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Singing for Survival

Songs of the Lodz Ghetto,
1940-45

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The Song: A "Hit"

During the first year of the ghetto's existence the song "Rumkowski Chaim," performed by the street entertainer Yankele Hershkowitz, became very popular. Most of the survivors remember the song, even if they do not recall the singer's real name and do not remember seeing him in the ghetto.

Yankele Hershkowitz and his "hit song" are described by the chroniclers in their entry of 5 December 1941:

The author and performer of this song is the popular ghetto street "troubadour" (Yankele) Hershkowitz, formerly a tailor by trade. Last year he composed the extremely popular topical song entitled "Rumkowski Chaim" . . . and once even received a gift of five Marks from the Chairman himself, who had chanced to hear the song. Another time, the ghetto "troubadour" received a package of matzoth from the Chairman in person when he was performing his song in front of a store which the Chairman happened to be visiting before the holidays. At present the song writer has formed a partnership with a man from Vienna, a certain Karl Rosentsweig, a former traveling salesman. Rosentsweig accompanies Hershkowitz on the guitar or zither. And this duo, which, like everything else in the ghetto, is a bit peculiar, being composed of a tailor from Bałut and a traveling salesman from Vienna, is enjoying great success with the populace. This is of course good for their business and the duo sometimes ends up with six Marks to share after a full day's work, a tidy wage indeed. The partnership has recently launched a new song.³ . . . The ghetto's songwriter also composed another very popular "hit song" entitled "lebn zol prezes Chaim" (Long live Chairman Chaim). (Dobroszycki 1984: 92)

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Yankele Hershkowitz composed and sang his songs in Yiddish, the Jewish vernacular. The verses covered a broad range of political and social topics in which the singer lamented the past and commented on the present. He continued the tradition of the broder-singers (singers from Brody) of the *Haskalah* period, the wandering minstrels who entertained on the street corners of Eastern Europe with topical and satirical songs. However, unlike his predecessors who traveled from one town to the next, the ghetto singer was confined to the ghetto.

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נאנקל'ס גאס "נאנקל"

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Opator

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Yankele Hershkowitz could also be classified as a typical Eastern European Yiddish folk singer, one of those performers of the last two centuries who later became popular singers in the growing urban centers of Poland and elsewhere. According to Cahan, one of the early folklorists of Jewish folksong, such a singer came from a low-to middle-class family and used his talent to earn additional income. Due to his background, his repertoire addressed the issues of "all people," and he drew on familiar topics and musical sources: "his outlook of the world is the same as that of his fellow men, he draws his ideas from the common life of his surroundings, using the folk's mouth and his own soul. He is one of the masses with a natural poetic nature, but not a famous [literate] poet" (Cahan 1952: 11).

The Jewish folksinger of the interwar period was exposed to both Yiddish and Polish folk music and popular music, as well as to American popular music, both Jewish and non-Jewish, which made its way to Europe. In addition, the singer could be exposed to classical music or its popular rendition and to Jewish sacred music. The main difference that separated the Jewish singer from his neighbors before 1939 was his use of two internal languages: Yiddish and Hebrew.

Thus the description of Yankele Hershkowitz given by Rachmil Bryks in his novel *Di papirene kroyn* (The paper crown) fits into the framework of the typical Jewish folksinger:

Yankele was a genuine folksinger. . . . Just before World War II he arrived in Lodz from Aft. He was a tailor of cheap designs, a simple, nice man. All his education came from the *kheyder* where he studied 'vry [the basic Hebrew alphabet and biblical stories]. . . . At a young age he had to go to work to help his poor family. He did not even know Polish; he wrote Yiddish with mistakes. . . . He traveled with other tailors to nearby towns to trade his merchandise and thus he learned folksongs and folktales. . . . He had a pleasant voice. He enjoyed singing and sang very emotionally. For each event of the *shtetl* he com-

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posed a poem and adapted it to a well-known melody. Soon afterwards, all the people of the *shtetl* sang his rhymes. . . . When the ghetto was sealed and Yankele did not have anything on which to survive, he knew that Mordechai Chaim Rumkowski was responsible for that, and this was what most of the ghetto inhabitants thought. . . . Thus he composed the song about Rumkowski . . . and adapted the lyrics to an old folk melody. . . . (1969: 34-35)

In the ghetto, where no radios were allowed, newspapers forbidden, and political gatherings outlawed, the only form of expression still permitted (albeit supervised) was singing. Thus, it is not surprising that the "king of the ghetto"—Chaim Rumkowski—became the theme of "Rumkowski Chaim," a song that was to be the ghetto's greatest "hit."

Yankele Hershkowitz was accompanied, some survivors observe, by a musical instrument. However, there is some debate over the instrument used. The conflicting reports prove one thing at any rate: his accompaniment was most likely an ad-hoc affair determined by the availability of instruments and accompanists.

Hershkowitz uses a verse-refrain structure for this song as well as for most of his songs. These are most likely *contrafact*, that is, songs created by setting new words to a pre-existing melody, a method traditional among folk poets who are also folksingers. According to Beregovski, the "new" satirical songs "largely use the devices of contrast and parody, as did the older satirical songs . . ." (1982: 34). My research has not yielded an original source for the melody of "Rumkowski Chaim," and it is more than likely that Hershkowitz drew his melody from the body of Yiddish folk tunes.

The version I present here is one I recorded in Israel during the summer of 1985.⁴ It was sung by Yaakov Rotenberg, a survivor of the Lodz ghetto who was fourteen when the ghetto was sealed. The text is transcribed into Latin characters according to the pronunciation of the informant in his special Lodz dialect. An English translation is provided along with the Yiddish. (The words in the lyrics which are marked with an asterisk are discussed in note 4.)

