

MIKHL GORDON (1823-1890)

- I. Charlash, "Mikhl Gordon (1823-1890)," YB 41 (1957/8): 56-71.
- (62-63) 1st collection anonymous for fear of the Hasidim, not because of his embarrassment w/Yiddish
- (59-60) died completely abandoned in Kiev, no one attended his funeral
- (63) "shtey oyf, mayn folk" (1869) rhymes khalat:aziat
- (63-4) "di bildung" -- false education of women who read only novels (zi hot shoyn, nebekh, fil trern fargosn / vos Vanke hot zikh iber Tanke deshosn) and then abandon both Yiddish & yiddish-kayt
- (64-5) "mayne lidelekh" mean folk consider my verse badkhones. It almost made me burn them up!
- (65) Di bord, un dertsu nokh andere sheyne lider. ale fun a groysn khosid: "fun der khupe" (his 1st poem); "der get," "di bord," "Di shtifmutter"; exc. for occasional poems published in YFBlat, Familyen-fraynd (1887), Hoyzfraynd (1888,1889) and SA YFB 2, nothing pub. until 27 songs of Shirey M. Gordon (inc. 12 from original collection).
- 65-71 analysis of last collection; revisons, additions, annotations;
- "der yid in goles" (1865) ended w/hope in Alexander's reforms; new version ended w/return to a dark time & hope of remaining a Jew despite it all
- similarly distanced himself from "shtey oyf, mayn folk" of 1869' "mayn tsavoe" now speaks openly of pride in the name 'Jew.'
- (71) Frug's panegyric to Gordon in Hoyzfraynd (1889): "Tsu Mikhl Gordon": your Jewish muse dressed in simple, old-fashioned garb but also "balebatish" -- strong & with kosher thread; a torbe mit gramen; very sentimental look at Gordon;

"di bord" Eleanor Gordon Mlotek, "A gilgl fun Mikhl Gordons di bord," YB 35 (1951):299-311.

(301) lists all of his songs that were folklorized

(304) eliminated 3 stanzas in his own revision of 1889 & rewrote the last one

(304-5) Peretz, citing the poem from memory in YB, already made changes

(305) S. Einhorn's recollections of Mariampol, 1860s

(Reshumot 6) has 2 of Gordon's songs

(305-7) many of his songs carry real or invented names which are veiled AB

(306) when he sang "der get" to Dinezon, used his own name: "Tsi hot ir dort Mikhl Gordonen gezen?"

(307) are both Kokher & Zhargon stand-ins for the poet?

What remained in the folk memory: preface (2); stanza I (3); II (4); IV (2) VI (4);

FOLKLORIZATION: Pipe's review of Skuditsky, YB 14 (139): 365-66; Skuditsky, 330-31; Pipe-Noy 599-600, n. 20

mayn tshuve, mayn deye, shlof mayn kind, di bord, Zelde far dem get, di shtifmutter, di mashke, fun der khupe, der get

Dinezon (1888) mentions: der yid in goles, di shtifmutter, di mashke, khevre borsht, dos lid fun di tsvuakes, di bord, vide

Perl fun der yidisher poezye, 17-34; 448-57.

(18) "Di shtifmutter" sung by heder boys, orphans

(17) Frug's lament upon his death Hoyzfraynd 3 (1894)

THE ANTIHASIDIC CORE

"di mashke": begins with address to fellows; lomir shoyn mashke trinken, brider; reviews his biography-through-drink from prenatal meeting of his grandparents to his present slate of inebriation; from his own wedding jumps to Adam / Eve; exhorts the crowd, looks forward to the resurrection, too! Messianic age: when whiskey will flow like water. (aabbcc)

[already includes the freylekh/meylekh rhyme]

"di bord" I = super-pious Jewish wife (aabbb) refrain begins w/gevald...

"der get" I = abandoned Jewish women whose husband wrote a song about a beard (i.e., continuation of the masquerade)

he lives by the rule of "men meg"; lax in his prayers,, sings German songs, trimmed his beard (aabb) funniest rhyme is poles:goles

"mayn tshuve far dem khsidishn gutn yidn" I = fake penitent standing before the rebbe. inc. 2 ethnographic notes & 2 linguistic (abab). I promise to drink and to sanction ignorance and have blind faith in the rebbe

"der borsht" I = happy-go-lucky Hasid (aabbcc)

"a nayer moyfes (fun a tsadik ben tsadik)" I = Hasid who speaks in the name of the group & begins by narrating the dynastic rule of the 4 Strivker sons (abab). ends w/angelic tzaddik, who of course never eats, being forced to puke the food he has gorged

"mayn vide (fun a khasidishn tsadik)" (abab) comic use of loshn-koydesh-rhymes; I = Hasid doing penance for bad-mouthing the tsaddikim; ends w/VULGAR kush==zhe zi dray mol in tukhes

elaborate mock-mythic disclaimer before the song "bar mitzva"; suggests that the melodies were not his own; there are a few poems in this collection that were a product of another time/place; if you don't like 'em, skim 'em.

"ze-de far dem get" (aabb) I = anguished wife of 3 children who has suffered 12 years w/her hated husband; nothing funny about it

SERIOUS POEMS

[Shtif has a preference for these, as does Charlash]

2 Old Poems w/long, interesting preface on the crippling effect of yikhes & gemore on matchmaking; nowadays things have changed, in no small measure thanks to these songs

"fun der khupe" (aabb), poet addresses the young man whose parents have ruined him for life. a refrain (fun der khupe tsu

der sude) repeated 3 times, marking the passage of miserable yrs. of marriage. Fn on NO LOVE between husband/wife

[Shrif] "mayn deye" addressed to Leah who's about to get married

[Shtif] "di bildung" ni 1st-person voice (aabb)

[Shtif] "shtey oyf, mayn folk" - note explains that someone stole his lyrics (pub in 1869) and set them to a better melody. only the part about wisdom, wispect & modesty are still relevant today. Asia vs, Europe; takes exception w/atah behartanu; lwet's adopt the language of the land; rebeim = Sabbatians; embarrassed to be on a TRAIN w/pious, praying Jews -- so many histrionics, their tsitis flying. call for decorum

"der yid in goles" odd contradiction: goles not to be confused w/present; what I meant were the Hadrianic peresections & the Crusades...but then dissociates himself from the liberal hopes of 1865 in the light of present-day antisemitism. I = eternal Jewish people (aabb)

"mayn haskome" contrasts his satirical songs w/Bernsteins melodious ones

[Shtif] "Mayne lidelkh" (abab) I've even inc. those few poems of old that gave me so much trouble; disparages the folk

baym prostrn oylem hot a ponem
afile dos beste fun aykh ale
vi proste lidlekh fun badkhonim
vi proste gramen far khosn-kale.

I.e., the book was written for the "better" male reader, complete w/explanatory footnotes & historical disclaimers. Odd mixture of lively satire & highfalutin moral preaching