A Jolly Hassid
Abraham Goldfaden

I thank you, loving heavenly father,
My loyalty to you is boundless
For you held me dear like no other
Above the rest of all the scoundrels;
And my children, as is known to you
They follow in my footsteps too.

The Frenchies, they eat with a hatless head,
May they all crumble to crumbs, na!
Their females walk with their own braids
And their bonnets are a tad askew
My little ones go fully shaven
With coifs pulled over the ears, like mavens.
(...)
Their daughters are little klezmers, so

1 Abraham Goldfaden, “Dos Freilekhe Hosid!” [The Jolly Hasid], in Dos Yidele: Yiddishe lider af prost Yiddiser shprakh [The Little Jew: Jewish Poems (and Songs) in a simple Jewish Language] (Warsaw: Yaakov Lidsky Book Handler, [1866] 1903), 94-100. Translations are mine, unless otherwise stated. I printed the original Yiddish opposite the English translation text only in translations of verse.
They play their cymbals ding-a-ling.
They use their voices, Heaven knows
It's just like shiksahs; they even sing!
My kids have no such manners ever:
Our female's voice is hushed forever.

The groom is led to the theater
The poor fool sees husband and wife.
Wife says, "my lord, my liege," and later
The husband answers, "You're my life."
But we? When we speak in love or jest,
He's called schlimazel, she--a pest.

The heretics, fe, this is so wrong.
They let their son grow up, mature,
So when he's wed there comes along
A lad with a beard, no kid for sure.
But we wed better: an infant bride
With a toddler boychik by her side.

לטמדת لنגן על חליל מתלטטל
וה בAMES שמעה קול, אよい זמר
כמו היסיסו, אוי אביו לאנוהה!
אצלין ידעת בני נכה
שקול באשה היא לנרreira, עוה

שלאחר טרייאטר על תמי
הוה היא ראשת, והו מחלך
איה אמאית: "אוהבי המקסום"
איה מתמגנת: "מל, שלר."
אצלינו אמ כרב מברעם ולו אדנה
איה קוראת לח שימלד, והו עונה, כלבה.
אצל האופיקורים, פוי, זד מתעד
נטונים לכיר לכלובים כל הבר
אкрас פתחא פסטע
בחור מברך, עם קולי, משמך נבר
אצלנו שועים שידור פאתי-מווי
שכל ידנה והתחננים צייק.
Awake, my people, how long will you sleep?
For the night is over, the sun has shone
Awake, and look with your eyes hither and thither
Please acknowledge your time and place.

Has time frozen, have its wings grown feeble,
Since you wandered to the wings of the earth?
Or have millennia not finally ended yet
Since you set on your endless wanderings?

Between then and now generations have passed
Lands and oceans have parted us from there
Illustrative changes have whirled us and thrust
Yet a new history now awaits us.

Awake, my people, how long will you sleep?
For the night is over, the sun has shone
Awake, and look with your eyes hither and thither
Please acknowledge your time and place.

The land in which we are born and now live
Is now considered a part of Europe!
Europe may be a small particle in the world,
Yet its wisdom is superior to all others.

This paradise has now welcomed you,
Its sons call us now “our brethren”
How long can you live amongst them as an outsider
Why will you stride against their course?

Hark, they release you from the ongoing suffering,
They unburden you, too, from the yoke,
They wipe from their heart away all futile hatred
They offer their hand, they embrace you with peace.

Erect your head, straighten your back,
And look them in the eye with love and affection,
Open your heart to wisdom and knowledge
And be an enlightened people, versed in their tongue.

Every erudite will share all the wisdom,
All crafts and skills will be taught to you.
The bold and the brave will serve in the army,
The farmers will harness their ploughs in the fields.
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| So contribute to your country’s treasuries And share its assets enjoy its yield Be a man outdoors, and a Jew in your tent, A brother to your countrymen and a slave to your king. Awake, my people, how long will you sleep? For the night is over, the sun has shone Awake, and look with your eyes hither and thither Please acknowledge your time and place. | אל אפרים וتجارיה תבואו כלם ונהבitez את מלך זוהי.Hebrew text lost due to damage. ש apoptol את מי הימרא ההנה! דבריו משון ושם חתרה. להוהו והיימו באתה והנה. תמדדו פיסוקיהם רק חזרה.
### Awake, My People

**Michael Gordon, 1869 (1823-1890)**

Awake, my people, you’ve slept enough  
Awake and open your eyes wide  
Why have you alone been ploughed thus  
That you alone are still asleep while it’s midday?

The sun has shone long ago over the world  
It’s already prodded all the people to their feet.  
But you alone lie still, all heavy and bent  
And won’t even open your eyes.

Time keeps fleeting, it won’t stand and wait  
Don’t linger before it’s too late  
So linger no more, see what gets lost  
While you still lie, fantasizing and dreaming

You lie and keep dreaming your silly old dreams  
Of old times, of far away places.  
The old times are no more, a new time is here  
And you got far away from those places long ago.

Your murky Asia, from which you’ve emerged  
Is shady and dark to this day  
You’ve quitted the place long ago, you’re in Europe now  
Look up, see how bright the sun shines here.

The sun shines, it’s radiant and bright  
Yet you lie and sleep, won’t get up.  
Awake, my people, you’ve slept enough  
Arise and open your eyes.

Awake from your crouching and stand up erect  
Like all men, stretch out your limbs.  
Stop bending your back, quit lowering your head,  
Go get a haircut and wash properly.

