

GLANZ UND GRAVUR

THE POETIC EDDA

# Hamðismál

## The Ballad of Hamther

Old Norse · English – H. A. Bellows (1923)

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Hamdir and Sörli set out against King Jörmunrekk, kill their half-brother Erp on the way and fail because of it. The last poem of the Codex Regius. Preserved in the Codex Regius of the Poetic Edda (GKS 2365 4to, c. 1270). This reading edition sets the Old Norse text and the English translation side by side, stanza by stanza; the German version is on the German edition of this page. Old Norse text after Guðni Jónsson's edition (Eddukvæði), digitised by heimskringla.no. German after Karl Simrock, Die Edda (1851; 6th ed. 1876, Wikisource). English after Henry Adams Bellows, The Poetic Edda (1923). All are in the public domain.

| | Old Norse | English – H. A. Bellows (1923) |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | *Spruttu á tái*<br>*tregnar íðir,*<br>*græti alfa*<br>*in glýstömu;*<br>*ár of morgin*<br>*manna bölva*<br>*sútir hverjar*<br>*sorg of kveykva.* | Great the evils once that grew,<br>With the dawning sad of the sorrow of elves;<br>In early morn awake for men<br>The evils that grief to each shall bring. |
| 2 | *Var-a þat nú*<br>*né í gær,*<br>*þat hefir langt*<br>*liðit síðan,*<br>*- er fátt fornara,*<br>*fremr var þat halfu, -*<br>*er hvatti Guðrún*<br>*Gjúka borin,*<br>*sonu sína unga*<br>*at hefna Svanhildar:* | Not now, nor yet of yesterday was it,<br>Long the time that since hath lapsed,<br>So that little there is that is half as old,<br>Since Guthrun, daughter of Gjuki, whetted<br>Her sons so young to Svanhild's vengeance. |
| 3 | *"Systir var ykkur*<br>*Svanhildr of heitin,*<br>*sú er Jörmunrekkr*<br>*jóm of traddi,*<br>*hvítum ok svörtum*<br>*á hervegi,*<br>*grám, gangtömum*<br>*Gotna hrossum.* | “The sister ye had was Svanhild called,<br>And her did Jormunrek trample with horses,<br>White and black on the battle-way,<br>Gray, road-wonted, the steeds of the Goths. |
| 4 | *Eftir er ykkr þrungit*<br>*þjóðkonunga;*<br>*lifið einir ér*<br>*þátta ættar minnar.* | Little the kings of the folk are ye like,<br>For now ye are living alone of my race. |
| 5 | *Einstæð em ek orðin,*<br>*sem ösp í holti,*<br>*fallin at frændum*<br>*sem fura at kvisti,*<br>*vaðin at vilja,*<br>*sem viðr at laufi,*<br>*þá er in kvistskæða*<br>*kemr um dag varman."* | Lonely am I as the forest aspen,<br>Of kindred bare as the fir of its boughs,<br>My joys are all lost as the leaves of the tree<br>When the scather of twigs from the warm day turns.” |

**6**

*Hitt kvað þá Hamðir*
*inn hugumstóri:*
*"Lítt myndir þú þá, Guðrún,*
*leyfa dáð Högna,*
*er þeir Sigurð vökðu*
*svefni ór,*
*saztu á beð,*
*en banar hlógu.*

Then Hamther spake forth, the high of heart:
“Small praise didst thou, Guthrun, to Hogni's deed give
When they wakened thy Sigurth from out of his sleep,
Thou didst sit on the bed while his slayers laughed.

**7**

*Bækr váru þínar*
*inar bláhvítu*
*ofnar völundum,*
*flutu í vers dreyra;*
*svalt þá Sigurðr,*
*saztu yfir dauðum,*
*glýja þú né gáðir,*
*Gunnarr þér svá vildi.*

Thy bed-covers white with blood were red
From his wounds, and with gore of thy husband were wet;
So Sigurth was slain, by his corpse didst thou sit,
And of gladness didst think not: 'twas Gunnar's doing.

**8**

*Atla þóttisk þú stríða*
*at Erps morði*
*ok at Eitils aldrlagi,*
*þat var þér enn verra;*
*svá skyldi hverr öðrum*
*verja til aldrlaga*
*sverði sárbeitu,*
*at sér né stríddi-t."*

Thou wouldst strike at Atli by the slaying of Erp
And the killing of Eitil; thine own grief was worse;
So should each one wield the wound-biting sword
That another it slays but smites not himself.”

