“I Pity the Poor Immigrant”

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from the album *John Wesley Harding*

**I pity the poor immigrant.** For YHVH your G-d is G-d supreme and L-rd supreme, the great, the mighty, and the awesome G-d, who shows no favor and takes no bribe, but uphold the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and befriends the stranger, providing him with food and clothing. You, too, must befriend the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. (Deuteronomy 10:18-19)

**I pity the poor immigrant
Who wishes he would’ve stayed home
Who uses all his power to do evil
But in the end is always left so alone
That man whom with his fingers cheats
And who lies with ev’ry breath
Who passionately hates his life
And likewise, fears his death

I pity the poor immigrant
Whose strength is spent in vain
Whose heaven is like Ironsides
Whose tears are like rain
Who eats but is not satisfied
Who hears but does not see
Who falls in love with wealth itself
And turns his back on me

I pity the poor immigrant
Who tramples through the mud
Who fills his mouth with laughing
And who builds his town with blood
Whose visions in the final end
Must shatter like the glass
I pity the poor immigrant
When his gladness comes to pass**

**I pity the poor immigrant.** And I will scatter you among the nations…. Yet, even then, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not reject them or spurn them so as to destroy them, annulling My covenant with them: for I, YHVH, am their G-d. (Leviticus 26:34, 44)

**Whose strength is spent in vain.** …Your strength shall be spent in vain. Your land shall not yield its produce, no shall the trees of the land yield their fruit. (Lev. 26:20)

**Whose heaven is like ironsides.** I will make your skies like iron and your earth like copper. (Lev. 26:19)

**Who eats but is not satisfied.** When I break your staff of bread, ten women shall bake your bread in a single oven; they shall dole out your bread by weight, and though you eat, you shall not be satisfied. (Lev. 26:26). *Compare:* For YHVH your G-d is bringing you into a good land…. When you have eaten your fill, given thanks to YHVH your G-d for the good land which G-d has given you. (Deut. 8:7-10)

**Who hears but does not see.** I will wreak misery upon you… that shall make your eyes fail. (Lev. 26:16). You shall grope at noon as a blind man gropes in the dark. (Deut. 28:29)

**Who falls in love with wealth itself and turns his back on me.** …And you say to yourselves, “My own power and the might of my own hand have won this wealth for me.” Remember that it is YHVH your G-d who gives you the power to get wealth, in fulfillment of the covenant that G-d made on oath with your ancestors, as is still the case. (Deut. 8:17-18)

**Who falls in love with wealth itself and turns his back on me.** [G-d] set him atop the highlands / to feast on the yield of the earth / [G-d] fed him honey from the crag / and oil from the flinty rock… So Jeshurun grew fat and kicked / You grew fat and gross and coarse / He forsook the G-d who made him / And spurned the Rock of his support. (Deut. 32:13,15)

**When his gladness comes to pass.** The worst thing about poverty is that the poor person believes that wealth will remove his suffering. (Rabbi Yissachar Baer of Radoshitz, the “Saba Kadisha”, 1765-1843)