

Hava Nagila

JEWISH · Walter J. Kin · Rigli Publishing

<https://jewishthemovie.com/music/russian/hava-nagila>

← Jewish Songs in Russian

Russian Songbook · Sung by Elechka

Хава нагила

Hava Nagila

The world's oldest song of joy, sung anew in Russian.

"Hava Nagila" is probably the most beloved Jewish song in the world, and its melody is older than its words. It began as a wordless Hasidic nigun from the Sadigora Hasidim of Bukovina, in what is now Ukraine. Hasidim carried the tune with them to Jerusalem around the turn of the twentieth century, and there it found its first words.

In 1918 Abraham Zvi Idelsohn, often called the father of Jewish musicology, transcribed the melody and set it to a short Hebrew text drawn from Psalm 118:24, "This is the day that the Lord has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it." The song was first performed that year at a concert in Jerusalem. The original Hebrew is only a handful of phrases, repeated: hava nagila, let us rejoice; hava neranena, let us sing; uru achim, awake, brothers, with a joyful heart. Just a dozen or so words, set to a tune made for the hora, the circle dance.

Our recording is sung in Russian by Elechka, who also arranged it. The Russian text is not a literal translation but an authorial poem written in the spirit of the original, moving between dancing and singing, life and its passing, an open door for guests, and the simple release of song through everyday days.

It was recorded for the RIGLI channel as part of a project that carried these Jewish songs into Russian, so that listeners who never knew the Hebrew could feel them in their own language. The video has gathered more than a million views, and the comments below come from people of many backgrounds who found something of their own in it.

The English-language musical film JEWISH grew out of these Russian originals. The recordings came first, and the film took shape around them, an attempt to carry the same songs and the same warmth to a wider audience while keeping faith with where they began.

Lyrics, line by line

The full Russian text of the recording, with a plain English translation under each line.

Встань с той ноги да

Get up on the right foot
Встань с той ноги да
Get up on the right foot
Чтоб легче было
So that it would be easier
Петь да плясать
To sing and dance
Хава нагила
Hava nagila
Хава нагила
Hava nagila
Было да сплыло
It was and it floated away
Не вернёшь назад
You will not bring it back
Жизнь нам не зря дана
Life is given to us not in vain
Жизнь нам не зря дана
Life is given to us not in vain
Жизнь нам не зря дана
Life is given to us not in vain
Слёзы не лей
Do not shed tears
Жизнь нам не зря дана
Life is given to us not in vain
Жизнь нам не зря дана
Life is given to us not in vain
Жизнь нам не зря дана
Life is given to us not in vain
Слёзы не лей
Do not shed tears
У рубахи

On the shirt

У рубахи два кармана

On the shirt there are two pockets

У рубахи два кармана

On the shirt there are two pockets

Нам о смерти думать рано

It is too early for us to think about death

Нам о смерти думать рано

It is too early for us to think about death

А грехи а грехи

And the sins, and the sins

Отпоём отпляшем

We will sing them off, we will dance them off

Встань с той ноги да

Get up on the right foot

Встань с той ноги да

Get up on the right foot

Чтоб легче было

So that it would be easier

Петь да плясать

To sing and dance

Хава нагила

Hava nagila

Хава нагила

Hava nagila

Было да сплыло

It was and it floated away

Не вернёшь назад

You will not bring it back

В ботинках рваных нам

In torn shoes for us

В ботинках рваных нам

In torn shoes for us
В ботинках рваных нам
In torn shoes for us
Каблуков не жаль
The heels are no loss
Курам курам на смех
For the hens, for the hens to laugh at
Всё богатство курам на смех
All the wealth is for the hens to laugh at
Открывайте двери настежь
Open the doors wide
Открывайте двери настежь
Open the doors wide
Будут гости будет счастье
There will be guests, there will be happiness
А грехи а грехи
And the sins, and the sins
Отпоём отпляшем
We will sing them off, we will dance them off
Встань с той ноги да
Get up on the right foot
Встань с той ноги да
Get up on the right foot
Чтоб легче было
So that it would be easier
Петь да плясать
To sing and dance
Хава нагила
Hava nagila
Хава нагила
Hava nagila
Было да сплыло

