

Ge'ulla for Sefira: Second Shabbat After Pesah *Shedudim Nedudim*, by R. Solomon ibn Gabirol

Translated and introduced by Dr. Gabriel Wasserman

This is the third in our series of installments on *ge'ulla* piyyutim recited in the Eastern Ashkenazic Rite during the six Sabbaths between Pesah and Shavu'ot, before the conclusion of the blessing *Barukh atta hashem ga'al yisra'el*. Like last two week's *ge'ullot*, this one is by the Iberian poet R. Solomon ibn Gabirol, who lived decades before the First Crusade; he wrote this piyyut as a general prayer complaining about the long exile, but Eastern Ashkenazic communities later adopted it for Sefirat Ha'omer, the period when they commemorated the tragedies of the Crusades.

Like the *ge'ulla* that we recited two weeks ago, *Sheviya 'Aniya*, this one also begins with two rhyming adjectives, *Shedudim Nedudim*. This will be the case next week, as well, with *Shekhula Akhula*. Ibn Gabirol also used this device in one of the later stanzas in *Sheviya 'Aniya*, namely *Mehutzim Lehutzim*. In all these instances, the pair of rhyming adjectives describes the sorry state of the Jewish people in exile, and the rhyme creates an effect that focuses the listener's attention onto this sorry state.

In Ashkenazic prayerbooks, both in manuscript and printed, each stanza in this *ge'ulla* ends with a line rhyming in the syllable *-nu*, and then a three-line refrain, also rhyming *-nu*: *Lamma lanetzah tishkahenu*, "Why should you forget us forever", etc. However, I suspect that these lines are not original, for multiple reasons: (1) In the first stanza, the first four lines are followed by a rhyming couplet, ending *-yon*, not *-nu*, and only then comes the *-nu* lines. This suggests that they are setting up the poem for a "girdle rhyme" to run through the whole poem, of *-yon*, but this never materializes. Have *-yon* lines been lost from the rest? (2) The identical refrain

appears in Ashkenazic manuscripts of *Sheviya 'Aniya*, but not Geniza manuscripts. (3) Unfortunately, the Geniza manuscripts of *Shedudim Nedudim* that I was able to see in facsimile were all tattered, but as far as I could tell the only refrain that they had indicated was a line *Hashem Malkenu*, perhaps the last line of the Ashkenazic refrain?. (Incidentally, the words *Hashem Malkenu* allude to the position of the *ge'ulla* in the liturgy, after the verse *Hashem yimlokh* in the blessing after the Shema'.) In one Geniza manuscript that I saw of the first stanza, the line of the stanza ending in *-nu* was absent, as well. Therefore, I have printed the *-nu* lines in angle brackets, and the refrain in small letters.

The poet uses a number of biblical references. His reference to the priests as "garbed in checkered (vestments)" is obviously based on the description of the priestly tunic as "checkered" (*tashbetz*) in Exodus 28:4. But why does he refer to the sages of the Sanhedrin as "Tir'atites, Shim'atites, clans of Ya'betz"? This is more obscure: it is from a genealogical list in I Chronicles 2:25, which lists clans of *sofrim*, "scribes". Because the word *sofrim* came to mean "scholars", the Talmud in Sanhedrin 104a identifies the words in this biblical verse as referring to the Sanhedrin.

He refers to the Messiah as "Yinnon", based on the understanding of the words *yinnon shemo*, "Yinnon is his name", in Psalms 72:17, as expounded in Sanhedrin 98a. And he refers to Egypt as "Tanes and Hanes", ever loving the rhyming pairs of words. What is the origin of these words? The Torah mentions an Egyptian city Tzo'an (Numbers 13:22), which Targum Onkelos translates as "Tanes", thus identifying it with the city known in Greek as Tanis (see Wikipedia entry "Tanis"). And in Isaiah 30:4, the prophet uses "Tzo'an" and "Hanes" in connection with Tzo'an: *For his ministers were in Tzo'an; and his messengers reached Hanes*. For the poet, these both become simply ways to say "Egypt", in rhyme.

