

1: Poem and audio recording, Itzik Fefer's, "I am a Jew" (Ikh bin a yid), 1941.

Itzik Feffer, I Am a Jew

I am a Jew.

The wine of enduring generations

Strengthened me on my wanderer's way.

The evil sword of pain and lamentations

Nothing that I hold dear could slay-

My people, my faith, and my head unbowed.

It could not stop me from being free and true.

Under the sword I cried aloud:

'I am a Jew!'

Pharaoh and Titus, Haman made their aim

To slay me in their times and lands,

Eternity still bears my name

Upon its hands.

And I survived in Spain the rack,

The Inquisition Fires too.

My horn sounded this message back:

'I am a Jew!'

When Egypt walled my body round

I felt agonies.

But I sowed my pain upon the ground,

And saw the sunrise.

Under the sun a road lay spread,

Where thorns and prickles grew,

And as they pierced my eyes, I said:

'I am a Jew!'

My forty years of wandering

In the wilderness,

Gave me in age the hardening

To bear pain and distress.

Through all my sufferings and my fears,

Bar Kochba's call came to my ears,

Through every sound and view

I cried: 'I am a Jew!'

Samson's hair that Delilah shore
Shone brighter than gold could do.
Always one cry was at my core:
'I am a Jew!'

Rabbi Akiba's sagacity,
And wise Isaiah's word,
Kept alive my love in me,
Till my hatred stirred,
And i felt the blood of the Maccabees,
Whom the tyrants slew—
I cried from all the gallows-trees:
'I am a Jew!'

Solomon's wisdom guided me
Along my wanderer's road,
And Heine's twisted smile I see
As a scourge and a goad.
Yehuda Halevi's song in my head
Echoes through and through.
I have often faded but never died:
'I am a Jew!'

In the market places of Amsterdam
Spinoza worked undeterred.
On this earth like a bright sun came
Karl Marx and his word.
It filled with fresh red blood my veins,
And made my old heart new,
It healed my sorrows and my pains:
'I am a Jew!'

My eyes are dazzled with the sunset glow
Of a painting by Levitan.
The road that Mendele trod I go,
And meet the bayonet of a Red Armyman.
The sickle shines on the ripe corn.
I am a son of this Soviet land where I was born.
And too
'I am a Jew!'

From Haifa Harbour answeringly,

From London comes the response to me,
From Buenos Aires and New York
Come songs from Jews who fight and work.
And even from the burning hell
Comes a shuddering I know well.
In them all one word runs through:
'I am a Jew!'

I am a Jew who has drunk up
Happiness from Stalin's cup.
To those who would let Moscow go
Under the ground, I call out—'No.'
The Slavs are my brothers, too,
'I am a Jew!'

I am a ship against both shores.
Into eternity my blood pours.
On my pride in Sverdlov I depend,
And on Kaganovitch, Stalin's friend.
My young go speeding over the snows.
My heart bombs and dynamite throws.
And everywhere the call comes through:
'I am a Jew!'

I am not alone! My strength is growing.
Battle is now my daily bread.
I send the storm raging and blowing,
And the brown enemy falls dead.
Gorelik and Papernik, too,
Cry from under the earth:
'I am a Jew!'

Despite the foe who comes destroying
Under the Red Flag I shall live,
I shall plant vineyards for my enjoying,
And on this soil I will thrive.
Whatever the enemy may do
The liberty of the world we shall save.
I shall dance on Hitler's grave.
'I am a Jew!'