Song 1

Rumkovski khayim (Rumkowski Chaim)

Verse



Yi - da - lakh zay - nen ge - bentsht mit kha - yim, — Kha -

yim le - oy - lam mu - ves, Kha - yim fin beys ha - kha - yim, —
 — Rum-kov-ski kha-yim mit zayn groy - sn nes. — Er makht dekh
 ni - sim oy, Yey-dn tug a - zoy, Ge - valt tsi shra - a - yen oy, oy.
 oy. Ye - der ay - ner frey - gt. — A tsvay - te shay -
 le, oy. — Zugt er kha - yim s'iz git a - zoy.
 Refrain
 Vayl ind - zer kha - yim, Er get indz kla - yen, Er get indz
 gro - pn, Er get indz man, Far-tsay - tns hobn di mid - ber yi - dn
 ge - ge - sn man; Hay - nt est shoy n ye - de vayb ir
 man. — Rum-kov-ski kha - yim hot git ge - trakht, Ge - ar - bet
 shve - [e]r bay tug bay nakht, — Ge - makht a ge - to in a
 dye - to, — In er shrayt ge - vald ar iz ge - rakht!

ווייזמאן : רומקוב

① Verse 1:
 Yidalakh zaynen gebentsht mit khayim,
 Khayim leoylam muves.
 ② Khayim fin beys ha'khayim,
 ③ Rumkovski khayim mit zayn groysn nes.
 Er makht dekh nisim oy,
 Yeydn tug azoy,
 Gevalt tsi shrayen oy, oy, oy,
 Yeyder ayner freygt:
 A tsvayte shayle, oy,
 Zugt er khayim s'iz git azoy!

Refren:
 Vayl [er iz] indzer khayim,
 Er get indz klaven,
 Er get indz gropn,
 Er get indz man.*
 Fartsaytns hobn di midber yidn gegesn man,
 Haynt est shoy n yede vayb ir man.
 Rumkovski khayim hot git getrakht,
 Gearbet shver bay tug bay nakht,
 Gemakht a geto in a dyeto
 In er shrayt gevald a[z] [e]r iz gerakht!

Verse 2:
 Khayim vaytsman hot gezugt:
 Az er vil di yidn in palestine hobn.
 Hot zay gehaysn akern zeyen,
 Er hot zay dortn tif bagrubn;
 Ober indzer khayim'l,
 Rumkovski khayim,
 Er get indz yeydn tug shrayim:
 Aynem a shtik broyt,
 In tsvey n a shtik ferd,
 Me leygt bay eyem oyekh tif'n drend.

Refren: Vayl iz indzer . . .

Verse 1:
 Jews are seen to be blessed with life,
 Life until death,
 Life from the house of life, cemetery
 Rumkowski Chaim and his great miracle.
 He makes miracles, oy,
 So every day,
 For heaven's sake, oy, oy, oy,
 Everyone asks:
 A second question, oy?
 Chaim says: It's good this way!

Refrain:
 Because [he is] our Chaim*
 He gives us bran,
 He gives us barley,
 He gives us manna.*
 Once upon a time Jews of the desert ate manna,
 Now each woman eats her husband.
 Rumkowski Chaim thought it through,
 Worked hard day and night,
 Made a ghetto with a diet (store),*
 And claims gevald that he is right!

Verse 2:
 Chaim Weizmann said:
 He wants to have the Jews in Palestine.
 He told them to plow, sow,
 He did them in there deep;
 But, our Chaim,
 Rumkowski Chaim,
 Everyday he gives us leftovers:
 One a piece of bread,
 The other a piece of horse,
 And we are also done in deep.

Refrain: . . .

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Verse 3:

Der driter khayim fin beys ha'khayim,
 Hot mit malkhe [ha]muvés a git gesheft gemakht:
 Er zol im tsishteln maysim vus mer;
 Er zol im tsishteln bay tug bay nakht.
 Hot zekh der malekh ha'muvés genimen
 Tsi der arbet shnel.
 Er makht fin yedn giber* oy a tel:
 Er makht des flink,
 Er makht des git.
 Er makht di gantse geto* shvakh in mid.

Refrain: Vayl iz indzer . . .

Verse 4:

In a zimer tug,
 Geveyzn iz a tug a hayser,
 Geyt rumkovski in der gas,
 Er zet dokh oys vi a keyser.
 A hele antsug, oy,
 In tinkele briln,
 Politsay arim bevakht.
 Iekh zug aykh guér
 Indzer keyser hot groue huer,
 Leybn zol er gantse hindert yuer!

Refrain: Vayl iz indzer . . .

Verse 5:

Rumkovski khayim der eltster yude,
 Iz ungeshtelt bay di gestapo
 Meve yidalakh zaynen zayne bruder,
 In er farzorgt indz di papo.
 Er makht dekh nisim oy,
 Yeydn tug azoy
 Gevald tsi shrayen oy, oy, oy!
 Yeyder ayner freygt:
 A tsvayte shayle oy?
 Zugt er khayim: s'iz git azoy!

Verse 3:

The third Chaim of the house of life,
 Made a good deal with the angel of death:
 He should provide him more and more corpses,
 He should provide them day and night.
 So, the angel of death
 Got to work right away.
 He makes a mess out of every hero:
 He does it quickly,
 He does it well.
 He makes the whole ghetto weak and tired.

Refrain: . . .

Verse 4:

On a summer day,
 It was a very hot day,
 Rumkowski walked in the street,
 And looked like a Royal Highness.
 He wore a light-colored suit, oy,
 And dark glasses,
 Surrounded by the police.
 I tell you
 Our Royal Highness has gray hair,
 May he live to be a hundred!

Refrain: . . .

Verse 5:

Rumkowski Chaim, the Eldest of the Jews,
 Is employed by the Gestapo.
 We Jews are his brothers,

And he supplies our food.
 He makes miracles, oy,
 So every day,
 For heaven's sake, oy, oy, oy!
 Everyone asks:
 A second question, oy?
 Chaim says: It's good this way!