Start wearing clothes, like all others wear,  
Why need you your great grandfather’s outfit?  
Don’t go out on the street in your long *streiml*  
So people won’t point; here goes an *Azjat*
Don’t speak a language that no one understands
Your tongue is alien, a distorted mongrel
Whereas the state-language is clear and pure
Speak it, writes it, so that all may understand.

You’re not, indeed, the most lustful of all
But you, my brother, are more boastful than all
You think that God respects you, and you alone
And you’ve brought this wild vanity from Asia.

Your “chosen-people” concept has thus only harmed you
It makes others find you repulsive and ugly
No words can help here nor can any claims,
When will wisdom illuminate your mind?

So say why you refuse to listen to wisdom
You think that wisdom will obstruct your faith
So know that wisdom – so clear and so real –
Is the only support that your faith can wish for.

For faith with wisdom revives all people
While faith without wisdom is just a wild beast
A wise believer is to humanity a friend
While an ignorant believer is to humanity a fiend

Run as fast as you can from the Hasidic Tsadik
Those venomous snakes, the worst of pests
What Sabbatai Zevi left over are his Hasidim
And their disciples are the Hasidic Tsadikim.

Our pure faith, our holy Torah
Is for a Hasidic Tsadik but petty merchandize
He mixes it into all sorts of garbage
And sells these damaged goods for no less than pure gold.

Why need you good pleaders between you and God?
Fellow Jew, why do you turn men into idol?
And why do you fear them, and give money to them
For their blessings for children, for snow and for rain.

Our God is close, anyone can approach him,
There is no need for a pander in order to beseech him
How can you believe in God, you fool, you idiot,
If you need to send him pimps who take bribes.
Don’t believe in swindlers, believe rather in God
And three times a day keep praising him
But remember, man, you’re standing before God
Need not sway, and bend and make faces.

Are you crazy, has it occurred to you
Why yell to God, why scream out so loud?
The almighty hears, he is not at all deaf
He, notices the smallest of worms sing his praise.

When we are together in shul
I see you turn yourself into a madman and fool
I sit there calmly, not losing my temper,
I’m probably used to your outrageous manners.

But when on a train, together in a car
Among strangers who are looking at you
When you pray and sway and meow like a cat
All I see is sniggering laughter from those who witness that.

You wear the prayer shawl, you wear your small talis,
This diaper you wrap in incites only mockery.
Then when you kiss and lick the fringes of your tassel
The mockery turns uncontrollable and I nearly faint.

Strangers think it’s a commandment from our Torah
To sway here and there when we pray, all this folly,
With the weirdest of gestures, no shame and no glory
You, Jews, desecrate our Holy of Holies.

For nothing is more sacred than our Holy Torah
What it commands are the creator's very laws.
Now let’s abolish the false and crooked customs
Let’s not mix the impurity into the sacred.

Say three times a day that God is one and only.
He alone rules the world, nobody but Him.
So what’s the point of a silly replacement
Separate now God from his false entourage.

How did this idea come upon you, fellow Jew,
That God needs a team of ministers
That he cannot run the world without them,
How did Jesus turn you Jew into an Interior Minister?

God has punished you, and will punish again,
Because of all that your prayer books contain:
The names of angels, all of God’s little helpers,
You’re steeped in idol worship, just like your ancestor Esau

In order to cleanse yourself from this idolatry,
You must know your pure and clear faith
For that there’s no need for a great effort
Just learn the Torah, the pure Bible itself.

When you study the Talmud with a sound mind
You are sure to find in it the straight and narrow
Your trouble, you see, and your plight are simple
That the Talmud and Torah are taught by warped minds.

Therefore, though there’s more to tell you, my people,
Enough is enough, just hear and obey me
And then, you all will understand,
How to tell the good from the bad, and fine from plain.

So why are you angry, and why gnash your teeth
Why get so furious and cast stones at me?
Why holler why curse, why make noise, why bother?
I’m doing you a favor, after all, I’m your brother!
Awake, my people, arise from your nap.
In nonsense you should no longer trust.
How fresh is the morning, how clear is the sky
All the others rejoice and live.
Other peoples have long ago opened their shutters
A shining light of education shines,
Fresh air of wisdom and hope
Blows in and fills the room.
But you, my people, won’t open your shutters
With you, my people, it’s an eternal plague,
Drowsy, you’re blind to time, you won’t get up.
Awake, my people! It’s day outside.

I hear the tumult in all other countries
Every people has re-formed itself
Here ministers sit, sharpening their minds,
Legislating new laws for the sake of their people
Over there canons thunder, and ships sail away
Reaching new territories and lands
Curiosity takes people to the ends of the earth
How fast letters are delivered worldwide.
Locomotives whistle and arouse.
Awake, my people! It’s day outside.

But my people is submerged in its nap, in a dream,
It doesn’t feel like standing up on its feet
It waits for bread to fall from the Heavens
And water to sprout from a rock
It meditates over the length of a prayer-shawl
Or the depth of the ritual bath
It seeks devices to drive away Satan
And ways to kosher a pot and a calf
It is clear how to distinguish kosher from treif
Its commandments outweigh everything
You ought to wake up from your silly dream,
Awake my people! It’s day outside.

The Yiddish original (ועסא איהו מיט פאַלכ) is unclear. Therefore, I took some liberty in “reforming” the bizarre “firma” into the play on words: “re-form.”