

Lecha Eli Teshukati - לך אלי תשוקתי

R. Avraham Ibn Ezra

About the Piyut

This deeply personal Piyut, authored by the great Sephardic Rabbi Avraham Ibn Ezra, opens the Yom Kippur prayers among most Sephardic communities. Although some scholars throughout the ages have claimed that this text may have been written by Rabbi Yehudi Ha-Levi, most agree that it was crafted by the pen of Rabbi Ibn Ezra. Throughout the text, the author describes his innermost feelings, his pining for the Lord and for His closeness. He thanks God for all he has received — beginning with his daily life and ending with his death. The author requests forgiveness from his God for all aberrations and sins he has committed.

Hebrew Text

Lecha Eli teshukati / b'cha cheshki v'-ahavati	בְּךָ חֶשְׁקִי וְאַהֲבָתִי	לְרֶ אֵלִי תְּשׁוּקָתִי
L'cha libi v'-chilyotai / l'cha ruchi v'-nishmati	לְבֶּ רוּחִי וְנִשְׁמָתִי	לְדֶ לִבָּי וְכִלְיוֹתַי
L'cha yadai l'cha raglai / u-mimcha hi t'chunati	וּמִמָּךְ הִיא תְּכוּנָתִי	לְבָ יָדַי לְבָ רַגְלַי
L'cha atzmi l'cha dami / v'-uri im g'viyati	וְעוֹרִי עִם גְנַיָּתִי	לְרֶ עַצְמִי לְרֶ דָמִי
L'cha eynai v'-raiyonai / v'-tzurati v'-tavniti	וְצוּרָתִי וְתַבְנִיתִי	לְדֶ עֵינַי וְרַעְיוֹנַי
L'cha ruchi l'cha kochi u-mivtachi v'-tikvati	וּמִבְטַחִי וְתִקְּוָתִי	לְבָ רוּחִי לְבָ כֹחִי
L'cha libi v'-dam chelbi / k'-seh akriv v'-olati	כְּשֶׂה אַקְרִיב וְעוֹלֶתִי	לְבָ לִבִּי וְדַם חֶלְבִּי
L'cha yachid b'li sheyni l'cha toda y'chidati	לְבָ תוֹדֶה יְחִידָתִי	לְבֶ יָחִיד בְּלִי שֵׁנִי
L'cha malchut l'cha geut / l'cha te'ot t'hilati	לְבָ תֵאוֹת תְּהַלֶּתִי	לְדָ מַלְכוּת לְדָ גֵאוּת
L'cha ezra b'et tzara heyeh ezri b'tzarati	הֱיֵה עֶזִרִי רְּ צְרָתִי	לְרֶ עֶזְרָה בְּעֵת צְרָה
L'cha ochil b'et achil k'-yoleda b'-anchati	כְּיוֹלֵדָה בְּאַנְחָתִי	לְרֶ אוֹחִיל בְּעֵת אֲחִיל
L'cha sivri r'fa shivri / v'-et tziri u-makati	וְאֶת צִירִי וּמַכָּתִי	לְדֶ שִּׂבְרִי רְפָא שִׁבְרִי
L'cha ehemeh v'-lo edneh adey ta'ir afelati	עֲדֵי תָּאִיר אֲפֵלָתִי	לְבָּ אֶהֱמֶה וְלֹא אֶדְמֶה
L'cha netzach b'cha evtach v'-ata hu eyaluti	וְאַתָּה הוּא אֱיָלוּתִי	לְרָ נֶצַח בְּרָ אֶבְטַח
L'cha ez'ak b'cha edbak adey shuvi l'-admati	עֲדֵי שׁוּבִי לְאַדְמָתִי	לְרָ אֶזְעַק בְּרָ אֶדְבַּק
L'cha ani b'odi chai / v'-af ki achrei moti	וְאַף כִּי אַחֲרֵי מוֹתִי	לְרֶ אֲנִי בְּעוֹדִי חַי
L'cha odeh v'-etvadeh aley chet'i v'-rishati	עֲלֵי חֶטְאִי וְרִשְּׁעָתִי	לְבָ אוֹדֶה וְאֶתְוַדֶּה
L'cha yish'i s'lach rish'i v'-et pish'i v'-ashmati	וְאֶת פָּשְׁעִי וְאַשְׁמֶתִי	לְבֶ יִשְׁעִי סְלַח רִשְׁעִי

