**Biot Rishonot ("First Comings")**

Playwright: Uri Nitzan

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**Trailer:**

<http://vimeo.com/320725669>

**Full Play:**

<https://vimeo.com/296624959>   (password: biot)

**Summary:**

The original play "biot Rishonot" ("First Comings") announced the arrival of a unique and moving voice to the Israeli stage. Uri Nitzan, a psychiatrist and playwright, wrote in an unusual language, rich in beauty and depth, a powerful play on the struggle of modern man for intimacy. This play enables a rare and somewhat forbidden peek into the wedding night of Shlomi and Sarah, an Ultra-Orthodox couple, who cope with the horror of their first sexual encounter. Nonetheless, this is merely a deceptive semblance; gradually, the play reveals a complex truth that brings the play closer to the audience's world.

Shlomi and Sarah are, in fact a secular couple dealing with grave and painful difficulties in their intimacy and sexuality. Impersonating to an Ultra-Orthodox couple and attempting to stage their fantasized "ritual" of the "first coming", is part of Shlomi and Sahrah's final attempt to come closer, rejuvenate their intimacy, and save their marriage

In many ways, claims the play, sexuality was destroyed after being exposed and transformed from private to public domain, and by that was emptied of the need to explore our way in the dark, experiment new revelations, excitements, thrills and fantasies. Dealing with sexuality in a delicate, exposed and unprecedented way, this play is setting in objective: to restore sexuality the intimacy and mystery that were lost.

**Translation Sample**

**ACT 1**

*Shlomi and Sarah maintain modest body language and restrained expressions. Shlomi makes sure not to let his hands slip below the beltline, and Sarah’s hands are mostly held flush against the sides of her body. The lack of ongoing eye contact is a rule of thumb during the beginning of the act (other than when specified otherwise), but as the act progresses the eye contact becomes more intense, as does the body language.*

*Evening. A light beam illuminates a living room. Shlomi is sitting by the desk, reading. He runs his hand through his hair in a typical mannerism. Someone knocks on the door. Shlomi ignores it. They knock again. Shlomi looks up from his book*.

Sarah’s voice: (*quiet and bashful*) Shlomi?

*Pause. Sarah walks in hesitantly. Her long hair is braided. She is carrying a tote bag. Shlomi rises. Sarah stands before him. They linger. It’s silent.*

Shlomi: (*quiet and bashful*) A bride on her wedding night.

Sarah: (*quiet and bashful*) A groom on his wedding night.

Pause. They stare at each other.

Sarah: You waited for me.

Shlomi: *(nods. Pause*) With a willing spirit. (*Sarah smiles*) I was getting worried.

Sarah: I wasn’t sure if you were ready for me.

Pause.

Shlomi: How was the water?

Sarah: Cold. (*She takes a step toward him*) I’m cold.

Shlomi: I heard there’s a heated mikveh somewhere. (*Pause*) God forbid you catch a cold.

Sarah: Cold is purifying. (*Pause*) I need that.

Shlomi: Was the water clean at least?

Sarah: I don’t know. (*Pause*) I didn’t look.

Shlomi: Sometimes there are oil spills. Floating on the water. Like chicken soup.

Sarah: (*with disgust*) Gross… (*closing her eyes)* The attendant told me to close my eyes so I closed my eyes. (*Pause*) So I wouldn’t see myself so naked. (*Pause*) God forbid I undermine something…

Shlomi: That is honorable vigilance.

Sarah: (*opening her eyes*) My mother did the same thing.

Shlomi: The customs of our ancestors are ours to keep.

Sarah: I’m trying.

*Pause*

Sarah: I didn’t even dare peep on myself.

Shlomi: There is no reason to peep on your nudity on a night like this.

Sarah: It might undermine something.

Shlomi: Distract the mind.

Sarah: Weaken me.

*Pause*

Shlomi: This is a special night!

Sarah: (*lowering her eyes*) Very special.

Shlomi: *(lowering his eyes)* Very. (*Pause*) Different from all the nights when—

Sarah: We’ll be gentle with each other.

*Pause*.

Shlomi: God willing.

Sarah: Be gentle with me.

Shlomi: Of course I’ll be gentle with you. When have I ever not been gentle with you?

*Pause.*

Sarah: It’s just…

Shlomi: We’ll make an effort. A *hishtadlut*, with God’s help.

Sarah: Just do it.

Shlomi: Do what?

Sarah: Exactly what you need to. The way you’re supposed to, I mean!

Shlomi: Of course I’ll do it the way I’m supposed to. I’ll try to, I mean—

Sarah: And explain! What… what you want from me.

Shlomi: I’ll explain what I want.

Sarah: Explain exactly what you want.

Shlomi: I’ll explain, God willing! Let me explain to you.

Sarah: Exactly what you want—

Shlomi: Let me explain to you! (*Pause*) I want… I want us to diminish before Him. That’s what I want. To forget ourselves for a moment. To imagine for a moment that the navel of the universe and our own navel are not the same/identical?. To act in the name of the Almighty. With pureness and sanctity. Aiming to please Him—

Sarah: Can I get something to drink? (*Shlomi stops cold*) Cold water. Please.

Shlomi brings two glasses and fills them with whiskey. Sarah looks at his glass.

