Classic Poetry Series

Yehudah HaLevi

- poems -

Publication Date:

2004

Publisher:

PoemHunter.Com - The World's Poetry Archive

"O My Lord, Your Dwelling Places Are Lovely"

O My Lord, Your dwelling places are lovely
Your Presence is manifest, not in mystery.
My dream brought me to the Temple of God
And I praised its delightful servants,
And the burnt offering, its meal and libation
Which rose up in great pillars of smoke.
I delighted in the song of the Levites,
In their secrets of the sacrificial service.
Then I woke, and still I was with you, O Lord,
And I gave thanks - for to You it is pleasant to give thanks

Yehudah HaLevi

A love song

"Do you see over my shoulders falling,
Snake-like ringlets waving free?
Have no fear, for they are twisted
To allure you unto me."

Thus she spoke, the gentle dove,
Listen to your plighted love:
"Oh, how long I wait, till my sweetheart comes back," she said,
"Laying his caressing hand underneath my burning head."

Yehudah HaLevi

Awake, my fair

Awake, my fair, my love, awake,
So that I may gaze upon you!
And if one is eager to kiss your lips,
In your dreams this do you see,
Lo, then I myself of your dream
The interpreter will be.

Yehudah HaLevi

He comes

He comes, O bliss!
Fly swiftly, you winds,
You odorous breezes,
And tell him how long
I've waited for this!

O happy that night,
When sunk on your breast,
Your kisses fast falling,
And drunken with love,
My troth I did plight.

Again my sweet friend
Embrace me close.
Yes, heaven does bless us,
And now you have won
My love without end.

Yehudah HaLevi

Hymn for Atonement Day

Lord, Your humble servants hear,
Suppliant now before You,
Our Father, from Your children's plea
Turn not, we implore You!

Lord, Your people, sore oppressed,
From the depths implore You;
Our Father, let us not, this day,
Cry in vain before You.

Lord, blot out our evil pride,
All our sins before You;
Our Father, for Your Mercy's sake,
Pardon, we implore You.

Lord, no sacrifice we bring,
Prayers and tears implore You;
Our Father, take the gift we lay,
Contrite hearts, before You.

Lord, Your sheep have wandered far,
Gather them before You;
Our Father, let Your shepherd love
Guide us, we implore You.

Lord, Your pardon grant to all
That in truth, implore You;
Our Father, let our evening prayer
Now find grace before You.

Lord, Your humble servants hear,
Suppliant now before You;
Our Father, from Your children's plea
Turn not, we implore You!

Yehudah HaLevi

Marriage Song

Fair is my dove, my loved one,
None can with her compare:
Yea, comely as Jerusalem,
Like unto Tirzah fair.

Shall she in tents unstable
A wanderer abide,
While in my heart awaits her
A dwelling deep and wide?

The magic of her beauty
Has stolen my heart away:
Not Egypt's wise enchanters
Held half such wondrous sway.

Even as the changing opal
In varying luster glows,
Her face at every moment
New charms and sweetness shows.

White lilies and red roses
There blossom on one stem:
Her lips of crimson berries
Tempt mine to gather them.

By dusky tresses shaded
Her brow gleams fair and pale,
Like to the sun at twilight,
Behind a cloudy veil.

Her beauty shames the day-star,
And makes the darkness light:
Day in her radiant presence
Grows seven times more bright.

This is a lonely lover!
Come, fair one, to his side,
That happy be together
The bridegroom and the bride!

The hour of love approaches
That shall make one of twain:
Soon may be thus united
All Israel's hosts again!

Yehudah HaLevi

My sweetheart's dainty lips

My sweetheart's dainty lips are red,
With ruby's crimson overspread;
Her teeth are like a string of pearls;
Down her neck her clustering curls
In ebony hue vie with the night,
And over her features dances light.

The twinkling stars enthroned above
Are sisters to my dearest love.
We men should count it joy complete
To lay our service at her feet.
But oh what rapture is her kiss!
A forecast 'tis of heavenly bliss!

Yehudah HaLevi

Sabbath, My Love

greet my love with wine and gladsome lay;
Welcome, thrice welcome, joyous Seventh Day!

Six slaves the weekdays are; I share
With them a round of toil and care,
Yet light the burdens seem, I bear
For your sweet sake, Sabbath, my love!

On the First-day to the accustomed task
I go content, nor reward ask,
Save in your smile, at length, to bask --
Day blessed of God, Sabbath, my love!

Is the Second-day dull, the Third-day unbright?
Hide sun and stars from the Fourth-day's sight?
What need I care, who have your light,
Orb of my life, Sabbath, my love!

The Fifth-day, joyful tidings ring:
"The morrow shall your freedom bring!"
At dawn a slave, at eve a king --
God's table waits, Sabbath, my love!

On the Sixth-day does my cup overflow,
What blissful rest the night shall know,
When, in your arms, my toil and woe
Are all forgotten, Sabbath, my love!

Now it's dusk. With sudden light distilled
From one sweet face, the world is filled;
The tumult of my heart is stilled --
For you have arrived, Sabbath, my love!

Bring fruits and wine, and sing a cheerful lay,
Chant: "Come in peace, O blissful Seventh Day!"

Yehudah HaLevi

The Grey Hair

One day I observed a grey hair in my head;
I plucked it right out, when it thus to me said:
"You may smile, if you wish, at your treatment of me,
But a score of my friends soon will make a mockery of you."

Yehudah HaLevi

The Mirror

Into my eyes he lovingly looked,
My arms about his neck were twined,
And in the mirror of my eyes,
What but his image did he find?

Upon my dark-hued eyes he pressed
His lips with breath of passion rare.
The rogue! 'Twas not my eyes he kissed;
He kissed his picture mirrored there.

Yehudah HaLevi

The Seventh Day

Forget not the day of the Sabbath,
Its mention is like a pleasant offering.
During it the dove found resting place,
And there the weary may relax.
The day is honored by the Children of Faith,
Careful to observe it are fathers and sons.
Engraved upon two tablets of stone,
From great power and mighty strength.
And they all came in Covenant together,
In unison they said, "We shall do and we shall listen."
And they commenced and answered, "God is One,"
Blessed is He that gives strength to the weary.
He spoke in His holiness by the mountain of Mohr spice
"Remember and guard the seventh day."
And all of his commandments to be completed together
Strengthen the loins and gather up power.
The nation that is in motion, like lost sheep,
By covenant He will remember to recall it,
So that an evil happening may not befall them,
Just as You have sworn by the waters of Noah.

Yehudah HaLevi