

Yidishe verter.

Fun der yidisher shprakhs umgehayere oytsres
nor a teyl gor a kleynem bahersh ikh.
Un fundestvegn, iz dort an oytser far mir yedes vort...
Un es vilt zikh mir filn zey mit ale khushim:
zey aroysreydn, hern, farzukhn un kushn.
Vil ikh, zoln zey shpiln mit kolerley farbm, kolirn -
vi Mones peyzazh-bilder, vi "Tayms-Skver" in ovnt.
Zoln klingen zey oykh mit farsheydene klangen:
vi a vaserfal, duner, vi yam-khvalyes' pleyesken,
vi a valdroysh, a foygl-lid, grozshpringers' tsirken.
Kh'vil, az zey zoln zingen mit shtimen
fun Karuzo, Shalyapin, fun Shvartskopf un Kalas.
Vil ikh, shmekn zey zoln mit alerley reykhes:
vi a duftike royz, vi der yam un di zamdn af baltishe plyazhes,
vi "Shanel", vi benzin, vi fun hey stoygn frische -
un vi er, der gebenchter un heyliker duft fun an ishe...
Libe yidishe verter! Ikh vil ir zolt lakhn un veynen,
shpringen, flien, valsirn,
glantsn, blishchen un finklen,
brenen, shtromen, zikh shleynglen,
blondzhen, beynken un hoykhn...
Nor s'iz orem mayn teyl funem oytser
un mayn kenen iz dalesdik, vorem keyn shrayber kh'bin nisht.
Un kh'kon gebm aykh, yidishe verter,
nor mayn libe...

Yiddish Words

Of the Yiddish language's enormous treasures,
I have mastered only an extremely small portion,
and yet—every word there is a treasure for me,
and I want to feel them with all my senses:
to pronounce, hear, taste and kiss them.
I want them to sparkle with all kinds of colours:
like Manet's landscape paintings, like Times Square in the evening.
Let them also ring with various sounds:
like a waterfall, like thunder, like the slapping of the ocean waves,
like a forest's rustling, a bird's song, grasshoppers' chirp.
I want them to sing with the voices
of Caruso, Chaliapin, Schwartzkopf, and Callas.
I want them to emit all kinds of aromas:
like a fragrant rose, like the sea and sands on the Baltic beaches,
like Chanel, like gasoline, like fresh haystacks—
and like the blessed and holy fragrance of a woman.
Dear Yiddish words! I want you to laugh and cry,
jump, fly, waltz,
shine, sparkle, burn, stream, wriggle,

wander, yearn, and exhale...
But my portion of the treasure is paltry
and my knowledge is poor, for I am no writer,
and I can give you, Yiddish words,
only my love.