**DER NAYER SHER**
(The New Sher)
Composer: Abraham Ellstein

Hey you, klezmer, pick up your fiddle,  
play your music,  
and we’ll dance the new *sher.*

We’ll spin around in a *karahod,*  
and our hearts will rejoice,  
whenever the new *sher* is danced.

Higher, higher, Grandpa Elya leaps  
straight up to the ceiling.  
He wants to enjoy life fully.

And Grandma Sosye beams with joy.  
Our enemies can go to hell,  
for we’re going to dance the new *sher.*

*Nu,* see, just see how everyone is happy,  
how they spin,  
and how they tap their feet.

The heart is breaking  
but still begs to dance,  
for when we dance, life becomes so sweet.

Now we are all happy.  
We will no longer be sad.  
Because soon the bride will be seated,  
and then we will dance the new *sher.*

What good will all the worrying do for you,  
when your heart is heavy?  
Better hope, brother, that by tomorrow  
we will all dance the new *sher* together!

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1. A lively party or celebration dance  
2. A type of a circle dance
OYGN
(Eyes)
Composer: Abraham Ellstein    Lyrics: Molly Picon
from eyns un a rekhts, or One in a Million

It’s a dark night, and I sit and think that
my life is worthless.
It’s empty and hollow, my aspiration for naught.
There’s no luck in my cards....

But suddenly a ray of light, a bright source:
I caught sight of two eyes.
I soon felt that my heart was lost,
but I was happy.

Eyes ...
for your dark eyes ...
before them the bright sun
bows down.

Eyes ...
for your dark eyes ...
they pulled my heart to you, and I
became enslaved for life,
captured and amazed....
And I will aspire
to fulfill all their desires.

Eyes ...
for your dark eyes ...
the world will no longer have any worth
without your dark eyes.

s’iz a finstere nakht un ikh zits mir un trakht
mayn lebn hot gornisht keyn vert.
s’iz leydiq un pust, mayn shtrebn umzist;
keyn mazl iz mir nisht bashert.
nor plutsem a shtral, a likhtiker kval:
tsvey oygn hob ikh derzen.
ikh hob bald derfli, mayn harts iz farshpiit,
nor ikh bin tsufridn geven.

oygn ...
far dayne shvartse oygn ...
far zey shteyt ayngeboygn
di likhtike zun.

oygn ...
far dayne shvartse oygn ...
zye hobn tsugetsoygn mayn harts,
un ikh bin farshklat gevorn af mayn gants lebn,
fargaft gevorn ...
un ikh vel shtrebn
ales zey tsu gebn.

oygn...
far dayne shvartse oygn...
di velt vet mer nisht toyg
on dayne shvartse oygn.
IKH VIL ES HERN NOKH A MOL
(I Want to Hear It Again)
Composer: Abraham Ellstein  Lyrics: Isidore Lillian and Jacob Jacobs
from ikh bin farlibt (I’m in Love)

Victor:
The world has many books and novels, in which we read of great romances. My love, you may be sure that none of these books can describe how strongly I feel about you.

Luba:
Do you mean what you say? Or are you just saying it? I want be sure about it, for I am a woman, sworn to you forever.

Victor:
And once again you ask me to tell you that I love you.

Both:
I want to hear it again from you. Say again that you are in love with me. It rings in my ears like the Song of Songs. I will never tire of hearing it. My heart dances in me from joy and happiness when I hear the sweet words from you. When you say those four words, it fills me with joy. Yes, I want to hear it again from you!

Luba:
Yes, I want to hear it again from you!

3 ikh hob dikh lib (I love you).
IKH ZING
(For You I Sing)
Composer: Abraham Ellstein   Lyrics: Molly Picon
from the film Mamele

King Solomon sang to his Shulamit
a love song.
And just like Solomon then, my love,
I bring my song now to you.

I sing my Song of Songs for you.
With love I adorn it,
only for you, soul of mine, do
I sing my dreams—

My love for you is like a dream—
Only for you, my comfort,
when I’m about to die from longing
for you, my beloved.

And when I still think
that you will once again be mine,
I sing my song from the heart,
my Song of Songs again.
Beloved, for you I sing.

shloyme hameylekh hot tsu zayn shulamis
gezungen a libes-shir,
un punkt vi shloyme dan, gelibte mayne,
breng ikh mayn lid itst tsu dir.

ikh zing far dir mayn shir hashirim,
mit libe ikh batsir im,
far dir nor neshome mayn
ikh zing, far dir mayne khaloymes—

mayn libe vi a troym iz
fun dir nor nekhome mayn,
ven ikh gey oys fun benken,
nokh dir, gelibte mayn.

un ven ikh halt in eyn denken,
az du vest nokh a mol mayne zayn,
ikh zing fun hartsn mayne lider,
mayn shir hashirim vider.
gelibte, far dir ikh zing.
abi gezunt
(So Long As You’re Healthy)

Composer: Abraham Ellstein
Lyrics: Molly Picon
from the film Mamele

A bit of sun, a bit of rain,
a peaceful place to lay your head ...
so long as you’re healthy, you can be happy.

a bisl zun, a bisl regn,
a ruik ort dem kop tsu legn,
abi gezunt, ken men gliklekh zayn.

