



IN GEVEB A JOURNAL OF YIDDISH STUDIES

Appendix

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**APPENDIX:
Worksheet for an Advanced Yiddish Lesson**

Shlomo Groman

Worksheet for an Advanced Yiddish Lesson: Melech Ravitch's Poem “*Khalef*” (Butcher Knife, as published in his book *Nakete lider*, Vienna: Kval, 1921, 99–100)

ה לף



נעם דײך צוזאמען:

טוט!

אין זאג:

ײן טוטער האב איך פון טײן טיר ליכהארצענדיג טיט כבוד
[אָסנעוויווען,

צו טײן ווייב האָב איך געזאָגט: ביזט אַלט, אָסנעלעכט:
טײנע קינדער האָב איך איבערגעלאָזט אין ווייניגע טעג אין פונקעלע
[שטיבער,

לעכער האָב איך גענראָבען אונטער די טיט,
די באַרוועסע, נלויביגע וואַנדערער־טיט פֿון טײנע בעסטע פֿריינד,
פֿלייש פֿון סאַמעט־טיט קעלכער האָב איך טיט אַ נרויסען געסט
באַשטעלט בײַ אַ קעלנער אין אַ קאַפּעהויז:

ווייל איך האָלט פֿון נוטע קעסט —

און געפֿרעסען האָב איך עס טיט ווייטער חלה,
בשעת גאַסען־קינדער האָבען צוגעטוליעט בלויז פֿניטלעך
צו די רעגענ־נאַסע, נרויסע שויבען

אין געקומט.

אַריטע אַרבעטער־טיירלעך האָב איך אָנגעהויבען
אָבער נוט באַצאָהלט.

אין בין גענאַנגען דעם וועג פֿון אַ דיכטער פֿון פֿרייד
און פֿון דער ליבע צו אַלע קרעאַטורען,
פֿון קלוגשאַפט, קאַמוניזם און וועלט־גליק.

— ווי קאן איך דיר דאס אַלעס נלויבען?

— אודאי קאַנסטו! פֿאַר אַוועלכע טיני זינדען שמראָסט דאָך נישט
קײן שום געזעץ פֿון מערב און פֿון מזרח —

און פֿון די עשרת־הדברות איז נישט אָנגעריהרט קײן אלה!

און דאָך איז דאָס נישט אמת:

אָבער ס׳איז אַ חלה,

און פֿאַנכמאַל דאַרף מען שניידען די נישטה טיט אַ חלה.

Lexical Comments

1. At first glance, the meaning of the word *arbeter-meydl* seems transparent. However, you may mistake it for “a worker’s girlfriend,” all the more so because the possessive case is not always applied systematically in Yiddish. Only the context helps to figure out that it means “working girl” or “housemaid.”¹
2. The verb *onheybn* is used here in its rare meaning: “to deflower.”
3. Pay attention to the unusual form of the word *komunizmus*. In Yiddish, this is not the only case of adding a Latin ending *-us* to international words with the suffix *-ism*. Among other examples, *liberalizmus* can be mentioned.
4. The word *mankhmol* is a typical daytshmerism. In German, *manchmal* means “sometimes.”

Pre-lesson Assignments

1. Here are some words that do not belong to the vernacular and are not found in most dictionaries, but can be “deciphered” by advanced students who have mastered the principles of Yiddish morphology: *libhartsndik*, *vanderer-fus*, *sametfisik*, *velt-glik*. Find out their meaning using the context and dictionaries.
2. Think of four (at least) synonyms for *mankhmol*.
3. Rewrite the poem according to YIVO spelling standards. While doing that, make sure you understand every word.
4. (To be read aloud and discussed at the lesson). Formulate, in 60–100 words of prose, the main ideas of the poem, paying particular attention to the character of the lyrical speaker.

¹The connotations of prostitution that “working girl” sometimes carries in English are hardly involved here.

Post-lesson Assignments

Each student may choose one or two questions to answer in expanded form, 200-300 words in total.

5. Comment on the role of Hebraisms in this poem. Which of them might be substituted by synonyms of different origin? Would it change something in semantics, intonation, and perception of the text?
6. What is special about the last stanza?
7. Ravitch's *Nakete lider* contains a section called "*Vegetarish evangelyum*." Read some of the poems from that section, compare them to "Butcher's Knife," and discuss whether that poem could belong there.

Key to Assignment 1: *libhartsndik* (with love in one's heart), *vanderer-fus* (wayfarer's foot), *sametfisik* (velvet-legged), *velt-glik* (global happiness)

Notes for Teachers

1. Before this lesson, students should have at least a basic understanding of Melech Ravitch's biography and his collection *Nakete lider*, and be familiar with *Khalyastre* in general.
2. In strong advanced classes, it is desirable to conduct explanations and discussions entirely or partially in Yiddish; for the sake of uniformity, English is used throughout this article.

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