

*Zulat* piyyut for the fifth Sabbath after  
Pesah (Eastern Ashkenazic Rite):  
*Elohim Lo Eda' Zulatekha*

Translated by Dr. Gabriel Wasserman

Like last's week's Eastern *zulat*, This *zulat* is by the twelfth-century poet Ephraim of Regensburg. Like all the Eastern *zulatot* for the other weeks of Sefira, this one has a short refrain after every pair of two stanzas, here: "How long, O Lord!" Only at the end, when the poet turns toward the future and explicitly prays for redemption, does the refrain chain: "And you are the Lord!"

The poem begins with a direct echo of the words *en elohim zulatekha*, "there is no god but you", which are recited in the prose liturgy immediately before the *zulat*. The poet begins: *Elohim lo eda' zulatekha*, which can be read as "God, I know none other than you", or as: "I know no other god than you."

Ephraim of Regensburg was a very learned poet, and we see in this poem how he uses references to classical sources in very new ways. While it is not uncommon in poems about persecutions to refer to the Jews as being like sacrifices in the Temple, our poet goes one step further — in the stanza beginning with the letter *hé* — to compare the Jewish people to an *asham*-offering or a *hattat*-offering that is no longer relevant (such as, for example, it went missing and the penitent offered a different animal): the animal intended for *asham* is left to pasture until it develops a blemish, at which point it can be slaughtered as a non-sacrifice, and the animal of the *hattat* is left to die. If the Jewish people are like valid sacrifices, then their persecution is not in vain, but holy; but here, they are not even valid sacrifices, but rather like sacrificial animals that have become irrelevant, whose deaths bear no holy result.

While last week's poem contained criticism of Christianity, this one is even more bitter, in the stanzas beginning *zayin* and *het*, calling the Christian faith "as tasteless as egg-white liquid", an expression taken from Job 6:6, where Job says that his illness has made all his food tasteless.

One of the starkest re-purposes of a Biblical quotation in all of piyyut literature is on p. 11, where he writes: *ve-halkhu goyim le-orekh*. In Isaiah 60:3, this means: "Nations will walk by your light", where the word is vocalized לְאֹרֶךְ (accent on the second syllable, *tzeré* on the letter *resh*); but our poet uses it to mean "The nations walk throughout the length (of the earth)", requiring the vocalization לְאֹרֶךְ (accent on the first syllable, *segol* on the letter *resh* — a completely different word.

Another stark re-purpose of a Biblical quotation, though less stark than *le-orekh*, is in the stanza beginning *resh* on p. 9: *ve-'asita lo misgeret*, "make a frame (to contain) him". In Exodus 25:25, this refers to a beautiful frame adorning the Shulhan, the table of the Showbread in the Temple. Here, it means: Contain my enemy by locking him up.

Yet another is in the stanza beginning *sin* (in place of *samekh*) on p. 7: *ve-haddamim mo di'im*: in the Mishna (Bava Batra 5:1) this means "the money (*damim*) demonstrates it", but the poet uses *damim* in novel sense "blood", thus: "and my blood demonstrates it."

The end of the first stanza alludes to Book of Ruth, "Redeem your right of redemption for yourself", and the poet returns to this in the last four stanzas, every one of which ends with an allusion to Ruth. The legal action in the story of Ruth is about the redemption of Elimelech's field, which has fallen into foreign hands due to poverty. In the biblical story, the Elimelech's near kinsmen need to buy back the field to redeem it for the family. Here, the poet prays to God, our "close in kin", to redeem us from exile. In a week and half we will read the Book of Ruth, on Shavu'ot; during Sefira, when we devote our prayers to our unfortunate state and our need for redemption, it is poignant to look forward to the Book of Ruth as a model for our own redemption.

The poem ends with no explicit reference to the words *'ezrat avotenu*, which followed the *zulat* in Ashkenazic liturgy of the poet's day (and ours), nor to the splitting of the sea or the Exodus, but merely with the word *ge'ulla*, "redemption", the overall theme of the blessing following the Shema'.

אֵלֹהִים לֹא אֲדַע זֹלָתְךָ  
מוֹשִׁיעַ אִין בְּלָתְךָ  
גֹּאֵל לְךָ אֶתְּהָ אֶת־גְּאֻלָּתְךָ

בֵּיתְךָ קֹדֶשׁ נֶאֱוָה  
הָיָה לְאֵשׁ וְלִהְבֵּה  
הִרְהָאֵלֹהִים חֲרָבָה

עַד מָתִי, יי?