L'cha ikaf v'-efros kaf sh'ma na et t'chinati	שְׁמַע נָא אֶת תְּחָנָתִי	לְרֶ אִכַּף וְאֶפְרֹשׁ כַּף
L'cha evkeh b'-lev nidkeh ba-rov sichi v'-tugati	בָּרֹב שִׂיחִי וְתוּגָתִי	לְרֶ אֶבְכֶּה בְּלֵב נִדְכֶּה
L'cha chesed l'cha chemla / chamol al kol t'laotai	חֲמֹל עַל כָּל תְּלָאוֹתִי	לְבָ חֶסֶד לְבָ חֶמְלָה
V'-gadol min'so chet'i v'-gadla yad meshuvati	וְגָדְלָה יָד מְשׁוּבָתִי	וְגָדוֹל מִנְּשׂוֹא חֶטְאִי
V'-lachen gadlu tzirai / v'-katzarti z'riyati	וְקָצַרְתִי זְרִיעָתִי	וְלָכֵן גָּדְלוּ צִירַי
V'-oy alai v'-ha li im / t'dineyni k'-rish'ati	תְּדִינֵנָי כְּרָשְׁעָתִי	וְאוֹי עָלַי וְהָהּ לִי אִם
V'-yitzri tzoreri tamid k'mo satan l'umati	כְּמוֹ שָּׂטָן לְעֻמָתִי	וְיִצְרִי צוֹרְרִי תָמִיד
Yatzani u-fitani / b'-moatzot l'-ra'ati	בְּמוֹעֵצוֹת לְרָעָתִי	יְעָצַנִי וּפִתְּנִי
V'-alav lo aley bilto / chamasi im t'lunati	חֲמָסִי עִם תְלוּנָתִי	וְעָלֶיו לֹא עֲלֵי בִּלְתּוֹ
V'-et ya'alu aley libi avonotai b'-mitati	עֲוֹנוֹתַי בְּמִטֶּתִי	וְעֵת יַעֲלוּ עֲלֵי לִבִּי
Me'od efchad v'-gam er'ad me'od yigdal mehumati	מְאֹד יִגְדַּל מְהוּמָתִי	מְאֹד אֶפְחַד וְגַם אֶרְעַד
V'-ergaz et ehi zocher l'fanecha me'uvati	לְפָנֶירָ מְעֻוָתִי	וְאֶרְגַּז עֵת אֱהִי זוֹכֵר
V'-e'emod negd'cha erom u-ma tihyeh t'shuvati	וּמַה תִּהְיֶה תְשׁוּבָּתִי	וְאֶעֱמֹד נֶגְדְּךָ עֵרוֹם
B'-yom bi ya'aneh kachashi/ v'ochal mi-pri dati	וְאֹכַל מִפְּרִי דָתִי	בְּיוֹם בִּי יַעֲנֶה כַּחְשִׁי
V'-yavou y'mey shalom v'-tikrav et p'kudati	וְתִקְרַב עֵת פְּקֻדָתִי	וְיָבוֹאוּ יְמֵי שְׁלוּם
V'-shimach et sh'ma'atihu me'od zati v'-yireti	מְאֹד ַזְעְתִּי וְיָרֵאתִי	וְשִׁמְעָךְ עַת שְׁמַעְתִּיהוּ
U-mi ya'amod l'fanecha u-mo yihyeh t'murati	וּמִי יִהְיֶה תְמוּרָתִי	וִמִי יַעֲמד לְפָנֶיךָ
V'-ech cheshbon l'cha eten v'-ech etzdak b'-ta'anati	וְאֵיךְ אֶצְדַּק בְּטַעֲנָתִי	וְאֵיךְ חֶשְׁבּוֹו לְרָ אֶתֵו
V'-ashamti v'-aravti u-vagadti u-vaziti	וּבָגַדְתִּי וּבָזיתִי	וְאָשַׁמְתִּי וְאָרַבְתִי
V'-gazalti v'-ganavti hare'oti v'-hirshati	רָרֵעוֹתִי וְהִרְשַּעְתִּי	וְגָזלְתִּי וְגָנַבְתִּי
V'-gam zad'ti v'-chamasti v'-chatati v'-hech'teti	וְחָטָאתִי וְהֶחְטֵאתִי	וְגַם זַדְתִּי וְחָמַסְתִּי
V'-ta'iti v'-ya'atzti v'-chizavti v'-chafarti	וְכַזַּבְתִּי וְכָפַרְתִּי	וְטָעִיתִי וְיָעַצְתִּי
V'-lotzatzti v'-gam latzti / u-marad'ti u-mariti	וּמָרַדְתִּי וּמָרִיתִי	וְלוֹצַצְתִּי וְגַם לַצְתִי
V'-niatzti v'-niafti v'-sararti v'-srachti	וְסָרַרְתִּי וְסָרַחְתִּי	וְנָאַצְתִּי וְנָאַבְּתִּי
V'-aviti v'-he'eviti u-fashati u-fagamti	וּבָשַעְתִּי וּבָגַמְתִּי	וַעָוִיתִי וְהֶעֱוִיתִי
V'-tzararti v'-tziarti / v'-kilalti v'-kilkalti	וְקַלַּלְתִּי וְקַלְקַלְתִּי	וְצָרַרְתִּי וְצָעַרְתִּי
V'-rashati v'-shichat'ti v'-tiavti v'-taiti	וְתָעַבְתִּי וְתָעִיתִי	וְרָשַׁעְתִּי וְשַׂחַתְתִּי
V'-sarti mi-darchecha / v'-chisatni chlimati	וְכִפַּתְנִי כְלִמָּתִי	וְסַרְתִּי מִדְּרָכֶיךְ
V'-higdalti asot resha v'-hechezakti b'-rishati	וָהֶתֱזקְתִּי בְּרִשְׁעָתִי	וְהָגְדַּלְתִּי עֲשׁוֹת רֶשַּׁע
V'-chichashti u-ma'alti v'-ashakti v'-ratzoti	וְעֻשַּׁקְתִּי וְרַצּוֹתִי	וְכָחַשְׁתִי וּמָעַלְתִּי
V'-shatati b'-reshitit / v'-rashati b'achariti	וְרָשַּׁעְתִּי בְּאַחֲרִיתִי	וְחֶטֶאתִי בְּרֵאשִׁיתִי