I have recorded an additional verse on Rumkowski, from Yaakov Flam, sung to the same melody. This verse was recalled and published by Frenkiel (1986b: 43-44), a survivor of the Lodz ghetto who considers it an independent song and not as a verse of this "hit song," even though it is sung to the same melody:

Verse 6:

Ikh hob aykh yidelekh epes tsi zugn:
 A kadokhes vel ikh aykh zugn.
 Di yidelekh zugn shoyn fil nevues,
 "Az di geto efenen vet men shevues!"
 A tsveytn tug er redt,
 Yidelekh makhn shoyn a gevet
 Un lernen zekh shoyn vayter trefn,
 Rumkovski fin di yidelekh lakht:
 "A krenk vus ir trakht!"
 Di geto blaybt oykh vayter git farmakht.

[kadokhes אנצפ]

Verse 6:

I've got for you, Jews, something to tell you:
 It's a big nothing I've got to tell you.
 The Jews mouth many prophecies already,
 "The Ghetto will open
 on Shavuot!"
 A second day he makes a speech,
 Jews are already betting
 And trying to guess;
 But Rumkowski laughs at the Jews:
 "Who cares what you think!"
 And still the ghetto stays tightly closed.

* The song, especially the refrain, is known to every survivor of the Lodz ghetto. In addition, Yaakov Rotenberg even calls it *ha-shir ha-gadol* in Hebrew, meaning the "hit" song of the ghetto. Rachmil Bryks quotes the refrain in his novel *Der kayser in geto* (The emperor in the ghetto) and describes children and adults singing it, accompanying themselves with hand clapping and foot stamping

(1961:29). Bryks also quotes a variant of the refrain (1961:196) which was composed by the ghetto children for a play they performed on a street corner:

Rumkowski Chaim
Er get indz mayim,
Er get indz fefer,
Er get indz sam . . .
R'hot gemakht a gete mit a dyete.
R'hot gemakht a gete mit a mete
Und er shrayt
Az er iz gerekht!

Rumkowski Chaim
He gives us water,
He gives us pepper,
He gives us poison.
He made a ghetto
With a diet.
He made a ghetto
By the meter—
And he claims
That he is right!

Pol. sentries

Chava Rosenfarb in her trilogy *Der boym fun lebn* (The tree of life) also quotes an abridged version of the song (1972, 2:550). The opening three verses speak in turn about the three "Chaims": Chaim Rumkowski; Chaim Weitzmann, the Zionist leader; and Chaim *der grober* (the fat), the undertaker of the ghetto. The latter's nickname is a multilevel pun relating to his physical appearance (*grob* in Yiddish means fat one) and to his profession (*gräber* is German for gravedigger). The real name of Chaim *der grober* was Chaim Perzerkowski; he survived the war and died soon after its end, in 1945 in Lodz.⁵

The final two verses give sarcastic praise to Rumkowski. These might be considered as dues paid to the "Royal Highness" so he would not get angry and arrest the singer. These verses could have been improvised when the singer saw Rumkowski in the streets, and were probably not composed at the same time as the first three verses. My sources could not give any dates for the composition in general or for any particular verses.

The sixth verse comments on Rumkowski's speechmaking, for while he favored big words in order to foster hope, his words actually contained nothing of substance.

Throughout the song, contrasts are made between "him," the leader, and "us," the ghetto dwellers. The name Chaim literally means "life," but the song which was composed in the ghetto has other important features. In its many-layered allusions to the heritage of Jewish cultural life, biblical themes, Hassidic folklore, and Zionism, "Rumkowski Chaim" is a powerfully ironic commentary on the abuses of power, the senseless infliction of suffering on one's fellow man, and the negation of life—death.

The following is my line-by-line interpretation of the text based on this background and the interviews I have conducted.

The word *khayim* (Yidd.: Chaim) serves as a leitmotif for the first verse as well as for the entire song. The song declares: "Jews are seen to be blessed with life, life until death." This statement has morbidly recast the biblical verse "For dust we thou art, and unto dust shall thou return" (Gen. 3:19), as "from the cemetery we are created and to the cemetery we return." (Cemetery = *beys ha-khayim*, that is, euphemistically, house of life.) An analogy is made between Chaim Rumkowski, the Jewish leader, and Moses, the Jewish historical leader. Chaim promised the ghetto dwellers miracles, promised them food (life) that would descend as a result of miracles, when in actuality the result of these promises is that they starved. However, when the ghetto dwellers complain, Rumkowski answers, "It's good this way." The question reflects their misery, but also Rumkowski's belief that he was doing the right thing.

The refrain makes clear the analogy to Moses: Moses gave his people the "manna" by miracles. Rumkowski, on the other hand, "gives us bran / he gives us barley / he gives us wine." The wine was made from barley, the informant explains, just as in the variant (quoted above) Rumkowski is like Moses and "gives us manna." But unlike the children of Israel in the desert, the ghetto-dwellers starve. Nothing is left but to complain. The wife complains to her husband, as described in the song: "Jews in the desert ate manna / Now each woman eats her husband." This plays on the Yiddish idiom *esn zikh*—to eat away at something; in this case the woman's complaints "eat up" her husband. The poet also plays on the rhyme-association—*manna*, the biblical sustenance, and *man*, Yiddish for husband. The poet gives an explanation as to how the ghetto reached its desperate condition, in the line "Rumkowski Chaim thought it through, / worked hard day and night, / made a ghetto with a diet." As Rute Pups (1962:56–58) explains, the word *dyeto* meant a special food store which carried better food products. Officially the

store was for "sick people," but in fact it was for privileged people from whom Rumkowski wanted support. So, while Rumkowski and his friends are eating well, everyone else eats poorly.

The refrain reminded Hershkowitz's audience as to who was responsible for the deteriorating situation in the ghetto, describing the lack of resources and identifying the main cause of the suffering.

