

אל אליהו - El Eliyahu

R. Abraham Ibn Ezra

About the Piyut

El Eliyahu is a Piyut for Saturday night (Motzei Shabbat) that is sung by most Sephardic communities. The prophet Elijah, as a symbol of redemption, is a prominent figure in the Saturday night liturgy for bidding farewell to Shabbat. Some commentators explain that Elijah does not appear on the eve of the Shabbat or holidays, so as not to bother the people who are busy preparing for these special days, and it is therefore appropriate to ask for his arrival as we emerge from our celebrations. Others explain that Elijah is summoned on Saturday evening to help ease the transition from Shabbat to the mundane week--to deliver us from the daily struggle for food and survival.

The author of the poem is most likely R. Abraham Ibn Ezra, hinting at his identity in the verse "Please God, the God of Abraham, let me find...". This verse quotes the words of Abraham's servant in Genesis 24:12, who asks God to help him find a bride for Isaac. Here is where we see a transition from a prayer for 'the other' to a personal prayer--inviting us to create our own personal and direct channel of communication with God.

Hebrew Text

*El Eliyahu, El Eliyahu, Biz'chut Eliyahu ha-navi
haveh na*

אל אליהו אל אליהו בְּזָכוֹת אֱלִיהוּ הַנָּבִיא הֵבֵא נָא

Bo yirtom richbo, Na bashevi ki bo

בּוֹ יִרְתֹּם רִכְבּוֹ נָע בְּשֶׁבִי כִּי בּוֹ

Lo shachav libo, Gam lo ra'ah sheinah

לֹא שָׁכַב לְבוֹ גַּם לֹא רָאָה שְׁנֵינָה

Rav machli bir'ot, Kach'shi u'msanot

רַב מַחְלִי בְּרֵאוֹת כַּחֲשִׁי וּמִשְׁנֹאוֹת

Yafot u'vriot, Bassar vatirena

יָפוֹת וּבְרִיאוֹת בָּשָׂר וְתַרְעִינָה

Hashkeh tzur mei rosh, Tzar einav yiltosh

הַשְׁקֵה צוּר מִי רֹאשׁ צָר עֵינָיו יִלְטֹשׁ

Yom einai likdosh, Yisrael tish'ena

יוֹם עֵינַי לְקַדּוֹשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל תִּשְׁעִינָה

Matai tar'eh ot, Yesha el kor'ot

מָתַי תִּרְאֶה אוֹת יֵשַׁע אֶל קוֹרְאוֹת

Lacha u'lecha nos'ot, Kolan vatiokena

לָךְ וּלְךָ נוֹשְׂאוֹת קוֹלָן וְתִבְכְּנָה

Hamalach hago'el, Lifnei dal sho'el

מַלְאַךְ הַגּוֹאֵל לִפְנֵי דָל שׁוֹאֵל

Ana ha-El El, Avraham hakreh na

אֲנִי הָאֵל אֵל אַבְרָהָם הַקָּרֵה נָא

English Translation

He will lead his chariot
His heart did not rest

restless in captivity
nor envision sleep

My illness grows as I see
Are beautiful fat-fleshed

my leanness while my enemies
and graze

Our Rock, give them poisonous water
My eyes to the Holy One

while the enemy shall glare
of Israel will be raised

When will You give a sign
To You, O to You they raise

of redemption to those who call out
their voices and weep

Angel of Deliverance
O Lord, God of

come before this poor seeker
Abraham call him forth

Recording from the Iraqi tradition by the Piyut North America ensemble