* (the Jewish version of elementary school for boys), and any woman who read the *tsenerene* (the Yiddish-language Bible for women), was exposed willy-nilly to both *remez* and *pshat*. The interpretive methods may not have been formally inculcated, but they were experiential realities. They were the interpretations given by every boy's *melamed* (teacher), and they are assumed and transmitted in the *tsenerene*. The boys had to repeat these interpretations in class, and the girls read the definitive text every Sabbath afternoon for most of their lives. These interpretive modes, internalized by every traditional Ashkenazi boy and girl, became part of the intellectual baggage of every Jewish man and woman who had grounding in *yidishkeyt*. For the contemporary Jewish man who has not gone to *kheyder* and the contemporary Jewish woman who does not read the *tsenerene*, for all those who have not sat over the Bible in its original Hebrew and tried to tease out of it at least one satisfactory meaning, how to understand the meaning of *remez* and *pshat*? Without *yidishkeyt*

and its experiential grappling with the ultimate Jewish text, the full meaning of Yiddish poems remains sealed and unknowable. Contemporary Yiddish poets, who have experienced only a secular education, do not have these terms at their disposal, and contemporary readers of poetry, who have had only a secular education, do not have the background to understand these terms. Basman, who grew up in the Old World but has spent most of her life in a different world, is one of the few remaining poets who knows these terms and uses them with ease.

This paper has not dealt at all with Basman's style – her unique blend of Hebraisms and Yiddish. That will have to wait for another paper. What has been offered here is merely a small sample of the quiet, contemplative, lyrical voice that makes itself heard in Basman's poetry. It is the non-ideological voice of an individualist in love with language and determined to celebrate life in Yiddish.

NOTES

All quotations and references are taken from the following collections of Basman's work:

Basman Ben-Hayim, Rivke. *Bleter fun vegn* (Tel-Aviv: Yisroel-bukh, 1967).

_____ *Likhtike shteyner* (Tel-Aviv: Yisroel-bukh, 1972).

_____ *Tseshotene kreln* (Tel-Aviv: Yisroel-bukh, 1982).

_____ *Onrirn di tsayt* (Tel-Aviv: Yisroel-bukh, 1988).

_____ *Di shtilkeyt brent* (Tel-Aviv: Yisroel-bukh, 1992).

_____ *Oyf a strune fun regn* (Tel-Aviv: Yisroel-bukh, 2002)

¹ 'Dermonung', from *Onrirn di tsayt*, p 70.

² 'Dersteylen', from *Onrirn di tsayt*, p.77.

³ 'Dnoen', from *Bleter fun vegn*, p.100.

⁴ 'Mayn Bruderl Balibter', from *Di shtilkeyt brent*, p.96

*mayn bruderl balibter,
antloyfn lomir shnel,
antloyfn nit bazigte
fun a bazigter velt.*

*un mitnemen di blikn
vi brunemer in feld
farblibn pust un trukn
in a farbrenter velt.*

*un mitnemen di klangen
vi glekldike shof
in velt vu s'iz fargangen
der onheyb
un der sof.*

In Memory of Arele

My brother my loved one
Let us flee in haste
Flee unvanquished
From a vanquished world.

And take with us a glance
Like wells within a field
Deserted and dried up
In a world that's charred.

And take with us the sounds
As bell-bedecked sheep
In a world that's lost the bounds
Of beginning
And of end.

⁵ 'Mayn lererin Rive', from *Likhtike shteyner*, p.19:

*vi zun in a regn
gefangen in bleter —
zunikt keseyder
dayn onblik
in mir,
mayn lererin Rive.*

*eintsik un eibik
dayn zeung.*

*an emesdik-vortslidik-vakhe.
di shtarkste dayn libe —
mayn lererin Rive.*

*arumnemen tu ikh di shkiye,
vos hot mir
durkh tunktele shoybn
baloykhtn a vinkl zikorn
vu s'vartn gedulik di yorn,
vu tsayt hot oyfzey nit
keyn shlite.
un dort,
in a shtetl in Lite,
bay ershte tsezungene oysyes
batrifte mit honik un trern,
geshlungen derbay
kh'hob dayn shmeykhl,
in umet gelernt.*

*mistome deryogn zikh shoen,
di fri-erge greykhn dem shpeyter
un trefn zikh
ergets tsuzamen
bay yamen.
un dort
in a bloyer dermonung
vet breyshisdik
gliyen dayn nomen —
mayn lererin Rive.*

My Teacher Rive

Like sun in a rain
Begun in leaves
Your image
Shines always
In me,
My teacher Rive.

