

When silver melts

Translated by Andrew Firestone and Beni Gothajner (2014)

Dear God, the fish below and the stars above shiver
not just in the threatening sun of the Days of Awe:
the silver from Your heavens melts
in the raised temperature of patients.

38, 39, 40, 40.8

are steps that lead up, up to You.

And the sick are certain they lie close to Your heart
and weep into the night...

They drag their eyes away from the thermometer,
their looks stray to the window, then search on the wall.
They grab as if drowning for your Hand...
if we stand there we hear sounds of heat and cries, of thirst and
conflagration.

The sick can sense that they lie close to Your heart
and they cry in the night to seal off their fear.

But sometimes, God, You depart in silence
and slam the door without a goodbye.

1934

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published March 2, 1934 in the newspaper *Haynt*, with a footnote:
*The well-known Yiddish writer Yisroel Shtern is very ill at present, and during his
illness has written this fine poem, expressive of a sick person's state of mind.*