

אמרו לאלהים

ובבִּין אִמְרוּ לְאֱלֹהִים מִה נִוְרָא מַעֲשֵׂיךָ.

אִמְרוּ לְאֱלֹהִים:
אֵל מֶלֶךְ בְּעוֹלָמוֹ,
מִחַיֵּשׁ פְּדוּת עַמּוֹ,
לְקַיֵּם דְּבַר נְאֻמוֹ,
בִּי סְלִיחָה עֲמוֹ,
הוֹדוּ לַיהוָה קְרָאוּ בְּשִׁמוֹ.

אִמְרוּ לְאֱלֹהִים:
בְּרוּךְ וּמְהַלֵּל בָּרַב גְּדֻלוֹ,
מִחַיֵּשׁ סְלִיחָה לְקַהְלוֹ,
לְהַרְאוֹת לְכָל גְּדֻלוֹ,
מִדַּד מִיָּם בְּשָׁעֵלוֹ,
שִׁירוֹ לוֹ זְמֵרוֹ לוֹ.

אִמְרוּ לְאֱלֹהִים:
גּוֹאֵל עִם קְדוּשׁוֹ,
בְּסְלִיחָה לְהַקְדִּישׁוֹ,
וּמְכוֹנֵן בֵּית מִקְדָּשׁוֹ,
לְזַרַע אַבְרָהָם קְדוּשׁוֹ,
הַתְּהַלְּלוּ בְּשֵׁם קְדָשׁוֹ.

final form), the general custom is to recite only the first ten and the final two stanzas.

U-V'KHEN. ובבִּין. The first line, following the introductory word *u-v'khen* ("and so"), is taken from Psalm 61:3: "Say to God: How awe-inspiring are Your works!" As we recite the phrase *imru leilohim* ("Say to God") throughout the poem, we might also have this phrase from psalms in mind.

THANK. הוֹדוּ. As noted above, this oft-quoted verse is from Solomon's prayer dedicating the Temple, found at 1 Chronicles 16:8.

SING. שִׁירוֹ. Part of the same prayer of Solomon quoted above, 1 Chronicles 16:9.

SANCTIFY . . . ESTABLISH. לְהַקְדִּישׁוֹ וּמְכוֹנֵן. The thought of the poet is that the forgiveness of sin will lead to messianic redemption and the re-establishment of the Temple.

EXULT. הַתְּהַלְּלוּ. The continuation of Solomon's prayer in 1 Chronicles 16:9.

IMRU LEILOHIM. There are several different *piyyutim* that all have a refrain of *imru leilohim*, "Say to God." This one is customarily recited in the Eastern European rite before Unetanah Tokef in Musaf for Yom Kippur. It is ascribed to Rabbi Meshullam ben Kalonymus (10th–11th centuries, Italy and Germany), one of the great pioneers of Ashkenazic *piyyut*.

The poem serves as an extended elaboration or midrash on King Solomon's prayer dedicating the First Temple (1 Chronicles 16:8–36). Each stanza opens with the words "Say to God," followed by four rhymed lines of three or four beats each. Each stanza then concludes with a quotation from Solomon's prayer, in sequence.

This tight construction, frequently including alliteration, creates an almost musical effect—which may be a source of its popularity—but often forces the ideas into a constricted pattern. Although the original poem formed a complete alphabetical acrostic (including doubling the letters that have a different written

IMRU LEILOHIM

And so, say to God:
How awe-inspiring are Your works!

Say to God:
God, sovereign in Your kingdom,
hasten the redemption of Your people,
fulfilling Your promise
that forgiveness is Yours.

Thank ADONAI, calling out God's name.

Say to God:
You are blessed and praised in Your greatness,
quick to forgive Your congregation,
show Your greatness to all,
as when You measured out the seas.

Sing unto God, raise up Your voices to God.

Say to God:
Redeemer of Your holy people,
sanctify them through forgiveness.
Establish the Holy Temple
for the the descendants of Abraham dedicated to You.
Exult the holy name of God.

