

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

Translated by Dr. Gabriel Wasserman

This week's *zulat*, by the otherwise unknown Samuel bar Judah, is a historical remembrance of a specific event, namely, the First Crusade massacres of the year 1096, which took place at the end of Sefira. As such, it is similar to *En Kamokha Ba'illemim*, the Eastern Ashkenazic *zulat* for the first week, which is specifically in memory of the Second Crusade massacres of the year 1147, which took place at the beginning of Sefira. Unlike the *zulatot* for the middle four weeks, which are not tied to specific weeks, and appear in various manuscripts for different weeks, *En Kamokha Ba'illemim* is always for the first week, and our *zulat* almost always for the last.

The poet's full signature appears in a place not easily noticeable: at the beginning of the second line of each stanza. This has been indicated here with a circle symbol over each letter of the acrostic. He signed his first name, Samuel, again at the end of the poem, as well.

The date when the First Crusade was declared is given in the penultimate stanza of the *zulat*: "In the year 56, my blows and lashes were mortal" — that is, the year 4856, corresponding to the Christian year 1095–1096.

Near the beginning of the poem, in the stanza beginning with the letter *vav*, the poet writes: "They gathered together in Dark Corner, to take pride in the glory of (Jesus) the Nazarene." The First Crusade was in fact declared by the pope at the Council of Clermont in November 1095; the name Clermont means "Bright Mountain" (Latin *Clarus Mons*), which the poet has turned into "Dark Corner" (*Keren Afela*), because it resulted in "terror and great darkness". (This was noted already by Seligmann Baer in the nineteenth century, and endorsed by Avraham Fraenkel and Avraham Gross in their 2016 volume *Hebräische liturgische Poesien zu den Juderverfolgungen während des Ersten Kreuzzugs*.)

The poet mentions two calendar dates, both shortly before Shavu'ot: Rosh Hodesh Sivan, in the *yud* stanza, and the third of Sivan, in the *lamed* stanza. He calls the latter "the day when *hagbala* was commanded", alluding to Exodus 19:11–12, where God commands Moses to get the people ready for three days before the Sinai Revelation: *You shall make boundaries (ve-higbalta) for the people around (the mountain)*. Thus, three days before Shavu'ot is "the day when *hagbala* (boundary-making) was commanded".

These two dates match up with the account given in the prose chronicle *Gezerot Tattenu* by R. Eliezer ben Nathan (Ra'avan — the author of the Western *zulat* for this week), that the community of Worms suffered a massacre on 1 Sivan (this was the second massacre in Worms, after one a week earlier on 23 Iyyar), and the community of Mainz suffered a massacre on 3 Sivan. Like our poet, Ra'avan's prose account also assigns 3 Sivan the historical-religious significance of the Sinai Revelation; he calls it "the day when the Jews sanctified and separated themselves for the Giving of the Torah".

From the *kuf* stanza onwards, the poet moves from mournful description to a prayer for redemption, for a time when God will "hover over" the Jews with protective wing, "crush" the hordes of Christian oppressors, and make his own name and throne complete. But then, right before the end, he has one stanza again crying out from the pain, namely, the one that gives the date (which we have already discussed): "In the year 56, my blows and lashes were mortal". After that, he finally concludes with a prayer leading back to *'ezrat avotenu*, the resumption of the prose liturgy: "Give us joy corresponding to the days you have afflicted us, O God, our rescue, our help (*'ezratenu*)!"

אֱלֹהֵי אֶקְרָא בְּמַחְשָׁב
שִׁיר מֵעַנִּי לְהַקְשִׁיב
וְאַתָּה קְדוֹשׁ יוֹשֵׁב

בְּעֲזָתְךָ תִּפְאָרַת בְּהַמוֹנֵי
מְכֹלֵל יָפִי בְּהַגְיוֹנֵי
מִקְוֵה יִשְׂרָאֵל יי

אל־דַּמִּי לָד!

גְּעוֹנֵי יָמֵי עֲבָרָה
וְצָר בְּזָדוֹן נִתְגַּרְה
כִּי דְבַר סָרָה

דָּאוּ מֵאַרְץ רְחוֹקָה
אֲגִפִּי תִימֵן לְהַחְזִיקָה
יוֹם צָרָה וּמְצוּקָה

אל־דַּמִּי לָד!

הַמֹּן חֵיל שְׂעִיר
לְהַקְתָּם בְּכֹלָה לְהַסְעִיר
קוֹל שְׂאוֹן מֵעִיר

וְעָדוּ לְקַרְנוֹ אֶפְלָה
בְּכַבּוֹד נּוֹצְרֵי לְהַתְהַלְלָה
וְהִנֵּה אֵימָה חֲשֻׁכָה גְדוֹלָה

אל־דַּמִּי לָד!

