

## **The Silence**

**by Itzhak Nahmanovitch**


I came to David-Horodok in August 1944. I found mounds overgrown with grass in place of the houses. Instead of joyous laughter and childish playful screaming, places that once beckoned with the glow of their homely warmth now presented a fierce and frightening picture.

Every remaining house, every tree that stands like a solitary wounded limb, cries, screams, laments and anxiously asks, "Where are the gray respectable old folks who would rest in our shade? Where has the happy laughter fled, the tender feelings, the curly-headed children? Why is all that was beautiful and loving gone? And many, many more whys.

No answer comes. I cannot find it. From Dentist Edel's house to the church hill—not one remaining house, only wild grass ... mounds and grass.

Someone appears ... moving about like a wild apparition ... he doesn't look me in the eyes ... with dirty bare feet in a good black pullover with silk lapels ... he doesn't speak ... no one here talks now ... they know nothing ... they did hear about something but they don't remember exactly ...

What's the use of talking? It's better to be quiet in a cemetery ... I come to the holiest place for me in the entire world—the mass grave. A smooth sandy field ... four years later, four long years after fire and blood. Years of homesickness close by me... I finally come to the home which was so near ... but where are the loving mother's arms? Where are the coveted friendly faces gleaming with pleasure at each encounter? ... No one kisses ... no one shakes my hand ... I stand shattered, dismayed and waiting, but in vain. In this small arid field a town is hidden ... no markers, no monument tablets, no inscriptions, no flowers—just a strange heartrending silence.



**A Responsive Reading in Memory  
of Those Who Fell  
in David-Horodok During the Shoah**


*(This reading is woven around the words of people who once lived  
in David-Horodok)*

*David-Horodoker:* Stories make up lives, all lives. Listen to the chatter, to the tales around you. You will hear your lives told in other peoples' remembering. Your stories go on, but ours ended before they were over. There is a hole in the place where our hearts once beat. There is a void where the rest of our lives should be.

*Assembly:* We will remember. We will fill your empty space with thoughts from our hearts and time from our lives. Our living will lessen the tragic loss of yours.

*David-Horodoker:* Go to David-Horodok, to the place where the synagogues stood. Listen to the whispers of the wind. They will tell you of us, of our living and our dying.


*Assembly:* We will listen and we will act on that listening. Your lives will be a light to us; the fullness of your living and the tragedy of your dying will remind us of the importance of the way we ourselves live. Tell us of this place.



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*Speaker 1:* God was our Father but the Horin River was our mother; she nourished our town. Some she made rich, some poor; some homes she destroyed in floods, others she built through wealth brought by the ships, barges, rafts and steamers that plied her waters. We were the children of that river. In the summertime we swam and played in the Horin. We walked along the large wooden bridge. We ran to greet the incoming steamer even if there was no one we were waiting for. At night our youngsters strolled along the riverbank. And during the Holocaust some of us committed our bodies to the Horin rather than die at the hands of our enemies. Wherever God takes our souls, the river will stay with us forever.

*Speaker 2:* You would like to become acquainted with our town, our David Horodok? What didn't our town possess? Poor people, sextons, synagogue trustees and money-lenders, the charitable who cared for the poor and orphaned, a bathhouse, a ritual bath and above all ... mud! A sea of mud! It seemed as if there was no spot in the entire world that was free of mud. Mud in the street, in the yard, on the



sidewalk and mud right up to the house. What wasn't done to try and get rid of the mud? And do you think it helped? ... a yesterday day. Forget it!

*Speaker 3:* We loved going to the marketplace. The life of the town was there. Hot and dusty in sultry summer; cold and buried in snowy winter. We came to the market to sell and buy, but mostly to see each other. For such things the entire town came, some running and some walking. Shmaiha's Hiah Leah ran to sell fried goose skin and fat; Shashke Korman ran to sell fresh bagels; Sarinka's Nahe ran with a wagon of apples and Nahe Katz went with quick steps, perhaps to buy some pig bristles... There also flourished Simha the "Japanese", a broad-shouldered and big-footed man with a pair of fisherman boots pulled up to the armpits, a rope tied around his coat from which hung two ends on either side like a *Hasid's gertl* —he would whirl around the marketplace looking for a livelihood.

