

**Jacob Glatstein**  
***Lublin. My Holy City***

Lublin, my holy Jewish city, city of great Jewish poverty and joyous Jewish holidays. Your Jewish street smelled of whole-wheat bread, sour pickles, incense, herring, and Jewish faith. The Hassidic synagogue, the Maharam synagogue and the Maharshal synagogue, the workers' little houses and little synagogues all gave an air of holiness to the inter-Sabbath periods of everyday commerce, so to speak. The flour-covered bearers who stood and waited for a tip, and meanwhile slipped into the Hassidic synagogue and enjoyed the congregation's chant – the light, silky, satiny voices of the young men.

Lublin, my holy city, city of awakened class struggle. Your tailor-boys and cobbler-boys, your apprentices and servants, rose up to introduce justice, equality, and brotherhood for all “comrades and citizens.” A holy flame purified their eyes when they went joyfully to the tribunal, singing revolutionary songs along the way.

Lublin, my holy city of young boys and girls thirsting for education; of the first lilac aroma of early Hebrew and the deliciousness of proud Yiddish; of the modern Hebrew schools, the Hazamir choral society, and the professional unions; of our joint yearning for Odessa and Warsaw, where we made a fuss over Bialik, Frishman, Mendele, Peretz, Sholem Aleichem, and Reisen; my city of enraptured painters, poets, and violinists.

Lublin, my holy city, with the old-old and new-old cemeteries, with the mausoleums of Hassidic rabbis, graves that one might not approach except in times of great trouble, for their ground fairly burned with holiness.

Holy city of mine, you asked this honor for yourself: that when they would burn and roast a million-and-a-half Jews they should do it in the shadow of your nearly thousand-year history of Jewishness. This holy cemetery you wanted for yourself, so that all your holy tombs should together become one holy tomb for a great tsaddik – the Jewish people. I take off my shoes when I come to the Majdanek woods. The ground is Holy of Holies, for the Jewish people lies resting there in the shadow of hundreds of pious generations.

Who will raise you up again and rebuild you, my holy city, now that you've been razed to your foundations and are one frightful gravestone? They are hammering shingles and laying roofs, they are repairing and tidying up the old, disgusting world. But my holy city, the city of my world, will never be rebuilt.

Translation from the Yiddish by: Barnett Zumoff  
*Recalling. The Holocaust Poems of Jacob Glatstein*