My God, I call out to you in my thoughts,
That you should heed the song that I utter.
You are the holy One, enthroned.

May you be mightily glorified by my throngs of people,
(With) a beautiful crown, made out of my contemplative prayers.
The Lord is the hope of Israel.

Don't be silent!

Days of rage (against me) have reached me,
The foe incited me, wantonly,
By speaking rebelliously (against the Torah).

They flew in from a faraway land,
To take hold of the troops of the south,
A day of trouble and distress!

Don't be silent!

Hordes of forces of Seir (Edom) —
May you bestorm their crowds, finishing them off,
With a loud sound coming from the city (of Jerusalem)!

They gathered together in Dark Corner,
To take pride in the glory of (Jesus) the Nazarene —
And behold, there is terror, and great darkness.

Don't be silent!

זָעוּ וְנִתְפַלְצוּ אַבְיָרִים
רָשָׁע כְּאַסֹּף עֲדָרִים
עָבַר בֵּין הַגְּזָרִים

חָבַל יְלָדֵי שְׁעִשׂוּעִים
יְשָׁרֵי לֵב מַדְעִים
עַל מִשְׁפָּנוֹת הָרַעִים

אֵל-דְּמִי לָךְ!

טְבַחָה כְּצֹאן נֶחֱשָׁבוּ
הִמְסִלָּאִים בְּפֹז נִסְחָבוּ
הָאֲמַת וְהַשְּׁלוֹם אֶהְבּוּ

יְחַדּוּ שְׁמֶךָ לְקַדֵּשׁ
וְנַפְשָׁם הַשְּׁלִימוּ לְהַדֵּשׁ
בְּיוֹם אֶחָד לְחֹדֶשׁ

אֵל-דְּמִי לָךְ!

כָּל אֱלוֹפֵי תוֹרָה
דוֹרְשֵׁי מִצְוָה בְּרָה
יִרְאֵת יי טְהוֹרָה

לְיוֹם מִצְוֹת הַגְּבָלָה
הַזִּבְחוּ בְּנֵי הַקֶּהֶלָה
מִנּוֹרַת זָהָב כְּלָה

אֵל-דְּמִי לָךְ!

The mighty* shook and trembled
When the wicked man gathered the flocks,
And passed through the pieces.

He injured (God's) beloved children,
The people upright in their hearts, their
thoughts,
In the (study)-tents of the shepherds (the
teachers of Torah).

Don't be silent!

(The Jews) were considered like flocks for the slaughter,
The people worth their weight in gold were dragged (on the floor),
Loving truth and wellbeing.

They declared the oneness of your name (by saying the Shema'), to
sanctify it,
And they gave up their lives, letting themselves be trampled,
On the first day of the month (of Sivan).

Don't be silent!

All mighty chiefs of Torah,
Expounders of the unblemished commandments,
Pure reverence of the Lord —

On (the third of Sivan), the day when *hagbala* was commanded,*
The people of the community were slaughtered,
The entire golden Menorah!

Don't be silent!

***The mighty...** The meaning of this stanza is uncertain. Are the "mighty" the Jews, trembling in fear, and the "flocks" are the Crusader troops? That would make sense in the context of the lines, but "flocks", being more gentle animals, generally refers to the Jews, whereas "the mighty" could be the Crusaders. Perhaps the troops trembled with awe to fulfill the pope's order, and they "gathered" the Jewish flocks in the synagogue to kill them more easily? And "passed through the pieces" could mean cut-up bodies of dead Jews, or perhaps simply be a description of Crusader troops passing between communities?

***The day when *hagbala* was commanded.** In Exodus 19:11–12, God commands Moses to get the people ready for three days before the Sinai Revelation: *You shall make boundaries (ve-higbalta) for the people around (the mountain).* Thus, three days before Shavu'ot is "the day when *hagbala* was commanded".

מְשַׁחֶקֶת קְרוּעָה וּשְׂרוּפָה
חֲמוּסָה וּבְדָם הוּצְפָה
אִמְרַת יי צְרוּפָה

(The Torah, God's) play-partner, was torn and burned,
Robbed and drenched in blood,
God's unadulterated utterance.

נוֹצְרִיָּהּ הִקְדָּשׁוּ לְהַתְחַיֵּב
זוֹלְלוּ חוֹלְלוּ לְדַיֵּב
כִּי גִבַר אוֹיֵב

Those that kept (the Torah) were assigned to be punished,
To be denigrated and desecrated and miserable,
For the enemy prevailed.