**9**

*Hitt kvað þá Sörli,*
*- svinna hafði hann hyggju -:*
*"Vilk-at ek við móður*
*málum skipta;*
*orðs þykkir enn vant*
*ykkru hváru.*
*Hvers biðr þú nú, Guðrún,*
*er þú at gráti né fær-at?*

Then did Sorli speak out, for wise was he ever:
“With my mother I never a quarrel will make;
Full little in speaking methinks ye both lack;
What askest thou, Guthrun, that will give thee no tears?

**10**

*Bræðr grát þú þína*
*ok buri svása,*
*niðja náborna*
*leidda nær rógi;*
*okkr skaltu ok, Guðrún,*
*gráta báða,*
*er hér sitjum feigir á mörum,*
*fjarri munum deyja."*

For thy brothers dost weep, and thy boys so sweet,
Thy kinsmen in birth on the battlefield slain;
Now, Guthrun, as; well for us both shalt thou weep,
We sit doomed on our steeds, and far hence shall we die.”

**11**

*Gengu ór garði*
*görvir at eiskra,*
*liðu þá yfir ungir*
*úrig fjöll*
*mörum húnlenzkum*
*morðs at hefna.*

From the courtyard they fared, and fury they breathed;
The youths swiftly went o'er the mountain wet,
On their Hunnish steeds, death's vengeance to have.

**12**

*Fundu á stræti*
*stórbrögðóttan:*
*"Hvé mun jarpskammr*
*okkr fulltingja?"*

On the way they found the man so wise;
“What help from the weakling brown may we have?”

**13**

*Svaraði inn sundrmæðri,*
*svá kvaðsk veita mundu*
*fullting frændum,*
*sem fótr öðrum.*
*"Hvat megi fótr*
*fæti veita*
*né holdgróin*
*hönd annarri?"*

So answered them their half-brother then:
“So well may I my kinsmen aid
As help one foot from the other has.”
“How may afoot its fellow aid,
Or a flesh-grown hand another help?”

**14**

*Þá kvað þat Erpr*
*einu sinni,*
*- mærr of lék*
*á mars baki -:*
*"Illt er blauðum hal*
*brautir kenna."*
*Kóðu harðan mjök*
*hornung vera.*

Then Erp spake forth, his words were few,
As haughty he sat on his horse's back:
“To the timid 'tis ill the way to tell.”
A bastard they the bold one called.

**15**

*Drógu þeir ór skíði*
*skíðiéarn,*
*mækis eggjar,*
*at mun flagði;*
*þverrðu þeir þrótt sinn*
*at þriðjungi,*
*létu mög ungan*
*til moldar hníga.*

From their sheaths they drew their shining swords,
Their blades, to the giantess joy to give;
By a third they lessened the might that was theirs,
The fighter young to earth they felled.

**16**

*Skóku loða,*
*skalmir festu,*
*ok góðbornir*
*smugu í guðvefi.*

Their cloaks they shook, their swords they sheathed,
The high-born men wrapped their mantles close.

**17**

*Fram lágu brautir,*
*fundu vástigu*
*ok systurson*
*sáran á meiði,*
*vargtré vindköld*
*vestan bæjar,*
*trýtti æ trönu hvöt,*
*titt var-at bíða.*

On their road they fared and an ill way found,
And their sister's son on a tree they saw,
On the wind-cold wolf-tree west of the hall,
And cranes'-bait crawled; none would care to linger.

**18**

*Glamr var í höllu,*
*halir ölreifir,*
*ok til gota ekki*
*gerðu at heyra,*
*áðr halr hugfullr*
*í horn of þaut.*

In the hall was din, the men drank deep,
And the horses' hoofs could no one hear,
Till the warrior hardy sounded his horn.

**19**

*Segja fóru ærir*
*Jörmunrekki,*
*at sénir váru*
*seggir und hjalmum:*
*"Ræðið ér um ráð,*
*ríkir eru komnir,*
*fyr máttkum hafið ér mönnum*
*mey of tradda."*

Men came and the tale to Jormunrek told
How warriors helmed without they beheld:
“Take counsel wise, for brave ones are come,
Of mighty men thou the sister didst murder.”

**20**

*Hló þá Jörmunrekkr,*
*hendi drap á kampa,*
*beiddisk-at bröngu,*
*böðvaðisk at víni;*
*skók hann skör jarpa,*
*sá á skjöld hvítan,*
*lét hann sér í hendi*
*hvarfa ker gullit.*

Then Jormunrek laughed, his hand laid on his beard,
His arms, for with wine he was warlike, he called for;
He shook his brown locks, on his white shield he looked,
And raised high the cup of gold in his hand.