A shoe, a sock, an outfit without patches,
three or four measly coins in your pocket ...
so long as you’re healthy, you can be happy.

a shukh, a zok, a kleyd on lates,
in keshene a dray, fir zlotes,
abi gezunt, ken men gliklekh zayn.

The air is free, equal for all;
the sun shines for everyone,
whether rich or poor.

di luft iz fray far yedn glaykh,
di zun zi shaynt far yedn eynem,
orem oder raykh.

A little rejoicing, a little laughter,
some schnapps with a friend once in a while ...
so long as you’re healthy, you can be happy.

a bisl freyd, a bisl lakhn,
a mol mit fraynd a shnepsl makhn,
abi gezunt ken men gliklekh zayn.

Some look for riches,
some look for power,
to conquer the whole world.
Some think that all happiness
depends only on money.

eyner zukht ashires,
eyner zukht gevures,
aynnemen di gantse velt.
eyner meyn dos gantse glik
hengt nor op in gelt.

Let them all search,
let them all scrounge.
But I think to myself that
I have no use for such things,
since happiness is waiting at my doorstep.

zoln ale zukhn,
zoln ale krikhn,
nor ikh trakht bay mir,
ikh darf dos af kapores,
vayl dos glik shteyt bay mayn tir.
ZOG ES MI R NOKH A MOL
(Tell Me Again)
Composer: Abraham Ellstein      Lyrics: Jacob Jacobs
from der berditshever khusn (The Bridegroom from Berditchev)

If I would only be fit
to find favor in your eyes,
the whole world would already be mine.
I would sing "Hatikvah" [Become a Zionist]⁴
and would even go to the mikvah [be religious],
just so you will be together with me.

I would cut a deal
to become a slave to your father,
like Jacob was to Laban.
I would suffer all kinds of terror
and would even milk the cows,
so long as I would always be able to see you.

Tell me again,
oh, tell me again,
for I’d like to hear
those beautiful words from you.
Tell it to me again,
oh, tell it to me again,
for your words bring me joy
and give me constant encouragement.

My heart is overflowing
with such great joy
of having lived to hear
such words from you.
Tell it to me again,
oh, tell me again.
Oh, my heart, my dear,
Tell it to me again.

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⁴ The anthem of the Zionist movement (and now of the State of Israel).
⁵ A ritual bath of purification.
DI GRINE KUZINE
(The Greenhorn Cousin)
Composer: Abe Schwartz  
Lyrics: Jacob Leiserowitz/Hyman Prizant(?)

My cousin from the old country came over here.
She was beautiful as gold, the "greenhorn." 6
Her cheeks were rosy like blood oranges;
her feet were just begging to dance.

She skipped instead of walking;
she sang instead of speaking.
Happy and merry was her demeanor.
Such was my cousin.

I went to the lady next door,
who has a little millinery store.
I got my greenhorn cousin a job there—
so long live the Golden Land! 7

Many years have since past.
My cousin has turned into a wreck.
She slaved away for many years 8
until nothing was left of her.

Under her blue, beautiful eyes
black bags have appeared.
The cheeks, those ruddy oranges,
have aged and lost their greenhorn glow.

Nowadays, when I meet my cousin
and I ask her, "How are you, greenhorn?"
She answers me with a crooked expression:
"Columbus's land can go to hell!"

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7 The Golden Land—a common affectionate reference to America as a land of opportunity.
8 Literally, "She collected paydays for many years."
VOS GEVEN IZ GEVEN UN NITO
(What Was, Was, and Is No More)
David Meyerowitz

Permit me
to unburden my heart.
Whether I talk sense
or whether I speak from pain,
I suffer from a disease,
which is not called an illness.
They call it old age.
It gnaws and it yearns.

For what was, was, and is no more.
That year, that hour has already passed.
How quickly youthful joy flies away
and cannot be recaptured.
For what was, was, and is no more....
The faculties become weak,
the hair turns gray....
One can mend himself, hide under nice clothing,
make himself up;
but he fools no one but himself,
for what was, was, and is no more....