The repetition of the word *khayim* in the refrain brings to mind the blessing of the new month in which the reader and the congregation ask God for eleven different kinds of *khayim*: life. On the Sabbath preceding *Rosh Hodesh*, Jews call upon God: "grant us long life, a life of peace and well-being, a life of blessing and sustenance, a life of physical health, a life of piety and dread of sin, a life free from shame and disgrace, a life of wealth and honor, a life marked by our love for Torah and our fear of Heaven, a life in which the wishes of our heart shall be fulfilled for happiness" (translation in Birnbaum 1969: 430). This contrast of a blessing which becomes a curse, life which is like death but not death itself, is the central motif of this song.

The second verse introduces Chaim Weizmann, the leader of the Zionist movement. Again the contrast is made: Chaim Weizmann entrapped the Jewish people in the Holy Land by telling them to work the soil, and in the ghetto, the dwellers work and yet receive *shirayim* (Heb.: leftovers). The reference to *shirayim* also requires some explanation: This Hebrew word for leftovers specifically refers to that part of the meal a Hassidic Rebbe would leave for his followers. In the song text this tributary food, originally an act of respect, is "a piece of bread, . . . a piece of horse" (the latter is not kosher). Yaakov Rotenberg recalls how Orthodox Jews spat at the singer when he mentioned the horsemeat. For many Jews, however, it was at that time the food that saved their lives. *Shirayim* rhymes with *khayim* (life), and *ferd* (horse, i.e., horsemeat = food = life) rhymes with *drerd* (the earth), making life like death.

The third verse presents the third Chaim, the gravedigger, who brings corpses to the "house of life," the cemetery. This Chaim, as described in the song, is very productive: "(He) made a good deal with the angel of death: / He should provide him more and more corpses; / He should provide them day and night." The "deal" was struck between the Angel of Death (the only angel known in the ghetto) and the undertaker. The Angel of Death is a good worker: he "got to work right away. / He makes a mess out of every hero. / He does it quickly, He does it well. / He makes the ghetto weak and tired." This efficient cooperation between the two creates a weak

ghetto, or in some versions, a weak world—which for the inhabitants means probably the same thing. This partnership, made in heaven, causes dreadful results on earth.

Here the song could come to an end (as in Itka Slodowsky's version);⁶ however Yaakov Rotenberg remembered two additional verses devoted exclusively to the "Royal Highness," the "First Chaim," Chaim Rumkowski.

The fourth verse begins with a description of a seasonal moment in the ghetto: it is a summer day, a hot summer day; Chaim Rumkowski wears a light-colored suit, his eyes are shielded by dark glasses. Why? Does he not wish to see what is going on in the ghetto? In his kingdom? In contrast to the cold and darkness suffered by the ghetto dwellers, a motif found in many songs of the period, the sun always shines for Rumkowski. He walks in the streets surrounded by personal guards; he is not alone "and look[s] like a Royal Highness." And the verse concludes: "I tell you / Our Royal Highness has gray hair; / May he live to be a hundred!" The poet tells his audience that although Rumkowski is not young—after all he was appointed to be the "Eldest of the Jews"—he wished him to live to be a hundred. This blessing is actually a curse, since Jews bless each other with *hundert und tsvontsik yor*—"may you live to be a hundred and twenty," the number of years that Moses lived (Deut. 34:7). Here, then, it becomes clear that Rumkowski is not Moses; as a "tribute" to his leadership even a hundred years are more than enough.

Yaakov Rotenberg and Rute Pups (1962: 56–58) both report that when the singer used to sing the last line of that verse, "may he live to be a hundred," the audience would respond with an additional sarcastic sentence: *Az aynnemen zol er a shvarts yor*, meaning "May he live through a black year," i.e., may the devil take him. And thus they expressed their anger and "love" to their Royal Highness.

The fifth verse continues the line of thought presented in the fourth verse: yes, Rumkowski is the "Eldest of the Jews"; that is the title given to him by the Germans. He has to obey the *Gestapo*, but "We Jews are his brothers / and he supplies our food" (*papo* is the Polish word for cereal, meaning basic food). In addition one should not forget that "He makes miracles, so every day / for heaven's sake, oy, oy, oy."

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The sixth verse is a commentary on Rumkowski's speeches, which created fear and at the same time hope. They were the source for rumors, and were delivered in a Lithuanian dialect; Rumkowski thought this to be the dialect of the Jewish intelligentsia of which he wanted to become a part. Rumors such as "the ghetto will open on

Shavuot" were spread often, but this and other rumors were pure fantasy. Shavuot is the holiday that commemorates Moses' bringing the Torah (God's law) from Mount Sinai to the Children of Israel. However, in the ghetto there was no Torah, no Moses, no holiday, and no freedom; it remained tightly closed, its dwellers hopeless and weakened.

Dobroszycki writes, "Rumkowski rarely doubted that he was in the right" (1984:1). Indeed, Yankele Hershkowitz ends his song with the last words of its refrain manifesting the same idea.

The melody of "Rumkowski Chaim," which contributed to its popularity, may have been adapted from another source. The melody has many characteristics of Jewish folksong with reminders of cantorial recitation, and this may have been its origin. It is cast in a minor mode. It makes use of a distinctive rhythmic manner of text setting—iambic primas—a melodic-rhythmic figure with a universal repetition. This figure, according to Braun (1984:285 n. 44), is characteristic of Jewish folksong.

The song form is: verse, A A' B B'; refrain, A A' B B'. This form is common in both Jewish folk music (cf. Beregovski 1982:293) and European and Jewish popular music (cf. Idelsohn 1967:400). The verse and the refrain share similar rhythmic and melodic material. It is sung in a triple meter with an upbeat which causes asymmetric accents on weak beats. Like other Jewish folksongs, according to Beregovski (1982:293), the melody is symmetrical; the underlying structure of this song is in four measures.

