

Each of Us Has a Name

Each of us has a name¹
given by God
and given by our parents²

Each of us has a name
given by our enemies
and given by our love

Each of us has a name
given by our stature and our smile
and given by what we wear

Each of us has a name
given by our celebrations
and given by our work

Each of us has a name
given by the mountains
and given by our walls

Each of us has a name
given by the seasons
and given by our blindness

Each of us has a name
given by the stars³
and given by our neighbors

Each of us has a name
given by the sea
and given by
our death.

Each of us has a name
given by our sins
and given by our longing

Translated by Marcia Falk



[1] “Male and female He created them, and He blessed them and called their name humankind on the day they were created.” (Genesis 5:2)

[2] “You find that a man is known by three names: the name by which his father and mother call him, the name by which other men call him, and the one he earns for himself; the most important name is the one he earns for himself.” (*Midrash Tanchuma*)

[3] The word used in the poem is *mazalot*, which refers to the signs of the zodiac.

לכל איש יש שם

לְכָל אִישׁ יֵשׁ שֵׁם
שְׁנַתְנֵנוּ לוֹ שׁוֹנְאָיו
וְנִתְּנָה לוֹ אֶהְבֵּתוֹ
לְכָל אִישׁ יֵשׁ שֵׁם
שְׁנַתְנֵנוּ לוֹ חֲגִיו
וְנִתְּנָה לוֹ מְלֹאכֶתוֹ
לְכָל אִישׁ יֵשׁ שֵׁם
שְׁנַתְנֵנוּ לוֹ תְּקוּפוֹת הַשָּׁנָה
וְנִתֵּן לוֹ עֲרוֹנוֹ
לְכָל אִישׁ יֵשׁ שֵׁם
שְׁנַתְנֵנוּ לוֹ הַיָּם
וְנִתֵּן לוֹ
מִתּוֹ.
לְכָל אִישׁ יֵשׁ שֵׁם
שְׁנַתְנֵנוּ לוֹ אֱלֹהִים
וְנִתְּנָה לוֹ אָבִיו וְאִמּוֹ
לְכָל אִישׁ יֵשׁ שֵׁם
שְׁנַתְנֵנוּ לוֹ קוֹמָתוֹ וְאֶפֶן חֵיכּוֹ
וְנִתֵּן לוֹ הָאָרֶץ
לְכָל אִישׁ יֵשׁ שֵׁם
שְׁנַתְנֵנוּ לוֹ הַהָרִים
וְנִתְּנָה לוֹ כְּתָלָיו
לְכָל אִישׁ יֵשׁ שֵׁם
שְׁנַתְנֵנוּ לוֹ הַמְּזֻלוֹת
וְנִתְּנָה לוֹ שְׂכָנָיו
לְכָל אִישׁ יֵשׁ שֵׁם
שְׁנַתְנֵנוּ לוֹ חֻטְאָיו
וְנִתְּנָה לוֹ כְּמִיָּהֲתוֹ

Bab el Wad

Here I'm passing by. I stand beside the rock,
A black asphalt highway, mountain ridges, stones.
Evening darkens slowly and a sea breeze blows.
Over Beit Mahsir,¹ the first starlight glows.

Bab el Wad,
Remember our names for all time.
Where convoys to the city broke through
Our dead lie sprawled by the roadside.
The iron skeleton, like my comrade, is mute.

Here tar and lead baked in the sun
Here nights passed with fire and blades
Here grief and glory dwell side by side
A scorched armored car and unknown men's names.

Bab el Wad...



The Arabic words *Bab el Wad*—the “gate of the valley” in English and *sha'ar hagai* in Hebrew—refers to a location 23 kilometers (approximately 14 miles) from present-day Jerusalem on the Tel Aviv-Jerusalem highway where the plains meet the Judean hills. This place was the site of some of the most difficult battles of the war during its first stage, from the UN vote in November 1947 until Israel's declaration of its independence in May 1948, during which local Arab militias attempted to bar Jewish vehicles from passing through the topographic gate of the valley leading to Jerusalem.

To this day, remnants of the armored cars of the *Palmach* fighters can be seen along the highway as a memorial to those battles.

This poem was set to music in a haunting melody, most famously sung by Shoshana Damari, and it accompanies ceremonies for Yom Hazikaron, the annual Memorial Day for fallen soldiers, which is observed the day before Israel's Independence Day.

[1] *Beit Mahsir* was a Palestinian village that today is the religious moshav, *Beit Meir*.

בָּאב אֶל וָאָד

פֹּה אֲנִי עוֹבֵר. נֹצֵב לַיָּד הָאֶבֶן.
כְּבִישׁ אֶסְפֹּלֵט שְׁחוֹר, סִלְעִים וְרִכְסִים.
עָרַב אֶת יוֹרֵד, רוּחַ יָם נוֹשֶׁבֶת
אוֹר כּוֹכָב רֵאשׁוֹן מֵעֶבֶר בֵּית־מַחְסִיר.

בָּאב אֶל וָאָד,
לְנֹצֵחַ זְכוֹר נָא אֶת שְׁמוֹתֵינוּ,
שִׁירֹת פְּרָצוּ בְדֶדְרֵךְ אֶל הָעִיר.
בְּצִדֵי הַדֶּדְרֵךְ מְטֹלִים מִתֵּינוּ.
שֶׁלֶד הַבְּרָקֵל שׁוֹמֵק, כְּמוֹ רֵעִי.

פֹּה רְתַחוּ בְשִׁמְשׁ זָפֹת וְעוֹפְרֹת.
פֹּה עֲבְרוּ לִילֹת בְּאֵשׁ וְסִכִּינִים.
פֹּה שׁוֹכְנִים בְּיַחַד עֲצָב וְתַפְאֲרֹת,
מְשֻׁרְרֵן חֲרוּף וְשֵׁם שֶׁל אֱלֹמוֹנִים.

בָּאב אֶל וָאָד...