

A Vow¹

*By these eyes that witnessed bereavement
and burdened my bowed heart with screams;
By the compassion that taught me forgiveness
Until days came far too terrible to pardon,
I contracted the vow to remember everything,
To remember everything – and to forget nothing.*

*To forget nothing – to the tenth generation,
Until the offence for everyone and everything has abated,
Until all the rods of my wrath have completely run out...*

*An oath: If, in vain, the night of terror has passed;
An oath: If, in the morning, I return to my erroneous ways,
And I learn nothing this time as well.*

Abraham Shlonski

¹ [TN: This poem shares some similarities with the Kol Nidrei prayer. It is widely known, and has been translated several times to English. This rendering is our own, albeit slightly influenced by other sources.]