The "sweet" melody with its ironic cantorial ornamentations carries a profound commentary on daily suffering in the ghetto. The match between the text and the melody caused the song to live in the memory of the survivors.

Vehicle vs. tenor



Song 31

Makh tsi di eygelekh (Close Your Little Eyes)

Text: Isaiah Shpigl (1906–1990)

Music: David Beyglman (1887–1944)

Makh tsi di ey - ge-lekh, Ot ki - men
 fey - ge-lekh In kray - zn do a - rim
 Tsi - ko-pns fin dayn vig. Dos pe - kl
 in der hant, Dos hoyz in ash in brand; Mir lo - zn
 zikh, mayn kind, — Zi - khn glik.

Makh tsi di eygelekh,
Ot kimen feygelekh
In krayzn do arim
Tsikopns fin dayn vig.
Dos pekl in der hant,
Dos hoyz in ash in brand,
Mir lozn zikh, mayn kind,
Zikhn glik.

Di velt hot got farmakht,
In imetim iz nakht—
Zi vart af indz
Mit shoyder in mit shrek.
Mir shteyen beyde do,
In shverer, shverer sho
In veysn mit vihin
S'firt der veg.

Men hot indz naket, bloyz
Faryogt fin indzer hoyz.
In fintsternish,
Getribn indz in feld,
In shturem, hogl, vint
Hot indz bagleyt, mayn kind,
Bagleyt indz inem opgrint
Fin der velt.

Close your little eyes,
Soon little birds will fly
In circles everywhere,
Around your cradle.
Your bundle in your hand,
Your house in ash and sand,
We leave you, my child,
In search for luck.

God closed the world,
Everywhere is night—

She waits for us
With horror and with dread.
We both are standing here,
At this difficult time,
Not knowing where
Our road is leading.

Stripped naked,
We were thrown from our home.
In the dark of night,
Driven out into the open field,
The wind and hail and storm
Accompanied us, my child,
Accompanied us into
The depths of the earth.

This lullaby was written by Isaiah Shpigl, a writer-poet-essayist-teacher who survived the Lodz ghetto and Auschwitz.⁸ It was performed in the ghetto theater by the professional singer Ella Diamant. The song has been published in several collections,⁹ however only two survivors I interviewed, Lucille Eichengreen and Miriam Harel, were able to recall any part of it.

The lullaby is one of the most popular song genres of Yiddish folk and theater music. The performance of lullabies had been a tradition in the Yiddish theater from its inception under Goldfajn in the mid-nineteenth century. In a typical Jewish lullaby, the mother soothes the child to sleep with promises of pleasant times to come. The father is usually absent, off making money for the child's education; his return, however, is said to be imminent. Shpigl's composition turns this concept upside down: Father will never come home. The child lies down to sleep in an open field at the mercy of the elements, his parents' house having been burned to the ground.

Nature does not smile on this Jewish child; rather, the world is full of horror. God has brought night into the little boy's world. The third verse strengthens the horror: "In the dark of night, / Driven out into the open fields, / The wind and hail and storm / Accompanied us, my child, / Accompanied us into depths of the earth."

According to Lucille Eichengreen, Rumkowski was in attendance during one of the performances of this song. He felt that the song manifested a pessimistic point of view of his "kingdom" and instructed the poet, "Bay mir vest mer nisht zingen" (you will never sing for me again). The song was forbidden and Shpigl was threatened with deportation. After some negotiation, he was allowed to remain in the ghetto but was transferred to a different workshop.

The music is a rare form of musical hybrid, a tango-lullaby. Evidently, tango melodies were so popular during this period that even tender lyrics could be set to them without seeming in the least incongruous.

Song 32

Nit kayn rozhinkes, nit kayn mandlen
(No More Raisins, No More Almonds)

Text: Isaiah Shpigl

Music: David Beyglman

Nit kayn ro - zhin - kes in nit kayn mand - len. Der
ta - te iz nit ge - fo - rn hand - len, Lyu - lin - ke, mayn
zun. Er hot far - lozt indz in a - vek,
Vi di velt hot nor an ek, Lyu - lin - ke, mayn zun.

Nit kayn rozhinkes in nit kayn mandlen.

Der tate iz nit geforn handlen,
Lyulinke mayn zun,
Lyulinke mayn zun.

Er hot farlozt indz in avek,
Vi di velt hot nor an ek,
Lyulinke, mayn zun,
Lyulinke, mayn zun.

S'shrayen soves, s'voyen velf,
Got, derbarem zikh un helf,
Lyulinke mayn zun,
Lyulinke mayn zun.

Ergets shteyt er in er vakht,
Mandlen, rozhinkes a sakh,
Lyulinke mayn zun,
Lyulinke mayn zun.

Kimen r'vet af zikher shoyn,
Zen dikh, kind, mayn eyntsik kroyn,
Lyulinke mayn zun,
Lyulinke mayn zun.

No raisins and no almonds.

Your father has not gone out trading,
Lu, lu, lu, my son,
Lu, lu, lu, my son.

He has left us, gone away,
To the end of the world,
Lu, lu, lu, my son,
Lu, lu, lu, my son.

Owls are screeching, wolves are howling,
God have pity on us and help us,
Lu, lu, lu, my son,
Lu, lu, lu, my son.

Somewhere he is standing, watching,
Lots of almonds and raisins,
Lu, lu, lu, my son,
Lu, lu, lu, my son.

There's no doubt that he will come,
To watch you, son, my only crown,
Lu, lu, lu, my son,
Lu, lu, lu, my son.

None of the informants I interviewed recalls this particular song. However, it can be found in the published collections of Kaczerginsky (1948:93, 387) and Mlotek and Gottlieb (1983:62-63). Like the previous song, it is a lullaby. According to Kaczerginsky, it was written after the death of Shpigl's daughter, Eva.