*Speaker 4:* We Horodoker Jews knew about evil spirits! Did not Horodoker mothers believe there was a kind-hearted Sarah sent down by heaven to protect the Jewish woman in childbirth and her newborn infant? And really why should they not believe it? Is it not clearly written in the Yiddish bible? We believed in Sarah because we believed in the devil's camp, Heaven protect us. The devil's camp tried by various tricks to entrap a child in sin. Indeed there were mothers who routinely distributed goodies to small school children to encourage them in their nightly prayers and hung placards of psalms on each window and door to prevent the entrance of imps and evil spirits. We believed in everything except for one thing: we did not believe that there could come a time when beasts in the form of people would rise up against us and ruthlessly murder us.

*Speaker 5:* They took our men and boys on the 17th of Av, 1941, and shot them down in trenches outside of town. The Nazi SS and our neighbors, may their names be blotted out, ended the lives of the men. For a year the women and children lived on in a wretched ghetto, starving to death, until those left were taken out on the 28th of *Elul*, two days before *Rosh Hashanah*, and shot too. We are buried outside of town on the road to the village of Olshon. Mourn us, for no one else is left.

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*David-Horodoker:* Say Kaddish for our souls.

*Assembly:* Though your bodies have become ashes and dust, in the light of the eternal flame, we will remember you.

*David-Horodoker:* Who are you, that you would do this for us?

*Assembly:* We are your heirs, flesh of your flesh. We are the relatives who escaped to America before the Second World War. We are the lucky ones.

*David-Horodoker:* We are but a memory.

*Assembly:* A memory need not be forgotten.

*David-Horodoker:* Do not forget.

*Assembly:* The eternal flame will forever remind us of your lives.

## Ely Maley Rahamim

*In memory of the six million*

אל מלא רחמים שוכן במרומים המצא מנוחה נכונה תחת  
כנפי השכינה במעלות קדושים וטהורים כזהר הקקיע מזהירים,  
את-נשמות כל-אחינו בני ישראל, אנשים נשים וטף, שנהרגו  
ושנטבחו ושושרפו ושחנקו. בגן עדן תהי מנוחתם. אָנָּא בְּעַל  
הַרְחָמִים, הַסְתִּירֵם בְּסֶתֶר כְּנַפֵּיךָ לְעוֹלָמִים וְצַרֵר בְּצִרּוֹר הַחַיִּים  
אֶת-נַשְׁמוֹתֵיהֶם. ייִ הוּא נֶחְלָתָם, וַיְנוּחַו בְּשָׁלוֹם עַל מִשְׁכְּבוֹתֵיהֶם.  
וְנֹאמֵר אָמֵן.

Exalted, compassionate God, grant perfect peace in Your sheltering Presence, among the holy and the pure, to the souls of all our brethren, men, women and children of the House of Israel who were slaughtered and burned. May their memory endure, inspiring truth and loyalty in our lives. May their souls thus be bound up in the bond of life. May they rest in peace. And let us say: Amen.

## Mourners' Kaddish

יִתְגַּדַּל וְיִתְקַדַּשׁ שְׁמֵהּ רַבָּא. בְּעָלְמָא דִּי־בְרָא כְרַעוּתָהּ.  
וְיִמְלִיךְ מַלְכוּתָהּ בְּחַיִּיכוֹן וּבְיוֹמֵיכוֹן וּבְחַיֵּי דְכָל־בֵּית  
יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּעָגְלָא וּבְזִמְן קָרִיב. וְאָמְרוּ אָמֵן:

יְהֵא שְׁמֵהּ רַבָּא מְבָרַךְ לְעָלְמָא וְלְעָלְמֵי עָלְמַיָּא:

יִתְבָּרַךְ וְיִשְׁתַּבַּח וְיִתְפָּאֵר וְיִתְרַמֵּם וְיִתְנַשֵּׂא וְיִתְהַדָּר  
וְיִתְעַלֶּה וְיִתְהַלָּל שְׁמֵהּ דְקָדְשָׁא. בְּרִיךְ הוּא. לְעָלְמָא  
וְלְעָלְמָא מִן־כָּל־בְּרַכְתָּא וְשִׁירְתָּא תְּשַׁבְּחָתָא וְנַחֲמָתָא  
דְאָמְרוּן בְּעָלְמָא. וְאָמְרוּ אָמֵן:

יְהֵא שְׁלָמָא רַבָּא מִן־שְׁמַיָּא וְחַיִּים עָלֵינוּ וְעַל־כָּל־  
יִשְׂרָאֵל. וְאָמְרוּ אָמֵן:

עֲשֵׂה שְׁלוֹם בְּמְרוֹמָיו הוּא יַעֲשֵׂה שְׁלוֹם עָלֵינוּ וְעַל־כָּל־  
יִשְׂרָאֵל. וְאָמְרוּ אָמֵן:

Magnified and sanctified may His great Name be in the world that He created as He wills. May His kingdom come in your life and in your days and in the lives of all the house of Israel, swiftly and soon, and say all Amen!

May His great Name be blessed always and forever!

Blessed, praised and glorified, exalted, extolled and honored, magnified and lauded be the Name of the Holy One, blessed be He, though He be high above all blessings and hymns, praises and consolations that are uttered in this world, and say all amen!

May there be abundant peace from heaven, and life for us and for all Israel, and say all amen!

May He who makes peace in His high places, make peace for us and for all Israel, and say all amen!

## David-Horodok's Stars of Heaven

by Kathy Winston



*[My mission in life is to destroy] "the tyrannical God of the Jews" [and] "the life-denying Ten Commandments."*

*Adolph Hitler, in conversation with Hermann Rauschung, cited in Rauschung's preface to The Ten Commandments, ed. Armin Robinson, pages ix-xii<sup>1</sup>*

*And the Lord said to Isaac, "I will fulfill the oath I swore to Abraham your father. I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven..."*

*Genesis 26: 3-5*

Hannah Leah and Avrom begat Hashke  
who with Leo begat Eileen  
who with Joseph begat Mark  
who with Susan begat Dana  
who sang so beautifully at the opening  
of her grandmother's art exhibit  
that told of David-Horodok and the  
children who will now never beget.



Mazishka and Dovid begat Hanche  
who with Bennie begat Abe  
who with Sadie begat Roz  
who with Stanford begat Lisa and Adam and Jenna  
who come to dinners given by the David-Horodoker  
Organization  
to remember a *shtetl* in Belarus  
where their ancestors lived,  
but where no Jewish children  
grow up to beget children.

Razel and Dovid Shlaima begat Bossel  
who with Joe begat Bernice  
who with Irving Michael begat Paul  
who with Kathy begat Rebecca  
who produced a play about  
her ancestors in David-Horodok  
To celebrate the ended lives  
of the children who cannot now beget children.

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<sup>1</sup> This was referenced in Rabbi Joseph Telushkin's *Jewish Wisdom*, p. 475

Here we remember, as we have done before,  
the lives of those who created us,  
and their children's lives, which were cut off.

The children who remained in David-Horodok are gone now. They perished some  
sixty years ago. To these children, whose destinies were never fulfilled,  
we can only say...

Our children shall be your children.  
Our children will remember you.  
Our children will honor you,  
and our children's children, and their children's children.  
So we will give lie to any "final solution."

You lived.  
We live.  
The children shall live.  
And the Jews of David-Horodok, and their God and God's Ten Commandments,  
Shall live on,  
*to all generations.*

*3 daughters*

## Sorrow and Faith

*Based on the words of Beatrice Gadzuk Sonders, mother of members Debra Feldman, Bonnie Levin, and Rita Salama, who survived the destruction of the Jewish community of David-Horodok, and whose witness was recorded by the Shoah Foundation.*

*Assembly:*

Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,  
I will fear no evil.  
For thou art with me.  
Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me. (Psalms 23:4)

*Survivor:*

What is left to a person when such horror befalls you, but to believe that God will nonetheless take care of you? How could anyone live as precariously as we did in Europe during the Second World War without faith?

When I was 15 and went to school the Christian children would throw stones at me and many times I was afraid. And later when I was sixteen and escaped the liquidation of the Jews of Sarne and the Ukrainian police were after me but didn't catch me, God was with me. And when I was eighteen and fled across the border into Vienna without papers and the Nazis never questioned me, and in Vienna when the German bullets went through my coat and not my body, I thanked God and I believed in Him.