When I chance to pass by a school,
I weep tears,
and I think of yesteryear:
How the young little mind
Doesn't understand its happiness,
and when one comes to his senses,
it is already too late.
OY, MAME, BIN IKH FARLIBT
(Oh, Mama, I’m in Love)
Composer: Abraham Ellstein

When he plays a beautiful and heartfelt
Jewish melody on his fiddle,
oh, Mama, everything feels so good.

Then, with his gorgeous dark eyes,
he seduced me.
Oh, Mama, I’m so happy.

And when he says, “Hey there, girl,
you are so lovely and delicate,”
and when his playing creeps into my heart,
I want to dance,
I want to sing.
Oh dear, I am starting to prance.
I can no longer live without him.

Oh, Mama, I’m in love....
Oh, Mama, I’m in love....
A young klezmer, my devoted mama,
is the only thing on my mind.
I cry and laugh and don’t know, Mama,
what’s going on with me.

Oh, Mama, I’m in love....
Oh, Mama, I’m in love....
I want to hug the whole world
and squeeze it close to me.
Oh, Mama, I’m in love....
ZOG, ZOG, ZOG ES MIR
(Tell Me, Say It to Me)
Composer: Ilia Trilling    Lyrics: Chaim Tauber
from goldele dem bekers (Goldele, the Baker’s Daughter)

In the glade, by the stream, a young man walked.
He spied a maiden there.
She enchanted him and immediately captured his heart.
She was as beautiful as an angel.

She saw him there between the branches.
Her heart began to beat rapidly.
They were both shy, and just silently stared at one another—
until he beseeched her:

"Tell me, tell me, say it to me,
I want to hear from you already
those four beautiful little words,\(^9\)
and answer me now.

"Tell me, say it to me right now,
oh, say it and revive me.
Please, why should it bother you.
Tell me already, 'I love you.'
With you it's a brilliant paradise;
without you, my life is dark.
And should we, heaven forbid, be parted,
it would tear my heart out.

"Oh, tell me, tell me, say it to me,
I want to hear from you now
those four beautiful little words;
say it already, say, 'I love you.' "

\(^9\) \textit{ikh hob dikh lib} (I love you).
In a restaurant I saw
an old man standing in the kitchen;
there's commotion swirling around him; he says not a word.
He stands and washes the dishes there,
and with much feeling
he sings softly to himself:

"I wash with my weak hands.
I wash and wash, for a few pennies,
from early till late for a stale piece of bread.
I wash and wish for my own death.

"Once I was somebody.
I had a home, I was rich.
My father was good to me.
Now I am old; no one has any use for me.
And in the tumult
I stand and wash.

"I have four children, all well educated.
My sons- and daughters-in-law toss me out.
My daughter argues with me that I should go to my son.
He just screams: 'There's nothing I can do.'
And in the tumult
I stand and wash...."
**DU SHAYNST VI DI ZUN**  
*(You Shine Like the Sun)*  
Composer: Ilia Trilling      Lyrics: Isidore Lillian

Day and night I think of you,  
and I am happy when I hear from you.  
Why is there a fire burning in my heart?  
Why are you so dear to me?

I love to hear your sweet words,  
for what you say brings me happiness.  
From the day I first caught sight of you,  
I fell in love with you.

Darling dear, tell me, am I this precious to you?  
Do you feel that your destiny is only with me?  
I gave my heart to you  
when you sang to me:

"You shine like the sun  
and you glow like the moon.  
Your eyes are like the stars  
that shine from heaven.

Without you,  
my life is in peril.  
At the first sight of you,  
my heart jumps for joy.

When you are here, it’s day;  
when you are gone, it’s night.  
You have brought me  
heaven on earth.

You shine like the sun  
you glow like the moon.  
I truly love you.  
This I swear to you by them [the sun and the moon].

say tog, say nakht, denk ikh un kler fun dir  
un ikh bin glikleh ven ikh her fun dir.  
farvos brent in mayn harts a fayer?  
farvos bistu mir azoy tayer?

ikh glaykh tsu hern dayne sheyne reyd,  
vayl vos du zogst mir dos farshaft mir freyd.  
dem tog ven ikh hob dikh derzen  in ikh farlibt in dir geven.

darling dear, zog, hob ikh dikh di vert?  
filst du az du bist nor mir bashert?  
kh’hib mayn harts gegeben dir  
ven du host gezogt tsu mir:

"du shaynst vi di zun—  
un du laykhst vi di levone.  
dayne oygn vi di shtern  
fun dem himl laykhnt zey.

un on dir tsu zayn  
iz mayn lebn in sakone.  
ven kh’derze dikh  
git mayn harts zikh a derfrey.

ven du bist do, iz tog;  
ven du bist nito, iz nakht.  
dem himl af der erd  
hostu mir arogebrakht.