אָמְרוּ לַאלֹהִים:
דְּגוּל מְשַׁבַּח בְּרִקְיעַ עֲזוֹ,
סוּלַח לְעַם זֹ בְּזוֹ,
בְּדָבַר עֲזוֹ וּמְעֲזוֹ,
לְכֵן עֲדַת מְעֲזוֹ,
דִּרְשׁוּ יְהוָה וְעֲזוֹ.

אָמְרוּ לַאלֹהִים:
הַבֵּל בְּמֵאֲמַר עֲשָׂה,
וְהוּא פָּעַל וְעֲשָׂה,
סוּלַח לְאוֹם עַמּוּסָה,
לְכֵן עִם בּוֹ חֶסֶה,
זְכְרוּ נִפְלְאוֹתָיו אֲשֶׁר עֲשָׂה.

אָמְרוּ לַאלֹהִים:
וּמְקִיָּם דְּבַר עֲבָדוֹ,
עַל אֶרֶץ וְשָׁמַיִם הוֹדוּ,
סוּלַח לְעַם מִיַּחַדוֹ,
אֲשֶׁר נִקְרְאוּ בְּדָבַר סוּדוֹ,
זִרְעֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל עֲבָדוֹ.

אָמְרוּ לַאלֹהִים:
זֶה רוֹקַע הָאָרֶץ,
הַיּוֹשֵׁב עַל חוּג הָאָרֶץ,
סוּלַח לְגוֹי אֶחָד בְּאֶרֶץ,
לְכֵן אָמְרוּ לְיוֹסֵד אֶרֶץ,
הוּא יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ בְּכֹל הָאָרֶץ.

אָמְרוּ לַאלֹהִים:
חַי בְּמַעֲוֹנָתוֹ,
חַנּוּן וְחַוּנָּן עֲדָתוֹ,
יָשׁוּב בְּרַחֲמִים לְבֵיתוֹ,
לְכֵן לְבָאֵי בְּבְרִיתוֹ,
זְכְרוּ לְעוֹלָם בְּרִיתוֹ.

YOUR MIGHTY WORD בְּדָבַר
16:19. Jeremiah 16:19 refers to
God as *uzi u-ma-uzi*, "my
strength and my strong-
hold." The poet considers
that stronghold to be the
Torah given by God.

SEEK דִּרְשׁוּ 1 Chronicles
16:11.

REMEMBER זְכְרוּ 1 Chroni-
cles 16:12.

YOUR SERVANT עֲבָדוֹ In
Isaiah 44:26, God promises
the fulfillment of the prom-
ise to God's servants that
Zion will be restored.

THE DESCENDANTS זִרְעֵי
1 Chronicles 16:13.

YOU הוּא 1 Chronicles 16:14.

YOUR HOME לְבֵיתוֹ. The
Jerusalem on earth and the
Jerusalem in heaven are
exactly parallel. The Temple
on earth is the mirror and
the place of God's dwelling.

REMEMBER זְכְרוּ 1 Chroni-
cles 16:15.

Say to God:
Singular One, praised in Your mighty heavens,
who forgives this people on this day,
as You promised by Your mighty word.
So, God's mighty people,
seek ADONAI and offer up praise.

Say to God:
You, who created everything through Your word,
fashioned it and made it,
forgive this impoverished nation.
And you, whose faith is in God,
remember the wonders that God has wrought.

Say to God:
You, who fulfill the promise of Your servant, the prophet,
and whose glory is in the heavens and on earth—
forgive the people devoted to You,
called in Your Holy Writ
“the descendants of Israel, God's servant.”

Say to God:
You, who formed the earth
and dwell beyond the horizons of earth,
forgive this unique people on earth.
So say to God, who established the earth,
You are ADONAI, our God, the Divinity of all the earth.

Say to God:
You, who dwell in the secret places of heaven,
Compassionate One, full of compassion for Your flock—
in Your mercy, return to Your home.
And you, who have joined God's covenant:
Remember always God's covenant.