גַּם כִּי־אֶזְעַק וְאֶשׁוּעַ  
מִיַּד נַפְשִׁי קֹבֵעַ  
וְאֲנִי עָנִי וְגֹועַ

דָּתְךָ לְהַעֲבִיר בְּקִשׁ  
דֹּר פְּתִלְתוֹל וְעַקֵּשׁ  
זֶה לָנוּ לְמוֹקֵשׁ

עַד מָתִי, יי?

הָיִיתִי כְּנֶתֶק לְרַעְיָה  
כְּנוֹס לְכַפֵּה לְדַחְיָה  
הָיִיתִי בְּאַרְצֵי נְכַרְיָה

וְאֵהִי נִגּוּעַ בְּתוֹכָחֹת  
מִפְּנֵי שִׁקְרֵי טְחוֹת  
חֲרוֹת עַל הַלְּחֹת

עַד מָתִי, יי?

God, I know none other than you,  
There is no rescuer other than you.  
Redeem your right of redemption for yourself!

Your house, the beautiful holy place,  
Has become fire and flames.  
God's mountain is in ruins.\*

**\*God's mountain is in ruins  
(*har ha'elohim horeva*). A  
punning use of Exodus 3:1:  
"To the Mountain of God,  
(Mt.) Horeb", using *horeva*  
not as "to Horeb" but as "in  
ruins".**

**How long, O Lord?**

Even when I cry and supplicate,  
Out of (my suffering from) the one robbing my life,  
While I am poor and dying.

He seeks to remove your Law (from the world),  
The devious, crooked generation,  
He is a trap for us.

**How long, O Lord?**

I have been like (a sacrificial animal that is no longer relevant for an  
*asham*, and therefore is) set aside to pasture (until it develops a blemish  
and can be deconsecrated),  
Brought into a prison to be rejected (to death, like a sacrificial animal no  
longer relevant for a *hattat*),  
I am in a foreign land.

And I have been afflicted by rebukes,  
About their false beliefs,  
(About their deity, whose image is) engraved upon flat surfaces.

**How long, O Lord?**

זָד עוֹרְףָּ לָךְ דְּמוֹת  
כְּטַעַם בְּרִיר חֲלָמוֹת  
הַכְּמוֹת נִבֵּל יְמוֹת

The wicked (Christian) ascribes (human) form to you,  
(A belief) as tasteless as egg-white liquid —  
Could (a god) die like the death of a nobody?

חִי רֹכֵב עַל עָב קַל  
הִמְירוּ בְּאִישׁ נִסְקָל  
וְלוֹ פָּנִים קִלְקַל

Instead of the living One, who rides upon the light clouds,  
They took, in exchange, a man, stoned to death,  
And his face was thoroughly ruined.

עַד מָתִי, יי?

**How long, O Lord?**

טוֹפְלֵי שְׁקֵר כְּלָם  
הַמְכַעֲסִים בְּהַבְלָם  
שֵׁם יי א"ל עוֹלָם

They are all forgers of lies,  
And with their vanity they enrage  
The name of the Lord, the eternal God.

יִרְצְצוּ כָּל קְדוֹשִׁים  
לְנַפְשָׁם עוֹלִים לְאֲשִׁים  
עַל-גְּבִי חָרְשׁוּ חוֹרְשִׁים

They crush all the holy people,  
Whose own lives ascend as fire-offerings,  
Upon my back the plowers plow.

עַד מָתִי, יי?

**How long, O Lord?**

כַּמָּה עָלַי יַעֲבוֹר  
אֶהְרֵג וְלֹא אֶעֱבוֹר  
חֻק-עוֹלָם וְלֹא יַעֲבוֹר

How much can happen to me?  
I let myself be killed, rather than transgress  
The eternal law, which will not go away.

לְנַפְשִׁי הִגִּיעוּ זִידוּנִים  
עָרְכוּ עָלַי כִּידוּנִים  
בְּעֵלּוֹנוֹ זוֹלָתְךָ אֲדוּנִים

The wicked have come up to my very life,  
And set up javelins (to throw) against me,  
Lords other than you have dominated us.

עַד מָתִי, יי?