The song is a "negative" version of Goldfadn's lullaby "Rozhinkes mit mandlen" (Raisins and almonds), perhaps the best-known song of the Yiddish theater, if not of all Yiddish songs. Goldfadn's tender lyric (based in turn on a whole corpus of "Rozhinkes" in Yiddish folklore) asks the sweet child to sleep well; his father has gone to market, and when he returns he will bring raisins and almonds. The little boy will grow up to be a scholar.¹⁰

The ghetto version, however, declares: No raisins, no almonds, father (who has not gone trading) will never come back home. Where did he go? To the world's end. Nature is personified; owls and wolves identify and sympathize with the man going "who knows where." The music does not quote or parody Goldfadn's original tune or any of the many "Rozhinkes" folk melodies.

39 סעט 39, (י'ק) מלכות; 1942 יולי 10; 1942 יולי 10; 1942 יולי 10

ROSKIES / Lecture on Ghetto Songs

Rivkele the Sabbath One

Rivkele, the Sabbath one,
In a factory toils,
Twists a strand into a strand,
Weaves a braided coil.

Rivkele di shabesdike
Arbet in fabrik.
Dreyt a fodem tsu a fodem.
Flekht tsunoyf a shtrik.

רבקהלע די שבחדיקע
ארבעט אין פאבריק.
דרייט א פאדעם צו א פאדעם,
פלעכט צונויף א שטריק.

Oh, the gloomy ghetto
Stands there much too long.
And her heart with so much pain.
Rueful, so forlorn.

Oy, di geto fintstere,
Doyert shoy'n tsu lang.
Un dos harts azoy farklemt
Tut ir azoy bang.

איר געטרייער הערשעלע
איז ארוועק, ניטא.
זינט פון יענעם שבת אן,
זינט פון יענער שעה.

Her devoted Hershele
Gone, has gone away.
Since that fateful Saturday,
Since that time, that day

Ir getrayer Hershele
Iz avek, nito,
Zint fun yenem shabes on,
Zint fun yener sho.

ווי אזוי ער, מיין ליבניקער,
לעבט ער נאך כאטש ווי?
צי אין קאצענטראציע-לאגער
ארבעט שווער אן רוי?

Sits in mourning Rivkele,
Mourns day and night,
Turns the wheel of her machine,
Thinking of her plight:

Vu iz er, mayn libinker,
Lebt er nokh khotsh vu?
Tsi in kontsentratsye-lager
Arbet shver on ru?

Peysakh Kaplan (Bialyotok Ghetto)

contract 15/11/42

Yisrolik

Nu koyft zhe papirosn,
Nu koyft zhe sakharin,
Gevorn iz haynt skhoyre bilik vert.

Hey, come and buy tobacco,
Come buy my saccharin,
These days the stuff is selling cheap as dirt.

A life for just a penny,
One cent is what I earn -
About the ghetto peddler have you heard?

A lebn far a groshn,
A prute a fardinst
Fun geto-hendler hot ir dokh gehert.

I'm called Yisrolik,
A kid right from the ghetto;
I'm called Yisrolik,
A reckless kind of guy.

Though I'm left with less than nothing,
Still a whistle and song is my reply!

A mantl on a kragn,
Takhtoy'nim fun a zak,
Kaloshn hob ikh, -s'feln nor di shikh.

A coat without a collar,
A shirt made from a sack;
I have galoshes - haven't got the shoes.

Whoever finds this funny,
Whoever dares to laugh -
I'll show them that I'm not one to abuse!

Un ver es vet nor vagn
Tsu lakh, oy, a sakh -
Dem vel ikh nokh vayzn ver bin ikh!

I'm called Yisrolik...
Don't think the gutter spawned me,
Don't think I have no claim -
A mother and a father loved me too.

Both were taken from me,
It's useless to complain,
But like the wind I'm lonely, it is true.

Nit meynt mikh hot geborn
Di hefkerdike gas-
Bay tate-mame oykh geven a kind.

I'm called Yisrolik,
And when no one is looking,
From my eyes
I wipe away a tear.

But this anguish -
Is not for speaking,
Why remember,
How much can one heart bear?

This song was first presented at the second public theatre performance in the Vilno ghetto in February, 1942. Words are by Leyb Rozental (See note about author in Ikh Benk Ahey'm). Composer Misha Veksler (1907-1943), the conductor of the Jewish theatre orchestra in the Vilno ghetto, met his death during the liquidation of the ghetto in September, 1943.

Yampolsky : יאָמפּאָלסקי : 500.2.1 - 0'6/11/0 : 8.5.18 N

DREMLN FEYGL AF DI TSVAYGN

Moderato



Drem-len fey-gl af di tsvaygn, Shlof, mayn tay-er kind.



Bay dayn vi-gl af dayn na-re Zitst a fremde un zingt,



Bay dayn vi-gl af dayn na-re Zitst a frem - de un



zingt: Lyu - lyu, lyu - lyu, lyu.

Dremlen feygl af di tsvaygn,
Shlof, mayn tayer kind.
Bay dayn vi-gl, af dayn na-re
Zitst a fremde un zingt:
Lyu-lyu, lyu-lyu, lyu.

pallet

Siz dayn vi-gl vu geshtanen
Oysgeflokhtn fun glik,
Un dayn mame, oy dayn mame,
Kumt shoy'n keyn mol nit tsurik.
Lyu-lyu, lyu-lyu, lyu.

Kh'hob gezen dayn tatn loyfn
Unter hogl fun shteyn,
Iber felder iz gefloygn
Zayn faryosemter geveyn.
Lyu-lyu, lyu-lyu, lyu.

Birds are drowsing on the branches.
Sleep, my darling child.
At your cradle, in the field,
A stranger sits and sings.
Once you had another cradle
Woven out of joy,
And your mother, oh your mother
Will never more come by.
I saw your father fleeing
Under the rain of countless stones,
Over fields and over valleys
Flew his orphaned cry.

