

"Was it only a dream..."

Was it only a dream? Was it I?
Was it I who long ago
rose with the dawn to fill the fields
by the sweat of my brow?¹

Was it I who on long, sultry days
of harvesting
on a high wagon loaded with sheaves
would sing?

Was it I who bathed in the innocent blue²
—under a peaceful sky—
Of my Galilee, my own Galilee?
Was it only a dream? Was it I?

Translated by Robert Friend



[1] "By the sweat of your brow shall you eat bread till you return to the soil, for from there were you taken, for dust you are and to dust shall you return." (Genesis 3:19) The phrase 'sweat of your brow' is from the story of Adam and Eve's banishment from the Garden of Eden, which may well echo the feeling of the poet being forced to leave her beloved Sea of Galilee.

[2] The word *taharti* (literally, "I purified myself") might be a comparison of bathing in the *Kineret* to the ritual of submerging oneself in the *mikveh* (ritual bath).

ואולי לא היו הדברים...

ואולי לא היו הדברים מעולם,
אולי
מעולם לא השכמתי עם שחר לגן,
לעבדו בזעת-אפי?

מעולם, בימים ארכים ויוקדים
של קציר,
במרומי עגלה עמוסת אלמות
לא נתתי קולי בשייר?

מעולם לא טהרתי בתכלת שוקטה
ובתם
של כנרת שלי... הוי, כנרת שלי,
ההיית, או חלמתי חלום?

I Believe

Laugh, laugh, at my dreams,
I the dreamer now speak.
Laugh—while knowing I still believe in humanity,
Because I still believe in you.
Because my soul still thirsts for freedom
I haven't sold out for a golden calf.
Because I will still believe in humanity,
In its spirit, its powerful, empowerment.
That spirit will pulverize binding chains
It will raise us up, with heads held high
No worker will die of hunger
Souls will be nourished with freedom, the poor people with bread.
Laugh, but know I also believe in friendship
I'll believe—I will still find a heart
A heart of my hopes, and of another's hopes,
That will feel joy, and understand anguish.
I will also believe in the future
Even if redemption day seems far away
But when it does come, it will bring peace
And a blessing from nation to nation.
Then, my people will also flourish
And in the land a new generation will arise
One that shakes off its iron shackles.
And eye after eye will see light.

אָנִי מֵאֲמִין

שְׁחָקִי, שְׁחָקִי עַל הַחֲלוּמוֹת,
זוֹ אֲנִי הַחוֹלֵם שָׁח.
שְׁחָקִי כִּי בְּאָדָם אֲאֲמִין,
כִּי עוֹדֵנִי מֵאֲמִין בָּךְ.
כִּי עוֹד נִפְשִׁי דְרוֹר שׁוֹאֶפֶת
לֹא מְכַרְתִּיהָ לְעַגְל־פֶּז,
כִּי עוֹד אֲאֲמִין גַּם בְּאָדָם,
גַּם בְּרוּחוֹ, רוּחַ עֵז.
רוּחוֹ יִשְׁלִיךְ כְּבִלֵי־הַבֵּל,
יְרוּמְמוּנוֹ בְּמִתֵּי־עַל;
לֹא בְּרַעַב יָמוּת עֶבֶד,
דְרוֹר – לְנַפְשׁ, פֶּת – לְדָל.
שְׁחָקִי כִּי גַם בְּרַעוֹת אֲאֲמִין,
אֲאֲמִין, כִּי עוֹד אֶמְצָא לֵב,
לֵב תְּקוּתִי גַם תְּקוּתִיו,
יְחוּשׁ אִשֶּׁר, יָבִין כָּאֵב.
אֲאֲמִינָה גַם בְּעֵתִיד,
אִף אִם יִרְחֹק זֶה הַיּוֹם,
אִךְ בּוֹא יְבוֹא – יִשְׂאוּ שְׁלוֹם.
אֲזוּ וּבִרְכָה לְאִם מְלֵאִם.
יִשׁוּב יִפְרַח אֲזוּ גַם עַמִּי,
וּבְאֶרֶץ יְקוּם דּוֹר,
בְּרִזְל־כְּבִלְיוֹ יִסַּר מְנוּ,
עַיִן־בְּעַיִן יִרְאֶה אוֹר.