Unique and eternal
Your vision.
A true-rooted-vigil.
The strongest your love —
My teacher Rive.

I gather-in the sunset

Which has lit for me
 Through dark panes
 A corner of memory
 And the years wait patiently,
 Where time has over them
 No dominion.
 And there,
 In a shtetl in Lithuania.
 At the first sung alphabet-letters
 Dripped with honey and tears,
 I swallowed then
 Your smile,
 Learned in sadness.
 Hours probably overlap
 The earlier reach the later
 And they gather
 Somewhere together
 By seas.
 And there
 In a blue remembrance
 Your name will gleam
 Pristine –
 My teacher Rive.

6. 'In midber', from *Likhtike Shteyner*, p.73.

*un blaybstu aley n mitn midber —
 zun, zamd un shteyn,
 verstu harter un milder
 un andersh mit zikh aley n.*

*in shteyniker ru fun feldzen
 tut dayn blik zikh a bri,
 un zest vi s'nemen tshemeltsn
 di kleynike sho-en fun hiy.
 an endlozer feldz a tsegliter
 vayzt dir a shteg tsu geyn,
 vu tunkele shtile graniter
 shlayfn oykh dikh vi a shteyn.*

In the Desert

And when you remain alone in the desert
 Sun, sand, and stone,
 You become tougher and milder
 And different all alone.

In the stony calm of cliffs
 Your glimpse is burnt a bit
 And you see how the wee hours of here
 Begin to melt as though lit.

An endless cliff all shiny
 Shows you a step to roam
 Where darkened still bits of granite
 Sharpen you too like a stone.

⁷ 'An onshpar', from Likhtike shteyner, p.51:

*pudn groye vor
 hobn zikh an onshpar gefunen
 oyf a dinem kust
 mit blumen.*

*nn ze,
 aza min dinkayt
 mit roz un grinkayt
 an onshpar zayn
 far groyer vor
 un haltn zi
 biz gor,
 biz gor.*

Refuge

Loads of grey reality
 Found a refuge
 On a thin twig
 Of flowers.

And see, how
 Such a thinness
 Of rose and greenness
 Can be a refuge
 For grey reality
 And support it
 So well,
 So well.

8. 'Az men kon', from *Tseshotene kreln*, p. 105:

az men kon
un men vil
vert ruik un shtil.
ven
vert azoy gut,
azoy gring,
es zingt zikh aleyn,
di klängen
hern zikh ayn
in der eygener ru,
zelt'n ven treft
aza
ruike ru—
kh'volt ofter
gegangen ahin
ven ikh veys
vi azoy
un vuhin.

If You Can and You Will

If you can and you will
 It becomes calm and still.
 When
 It becomes so good
 So easy
 It sings of itself,
 The sounds listen to
 Their own calm,
 Rare when there's
 Such a
 Becalmed calm—

I'd go there
 More often
 If I knew
 How to
 And to where.

9. 'Yinger fun di yorn', from *Di shtilkeyt brent*, p.89.
 10. 'Mit dir bin ikh ruik ...', from *Likhtike shteyner*, p.63.
 11. 'In shpurn fun libshaft', from *Oyf a strune fun regn*, p. 21.

¹² 'Letoyves a volf', from *Likhtike shteyner*, p.37.

¹³ 'Men darf amol', from *Tseshotene kreln*, p.99

¹⁴ 'Lezeykher Rokhl Fishman', from *Di shtilkeyt brent*, p.108.

¹⁵ 'Mir hobn getriknt', from *Di shtilkeyt brent*, p.31.

¹⁶ *sheymes* are the slips/pages of paper written or printed in Hebrew characters that have been respectfully retired from use. In the case of pages from prayer-books and other holy books, these were stored in the cellars or attics of synagogues. In theory, this was done because the papers/pages contained the name(s)/*sheymes* of God; in fact all retired papers collectively are called *sheymes*, whether or not they contain the names(s) of God.

¹⁷ The whole poem is published in *Bleter fun vegn*, pp.18-19.