

דרור יקרא - Deror Yik'ra

Dunash ben Labrat

About the Piyut

Deror Yikra is one of the oldest and most popular Shabbat songs, known and sung throughout Jewish Diaspora and history. The many tunes to this Piyut vary from ancient original compositions through borrowed and adapted foreign ones to modern day Israeli creations. It was written by Dunash ben Labrat, the 10th century poet and philologist, who is considered the pioneer of the measured meter in Hebrew poetry and the harbinger of the golden age of Spain. His name appears in the first, second, and fifth stanzas as an acrostic and is playfully concealed in the other two.

The Piyut revolves around the idea of the spiritual haven provided for the Jewish people on Shabbat. This personal, microcosmic salvation interweaves with the communal one of the Jewish people and in turn brings macrocosmic redemption to the whole world and elevates it to a higher spiritual level.

Hebrew Text

Deror yik'ra l'ven u'l'vat / v'yintzarchem k'mo vavat	וִינְצַרְכֶּם כְּמוֹ בַּבַּת	דְּרוֹר יִקְרָא לְבֵן וּלְבַת
Naim shimchem v'lo yushbat / sh'vu nuchu b'yom Shabbat	שְׁבוּ נוּחוּ בְיוֹם שַׁבָּת	נָעִים שְׁמַכֶּם וְלֹא יִשְׁבַּת
D'rosh navi v'ulami / v'ot yesha aseh imi	וְאוֹת יֵשַׁע עֲשֵׂה עִמִּי	דְּרֹשׁ נָוִי וְאוֹלָמִי
N'ta sorek b'toch karmi / sh'eh shav'at b'nei ami	שְׁעָה שְׁוַעַת בְּנֵי עַמִּי	נָטַע שׁוֹרֵק בְּתוֹךְ כַּרְמִי
D'roch bavel b'toch batz'ra / v'gam edom asher ga'v'ra	וְגַם אֶדוֹם אֲשֶׁר גָּבְרָה	דְּרוֹךְ בָּבֶל בְּתוֹךְ בָּצְרָה
N'totz tzarai b'af ev'rah / sh'ma koli b'yom ekra	שְׁמַע קוֹלִי בְיוֹם אֶקְרָא	נִתְּץ צָרִי בְּאֵף עֲבָרָה
Elohim ten ba-midbar har / hadas shita b'rosh tidhar	הִדָּס שְׁטָה בְּרוֹשׁ תִּדְהָר	אֱלֹהִים תֵּן בַּמִּדְבָּר הָרַח
V-la-maz'hir v-la-niz'har / sh'lomim ten k'mei nahar	שְׁלוֹמִים תֵּן כְּמֵי נָהָר	וְלַמְזָהִיר וְלַנִּזְהָר
Ha-doch kamai El kana / b-mog levav u-vi-m'gina	בְּמוֹג לֵבָב וּבִמְגִנָּה	הִדּוֹךְ קָמִי אֵל קָנָא
V-narchiv peh u-n'mal'ah / l'shoneinu l'cha rina	לְשׁוֹנֵנוּ לְךָ רִנָּה	וְנִרְחִיב פֶּה וְנִמְלֶאנָה
D'eh choch'ma l'nafsh'cha / v'hi cheter l'roshcha	וְהִיא כֶּתֶר לְרֹאשְׁךָ	דְּעָה חֲכָמָה לְנַפְשְׁךָ
N'tzor mitz'vat kod'sh'cha / sh'mor shabbat kod'shecha	שְׁמֹר שַׁבָּת קֹדֶשְׁךָ	נִצֹּר מִצְוַת קֹדֶשְׁךָ

English Translation

Freedom shall He proclaim for his sons and daughters	and will keep you as the apple of his eye
Pleasant is your name and will not cease to be	repose and rest on the Sabbath day
Seek my home and my temple	and give me the sign of deliverance
Plant a choice vine in my vineyard	turn to the need of my people
Tread the wine-press in Botzra	and also Babylon who overpowered
Crush my enemies in anger and fury	hear my voice on the day I call out
Lord, let the desert bloom like a mountain	myrtle, acacia, cypress, and elm
To those who counsel and to those who are cautious	give peace as flowing as a river's waters
Conquer those who rise against me, Oh zealous God	fill their hearts with fear and despair
Then we shall open our mouths	and fill our tongues with Your joyful song
Know wisdom for your soul	and it shall be a crown upon your head
Keep the commandment of your Holy One	observe the Sabbath

Recording by the Piyut North America ensemble