

Under Alien Skies by Yossel Birstein

Weary from Waiting

Translated by Sheva Zucker

To the sad of my people
to the sad of my home
Reb 'Sroel Baal-Shem¹
once more will come:

the quiet Jew of the common folk
who learned, from the quiet grass of the field,
the language of comfort –
and brimming with joy, blessed a world.

His world exists no longer but
comes to life now in our song.
Whoever weeps with our lament
will hear his footsteps too.

For he will come passing through our town
delivering God's greeting
and telling softly
that he has brought back joy.

Then we will tell him:
fortunate are we to hear your steps
for our body is weary, weary from waiting.
But the sad are always ready.

And that is why
the simple Baal-Shem will come
to the sad of my people,
to the sad of my home.

¹ (1) (Ed): the Ba'al Shem Tov, the legendary founder of the Chassidic movement, is addressed here as *R' 'Sroel*, a familiar form of Reb (Mister) Israel, which was his first name. This admixture of respect and familiarity is suited to a great interlocutor with God, who was at the same time a man of the people.