אַל-דַּמִּי לָד!

Don't be silent!

סְמוּדָה לְחַג הַשְּׁבָעוֹת
קְרָאוּנִי רַבּוֹת רְעוֹת
בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל בְּפִרְעַ פְּרָעוֹת

Adjacent to the festival of Shavu'ot,
Many evils befell me,
Wild attacks against Israel.

עֵינַיִךָ פָּקַח אֱוֹם
בְּיָטָה לְהַחִישׁ פְּדִיּוֹם
כִּי עָלִיךָ הִרְגָנוּ כָּל-הַיּוֹם

Open your eyes, O awesome One,
Look, hasten redemption,
For we are killed for your sake all day long!

אַל-דַּמִּי לָד!

Don't be silent!

פְּרַחֵי לְוִיִּם וְכַהֲנָיִם
תָּמוּ בְּהִסְתַּר פָּנִים
חֲדָשִׁים וְגַם יִשָּׁנִים

Young Levites and priests
Were exterminated, because (God's) face was hidden,
In new (tragedies), piled upon old ones.

צִיּוֹן שְׁעָרֵי תְּעוּדָה
רְעוּצִים בִּישִׁיבַת בְּדוּדָה
וְאֲנִי שְׂכוּלָה וְגַלְמוּדָה

The distinguished gates of *te'uda* (Torah)*
Have been crushed, to sit desolate,
And I am bereaved and gloomy.

אַל-דַּמִּי לָד!

Don't be silent!

***Distinguished gates of *te'uda* (Torah).**
Literally: "Zion, the gates of *te'uda*". This is alluding to Ps. 87:2, *The Lord loves the gates of Zion*, as read in b. Berakhot 8b: "God loves the gates that are distinguished (*metzuyyanim*, from the same root as *tziyon*, Zion) in (study) of *halakha*", that is, gates of the study-house. Since this piyyut is about the events of 1096, in Europe, and not 1099, in Jerusalem, the meaning here is presumably study house, and not Zion.

קָרַב קִץ הַפְּלֹאוֹת
הִצֵּל עַמְּךָ מִתְּלֹאוֹת
גְּאֻלָּנוּ יי צ"באוֹת

רַחֲמִים בְּאַבְרָתְךָ לְהַנְחוֹת
אֲמַצֵּם לְהַשִּׁיג רְוַחוֹת
אֲרַח חַיִּים שְׂבֹעַ שְׂמֵחוֹת

אַל-תְּדַמִּי לָדָּ!

נְשֹׂאֹן קָמִים הִדַּק
מְהֵרָ בְּנֵה עִיר הַצְּדָק
לְחַזֵּק אֶת בְּדָק

תְּמַלֵּא שְׁמֶךָ בְּעֶרְץ
נֹעֵם כְּסֹאֲךָ לְהַתְרִץ
עֲלִיוֹן עַל כָּל-הָאָרֶץ

אַל-תְּדַמִּי לָדָּ!

שְׁנַת חֲמָשִׁים וְשֵׁשׁ
מְחַצֵּי וּמְכַתֵּי אֲנוּשָׁה
יי לְעֲזָרְתִּי חוּשָׁה

חֲנוּן, זְקוּף מְטוּי קִרְנֵנוּ
כִּימוֹת עֲנִיתָנוּ שְׂמֵחָנוּ
הָאֵל יְשׁוּעָתָנוּ וְעֲזָרְתָנוּ

אַל-תְּדַמִּי לָדָּ!

Bring nigh the end-time, for miracles,
Rescue your people from hardships,
O our redeemer, Lord of Hosts!

Hover over them with your (protective) wing, to guide them,
Strengthen them, so that they will attain relief,
A path of life, satiated with joy.

Don't be silent!

Crush the noisy hordes of foes,
Speedily build the City of Righteousness,
And reinforce (the places where it has) structural damage.

Make your name full, with majesty,
And fix your sweet throne,*
To be supreme over the whole land.

Don't be silent!

In the year (48)56,
My blows and lashes were mortal —
O Lord, hasten to my help!

O merciful One, set up straight our fallen horn,
Give us joy corresponding to the days you have afflicted us,
O God, our rescue, our help!

Don't be silent!

***Make your name full ... and fix your sweet throne.** Until the progeny of Amalek is wiped out, God's name is partial (Yah) and his throne is partial (*kes*, rather than *kissé*). When Amalek — here understood as the Christian kingdoms — is wiped out, God's name and throne will be complete. (Pesikta Derav Kahana, *Zakhor*.)