*Assembly:*

How long, O Lord, shall I cry for help,  
And Thou wilt not hear?  
Or cry to Thee, "Violence!"  
And Thou wilt not save?...  
Thou who are of eyes too pure to behold evil,  
And who cannot look on wrong,  
Why dost Thou look on faithless people,  
And are silent when the wicked swallow up  
those more righteous than they?" (Habakkuk 1:1;13)

*Survivor:*

I ask myself, "Why God, why? What have I done to deserve this? What did my family do?" You can't imagine what the Germans and the Ukrainians did to us. Even if we tell it again and again, it is not enough to give you understanding.

And never is there an answer, except for God's tears. The evening of the 18th of Av, the evening after the men were slaughtered, the rain poured. I never saw such a storm; it was terrible. As we children and women with sacks on our backs--me with an old army jacket on--were driven across the bridge and out of town, God wept.

*Assembly:*

The face of the Lord is against evildoers,  
to cut off remembrance of them from the earth. (Psalms 34:18)

*Survivor:*

My daughter went back to David-Horodok in 1998, and came away with the report that nothing goes on there any longer. It is finished, a town going nowhere.

This I can understand. David-Horodok has become a dead place because its spirit is buried six miles away in a mass grave. Who can live and prosper with genocide on the conscience?

*Assembly:*

And the Lord appeared to Isaac and said, "... I will fulfill the oath I swore to Abraham your father. I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven, and will give to your descendants all these lands; and by your descendants all the nations of the earth shall bless themselves; because Abraham obeyed my voice and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes and my laws." (Genesis 26: 3-5)

*Survivor:*

I have three children and ten grandchildren and six great-grandchildren, and I'm very proud of them all. Many times I sit on the porch and think of the ones who are gone--my father and mother and brother, and cousins and uncles and aunts. I can still see their faces. But I know we Jews are living on. And I want those who are gone to know that too. I pray that God will tell them, to lighten their fate a little.

I was just awhile ago at a *pidyan haben* for my great-grandson. I was so happy to see myself in the faces of the new family that will take my place someday.

*Assembly:*

*Shema Israel, Adoney Elohemu, Adoney ehad.* Hear O Israel, the Lord is our God; the Lord is one.

*Survivor:*

The end of the war came. By that time I was in Vienna, and the people were cheering around me and hugging each other. And I, standing utterly alone, thought, "I don't want to be Jewish any more," because they still had their families and I had nobody. Everybody was dead. But the next minute I said, "If God preserved me, I will remain Jewish for the rest of my life; I will remain a Jew." And I never thought about it again. Hear Oh World! —The Lord is my God, the Lord is one.

*Assembly:*

For out of Zion shall go forth the law,  
And the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.  
He shall judge between the nations,  
And shall decide for many peoples;  
And they shall beat their swords into plowshares,  
And their spears into pruning hooks;  
Nation shall not lift up sword against nation,  
Neither shall they learn war any more. (Isaiah 2:3-4)

*Survivor:*

May God and future generations make this so, for the sake of all humankind, for people of all religions, but most of all, for my children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

# Horodok

by Howard Schechter

They said,  
"There's nothing left."

What they mean is  
"There's nothing Jewish left."

There is today a lively village  
sweet with houses  
streets  
yards  
and a river running through it

a beautiful  
lovely river  
the only thing in that place  
my father spoke of fondly

I stood on the bridge  
with my brother Neil  
and watched.

in my mind's eye I saw a little Jewish boy  
face full of love  
running  
cracking stick  
against the trees,  
1912


I smiled complete  
having danced with my father's river

the streets are paved now  
not mud anymore

the houses are floored now  
not dirt anymore

a town square  
a statue of Lenin  
a bird crapping on a visionary's head

smiling peasants




mouths full of metallic teeth  
babushkas everywhere

Donkey carts  
laden with hay  
women on top  
sleeping away

a gracious old couple  
helped us  
with guidance  
and blessings  
from her Catholic God

people  
we had learned to hate  
for their happy complicity  
with the slaughter of Jews,  
their children  
now proving kind




an occasional disagreeable look  
disdain or fear  
Jews from America  
might mean change

