

No Room in the World

Translated by Andrew Firestone and Beni Gothajner (2014)

Some people's lives are so muffled,
their steps hush-hush, so quiet and cold,
as if the world is forever under snow
and they have no money for a sled...
Adorned in golden hats and caps
the summers beam: the grain is harvested,
it smells of resin, fields and hay,
and every forest tree rejoices.
But these people walk hush-hush, so quiet and cold,
as if the world is forever under snow
and they have no money for a sled...

And in their homes the floor is rotted through
though fresh boards flow like milk from under the saw.
And when a wagon of flour comes rushing from the mill
these people hurry out of the way...

That's how they live, hidden like Elijah at the fair,
profound pain in their eyes and hunger in their beards.
Dear Jews, we exalt you and extol you
who take up no room in the world.

But sometimes their silence wraps itself in the blue...
like runaway skies, they shuffle off to some far off place
and with hearts in their breasts and clouds in their hearts
grow heavier and heavier by the hour
until they tumble down, like piercing rain,
and lie spilt on the cobblestones.

Says one passerby:

Oh! Someone has died of hunger!

A second, hurrying home to a sweet young wife,
elbows past him in a rage:

What next! A bum has stretched himself out here

and is taking up the whole street!

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