Leah Rudnitski
(Vilna Ghetto)

22. ביים געטא-טויערל

ביים געטא-טויערל ברענט א פֿײַערל
אין די שרעק איז גרויס, שׂרעק
עס גייען יודעלעך פון די בריגאדעלעך,
פֿון יעדן ניסט זיך שווייס.

זי זאָל איך בלעבן שטיין,
זי זאָל איך וועטער גיין,
איך ווייס נישט, ווען און וווּ.
דער קאָמנדאָנטעלע אין גרינעם מאַנטעלע
ער נעמט דאָך אלעס צו...

געלט א בייטעלע,
האלץ א שניטעלע,
ער נעמט דאָך אלעס צו,
מילך א קענדעלע,
שפּעק א פֿענדעלע,
ער לאָזט דאָך נישט צו ריין.

חֵבֶר מִיטן שטרֵיף, ווּ
איך בין אינגאנצן טרייף
הירבניין דעם קאָנטראָל.
פֿאַר דעם ביסל שרעק
קריגסט א קילאָ שפּעק
אין מאָרגן נאָך אַסאָל.

שטעלט זיך אויס צו פֿיר
אין דו לעבן מיר,
ישטופ זיך נישט פון זעם,
דו גיי צום רעכטן גוי,
"שיטאָס יאָו טוואַרקאָן" —
געמאַכט א לעבל ברויט.

אברהם אקסעלרוד
אומגעקומען אין קאַטין געטא

79 Avrom Akselrod

Sung to the tune
of Afu pripetskiuk
brent a fayerl.

At the Ghetto Gate°

At the ghetto gate
A fire flames.
Search is the worst yet.
Jews parade back
From the work brigades
Dripping buckets of sweat.

Should I go on ahead
Or stand still instead?
I'm not sure what to do.
The little commander
Decked out in green
Takes everything from you.

A stick of firewood,
Money in a wad,
God, he takes it all!
Milk from the can,
Lard from the pan,
Jews, it's awful.

Friend at the gate, listen,
I'm not all that clean.
Help me make it through,
Get me past the guard,
You'll get a kilo of lard
And more tomorrow too.

"Line up in fours!
You—stand over here
by me. Don't run away!"
Find the right guy—
"This one's OK"—
A loaf of bread for you today.

(Kovno Ghetto)

YA'ALES [YA'ALEH VEYAVO]

Avrom Akselrod, 1942

Zog mir, zog mir du geto-yidl,
Ver shpilt in geto dos ershte fidl?
Ver fun di ya'ales mer oder veynik
Vil do regirn punkt vi a kenig?

Tumbala, tumbala, shpil geto-yidl,
Shpil mir fun yidishe ya'ales a lidl--
Fun ale shefn un inspektorn
Vos zenen in geto mentshn gevorn...

Ver fun di ya'ales ken a karte gebn
Un a shayn tsu blaybn lebn?
Un vifl darf men derfar batsoln,
Kedey a brigade a gute tsu hobn?

Tumbala, tumbala, shpil geto-yidl...

Far vos esn ya'ales vayse gebeks,
Vareme beygelekh, bulkes un keks?
Un farbrengen gemitlekh bay muzik un bay kortn
Un fayern "yontoyvim" bay emese tortn?

Tumbala, tumbala, shpil geto-yidl...

Tsi hobn ven ya'ales gearbet afn aerodrom
Mit a hak, mit a lopete oder mit a lom?
Efsher voltn zey farshtanen undzere ya'ales
Far vos di oreme mase shtelt azelkhe shayles?

Tumbala, tumbala, shpil geto-yidl...

Ver darf di kontsertn, ven der troyer iz groys
Un s'pishtshet der hunger in dem orten hoyz?
Farzorgt zey beser mit "yushnik" a teler
Un hert oyf tsu praven do ya'alishe beler...

דער מחבר אונבאקאנט

15. האָט זיך מיר די שייך צעריסן

האָט זיך מיר די שייך צעריסן,
וויי צו מיינע יאָרן!
די קראַגנס האָט מען אונדז אָפּגעריסן,
ווער איך דאָך פֿאַרפֿאַרן.
טאַנץ, טאַנץ, טאַנץ
אַביסעלע מיט מיר!
אוי, איר גרויסע פֿרעסטעלעך,
איר קומט דאָך פון סיביר.

געלע שנינען, ראָזע שנינען,
אלערליי קאַלירן:
ווען וועל איך מיין וויבל זלאַטע
צו זיך אהיים שוין פירן?
טאַנץ, טאַנץ, טאַנץ
אַ ביסעלע מיט מיר!
האַסטו אַ געלן שייך,
האַב איך חתונה מיט דיר.

ברויט אַפן סענטימעטער,
האַלץ אַפן דעקאַ,
האַט אונדז פאַרוואַרגט דער ייִדנראַט,
דער ייִדנראַט פון געטאָ,
טאַנץ, טאַנץ, טאַנץ
אַביסעלע מיט מיר!
האַסטו אַ געלן שייך,
האַב איך חתונה מיט דיר.

People who
drive to power others
at expense of others.

Ya'ales°

Tell me, oh tell me, you ghetto Jew,
Who plays first fiddle here, just who?
And which of the big shots in the ghetto gang
Hands out orders just like a king?

Tumbala, tumbala, play on, ghetto Jew.
Play me a song of the Jewish Who's Who.
Of all the inspectors and bosses
The ghetto has raised up from the masses.

Which of the big shots has a card to give
And a permit to keep you alive?
And just how much must you pay
For the privilege of an easy work brigade?

Tumbala, tumbala . . .

Why does the top brass have white rolls to eat,
Warm bagels, fresh buns and rolls that are sweet?
How can they glory in music and poker stakes
And live it up with honest-to-goodness cakes?

Tumbala, tumbala . . .

