

## Kisei Shlomoh

by I. L. Peretz

Wâs rauscht mir in Moyakh?  
Wâs setzt wie'n a Müll?  
Shloymoh Ha-Meylekh's  
Goldene Stühl!

Es lâs't mich die Stühl,  
Die goldene Pracht,  
Nicht ruhen bei Tâg,  
Nicht schlâfen bei Nacht.

Es machen mir taub  
Die goldene Bären;  
Es machen mich blind  
Brillianten wie Steren.

Es rauschen die Spärber,  
Es wârken die Tauben;  
Es blendt Alabaster  
Un Pârl wie Trauben.

Vöegel gingoldene  
Blischtschen un prangen;  
Es sappen ufirene  
Ekdissen, Schlangen.

Es rauschen die Âdler  
Mit goldene Fliegel;  
Es blankt die Menoyrah,  
A goldener Spiegel.

Un Ochsen un Stieren  
Blecken un Wecken;  
Es kappet der Baumel  
Vun goldene Becken.

Un wecken in Harzen  
A selten Gefühl  
Die Frauen-gestalten  
Vun über der Stühl:

Ich seh var d'Augen  
Drei Frauen-Gestalten.  
In Zâp in'm grauem,  
In Kopf in'm alten

Derkenn ich d'Emunah  
In Drehen gebögen,  
Un feichtliche, grüne  
Verglâserte Augen.

## Solomon's Throne

translated by Marty Green

What burns like fever in my brain?  
What grips me like a vise?  
The Golden Throne of Solomon  
I see before my eyes.

No peace of mind by day I find  
Nor restful sleep by night  
While I remain tormented by  
This all-consuming sight:

I see the statues frozen, yet  
Their powers unimpaired:  
The alabaster serpent  
With its fangs forever bared;

The ruby-studded eagle  
With its wings spread wide in flight;  
The golden bear with eyes of pearl  
Now roars with all his might;

The flutter of the sparrow's wings,  
The bleating of the dove;  
The blinding glare of diamonds  
Bright as stars that shine above...

And they cut me to the marrow, yes;  
They chill me to the bone:  
Those woman-figures three who stand  
Above the fabled throne:

And of the three I recognize  
Her body bent and gray;  
Her eyes glazed over, damp and green -  
'Tis Faith who leads the way.

Vergleiste zu'm Himmel  
Vull T'philos, Kavunos –  
Nur hart is die Stimme!  
Es klingt ohn Rakhmunos.

Vun braun-darre Lippen  
Nur Kherem, nur Osur;  
Un wie a Pokschiwe  
Schmachedig Mosur!

Die Khokhmah derkönn ich  
In breitlichen Stern;  
Gekreuselte Locken  
Auf d'Aksel ze-lâs't.

Brilliantene Augen,  
Sée leichten wie Steren;  
Sée leichten doch ruhig  
Un kalt wie der Frost.

Un ständig durch Brillen...  
A Wâg in der Hand;  
All's wollt sie gewögen –  
Der Mâch auf der Wand,

Die Steren in Himmel,  
Den Drâbjasg in Teich;  
All's darf sie wissen,  
Nur all's is ihr gleich!

Es steht noch die Emes,  
Vun Kopf bis die Füßs,  
Verhilt in a Schleuer  
- Weil schrecklich un miyus!

Is nackete Emes!  
Men hât sie verstellt.  
Weil wer es derseht sie,  
Der geht vun der Welt!...

Es schmeckt un es rauscht,  
Es blankt un es blitzt.  
Nur leider, nischt Shloy moh,  
Nur Ashmedai sitzt!

Auf Kisei ben Dovid  
Ben Lilith regiirt!  
Dâs Ponim dâs schwartze,  
Rusiirt, blanschier!

She turns her eyes to heaven,  
And she parts her lips to speak;  
But from those lips, she pleads not Mercy  
For the poor and weak:

But pitch and sulfur, fire and brimstone,  
Bitter condemnation:  
Her tone is dry, her message clear:  
Reproach and accusation.

Tis Wisdom next I recognize  
Her brow is smooth and fair;  
No streaks of gray to dim the luster  
Of her flowing hair.

Her eyes are bright as diamonds,  
And they cast a steady glow;  
Peaceful, calm and confident  
But cold as winter's snow.