an old woman  
from her dying bed  
invites us in

orphaned  
adopted by a Jewish family

in her modest cottage  
she hypnotizes us with her stories  
of life  
and love  
in Horodok

then she broke with weeping  
remembrance of her family  
forced into the street  
marched to the killing fields



she muttered the names  
all twelve

hershel and esther  
dovid and wolf  
perished with five thousand that day

outside the town  
on a desperate knoll  
killed  
like cattle

falling  
into pits  
like pigs

onto the next village  
the nazi murderers went  
slaughtering more

another shtetl  
another killing field  
the vicious butchery  
over and over and over  
again

screaming  
or quiet  
they prayed and died  
for the crime of being Jewish


“yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death  
I fear no evil  
for thou art with me...”

the entire countryside of the Pale  
mass graves  
underfoot

we honored the dead  
with prayers of remembrance  
at the memorial of Horodok

next to the rust-colored  
marble-based obelisk  
we stood  
and chanted our prayers

Asher in tallis



leading the circle  
singing our grief


and rage

seething at the Evil  
who called itself Man

on leaving  
our bus was stuck  
reminding us  
that earth is master

rejoice in gratitude  
for the beauty  
that has become our lives

for our parents' courage  
to leave this finished place  
and bequeath us freedom




Horodok is here  
but nothing Jewish is left

an old man  
veteran of the red army  
did us Jewish geography

he showed us schnieder's old house  
and kauffman's  
and resnick's  
the butcher

children now play  
in the overgrown lot  
that once was the synagogue

we wandered the streets  
giving sweets  
to the kids  
in a village  
we no longer call home



There are no Jews here,  
Except us.

## CAPTURING THE MOMENT

By Marla Rowe Gorosh

Capturing the moment of surprise...I stepped through the small, newly planted cedars and between the deliberately placed boulders that reached my hips. My eyes caught the expanse of pure green outlined by red brick- a grave for seven thousand, lying naked and then shot by drunken Nazi beasts.

Now so silent, so flattened where the surrounding pines do not grow, only stones of remembrance. I thought, how fitting, how sobering for the pit to look like a giant cemetery plot.

Somber, heavy, so tired from the four mile walk through the town of David Horodok, tracing The March forced upon them past the wooden homes with their vegetables and flowers.

Today we wore Israeli flags and banners. We carried water and a pink parasol for the hot sun. My feet hurt, my back dripped but I pressed on because they had no choice.

Faces with questioning curious eyes, blond straight hair, their children's faces can be seen in the stout older women and hardened, leather-skinned men. Thick ankles, gnarled hands and eyes rarely meeting accompanied by a few nods, no waves, no smiles.

I imagined questions- Who are you? What are you planning? Why come to David Horodok, our out of the way town with your Western clothes, sparkly jewelry and Jewish stars?

Did they fear that we might intend to take back what was stolen? Our families' homes, furniture, clothing, books and pictures? Silverware, table linen?

Do you understand? Don't fear for your things. We walk for people -the lives of our mothers, our fathers, sisters, brothers and cousins. We walk for the children who were never conceived, for our distant cousins, today made so close as we walk on their streets and touch their houses and now face their bones.

We don't know how to feel about you. What do you know? Probably nothing. The genocide is not in your lessons in school. Your grandparents are gone or don't mention it. Your parents never learned of their parents' observations or participation in the routing out, rounding up, forced movement into the ghetto or march at gunpoint with dogs at their heels across the bridge and out of town along the road through the cornfields then along the birches and into the clearing in the pines where the pit was dug by the neighboring Horodtchukas-Tatars-Mongol Clans, who volunteered for the jobs of digging the pit, sorting the clothes and then checking the homes for an additional two weeks to find those who tried to hide.

Which ones along our March today knew any of these details? I asked myself, How could they ever know?

And then I saw... the side of the memorial was thick with Villagers dressed as if going to church. Silent, standing by or holding their small children in expectant attention watching us enter the gravesite of the seven thousand and the memorial to the heinous crimes that were committed in the murder of our families. I felt my throat tighten, I cried.

They were there to learn, to hold open the possibility for understanding.

## **Stones of Memory**

**In Honor of the David-Horodokers  
who are gone**

Pebbles are passed among those assembled. Each person takes one.

