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New Creation

by **Ber Kotlerman**, translation by Jessica Kirzane

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New Creation

Ber Kotlerman
translated by Jessica Kirzane

Introduction: *Translator's note: On October 7, as the scope of the heinous terrorist attack in Israel was becoming apparent, we - like so many others - found ourselves doomscrolling, searching for news, for community with whom to share our horror, anger, and fear, and ultimately for hope. As editors of this journal, on the top of our minds was also the question of what we could bring to our readers that might be helpful and relevant and speak to the concerns that are surely on the forefront of their minds in these dark days. It was a tall order to ask of our social media feeds.*

We found something that spoke to our needs in this poem, written by Ber Kotlerman. The grand vision of hope in this poem captures the themes of Simchat Torah, when the Torah reading calendar has us beginning anew at Breyshis, and uses them to comfort and embolden us to believe that it is possible to move toward a future of peace, even in a time of war. I translated the poem - and we pushed it quickly through our editorial process - so our readers could share in this hope at a time when it is essential.

Ber Kotlerman is a Yiddish author and Professor of Yiddish studies at Bar Ilan University, Israel. This poem was his first reaction to reports of victims of Hamas crimes in southern Israel. He recited it for the first time at a workshop on contemporary Yiddish poetry organized in Vienna jointly by the Bar-Ilan Center for Yiddish Studies, the Oxford School of Rare Jewish Languages and the Institute of Jewish Studies at the Jagiellonian University in Krakow, on October 9. The title of the poem in the original is a quote from the Shacharit morning prayer: [The Blessed One, who spoke] and the world came into being.

New Creation

At night, the moon whispers to my land
that somewhere at the eastern edge of all,
in the dark, a hidden gentle arm enfolds
a newborn light in a dazed slumber.

The great universe waits in a soft,
velvet dream until its edge
glows in sunrise-scarlet,

until its substance takes form
and hardens and the earth divides
from the heavens once again.
Day breaks and—a new creation.

In this world there is no power
that could suppress that shining hour
of hope, of truth, of faith.

Motsei Simchat Torah, 5784

וְהָיָה הָעוֹלָם

עס פראוועט סודות מיט מיין לאַנד ביינאַכט דער מולד,
אַז ערגעץ ביי דער אַלוועלטס מזרח-ראַנד
אין חושך ניאַנטשעט אַ פֿאַרהילטע צאַרטע האַנט
אַ נייגעבוירן ליכט אין הינערפלעט פֿאַרחלומט.
די גרויסע אַלוועלט וואַרט אין סאַמעט-ווייכן דרימל
ביז ס'ווערט איר זוים מיט מאַרגנרויט באַפֿאַרבט,
ביז ס'ווערט איר יש פֿאַרקערפערט און פֿאַרהאַרבט
און אַפּגעטיילט פֿון ס'ניי די ערד ווערט פֿונעם הימל.
אַ שפּראַך אויף טאָג און - וְהָיָה הָעוֹלָם,
און קיין שום כוח אין דער וועלט ניטאָ,
וואָס קאָן אַפּשאַפֿן די-אַ העלע שעה
פֿון האַפּענונג, פֿון אמת און פֿון גלויבן.

מוצאי שמחת תורה תשפ"ד