V'-ashamti b'-yalduti u-vagadti b'-ziknati	וּבָגַדְתִּי בְּזקנָתִי	וְאָשַׁמְתִּי בְּיַלְדוּתִי
U-vachalti b'-toratcha u-vacharti b'-torati	וּבָּחַרְתִּי בְּתוֹרָתִי	וּבָּחַלְתִּי בְּתוֹרַתְרֶ
V'-azavti r'tzoncha v'-halachti b'-ta'avati	וְהָלַכְתִי בְּתַאֲוָתִי	ַןעָזבְתִּי רְצוֹנְךָ
V-hishlamti retzon yitzri / v'-lo banti l'achariti	וְלֹא בַּנְתִּי לְאַחֲרִיתִי	וְהָשְׁלַמְתִּי רְצוֹן יִצְרִי
V'-hirbeti l'hosif chet aley rishi v'-chovati	עֲלֵי רִשְׁעִי וְחוֹבָתִי	וְהָרְבֵּיתִי לְהוֹסִיף חֵטְא
V'-lachen kista fanai k'limati v'-gam boshti	כְּלִמֶּתִי וְגַם בּוֹשְׁתִּי	וְלָכֵן כִּסְתָה פָנַי
V'-eyn li biltecha manos / u-mimcha hi slichati	וּמִמֶּךְ הִיא סְלִיחָתִי	וְאֵין לִי בִּלְתְּךָ מָנוֹס
U-mochel biltecha ayin / u-me'itcha mechilati	וּמֵאִתָּךְ מְחִילָתִי	וּמוֹחֵל בִּלְתְּךָ אַיִן
V'-im tavi b'-mishpat d'cha ma hi g'vurati	יָדְ מַה הִיא גְבוּרָתִי	וְאָם תָּבִיא בְּמִשְׁפָּט
U-ma ani u-ma chayai / u-ma kochi v'-otzmati	וּמַה כֹּחִי וְעָצְמָתִי	וּמָה אֲנִי וּמַה חַיָּי
K'-kash nidaf me'od nehedaf v'-ech tizkor m'shugati	וְאֵיךְ תִּזְכֹּר מְשׁוּגָתִי	רְּקַשׁ נִדָּף מְאֹד נֶהְדָּף
V'-ne'elamti v'-nichlamti v'-chistani chlimati	וְכִפַּתְנִי כְלִמָּתִי	וְנֶאֱלַמְתִּי וְנִכְלַמְתִּי
R'tzoncha eshala tamid l'malot et she'elati	לְמַלְאוֹת אֶת שְׁאֵלֶתִי	רְצוֹנָךְ אֶשְׁאֲלָה תָּמִיד
V'-herev kab'sini me-avonotai v'-chatati	מֶעֲוֹנוֹתַי וְחַטָּאתִי	וְהֶרֶב כַּבְּּסֵנִי
V'-habet rov t'laotai v'-daluti b'-galoti	וְדַלוּתִי בְּגָלוֹתִי	וְהַבֵּט רֹב תְלָאוֹתַי
V'-al na ta'alem oznecha l'-ravchati l'-shavati	לְרַוְחָתִי לְשַׁוְעָתִי	וְאַל נָא תַּעְלֵם אָזְנָךְ