It was and it floated away
Не вернёшь назад
You will not bring it back
Жизнь нам не зря дана
Life is given to us not in vain
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Слёзы не лей
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У рубахи
On the shirt
У рубахи два кармана
On the shirt there are two pockets
У рубахи два кармана
On the shirt there are two pockets
Нам о смерти думать рано
It is too early for us to think about death
Нам о смерти думать рано
It is too early for us to think about death
А грехи а грехи
And the sins, and the sins
Отпоём отпляшем

We will sing them off, we will dance them off

Listen on YouTube

Back to Songs

What listeners say

Real comments left under the recording on YouTube, translated into English, with the original Russian beneath each one.

During the war my grandfather saved a young Jewish woman. He brought her home at night, even though he had two little daughters at home. He was a railway worker; all the Jews who were brought in the wagon were shot. There is a monument. My grandfather died. Eva lived with my grandmother and helped her. She often hummed this song in her native language. Much time has passed, and now I know its translation. Thank you, YouTube.

Во время войны мой дед спас одну молодую еврейку. Он ночью привёл её домой, хотя дома у него было 2 малолетние дочки. Он был железнодорожником, всех евреев которых привезли в вагоне расстреляли. Есть памятник. Дед погиб. Ева жила у бабушки, помогала ей. Она часто напевала эту песню на родном языке. Прошло много времени, и я теперь знаю её перевод. Спасибо, ЮТУБ!

@НикольниковАлексей

This is a brilliant melody, a wonderful song, and a very talented translation. Glory to good people of every nationality.

Это - гениальная мелодия, замечательная песня и очень талантливый перевод! Слава добрым людям всех национальностей!

@tatyanaovsyannikova1344

I am not Jewish, but this music turns my whole soul inside out.

Я не еврейка, но эта музыка выворачивает всю мою душу наизнанку!

@yelenatretyakov7463

In all the many years of this popular, lively song, this is the first time I have come across such a fine translation and performance in a Russian version, and I had long wanted to hear one. Bravo.

За всю многолетнюю историю этой популярной и зажигательной песни впервые встречаю такой хороший перевод и исполнение в русском варианте (а давно хотелось услышать). Bravo.

@joker1000-f8d

I will start every morning with this song. Thank you for the translation. Peace to all nations.

Каждое утро буду начинать с этой песней. Спасибо за перевод. Мир всем нациям.

@natalyasatdarowa2414

When I hear Jewish melodies, tears come to my eyes all on their own, I don't even know why, though I am not Jewish myself.

Когда слышу еврейские напевы слезы наворачиваются на глаза сами по себе не знаю из-за чего хотя сам не еврей)

@ЕвгенийЛернер-с9ж

I am Russian, but I love Jewish songs so very much. And this performance of the famous song in Russian leaves me delighted. Thank you.

Я русская! НО ооочень люблю еврейские песни! А от этого исполнения знаменитой песни по-русски я в восхищении!!! 🙌🙌🙌 СПАСИБО!!!

@НадеждаКовалёва-ф7ц

I adore Jewish music. It doesn't matter to me what nationality a person is, as long as they are a real human being.

Обожаю еврейскую музыку. Мне всё равно, какой нации человек, лишь бы был ЧЕЛОВЕКОМ...

@ГалинаСеменова-у4с

It's as if I have a genetic memory; my soul spins and flies to this song, even without the translation. I am Russian, but who knows about me!

У меня, словно, генетическая память- у меня душа кружится и летает под эту песню, даже без перевода. Я русская, но кто меня знает!) 😊

@АнжеликаЛ-о4м

I am a quarter Jewish, but it stirs me instantly. My Russian mother loved these songs very much and listened to them with joy. Thank you so much.

Еврейской крови четверть, но откликается моментально! Моя русская мама очень любила эти песни и слушала с удовольствием. Спасибо огромное 🎉🎉🎉🎉🎉

@ВикторияФедоровская-о4ж

I remember how, when we were young, everyone danced together in the restaurants and no one thought about who was of which nationality.

Помню как в молодости в ресторанах все вместе танцевали и не задумывались кто какой нации

@ОльгаГолицына-з7с