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Klaybt Zich Tsunoyf

Michael Alpert

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KLAYBT ZIKH TSUNOYF (Gather Together)

(Lyrics and Music: Michael Alpert; arr. Bern, BOW)

Created one winter night in 1983, this new Yiddish song addresses the importance of friendship and community in negotiating the challenges of this tumultuous world. Its call and response form is based on the singing and poetry of the late Chaim Mendel Mermolstein, a Ruthenian-born badkhn (traditional wedding entertainer) in New York, who enlivened many a celebration. The Romanian character of the melody honors our family ties to that great branch of the Ashkenazi nation which has given the world so much heartfelt music and delectable cuisine.

Klaybt zikh tsunoyf, mayne shvester un briderlekh,
Un lomir zikh freyen, vos mir zaynen yidelekh.
Genug shoyn tsu veynen mit hertser farvundete,
Vayl mir zaynen ale vi kroyvim farbundete.

Khotsh ikh bin gekumen tsu aykh fun der vayter velt,
Ir zint mir alemen tayerer nokh fun gelt.
To lomir zikh freyen biz in vaysn tog arayn,
Mit hartsike lider un mit fule flashkes vayn.

A lekheyim tsu makhn bay fraynt, oy, iz tayer-zis,
Az lider zey zingen zikh, tupn zikh mit di fis.
A koyse tsu makhn bay fremde iz oykhet gut,
Ober bay fraynt iz es zis vi bay eygener blut.

A shnepsl tsu makhn ken zayn mamesh a genis,
Ober a lidl tsu zingen iz take zis.
To zingt-zhe shoyn mit, oy, khaverimlekh tayere,
Un fargest-zhe di zorgn un di tsores ayere.

In aza velt fun aveyres un blutikayt,
S'iz gring zikh tsu valgern fun emese tsiln vayt.
In aza velt a sakh mentshn farblondzhn zikh:
Amol ver ikh oykh azoy, biz vanet khap ikh zikh,

Az tsu zayn gliklekh, oy, iz nor in zikh gevent,
Un yedns mazl, oy, ligt in di eygene hent.
To zingt nor dos lidl tsu, frayndelekh tay'rinke,
Un vert shoyn bamutikt in di hertser ay'rinke.

Gather together, sisters and brothers,
And let us be glad that we're Jews.
Enough crying with wounded hearts!
We're bound together like family.

Though I've come from far across the world,

You are dearer to me than anything else,
So let's live it up 'til the break of day
With heartfelt songs and full bottles of wine.

To have a drink with friends is sweet and dear --
As we sing, our feet tap along.
Lifting a glass with strangers isn't bad either,
But with friends its as sweet as among family.

Shnaps can indeed be a pleasure,
But singing a song is truly sweet.
So sing along, dear friends,
And forget your cares and troubles.

In this world full of wrongdoing and bloodshed,
It's easy to stray far from one's true goals.
In such a world, many people become lost:
I do too, sometimes, until I remember:

That happiness depends on oneself,
And each person's fortune lies in their own hands.
So join in this song, dearest friends,
And let your hearts take courage from it.