With clinical precision now  
She takes her scale in hand:  
And measures to the final grain  
The beaches full of sand.

She weighs the stars in heaven  
And the moss upon the wall.  
But for beauty, love and happiness  
She's not concerned at all.

And last of all comes Truth: her body  
Covered in a shroud.  
So ugly that to look at her  
Must never be allowed.

To spare mankind the sight of her  
She hides behind a veil.  
For no one who has seen her face  
Has lived to tell the tale.

And in the midst of all there sits  
Upon the throne of gold:  
Not Solomon the Wise: instead  
A stranger dark and bold:

His smile is one of insolence;  
His face is smooth and tan;  
Where David's son once reigned, instead  
Now rules the Son of Sam.

In Keter Malkhus  
Di Hörner versteckt...  
Di Hühnere Füßlech  
In Purpur verdeckt.

Un trefft alle *Khodos*  
Vun Goyim un Jüden...  
Un stellt *a-la-Shloymoh*  
Di Weiber zufrieden.

Un schneid't amâl Kinder  
Lebedig zu Tödt;  
Es helfen di Khayos  
Araus fun a Nöt!

Un Shloymoh? Der wandert  
Verhungert, verschmacht.  
Schreit, "*Ani Shlomoh!*"  
Wer glaubt ihm? Men lacht!

Wer den is dort König?  
Men wéisst doch, men hört!  
Wer bringt vun Mitzrayim  
Sich Weiber un Pferd?

Wer hât die Malkah  
Vun *Sheva*-land baglückt?  
Men krächtzt auf'n: "Nebich!  
Der Mensch is verrückt!"

Es schmeckt un es rauscht,  
Es blankt un es blendt;  
'S hât kéiner den Shed  
Auf'n Thron nischt derkennt.

Emuneh – sie klärt nischt,  
Es *pask*'t di Tznuah.  
*Malkhuta d'erea*  
*K'malkhuta d'erka.*

Sie hât sich *ge-poyel*'t a  
"*Loy-yikhratz*" Prikaz:  
Far Umgewaschen  
Khotch schmeissen in Gass.

Minim khotch hängen;  
Un tâpschen in Teich;  
Far schneiden di Nägel  
Ohn Eydos un gleich.

His devil-horns are hidden by  
The kingly crown he wears.  
And purple drapes his chicken-feet  
So strangers needn't stare.

He governs to the broad acclaim  
Of Christian, Moor and Jew.  
And satisfies the ladies  
Just like Shlomoh used to do.

And if he's sometimes known to tear  
A baby limb from limb.  
One understands: the lions, too,  
For meals depend on him.

And what of Solomon the Wise?  
He wanders, dressed in rags.  
He cries in vain: "I'm Solomon!"  
"Says you!" reply the wags.

"If you're the king", the jokers chide,  
"Then show us to your palace!  
"We'll meet the Queen of Sheba!  
Sip champagne from golden chalice!"

"But first we must inquire, My Lord:  
Can you explain, perchance:  
The reason why you can't afford  
A decent pair of pants?"

And tho' the stench grows stronger  
Not a troubled voice is heard.  
A Demon sits upon the throne  
And no one says a word.

Faith has more important things  
To garner her attention:  
The rule of law must be preserved  
By sternest intervention.

By her command a new decree  
To punish lack of soap:  
The penalty for first offense:  
The lash, and then the rope.

And lest some sorry miscreant  
Be found with dirty nails:  
They'll throw him in the sea  
And let him sink among the whales.

Fein is der Rosenöl  
Pisem is nobel.  
‘S stinkt dâs Gehenum doch  
Ärger wie Knâbel.

Die Khokhmah derfühlt es  
Un red’t nischt a Wort.  
Die Khokhmah hot Seykhel  
Un steht auf ihr Ort.

Tzi hâben den alle  
Fünf Khushim kein Tuos.  
Sie soll sich verlâsen  
Alléin auf der Nâs’?

Men fühlt, es is Emes,  
Nu, ‘s trefft sich bei Leut’...  
Sie ruckt abissele  
Âb ân a Seit.

Un nemmt a Schmeck Taback;  
Beruhigt sich bald...  
Ein naarische Emes,  
Sie schreihet schön: “Gewald!”

“Auf Kisei ben Dovid  
A Fremder Parschôn,  
Zieht âb den Mantel  
Arâb nemmt die Krôn!”