Shlomi: (*glancing at Sarah, who isn’t drinking. Mumbling a prayer*) *She’hakol nehya b’dvaro*.

*Pause. He fixes his eyes on Sarah.*

Sarah: Amen… amen!

Shlomi sips.

Shlomi: This gives me strength. Why don’t you sit down? (*Pause*) This is your home.

Sarah: I know.

Shlomi: This is your home no less than mine.

*Pause.*

Sarah: It takes some time to get used to it…

Shlomi: I hope something has changed. (*Pause*) Has something changed?

Sarah remains standing.

Sarah: (*Flipping through Shlomi’s book*) One of us has prepared for the mitzvah.

Pause.

Shlomi: Preparation is for those who need preparation. You are prepared even without preparation.

Sarah: I don’t feel that way

Shlomi: (*Gets up*) Your body is in a position of grace (*Pause. He pulls out a chair for her in a gentlemanly gesture)*. You are present! Your “Hineni” is ready on the tip of your tongue. (*Sarah doesn’t sit*). To do what is righteous and good.

Sarah lets out an uncontrollable giggle.

Sarah: I… I’m sorry. Sorry, Shlomi. (*Pause*) I don’t know what came over me.

Shlomi: Nothing new under the sun.

Sarah: This has nothing to do with you—with us. Believe me (Pause) Believe me, Shlomi…

Shlomi: I believe you.

Sarah: not with all your heart. (*Pause*) This time it’s got nothing to do with anything. It just came out…

Shlomi: I believe you.

Sarah: I might be a little pregnant! (*Shlomi pulls out a large plastic sheet and uses scissors to cut the thread that ties it*) My body knows it’s going to happen! It’s going to become with child tonight! Going to fill up with life, God willing…

Shlomi: We’d better get ready. (*He walks into the bedroom with the plastic sheet*) It’s getting late.

Sarah: I’m not tired. (*Follows him into the bedroom*) Women in my condition, pregnant women, almost-pregnant women, I mean, they laugh for no reason. Semi baby-brain. Their heads are foggy, Shlomi They are light-minded. They say all sorts of nonsense—

Shlomi: The sanctity or the desecration of the Lord depends on our actions.

Pause.

Sarah: It’s all right to be angry, Shlomi.

Shlomi: I said I believe you.

Sarah: I deserve for you to be angry with me. Don’t stop halfway through!

Shlomi: There’s no point.

Sarah: You said something has changed!

Shlomi: I’m angry at myself for not being levelheaded. I’m angry and I shouldn’t be angry.

Sarah: You can be.

Shlomi: Anger leads to sin.

Sarah: I’m asking you to be angry with me.

Shlomi: A decent man keeps away from anger.

Sarah: Just be angry so we can fulfil this mitzvah!

Shlomi: Not to mention a groom! A groom must make sure not to be angry! Not to have anyone angry with him! I shouldn’t be angry, but I am angry! The night hasn’t even begun and already I am angry. My seed might heat up, practically boil over—

Sarah: I won’t die because you’re angry.

Shlomi: Our union will fail! Our union might fail, God forbid!

*Pause.*

Shlomi: The seed come be ahead of its time. (*Pause*) Or be spilled in vein, heaven help us.

*Shlomi nervously attempts to spread the plastic sheet underneath the linens. He fails. Sarah lifts up the linens and Shlomi stretches the plastic sheet beneath.*

Sarah: (*Pulling towels out of her tote bag*) Towels for discharge. Cloth diapers. Cotton…

*The bed is prepared. Shlomi and Sarah face each other, separated by the bed, and look at the sheet. Then Shlomi looks at Sarah.*

Sarah: What? What are you looking at?

Shlomi: Can’t a husband look at his wife? (*Pause*) There is no prohibition against a husband looking at his wife.

Sarah: I know you.

Shlomi: Stop saying that.

Sarah: There’s a thought scampering about in your head. The measure of justice—it’s peeking out of your pupils…

Shlomi: God willing, you’ll find there’s a lot more of me to know.

Sarah: Open to me your good treasure.

Shlomi: Lots of people will attest that there’s much to know about me.

Sarah: I can’t wait!

Shlomi: That the good Lord has blessed me with strength, that my heart is pure, that I have a thing or two to say about worldly affairs…

Sarah: That look is weakening me.

Shlomi: What look are you talking about?

Sarah: A critical look. I’m not imagining it.

Shlomi: I can’t control every single one of my looks.

Sarah: Are you making me out to be a madwoman?

Shlomi: You mistake the shadows of mountains for mountains.

Sarah: A Jerusalemite knows a mountain when she sees one.

Shlomi: You left Jerusalem twenty years ago.

Sarah: Jerusalem never left me.

Shlomi: Now you’re strictly plateau.

Sarah: It still nests in my bones…

Shlomi: You’re all plain, from head to toe! (Pause) Look at yourself.

Sarah: (*Looks at herself in the mirror. Smooths the budding wrinkles with her hands*) Myrrh Mountain! Frankincense Hill… (*Shlomi stands beside her, looking at her face in the mirror. She speaks to his reflection*) You don’t like—what you see. (*Pause*) Purify that look you’re giving me. (*Shlomi looks away from the mirror. Sarah turns her head toward him*) I am a bride. (*Pause*) On her wedding night.

*Shlomi looks up at her. Pause.*