

Y. L. Gordon: "Awake, My People"

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- ¹ Awake, my people! How long will you sleep?
The night has passed, the sun shines through
Awake, cast your eyes hither and yon
Recognize your time and your place.
- ⁵ Has the march of time stood still
From the day you left for all parts of the globe?
Thousands of years have come and gone
Since your freedom was lost and you wandered
away
- ⁹ Many generations have been born and died
Oceans and continents have intervened
Remarkable changes have taken place
A different world engulfs us today.
- ¹³ Awake, my people! How long will you sleep?
The night has passed, the sun shines through.
Awake, cast your eyes hither and yon
Recognize your time and place.
- ¹⁷ The land where we live and are born
Is it not thought to be part of Europe?
Europe, the smallest of continents
But the mightiest of all in wisdom and
knowledge.
- ²¹ This land of Eden is now open to you,
Its sons now call you "brothers."
How long will you dwell among them as a guest
Why do you reject their hand?
- ²⁵ They have already removed the burden from your back
And lifted the yoke from around your neck
They have erased from their hearts hatred and folly
They stretch out their hands to you in peace.
- ²⁹ So raise your head high, stand up straight
Look at them with loving eyes,
Open your hearts to wisdom and reason
Become an enlightened nation, speaking their tongue.
- ³³ Everyone capable of learning should study
Laborers and artisans should take to a craft
The strong and the brave should be soldiers
Farmers should buy fields and ploughs.
- ³⁷ To the treasury of the state bring your wealth
Bear your share of its riches and bounty
Be a man in the streets and a Jew at home
A brother to your countryman and a servant to your king.
- ⁴¹ Awake, my people! How long will you sleep?
The night has passed, the sun shines through,
Awake, cast your eyes hither and yon
Recognize your time and your place.

Translation from Michael Stanislawski, For Whom Do I Toil? Judah Leib Gordon and the Crisis of Russian Jewry (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 49-50.