**How long, O Lord?**

מְשׁוֹלִים תּוֹרִיךָ וְיוֹנִיךָ  
בְּנֵיךָ בְּנֵי בְּחֻנֵיךָ  
שׁוֹרְךָ טָבוּחַ לְעֵינֶיךָ

The people compared to your turtledoves and pigeons,  
Your children, children of your tested (patriarchs),  
Your ox, slaughtered in front of your eyes —

נָא הִבֵּט מִמַּעְלוֹתֶיךָ  
טְבַחְהָ טְבַחְהָ סִגְלָתְךָ  
הִתְיַצֵּב עַל עוֹלָתְךָ

Please look down from your high heavens!  
Your treasured people has let its slaughter be performed.  
Stand here, next to your burnt offering!

עַד מָתִי, יי?

**How long, O Lord?**

שָׂנְאֹתִי מַעֲשֵׂה תַעֲתָעִים  
וְהִדְמִים מוֹדִיעִים  
לְבָקָרִים וְלִרְגָעִים

I hate the actions of (idolatrous) folly,  
And (my blood) demonstrates it,  
Each morning, each moment.

עֲלֶיךָ פָּרְחֵי נְמֻלָּקִים  
קוֹל דְּמִיָּהֶם צוֹעֲקִים  
וְהִנֵּה עֲבָדֶיךָ מְפִים

For you, my young ones have their necks broken (like bird sacrifices),  
The voice of their blood cries out,  
And behold, your servants are beaten!

עַד מָתִי, יי?

**How long, O Lord?**

פָּתַח שַׁעַר אָנַךְ  
מוֹנִיךָ כְּלָה בְּחַרְנֶךָ  
מִתְקוֹמְמִים בְּיַמֶּיךָ

Open the gate of Anakh,  
And finish off your enemies, with your rage,  
Your opponents, with your right hand.

צָרוּר אֵת מְחַלְלֶיךָ  
וְעַל כָּל־הַקּוֹמְמִים עֲלֶיךָ  
שֵׂא נָא כְלֶיךָ

Attack those that profane you,  
And all those that rise up against you —  
Take up your weapons!

עַד מָתִי, יי?

**How long, O Lord?**

**\*The gate of Anakh.** The gate through which God hears the cries of people who have suffered mistreatment (*ona'a*). In Amos 7:7, the word *anakh* means “plumb-line”, but in Bava Metzi’a 59a it is explained homiletically as meaning *ona'a*.

קָנָא בְּעָרִיץ בְּעַר  
מִתְעַרָּה כְּרַעְנָן יַעַר  
מִדּוּעַ לֹא יִבְעַר

רוֹדֵף פְּלִיטָה הַנִּשְׁאָרָת  
הַשָּׁכֵם לֹא כְּבִמְחַתְרָת  
וְעָשִׂיתָ לוֹ מִסְגָּרָת

עַד מָתִי, יי?

נִשְׁלַח בְּרַשָּׁת רַגְלָיו  
שְׁלֵם כְּרוּעַ מֵעֲלָלָיו  
וְחִמִּישְׁתּוֹ יִסֹּף עָלָיו

תִּבְעַר מֵאַרְצֵי קָמִים  
וְרָשָׁע מֵהָרֵי בְּשָׁמִים  
כִּי אֲרָכּוּ-לוֹ שָׁם הַיָּמִים

עַד מָתִי, יי?

אֹזְכָלִי (נ"א: אָהָלִי) שָׁחַד אָכְלוּ  
יִגְיַע כַּפֵּי כָלוּ  
בְּנִכְלִיהֶם אֲשֶׁר גָּבְלוּ

פָּעְרוּ לְבַלְעָנִי חֲנָם  
חָרְקוּ עָלַי שָׁנָם  
תָּנָה עֹן עַל-עֹנָם

עַד מָתִי, יי?

Bring out your zeal against the tyrant, the fool,  
Who is firmly rooted, like a luscious forest —  
Why isn't he consumed by fire?

He pursues the surviving remnant (of Israel),  
Wakes up early (to attack them), like one digging (through subterfuge into  
a house, to rob it).  
Make a frame (to contain) him!

**How long, O Lord?**

Cast his feet into a net,  
Repay him for his wicked deeds,  
And add an extra fifth, beyond (what he deserves).

Exterminate the foes from my land,  
And the wicked from the Mountains of Aromatic Spices,  
For he has had too many days there.

**How long, O Lord?**

They have devoured, in bribes, (my possessions),  
They have consumed the toil of my hands,  
With their schemes, which they schemed.

They opened their mouths wide, to swallow me, for no cause,  
They gnashed their teeth at me.  
Charge them with this crime, in addition to their other crimes!