*Leader:* Let each of us place a pebble before the eternal flame, to honor the memory of a David-Horodok soul whose life on earth was cut short.

*Assembly:* The eternal flame reminds us that though the body may be lost, the soul lives forever. Let the souls of those who perished on the 17th of *Av* and the 28th of *Elul* live on, each soul glorying in the individuality given it by God.

*Leader:* Some personalities shone, just as some of these stones shine. Some souls were harsher; some more charming; some filled a room and some barely a chair. But smooth or hard, multi-hued or monotoned, each life enriched God's creation.

*Assembly:* We feel the loss in the friends and relatives we cannot visit and will never know. Where there should be life, there is only silence. The generations that should greet us when we visit the home of our ancestors, were never born.

*Leader:* Each man, woman and child killed on the 17th of *Av*, the 28th of *Elul*, or during the intervening year of horrors, was not only an individual, but part of a community. Some had smiles that warmed others; some displayed passions that aroused hate. Some annoyed; some comforted, and some just frolicked.

*Assembly:* Just as each stone placed by its sister creates a mosaic of beauty, so each life placed by its fellow created a community. The premature loss of this community diminished not only David-Horodok, but us and the world as well.

*Leader:* Our people lived in David-Horodok for 500 years. We can only feel sorrow that such a history was terminated in so brutal a fashion. God created each David-Horodoker; no human had the right to say that this community of souls was not good enough to live. No one had the right to usurp God's grant of life.

*Assembly:* Now that the starvation and killing, the torture and rape are over, we are left to weeping. But we can do more than that. We can also honor our sisters and brothers and their children, by remembering that their lives consisted of more than their deaths. Their lives were rich with living.

*Leader:* Though they are gone, their humane-ness as well as their human-ness, can inspire us to carry on with love and humanity ourselves. As our service closes, please place a pebble by the eternal flame in remembrance of the lives sacrificed at David-Horodok.

זאג ניט קיין מאָל  
"Zog nit keyn mol" (Never Say) or "Partizaner lid" (Partisan Song)  
written in 1943 by Hirsh Glick,

Zog nit kane mol az du geyst dem letstn veg,  
Khotsh himlen blayene farshteln bloye teg;

זאג ניט קיין מאָל, אַז דו גייסט דעם לעצטן וועג,  
כאַטש הימלען בלייענע פֿאַרשטעלן בלויע טעג.

Kumen vet noch undzer oisgebenkte sho,  
S'vet a poyk ton undzer trot: mir zeinen  
do!

קומען וועט נאָך אונדזער אויסגעבענקטע שעה –  
ס'וועט אַ פּוּיק טאָן אונדזער טראַט: מיר זיינען דאָ!

Kumen vet noch undzer oisgebenkte sho,  
S'vet a poyk ton undzer trot: mir zeinen  
do!

קומען וועט נאָך אונדזער אויסגעבענקטע שעה –  
ס'וועט אַ פּוּיק טאָן אונדזער טראַט: מיר זיינען דאָ!

Fun greenem palmen-land biz vaisn land fun  
shney,  
Mir kumen on mit undzer pine, mit undzer vey;

פֿון גרינעם פֿאַלמענלאַנד ביז ווייסן לאַנד פֿון שניי,  
מיר קומען אָן מיט אונדזער פּיין, מיט אונדזער וויי,

Un vu gefaln iz a shprits fun undzer blut,  
Shprotsen vet dort undzer g'vure, undzer  
mut.

און וווּ געפֿאַלן ס'איז אַ שפּריץ פֿון אונדזער בלוט,  
שפּראַצן וועט דאָרט אונדזער גבֿורה, אונדזער  
מוט!

Un vu gefaln iz a shprits fun undzer blut,  
Shprotsen vet dort undzer g'vure, undzer  
mut.

און וווּ געפֿאַלן ס'איז אַ שפּריץ פֿון אונדזער בלוט  
שפּראַצן וועט דאָרט אונדזער גבֿורה, אונדזער מוט!

You must not say that you now walk the final  
way,  
Because the darkened heavens hide the blue of  
day.

Because the hour that we have hungered for  
is near;  
Beneath our tread the earth shall tremble: We  
are here!

Because the hour that we have hungered for  
is near;  
Beneath our tread the earth shall tremble: We  
are here!