שְׂדוּדִים נְדוּדִים / לְצִיּוֹן תִּקְבְּצוּ
מְכוּרִים בְּלֹא הוֹן / תְּשִׁיבֵם לְמִרְבֵּץ
הָשֵׁב עֲבֹדָת / לְבוּשֵׁי תִשְׁבֵּץ
תִּרְעַת שְׁמַעַת / מִשְׁפָּחוֹת יַעֲבִץ
לְהוֹדוֹת וְלוֹמַר / לְשִׁמְךָ עֲלִיּוֹן
מָתִי תִקּוּם / תִּרְחַם צִיּוֹן

(חַיֵּשׁ קֵל מְהֵרָה / אֵת פְּדוּתֵנוּ)
לָמָּה לִנְצַח / תִּשְׁכַּחֲנוּ
יְיָ קִנְּנוּ / לָךְ קִוִּינוּ
יְיָ מִלְכֵּנוּ / הוּא יוֹשִׁיעֵנוּ

לְגוֹיֵי הָאָרְצוֹת / תִּחַיֵּשׁ שְׂאֵת נֶס
יִנּוֹן תִּגְבֵּר / וּמִתְנִי תִשָּׁנֶס
עֲדָרֵי תֶאֱסוּף / וּפּוֹצֵי תִכָּנֶס
תַּחֲדֵּשׁ גְּאֻלָּה / כְּטָאֲנֶס וְחָנֶס

(חַוִּשָּׁה וְהָשֵׁב אֶת־שְׁבִיתֵנוּ)
לָמָּה לִנְצַח / תִּשְׁכַּחֲנוּ
יְיָ קִנְּנוּ / לָךְ קִוִּינוּ
יְיָ מִלְכֵּנוּ / הוּא יוֹשִׁיעֵנוּ

The plundered and wandering ones — gather them to Zion,
The people sold for no money — bring them back to their pasture!
Restore the service of (the priests), garbed in checkered (vestments).
(And the Sanhedrin): Tir‘atites, Shim‘atites, clans of Ya‘betz,
To give thanks, and to say to your name, O you highest One:
When will you arise and have mercy on Zion?

(Speedily, quickly, hasten our redemption?)
Why should you forget us forever?
Lord, show us kindness; we put our hope in you!
The Lord is our king; he will rescue us!

(Facing) the nations of the world, may you hasten to lift up a banner,
Strengthen Yinnon (the Messiah), and gird his loins.
Gather my flocks, and bring in my dispersed people.
Make a new redemption, like (the Exodus from Egypt, the land of the
cities) Tanes and Hanes.

<Hasten and restore our captives!>
Why should you forget us forever?
Lord, show us kindness; we put our hope in you!
The Lord is our king; he will rescue us!

מְשַׁנְאֵי יְדָבָר / עֲזוּת בְּפָנַי
מִבְקֵשׁ לְאַבֵּד / תוֹחֶלֶת אֲמוּנָי
יְרִיבָנִי – עַד אֵן / תוֹחִיל לְעֵינִי
עֲנִיתִיו: "הֵן כָּתוּב / בְּסֵפֶר חֲזִיוֹנִי:
כִּי לֹא יִזְנַח / לְעוֹלָם יִי"

(יֵשׁוּב יִרְחָמֵנוּ / יִכְבֹּשׁ עֲוֹנוֹתֵינוּ)
לָמָּה לִּנְצַח / תִּשְׁכַּחֲנוּ
יִי חֲנֻנוּ / לָךְ קִיְנוּ
יִי מַלְכֵנוּ / הוּא יוֹשִׁיעֵנוּ

הָשֵׁב גְּרוּשָׁה / לְנַחֲלַת יִרְשָׁה
וּפְקוּדֵי אֲנוּשָׁה / בְּיַד צָר עֲנוּשָׁה
אֲכֹלָה בְּכָל־פֶּה / נְתוּצָה וְנִטּוּשָׁה
וְחִידֵשׁ צְדָקָת / אֲבוֹת שְׁלֹשָׁה
שָׁמַיִם חֲדָשִׁים / וָאָרֶץ חֲדָשָׁה

<וְאֵז נִשְׁוֹרֵר / בְּרִנּוֹנוּנוּ>
לָמָּה לִּנְצַח / תִּשְׁכַּחֲנוּ
יִי חֲנֻנוּ / לָךְ קִיְנוּ
יִי מַלְכֵנוּ / הוּא יוֹשִׁיעֵנוּ

My enemy speaks harsh words in my presence,
And wants to extinguish the hope of my faithful.
He challenges me: "How long will you wait for the Eyes (the Messiah)"?
I answered him: "Behold, it is written in my book of visions (the Bible):
That the Lord will not reject (us) forever. (Lamentations 3:11)"

<May he again have mercy for us, and subdue our iniquities.>
Why should you forget us forever?
Lord, show us kindness; we put our hope in you!
The Lord is our king; he will rescue us!

Bring back the expelled one to her inheritance, her portion,
And take notice of the weakened one, who has been punished by the foe,
She's been consumed by every mouth, broken and abandoned.
Renew the merits of the three Patriarchs,
And new heavens and a new earth!

<Then we will sing with our joyous songs.>
Why should you forget us forever?
Lord, show us kindness; we put our hope in you!
The Lord is our king; he will rescue us!