

Under Alien Skies by Yossel Birstein

A Strangeness flows from neighbors' homes

Translated by Zackary Sholem Berger

A strangeness flows from neighbors' homes –
cold sadness from my own.
What the evening is now repeating
loneliness told long ago.

Bent low over my grandfather
loneliness draws in his expression
an image of a tree bent over,
a song from Lamentations.

After years of struggling with the Devil
where has hope not found a place?
Now with ash-burned lips he murmurs
Ani maamin – I believe and wait.

Now his belief searches everywhere
to bring together ten Jews for prayer.