

## **MOTHERS**

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Translated by Floris Kalman (2007)

### **I. The loveliest flight of a host of pigeons**

The measured flight of a host of pigeons  
is not as serene nor as lovely  
nor as near to the Above  
as the gaze of mothers, when they sit alone

to look out the window deep into the night  
hear rustling above like the sound of wings  
and recognise the voices: one laughing one yelling  
and one set on falling from its cradle.

The weather is so mild. They can't understand  
how their brood has flown apart;  
and though at night they sit alone at the window  
their eyes still see the children laugh and cry.

They know how good great and just is the Name  
He is the ship above the clouds, the grasses' fragrance,  
and those who came from their loins  
are His as well, He won't abandon them.

Within their old hearts is a garden of faith,  
that somewhere their children flourish in joy  
and the loveliest flight of a host of pigeons  
Is not as serene as their gaze.

## **II. A young mother sings**

Tucked away beneath his cot  
close to Chaim's feet,  
a golden kid is standing –  
but how could anyone know?

And not to know is very good  
then you won't go off trading  
what's deepest hidden is blood  
more precious far than almonds.

Under little Chaim's cot  
stands a little golden jug,  
no one at all can know  
I have a rich son.

For not to know is best,  
every treasure is in secret.  
When the secret of blood blossoms in the sky  
the bright sun itself wants to go down.

## **III. Second mother sings**

It's hard. It's late. All are asleep.  
A lit-up window chases the wind.  
He who loved her has run away  
like the lit-up window that chases the wind.

He was hot-blooded, and his nights  
turned her black as coal.  
Who is at fault and who is right?  
Loveliest is her little girl's mouth.

The room presses down on her like lead.

His image echoes from these walls.  
Humble was their wedding party  
yet that night had blue and tender hands.

Painful and trashy, life dribbles away.  
It's late. It's hard. And all are asleep.  
A lit-up window chases the wind,  
but her daughter keeps her little mouth open.

#### **IV. Third mother sings**

The year of plenty is still far off  
and my son is still so small.  
Now he lies there yelling  
without a single tooth yet.

Far off is the year of plenty  
while through all the gates  
hunger makes hair fall out  
so that the stars mourn.

The year of plenty is still far off  
Earth hasn't yet put on summer colours  
Time has a long winter sleep,  
sees in a dream that she dies:

a vision of fields of abundant rye  
yet not one bite for her;  
a vision of distant reflecting streams  
while she drops to the ground from thirst.

Such a nasty dream  
and my son is still so small.  
Who will the rescuer be?  
My child has no teeth yet.

The day of honour is still far off  
when his mother will be blessed for his acts...  
the world is a block of stone  
that crumbles by the shore of seas –

its righteousness but a rudder's trail  
that vanishes in the water,  
and like semen in the lap of a whore  
its pride will give birth to nothing.

In birth pains the world writhes  
but no relief will they bring.  
The days fall away like snow  
and bury us under snowfalls.

More and more the winter drags out  
with sleep ever nightmarish harder.  
Ever closer cuts the cold –  
shelter, protect us from chastisement.

My child's eyes! Such eyes!  
And he smells like an apple-orchard.  
He has sucked so little yet from the earth,  
protect me from punishment, God!

I shall seal the windows tight  
let no chill into my home.  
My child bears warmth and life  
I shall be mother of spring.

My little boy's delicate limbs  
sing like little birds.  
His teeth rhyme like songs  
when a poet's heart flows through them.

Like the joy of a wondrous twilight  
is his quiet golden hair.  
God has opened up his hand  
though it's still far to the year of plenty.

Though the sky looks dark and ugly  
and people are hunks of tears,  
yet through the stillness of night  
I can hear my child's teeth growing.

He will be big and strong and clever  
and will bloom with joy like a sunflower.  
Just the sparks from his eyes  
will fling out a brilliant chain.

Around those who are silent and suffer in fear  
or curse the day they were born,  
or throw themselves from buildings, like garbage  
or who, through gambling, have lost

the steps of the eternal wanderer.  
the blood that flows proud in the body –  
and who lick the spear that another  
has plunged into them, their child, their wife:

my child will be strong, wise and deep.  
Upon my mind landed the loveliest star,  
for nine months I wrote a letter  
now I send it out to the world.

Let all read it who feel  
walls before their faces.  
God, give my son the strength of will  
of a judge at the last judgement.

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