In sein Retzikhah  
Is Ashmedai schrecklech:  
Un Generalen,  
Kohanim mit Glöcklech,

Mit Blut vun Korbonos  
Un Kheylev gefetzt,  
A Zehndling Soreysim  
Die hât er gesetzt

Zu mishpat’n Emes.  
Es schweigt der Narod.  
Feint hât men Emes,  
Un weit is zu Gott!

Sokhrim un Schenker  
Schreien: “Nur brennen!”  
Es beten sich Weiber:  
“Khotch Âdern trennen”!

Now people say the rose is red;  
The daffodil is sweet.  
But from Gehenum you can smell  
The stench of rotting meat.

And Wisdom knows there’s something wrong  
But closely guards her tongue.  
For Wisdom has the sense to know  
There’s nothing to be done.

And after all, she tells herself:  
The case is not yet closed:  
With four more senses not yet counted  
Must she trust her nose?

One shouldn’t base one’s judgement  
On a hasty first impression;  
“Best wait until I’ve gathered  
All the facts in my possession.”

She takes a drink to calm her nerves:  
And tries to get some rest:  
When foolish Truth throws off her rags  
And cries out “I protest!”

“A sinister imposter  
Now has stolen David’s Chair!  
Take back the royal scepter!  
The crown he shall not wear!”

“She’ll pay for this!” swears Ashmedai  
“She’ll not survive the hour!”  
He summons forth his faithful lackeys:  
Men of wealth and power.

Their blood-lust whetted, people rush  
To revel in the play:  
Shall it be boiling oil, the rack,  
Or fire that rules the day?

And judgement follows swiftly  
To the silence of the mob.  
For Truth is liked by no one  
And so far away is God!

Then merchant-men and bankers cry,  
“Just toss her in the fire!”  
While kercheif-wearing slatterns stack  
More branches on her pyre.

Men wéisst, ohn Rakhmim  
Wet aus-gehen a P'sak.  
Es rinnt der Emuneh  
A Trähr auf der Back.

Nur "*le-man yedeyu*"  
Es helft kein Rakhmunos!  
*Almola Moriah...*  
Proste Sekunos.

Sie schickt an *Eyn-horeh* –  
A Blick in der Seit.  
Die Khokhmah versteht schön  
Wâs d' Äugel badeut.

Sie seht wie'n a Spiegel  
Die allerlei S'khoyros  
Mit wâs sie wet handlen  
*Ad soph kol ha-doyros.*

Sie seht in'm Äugel  
Ot Widles zu Fleisch.  
Havdolos - zu *borei*  
*Me-orei ha-eish.*

Zwangen zu Nägel  
Un Messer zu Brüsten  
Un Knacker zu Béiner –  
Es tor sich nischt glusten.

Die Khokhmah verstéinert,  
Kein T'nuah, kein Klang...  
Es hât sie ver-*kishuph*'t  
Die giftige Schlang.

Un 's raasht sich in Tzion,  
Es jâgen sich Massen.  
Men lauft auf'n Wünder,  
Men paukt in die Gassen.

Kostroï treibt men Emes,  
Es knackt un es knallt...  
Die Emes, geschmiessen  
Entlauft in a Wald.

Dort hât sie getroffen  
A Löeb tzi a Bâer....  
Sâgt nâch ihr Kadish,  
Sie lebt schön nischt mehr.

But even Satan's justice  
Must preserve a thin veneer.  
He calls on Faith to consecrate  
The sentence with a tear.

A show of tender mercy  
But no difference will it make.  
When Truth is broken on the rack  
And wasted at the stake.

And Faith steps forward to intone  
A solemn word or two.  
But her eyes convey a message  
Understood by just a few.

Twas Wisdom grasped the meaning  
Hidden in that evil gaze.  
She saw a bargain sealed in blood  
Until the end of days.

And she knew that with her silence  
She had given her assent  
To the triumph of perdition  
And humanity's torment

Now the nation seethes and roils,  
Fevered masses crowd the street;  
To celebrate the spectacle  
Of Truth at Evil's feet.

They drive her through the gauntlet  
As the rabble laughs with glee.  
Bloodied now and beaten  
To the forest she must flee.

And there she meets a lion  
Or perhaps it was a boar.  
It doesn't really matter  
She's not with us any more.