אָמְרוּ לְאֱלֹהִים:
 טִפִּי נִחַלְתּוּ,
 טְלָאִי יִרְשָׁתוּ,
 יְקִיִּם עָלֵינוּ אִמְרָתוּ,
 בְּחֻקֵּי בְּתוּרָתוּ,
 אֲשֶׁר בְּרַת אֶת אֲבֹרָהֶם וּשְׁבוּעָתוּ.

אָמְרוּ לְאֱלֹהִים:
 יוֹעֵץ מִיִּשְׁרָיִם לְחֻק,
 יִרְאֵיו לְחַיִּים לְחֻק,
 סוֹלַח חֲטָא הַנְּחוּק,
 בְּנִשְׁמַע לְרוּעָה מֵרְחוּק,
 וַיַּעֲמִידָהּ לִיעֲקֹב לְחֻק.

אָמְרוּ לְאֱלֹהִים:
 תַּמִּיִּם אֵל יִשְׁעֵנוּ,
 מְצָרָה תוֹשִׁיעֵנוּ,
 וּמְכַפֵּר חַטָּאת פִּשְׁעֵנוּ,
 וּמְאֲזִין שִׁיחַ שׁוֹעֵנוּ,
 וְאָמְרוּ הוֹשִׁיעֵנוּ אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׁעֵנוּ.

אָמְרוּ לְאֱלֹהִים:
 תְּקִיף אֱלֹהֵי עוֹלָם,
 דְּבָרוֹ נֹצֵב לְעוֹלָם,
 וְהוּא מְפַל נְעֻלָּם,
 וְאִנְחָנוּ מֵהַלְלִים שָׁמוּ לְעוֹלָם,
 בְּרוּךְ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מִן הָעוֹלָם וְעַד הָעוֹלָם.

THE COVENANT אֲשֶׁר בְּרַת. 1 Chronicles 16:16. The pledge is that Israel will be the eternal people. Thus, the very young of Israel can be assured that the Jewish people will not die out.

MOSES לְרוּעָה. The Hebrew simply says “shepherd” without providing his name. Moses was in fact a shepherd and metaphorically can be said to have shepherded his people; he is told that God will forgive sins on Yom Kippur. Some take the reference as pointing to Abraham, who is promised that God will redeem Israel.

INSCRIBED וַיַּעֲמִידָהּ. 1 Chronicles 16:17. More literally “established,” but here translated as “inscribed” in order to capture the word repetition in Hebrew.

FAITHFUL תַּמִּיִּם. The word *tamim* is used in the Bible to describe human behavior, those who are honest, true, whole. Here the poet uses this ideal human characteristic to describe God.

AND SO WE SAY וְאָמְרוּ. 1 Chronicles 16:35.

RESOLUTE תְּקִיף. As noted above, almost all congregations skip the intervening stanzas between yod and tav.

PRaised בְּרוּךְ. 1 Chronicles 16:36.

ETERNALLY מִן הָעוֹלָם וְעַד הָעוֹלָם. There can be both a spatial and temporal meaning to the Hebrew word *olam*. Thus the phrase might also mean: Praise God in heaven and on earth.

Say to God:
Children of God's estate,
young sheep of God's inheritance,
may God fulfill for you the promise
recorded in the Torah,
contracted and pledged to Abraham and his descendants.

Say to God:
You, whose good counsel is inscribed as law,
inscribe the righteous for life.
Forgive the violations inscribed by sin,
as Moses the shepherd was told in ancient times,
and was inscribed for Jacob as an eternal covenant.

Say to God:
Our God of salvation, You are faithful.
You shall save us from suffering
and forgive the sins we have committed.
You hear our prayers,
and so we say: Save us, God of our salvation.

Say to God:
The Eternal God is resolute;
God's word is established forever.
Though God is hidden from us all
we praise God's name to the end of time:
Praised be the name of the God of Israel ever and ever.