du shaynst vi di zun,  
un du laykhst vi di levone.  
kh’hib dikh emes lib,  
dos shver ikh dir bay zey."
VOS IZ GEVORN FUN MAYN SHTETELE?
(Whatever Became of My Shtetl?)
Composer: Abraham Ellstein      Lyrics: Isidore Lillian

When I reminisce about how it was when I was a child, at home in the shtetl10 once upon a time, I recall how in those beautiful winter nights we used to stroll around and dream countless dreams. Oh, how things were so heartfelt, so beautiful then, when we used to pass by the synagogue, and the cantor’s sonorous voice resounded so piously, so emotively, by the lectern:

"As when a shepherd takes account of his flock, causing his sheep to pass under his staff one by one."11

Such a longing for bygone days has remained in my heart. Whatever became of my shtetl? Whatever became of my old home? Oh, what a longing I have for my shtetl. That is where I spent my youth. The alleyway, the little synagogue, how heartfelt and how beautiful … The tree, the little dairy—Will I ever see them again? Oh, whatever became of my shtetl? Oh, whatever became of the old home?

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10 A small market town of 5,000–10,000 people.
11 From one of the central prayers of the High Holy Days (Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur), concerning God’s judgment of humanity.
MAZL
(Good Fortune)
Composer: Abraham Ellstein      Lyrics: Molly Picon
from the film Mamele

Good fortune, sooner or later you shine on everyone—
On everyone, but not on me.
Good fortune, you bring happiness to everyone.
Why do you bypass my door?
O, how I long for you every hour.
Life passes by
and there still is no hope.
O, good fortune, sooner or later you shine on everyone—
On everyone, but not on me.

When the night arrives,
I remain awake, sitting and thinking:
Another day has already past,
and the dream that I have dreamt for myself
is gone with the wind once again.

mazl, es shaynt a mol far yedn—
far yedn, nor nisht far mir.
mazl, du brengst a yedn freydn;
farvos farzamstvu mayn tir?
oy, vi es tut benk a yede sho.
dos lebn fargeyt
un keyn hofenung iz alts nishto.
oy, mazl es shaynt a mol far yedn,
far yedn, nor nisht far mir.

ven es kumt on di nakht,
blayb ikh zitsn un trakht:
nokh a tog iz shoyn vider farbay,
un der kholem vos ikh hob gekhollemt far zikh
iz avek mitn vint af dos nay.
IKH BIN A BOARDER BAY MAYN VAYB
(I'm a Boarder at My Wife's)
Composer: Rubin Doctor

I'm a boarder at my wife's.
Guys, it's a sweet deal.
She attends to my every need.
When I come home, she doesn't ask any questions.
I am a boarder at my wife's.

I'm single once again,
single like a young boy.
I've divorced my wife.

I thought about moving out,
I looked for a room to lodge,
but my wife persuaded me:

"Why do you need to look for bargains
And be cramped in strange rooms,
And be alone and talk to the walls.
Stay here just like before.
Be a boarder now with me."
So like a boarder, I pay her rent.

I'm a boarder at my wife's.
It's so nice, so good.
Guys, it's a sweet deal.
She attends to my every need.
When I come home, she doesn't ask any questions.
I am a boarder at my wife's.

It's a pleasure;
I can get it all
as a stranger boarding at my wife's.
I'm no greenhorn,
and every day, after dinner,
I lie down, just to pass the time.

Oh, earlier she used to curse me
and make a big hullabaloo,
Even when there was a stranger boarding in my house.
But ever since I became a boarder at her place,
she is so good to me.
It costs me little, and she loves me.
DER ALTER TSI GAYNER
(The Old Gypsy)
Composer: Abraham Ellstein      Lyrics: Jacob Jacobs
from bublitshki (Little Bagels)

Yonder, on a hill, under the free, open skies—
far from the noise of the city's tumult,
stands a little hut all by itself.
An old Gypsy lives in it.

Yonder sounds such sweet tones,
that sob in minor,
when the old Gypsy takes up his fiddle,
with all his fire and ardor,
as only a Gypsy can.

A Gypsy melody is so beautiful.
Once you hear it, you never forget it,
for it is warm, heartfelt, full of charm.
A strange power, it fills you with love as well as
with suffering.
You hear it but once
and it gives you no rest.
The melody enchants you.

When you first hear it,
it sounds simply naïve,
and you have no idea of
how deeply it moves the soul.
From every side it infuses you
with passion and joy.
You want to hold on forever to these—
to these sounds of the melody.

When the Gypsy plays his fiddle,
it burns the heart.
The sound of his fiddle
awakens your soul's desire.
Your passions are aroused
when his bow strikes the fiddle's strings.
It's like floating to heaven,
all you want is life,
And life becomes so sweet....
That is the old Gypsy's song.