Have the big shots ever slaved at the airport
With an axe, a shovel or a crowbar?
Maybe then they might give an ear to our moans
How us poor folk have all these questions.

Tumbala, tumbala . . .

Who needs concerts when so great are our sorrows
And hunger whines in the poor man's house?
Far better we all have soup in our bowls
And you stop with your ritzy carnivals.

Kovno ghetto, circa 1942

Method is
popular wedding
song.

WOE IS ME

My shoes they are shot,
And my collar, alas,
Has been ripped from my coat.
I'm freezing my ass.
Dance, dance, come dance a bit with me.
Oh you miserable cold winds,
You're from Siberia, I see.

Yellow passes, pink passes,
Every color under heaven.
When can I bring Zlate my wife
back home once more? How soon?
Dance, dance, come dance with me a bit.
You got a yellow pass,
I'll marry you in a minute.

Centimeters of bread,
Decimeters of wood,
Furnished by the Judenrat,
The Getto Judenrat.
Dance, dance, come dance with me a bit.
You got a yellow pass,
I'll marry you in a minute.

Anonymous (Vilna Ghetto)
1) Confiscation of
fur coats & collars
for troops on Front.
2) work passes

אונדזער ליד איז פול מיט טרויער
 דרייסט איז אונדזער מונטער-גאנג
 כאָטש דער שונא וואַכט ביים טויער, —
 שטורעמט יוגנט מיט געזאָנג:
 יונג איז יעדער, יעדער, יעדער ווער עס וויל נאָר,
 יאָרן האָבן קיין באַטייט,
 אַלטע קענען, קענען, קענען אויך זיך קינדער
 פון אַ נייער, פרייער, צייט.
 ווער עס וואָגלט אום אויף וועגן,
 ווער מיט דרייסטקייט סיטעלט זיך פּוס,
 ברענגט די יוגנט זיי אַנטקעגן
 פונעם געטאָ אַ גערום.
 יונג איז יעדער...
 מיר געדענקען אַלע שונאים,
 מיר דערמאָנען אַלע פריינד,
 אייביק וועלן מיר פאַרכינדן
 אונדזער נעכטן מיטן היינט.
 יונג איז יעדער...
 קלייבן מיר צונויף די גלידער,
 ווידער שטאַלן מיר די ריי,
 גייט אַ בויער, גייט אַ שמידער, —
 לאַמיר אַלע גיין מיט זיי...
 יונג איז יעדער...

Our song is filled with grieving, -
 Bold our step, we march along,
 Though the foe the gateway's watching, -
 Youth comes storming with their song:

Young are they, are they, are they
 whose age won't bind them,
 Years don't really mean a thing,
 Elders also, also, also, can be children
 In a newer, freer spring.

Those who roam upon the highways,
 Those whose step with hope is strong,
 From the ghetto youth salutes them
 And their greetings send along.

Young are they. . .

We remember all our tyrants,
 We remember all our friends,
 And we pledge that in the future
 Our past and present blend.

Young are they. . .

So we're girding our muscles,
 In our ranks we're planting steel,
 Where a blacksmith, builder marches, -
 We will join them with our zeal!

Young are they. . .

Feb 42

This song written by S. Kaczerginski (see note about author in *Friling*), was dedicated to the children's and youth club in the Vilno ghetto. Composer is Bayse Rubin who is believed to have survived the war.

I מן הסתם רשע א מאן נא א פרוי; נאטאנ-ליינקייט
 עיניו געוויי: שפייער: מאַזמאן, ברוחא
 II שנינו 5, 7 = אין ליינקייט; 8, 6 = אז מליטעניסע
 פאליטיקער
 III זי קלייבן אונדז די צווייטע; זיין קויל פון א
 קלייניקען פייסטייל → א גליקליגער און!
 IV פון נאכט ← פיימליע; נצחון; האמץ און
 זי נעמט זיך און אונדז (און אונדז)

86 Hirsh Glik

Silence, and a Starry Night

Silence, and a starry night
 Frost crackling, fine as sand.
 Remember how I taught you
 To hold a gun in your hand?

! יאָרע

In fur jacket and beret,
 Clutching a hand grenade,
 A girl whose skin is velvet
 Ambushes a cavalcade.

Aim, fire, shoot—and hit!
 She, with her pistol small,
 Halts an autoful,
 Arms and all!

Morning, emerging from the wood,
 In her hair a snow carnation.
 Proud of her small victory
 For the new, free generation!

I שטיל די נאכט איז אויסגעשטערנט
 און דער פֿראַסט — ער האָט געברענט;
 צי געדענקסטו ווי איך האָב דיך געלערנט
 האַלטן אַ שפייער אין די הענט.
 II אַ מויד, אַ פעלצל און אַ בערעט,
 און האַלט אין האַנט פעסט אַ נאָגאָן
 אַ מויד מיט אַ סאַמעטענעם פנים
 היט אָפּ דעם שונאס קאַראַוואָן.
 געצילט, געשאָסן און געטראָפּן
 האָט איר קלייניקער פייסטויל,
 אַן אויטאָ אַ פּוילינקען מיט וואָפּן
 פאַרהאַלטן האָט זי מיט אַיין קויל.
 פאַר טאַג פון וואַלד אַרויסגעקראַכן,
 מיט שניי-גירלאַנדן אויף די האַר,
 געמוטיקט פון קלייניקען נצחון
 פאַר אונדזער נייעם, פרייען דור.

ס'וואַרט זענען זי

עפֿענען אַלע
 אַלע אַלע

This song was written by Hirsh Glik (1922-1944) in 1942 after partisans blew up a German convoy of trucks. A member of the literary group of young poets, Yungvald, before the war. Glik was imprisoned in a concentration camp in Estonia and was killed by the Germans in 1944. Composer unknown.

June '42

מיט די האַנט און אַיין מאַל אַלע זענען

4