**21**

*"Sæll ek þá þóttumk,*
*ef ek sjá knætta*
*Hamði ok Sörla*
*í höllu minni,*
*buri mynda ek þá binda*
*með boga strengjum,*
*góð börn Gjúka*
*festa á galga."*

“Happy, methinks, were I to behold
Hamther and Sorli here in my hall;
The men would I bind with strings of bows,
And Gjuki's heirs on the gallows hang.”

**22**

*Hitt kvað þá Hróðrglöð,*
*stóð of hleðum,*
*mæfingr mælti*
*við mög þenna:*
*-- -- --*
*"Því at þat heita,*
*at hlýðigi myni;*
*megu tveir menn einir*
*tíu hundruð Gotna*
*binda eða berja*
*í borg inni háu."*

Then the fame-glad one— on the steps she was—
The slender-fingered, spake with her son:
“Ye shall danger have if counsel ye heed not;
By two heroes alone shall two hundred of Goths
Be bound or be slain in the lofty-walled burg.”

**23**

*Styrr varð í ranni,*
*stukku ölskálir,*
*í blóði bragnar lágu,*
*komit ór brjósti Gotna.*

In the hall was clamor, the cups were shattered,
Men stood in blood from the breasts of the Goths.

**24**

*Hitt kvað þá Hamðir*
*inn hugumstóri:*
*"Æstir, Jörmunrekkr,*
*okkarrar kvámu*
*bræðra sammæðra*
*innan borgar þinnar;*
*fætr sér þína,*
*höndum sér þú þínum,*
*Jörmunrekkr, orpit*
*í eld heitan."*

Then did Hamther speak forth, the haughty of heart:
“Thou soughtest, Jormunrek, us to see,
Sons of one mother seeking thy dwelling;
Thou seest thy hands, thy feet thou beholdest,
Jormunrek, flung in the fire so hot.”

**25**

*Þá hraut við*
*inn reginkunngi*
*baldr í hrynju,*
*sem björn hryti:*
*"Grýtið ér á gumna,*
*alls geirar né bíta,*
*eggjar né éarn*
*Jónakrs sonu."*

Then roared the king, of the race of the gods,
Bold in his armor, as roars a bear:
“Stone ye the men that steel will bite not,
Sword nor spear, the sons of Jonak.”

**26**

*Hitt kvað þá Hamðir*
*inn hugumstóri:*
*"Böl vanntu, bróðir,*
*er þú þann belg leystir;*
*oft ór þeim belg*
*böll ráð koma."*

“Ill didst win, brother, when the bag thou didst open,
Oft from that bag came baleful counsel;

**27**

*"Hug hefðir þú, Hamðir,*
*ef þú hefðir hyggjandi;*
*mikils er á mann hvern vant,*
*er mannvits er!"*

Heart hast thou, Hamther, if knowledge thou hadst!
A man without wisdom is lacking in much.”

**28**

*"Af væri nú höfuð,*
*ef Erpr lifði,*
*bróðir okkarr inn böðfrækni,*
*er vit á braut vágum,*
*verr inn vígfrækni,*
*- hvöttumk at dísir, -*
*gumi inn gunnhelgi,*
*- gerðumk at vígi -."*

“His head were now off if Erp were living,
The brother so keen whom we killed on our road,
The warrior noble,— 'twas the Norns that drove me
The hero to slay who in fight should be holy.

**29**

*"Ekki hygg ek okkr*
*vera ulfa dæmi,*
*at vit mynim sjalfir of sakask*
*sem grey norna,*
*þá er gráðug eru*
*í auðn of alin.*

In fashion of wolves it befits us not
Amongst ourselves to strive,
Like the hounds of the Norns, that nourished were
In greed mid wastes so grim.

**30**

*Vel höfum vit vegit,*
*stöndum á val Gotna,*
*ofan eggmóðum,*
*sem ernir á kvisti;*
*góðs höfum tírar fengit,*
*þótt skylim nú eða í gær deyja;*
*kveld lifir maðr ekki*
*eftir kvið norna."*

“We have greatly fought, o'er the Goths do we stand
By our blades laid low, like eagles on branches;
Great our fame though we die today or tomorrow;
None outlives the night when the Norns have spoken.”

**31**

*Þar fell Sörli*
*at salar gafli,*
*enn Hamðir hné*
*at húsbaki.*

Then Sorli beside the gable sank,
And Hamther fell at the back of the house.

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