**How long, O Lord?**

רְאֵה תִּרְאֶה בְּעֵינַי  
דִּלְפָּה לְךָ עֵינַי  
אֵךְ אִם-אֲתֶה לּוֹ שְׁמַעְנִי

יְמִינְךָ מִחִיקֶךָ כִּלְה  
וְתִגְדִּיל לַעֲשׂוֹת עִם-אֲלֵה  
אֲתָה הָאֵל עֹשֶׂה פִלְא

**עַד מָתַי, יי?**

מָה אָרַךְ עָלַי פְּרָךְ  
כָּבְשׁוּ עָלַי דְּרָךְ  
וְהִלְכוּ גוֹיִם לְאָרֶךְ

בְּקוֹל עֲלֵה גֶדֶךָ  
הִיִּיתִי תָמִיד נִגְדָךְ  
וְהִאֲלֵהִים יִבְקֹשׂ אֶת-נִרְדָךְ

**עַד מָתַי, יי?**

רְאִיתִי קֶץ לְכָל-תְּכֵלֶה  
וְאִין קֶץ לְיִוִּשְׁבַת בְּגוֹלָה  
חֲפָשָׂה לֹא נָתַן לָהּ

רְחַמֶיךָ מִיּוֹם לְיוֹם צוֹפָה  
לְמָתַי תַּעֲלֶה תְרוּפָה  
עֹשֶׂה שָׁחַר וְעֵיפָה

**עַד מָתַי, יי?**

Look, yes, look, at the affliction,  
My eye drips tears to you,  
But if only you would listen to me —

Stop keeping your right hand in your bosom.  
(Take it out), and deal greatly with these people,  
For you are God, who performs wonders!

**How long, O Lord?**

Oh, how long this crushing oppression has lasted for me!  
They have conquered my roads;  
The nations walk throughout the length (of the earth).

By the noise of a blowing leaf  
I have been constantly pushed.  
But let God seek the cause of the persecuted!

**How long, O Lord?**

To all lines I see an end,  
But there is no end for the exile in which (the Jewish people) sits;  
Freedom has not been given to her.

From day to day, she looks forward to your mercy:  
When will you bring healing,  
O you who made dawn and darkness?

**How long, O Lord?**

בְּיָדוֹ לְפָדוֹת עַם־קְרוֹבוֹ  
וְעַד־מָתִי אֶצְפָּה לְיוֹם שׁוּבוֹ  
וְלֹא אֶץ לְבוֹא

יַעֲרָה מִמָּרוֹם רוּחוֹ  
וַיִּרָם קַרְנוֹ מִשִּׁיחוֹ  
הַשֵּׁיב הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶת־נִדְחָיו

**עַד מָתִי, יי?**

צִוֵּה יִשׁוּעוֹת עַמֶּךָ  
עֲזָרְתִי הִיְתָה מֵעַמֶּךָ  
אִין גּוֹאֵל קְרוֹב מִמֶּךָ

חַי גֹּאֲלֵי חַפְתָּה  
נַפְשִׁי לָךְ כְּלָתָה  
כִּי גֹאֵל אַתָּה

**עַד מָתִי, יי?**

קַיִם קוֹל צוֹפִיךָ  
עוֹד תַּעֲבֹרְנָה אֲלֵפֶיךָ  
וּפְרִשֶׁת עָלַי כְּנָפֶיךָ

קָרַב שָׁנַת הַגְּאֻלָּה  
הֲסֵר מֵעָלַי כְּלֵי גוֹלָה  
כִּי לָךְ מִשְׁפֹּט הַגְּאֻלָּה –

**וְאַתָּה יי!**

He has (the ability) in his hand to redeem the people that is close to him.  
How long will I await the day of his return?  
He has not hastened to come.

May his spirit be poured down from on high,  
And may he raise up the horn of his Messiah,  
And the king restore his cast-away (people).

**How long, O Lord?**

Order rescue for your people,  
My help has (always) come from you —  
There is no redeemer closer than you.

O living One, my redeemer, my soul waits  
And pines away for you,  
For you are the redeemer!

**How long, O Lord?**

Fulfill the announcement of your prophets,  
May your thousands (of people) again pass through (the land),  
And may you spread out your cloak over me.

Bring nigh the year of redemption,  
Remove the exilic garb from me,  
For yours is the responsibility to redeem —

**And you are the Lord!**