

My mother only said  
Thank God the Scorpion  
picked on me  
and spared my children.

The lines meant for explanation comprise the concluding stanza of Nissim Ezekiel's poem 'Night of the Scorpion'. The quoted lines mark a turn in the thought of the poem, and move the reader with the motherly feelings of the woman who was stung by a scorpion.

After the sting, the woman had to endure an acute pain for long twenty hours. Her neighbours, her well-wishers, and her husband tried all possible means to cure her of the pain. But, nothing actually bore fruit. She was groaning helplessly as long as the effect of the sting went on. The grimaces of pain that she made, led the naïve villagers to think that the pain had to do something with the sins of her previous, present or next life. Hence, they either invoked God or chanted incantation for her relief. Her husband, a sceptic and rationalist, did not share the ways and views of the villagers. He applied powder, mixture and herbs to the bitten spot. But, nothing at all had a healing effect on her.

Finally, as the pain wore off after long twenty hours, the woman heaved a sigh of relief. But, her feeling of relief was not so much due to her own recovery as to the fact that her children were spared by the scorpion. She heartily thanked God since the scorpion chanced not to bite her children. Thus, she proved herself to be a grand example of the ideal mother who would put the thoughts of her children above anything else.