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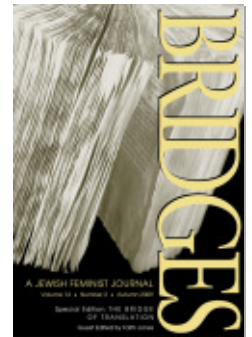
Don't Sing, Little Bird

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Bridges: A Jewish Feminist Journal, Volume 14, Number 2, Autumn
2009, pp. 42-43 (Article)

Published by Bridges Association

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2979/bri.2009.14.2.42>



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DON'T SING, LITTLE BIRD

BETH DWOSKIN

Feygele was a little girl.
She sang of the gentle dusk,
Like drizzle in autumn trees.
“Feygele, hush, don’t sing little bird,” said her mother.
“The baby is sleeping.
He cries day and night.
Please be quiet, for silence is golden.”

Feygele was a good daughter.
She sang of praise and glory,
Like a cantor, making cold stone walls
Echo with joy,
An exaltation, to honor God.
“Feygele, hush, don’t sing little bird,” said her father.
“We’re praying.
It is the male bird that sings.
You must be still, for silence is holy.”

Feygele was a young maiden.
 She sang of sorrow and yearning,
 Sitting with the women in the balcony,
 Chanting prayers of entreaty
 In dusty, shadowy corners.
 “Feygele, hush, don’t sing little bird,” said her grandmother.
 “We’re gossiping—we cannot sing.
 Learn to be mute, for silence is a virtue.”

Feygele was a new bride.
 She sang a heavenly song
 To the angels welcoming the Sabbath twilight
 On a winter night, as the candles gleamed
 And the ruby wine sparkled in silver cups.
 “Feygele, hush, don’t sing little bird,” said her husband.
 “We’re studying Torah, my friends and I.
 Do not make a sound, for silence is perfect.”

Feygele was a mother bird,
 She sang like the thrush in the silver birch,
 The warbler on the cattail,
 She cried like the owl in bleak moonlight,
 As she flew above the fog
 Over the marsh to her babies in their nest.
 “Mamele, sing,” said the babies.
 “We beg you to sing, for we sleep,
 We pray, we study and learn
 At the sound of your voice.
 Music is life.”