Ode to Jerusalem by Judah Halevi

Jerusalem! Don’t you have some greeting to return to your last remaining flocks, your captive hearts, who send you messages of love? Here are greetings from the west and east, from north and south, from near and far, from every side; greetings also from a certain man, a captive of your love, who pours his tears like dew on Mount Hermôn, and longs to shed them on your slopes. My voice is like a jackal’s when I mourn your suffering, but when I dream of how your exiles will return, I turn into a lyre. My heart is aching for Bethél, Peníel, Mahanáyim, every place where saints encountered messengers from God, where the Shekhina is your neighbor, where your Maker made you gates that face the gates of heaven; where the Glory of the Lord serves you for light, not merely luminescent bodies—sun and moon and stars. You are the house of kings, the throne of David’s God, though slaves are sitting on your nobles’ thrones.

I wish my soul could overflow where once the holy spirit poured out over your elect. I wish that I could wander where the Lord revealed Himself to visionaries, prophets, I wish that I had wings so I could fly away to you, so far, and set the fragments of my broken heart among your jagged mountains, throw my face down to your ground, to fondle your gravel, caress your soil. Even more would I delight to stand beside the tombs of ancestors and patriarchs, gaze at your choice graves, cross your fields and forests, stand at Gilead, gaze at Avarím—Hor and Avarím—the graves of two great lights, two men who were your luminaries and your teachers. Your air—the breath of life! Flowing myrrh, the dust that rises from your soil! Your rivers, molten honeycomb! What joy my soul would have if I could walk naked, barefoot, on the ruins, on the rubble that your Temple has become, where once your covenant-tabernacle was, now hidden, site of your two cherubim...