

## אמנם כן

אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ [וְאֲמוֹתֵינוּ]

אֲמָנָם כֵּן יֵצֵר סוֹכֵן בְּנוֹ,  
כִּי לְהִצְדָּק רַב צִדְקָה וְעֲנִנּוּ. סִלְחָתִי.

גַּעַל מְרִגֵּל וְגַם פִּגְלֵל סִפְרוֹ,  
דָּוִד שׁוֹאֵג בְּקוֹל יִתֵּן קוֹל דְּבָרוֹ. סִלְחָתִי.

הֵס קֶטְגוֹר וְקַח סִנְגוֹר מְקוֹמוֹ,  
וְיִהְיֶה יְהוָה לְמִשְׁעָן לוֹ לְמַעַן נִאֲמוּ. סִלְחָתִי.

זְכוֹת אֶזְרַח גַּם יִפְרַח לְשׁוֹשְׁנָה,  
חֲטָא הָעֵבֶר וְקוֹל הַגְּבֵר מִמְעוֹנָה. סִלְחָתִי.

טוֹב וְסִלַּח מְחַל וְסִלַּח אֲשָׁמִים,  
יְהִי הַקֶּשֶׁב וְגַם הָשֵׁב מִמְרוֹמִים. סִלְחָתִי.

**HOW TRUE כֵּן** *Amנם כן*. This *piyyut* was written by Rabbi Yom Tov Yitzhak of Joigny (Central France). Rabbi Yom Tov studied in northern France with Rabbeinu Tam, the important 12th-century rabbinic teacher, and then settled in England, where he served as the Rabbi of York. He was martyred during the massacre that took place there in 1190. His is the only *piyyut* written in medieval England to have entered the standard liturgy. Jews were expelled from England in 1290 and did not return there until Cromwell's Great Revolution in the 17th century.

The poet adopts a rabbinic conceit that personifies Satan as an angel whose responsibility it is to entrap and convict the human family. In this situation, it is only God who can rescue humanity; the refrain pleads for God's intervention. It is the

directness of that expression asking God to announce forgiveness which has endeared this *piyyut* to generations.

The formal rhyming pattern and two-beat meter adopted by the poet creates a compactness of expression that is difficult to translate; the alphabetical acrostic is also lost in translation. Despite the formal poetic structures, the poet manages to convey a loving and personal relationship with God.

**BELOVED דָּוִד**. Several times in the poem, the poet addresses God in terms of endearment, with language from Shir Hashirim (the Song of Songs), reflecting an intimate relationship between God and Israel.

**RAISE YOUR VOICE שׁוֹאֵג בְּקוֹל**. Jeremiah 25:30. There, the prophet proclaims that God has but to shout out and the enemies will be defeated.

**SILENCE THE PROSECUTOR הֵס קֶטְגוֹר**. The poet continues the common rabbinic conceit (stated at the beginning of the *piyyut*): that of a court case in heaven, determining Israel's guilt or innocence.

**SUPPORT לְמִשְׁעָן**. Psalm 18:19 uses this phrase to refer to God having been our support in bringing us out of Egypt.

**ABRAHAM אֶזְרַח**. Literally, "the EzraHITE." The midrash identifies this appellation as one of the names of Abraham (Babylonian Talmud, Bava Batra 15a).

**FLOURISH לְשׁוֹשְׁנָה**. Literally, "may the lily flourish." The Song of Songs is seen as a series of love poems between God and Israel. In 2:1 (which is understood as Israel's speech to God), Israel is referred to as a lily: "I am a rose of Sharon, a lily of the field."

## OMNAM KEN

*Our God and God of our ancestors:*

How true it is that the evil inclination rules us,  
But You, Master of righteousness,  
can declare us not guilty by saying “I forgive.”

Despise the one who speaks against us,  
discredit his indictment.  
Beloved, raise Your voice and exclaim, “I forgive.”

Silence the prosecutor;  
let the defense take his place;  
O ADONAI, support his case, and say, “I forgive.”

May the merit of Abraham cause Israel to flourish.  
Put aside our sins, and let Your voice  
from heaven proclaim: “I forgive.”

Good and forgiving God,  
forgive the guilty, hear our plea,  
respond from on high, and say: “I forgive.”

כָּאֵב תִּחְבֹּשׁ וּבְצוּל תִּכְבֹּשׁ עֵוֹנִי,  
 סְלַחְתִּי. לָךְ תִּהְלֶה אָמֹר מְלָה לְמַעַנִּי  
 מַחָה פֶּשַׁע וְגַם רָשָׁע בְּנֵי בְרִית,  
 סְלַחְתִּי. נִהַג חֲסִדְךָ בֶּן הַדֹּדֶךָ לְשֵׁאֲרֵית  
 סְכוֹת רַחֲשֵׁי וְגַם לְחֲשֵׁי תִרְצָה,  
 סְלַחְתִּי. עֵוֹן נוֹשֵׂא לְמַעַנְךָ עֲשֵׂה וְתִפְצָה  
 פְּנֵה לְעֵלְבוֹן מְקוֹם עֵוֹן לְהֲשִׁים,  
 סְלַחְתִּי. צָחֵן הָסֵר וְגַם תִּבְשֹׂר לְבָבְךָ חוֹסִים  
 קוֹלֵי שְׁמֵעַ וְרֵאָה דִּמְעַ עֵינַי,  
 סְלַחְתִּי. רִיב רִיבֵי שְׁעָה נִיבֵי וְהֲשִׁיבֵנִי  
 שְׁמִיץ טִהַר כְּעַב מֵהָר כְּנִאֲמַר,  
 סְלַחְתִּי. תִּמְחָה פֶּשַׁע לְעַם נוֹשֵׂעַ וְתֹאמַר

AT SEA ובצול תִּכְבֹּשׁ Micah 7:19  
 says, "You will take us back in  
 love, You will cover up all our  
 iniquities, and You will hurl all  
 our sins into the depths of the  
 sea." The verse is quoted in the  
 Tashlikh service and in the Haf-  
 tarah of the afternoon service  
 of Yom Kippur.

לְמַעַנְךָ FOR YOUR OWN SAKE  
 Isaiah 43:25. In the passage in  
 Isaiah, God speaks in the first  
 person, "For My sake," but the  
 poet earlier has placed that first  
 expression in the mouth of the  
 penitent.

פְּנֵה לְעֵלְבוֹן SEE OUR DISGRACE  
 The poet is referring to Jewish  
 exile in foreign lands.

Heal my suffering, bury my sins at sea,  
and as I speak Your praise,  
for my sake, utter the words, “I forgive.”

Sweep away the sins, the evil urges of those  
of Your covenant; act with love,  
truly honor this remnant by saying: “I forgive.”

Hear the murmurs of my heart,  
and the sounds of my lips; for Your own sake,  
forgive my errors and proclaim, “I forgive.”

See our disgrace as recompense for our errors;  
remove what is foul, and announce  
to those whose faith is in You: “I forgive.”

Hear my voice, and see the tears in my eyes;  
take up my cause and accept the words  
I have spoken, answer me by saying: “I forgive.”

Purify my stain, let it pass quickly as a cloud,  
Fulfill Your promise: wipe away the sins of  
this people You have sworn to save—and say, “I forgive.”