Arov avdach l'-tova gam emor na dai l'-tzarati	אֱמר נָא דַי לְצָרָתִי	עֲרֹב עַבְדָּךְ לְטוֹבָה גַּם
V'-hareni t'shuatach b'-terem yom t'-mutati	בְּטֶרֶם יוֹם תְּמוּתָתִי	ְוְהַרְאֵנִי תְשׁוּעָתָדְ
V'-yom nafli b'-pach mok'shai / S'moch na et n'filati	סְמֹךְ נָא אֶת נְפִילָתִי	וְיוֹם נַפְלִי בְּפַח מוֹקְשַׁי
V'-la'ana sav'a nafshi adey katzti b'-chayati	עֲדִי קַצְתִּי בְּחַיָּתִי	וְלַעֲנָה שָׂבְעָה נַפְשִׁי
Aseh imi l'tova ot / v'-kuma na l'-ezrati	וְקוּמָה נָּא לְעֶזרָתִי	עֲשֵׂה עִמִּי לְטוֹבָה אוֹת
Hachi ata m'nat chelki v'-rinati v'-tovati	וְרְנָּתִי וְטוֹבָתִי	הֲכִי אַתָּה מְנַת חֶלְקִי
V'-gorali u-m'haleli v'-chol gili v'-simchati	וְכָל גִּילִי וְשִׂמְחָתִי	וְגוֹרָלִי וּמַהְלָלִי
S'son libi v'-or eynai / u-mauzi v'-chemdati	וּמָעֻזי וְחֶמְדָתִי	שְשׁוֹן לָבִּי וְאוֹר עֵינַי
U-margoi v'-sha'ashui m'-nuchati v'-shalvati	מְנוּחָתִי וְשַׁלְוָתִי	וּמַרְגּוֹעֵי וְשַׁעֲשׁוּעֵי
Havineini avodatcha / v'-l'cha tihyeh avodati	וְלֶךְ תִּהְיֶה עֲבוֹדָתִי	ָהָבִינֵנִי עֲבוֹדָתְרֶ
Hashiveini v'-ashuva v'-tirtzeh et t'shuvati	וְתַרְצֶה אֶת תְשׁוּבָּתִי	ָהֲשִׁיבֵנִי וְאָשׁוּבָה
V'-horeini d'rachecha v'-yasher et n'tivati	וְיַשֵּׁר אֶת נְתִיבָּתִי	וְהוֹבִנִי דְרָכֶיבְ
V'-tishma et t'filati v'-ta'aneh et atirati	וְתַעֲנֶה אֶת עֲתִירָתִי	וְתִשְׁמַע אֶת תְּפִּלֶּתִי
B'-chol libi d'rashticha / aneini Yah d'rishati	עַננִי יָה דְּרִישָּׁתִי	בְּכָל לִבִּי דְּרַשְׁתִּיךָ
Anasecha et d'ma'i lach / m'cheh chet'i b'-dim'ati	מְחֵה חֶטְאִי בְּדִמְעָתִי	אֲנַפֵּךָ אֶת דְּמָעַי לָךְ

V'-nafshi amra chelki / Adonai hi v'-nachalati	יְיָ הִיא וְנַחֲלֶתִי	וְנַפְּשִׁי אָמְרָה חֶלְקַי
Esof na et avonotai / b'-chasdach yom asifati	בְּחַסְדָּךְ יוֹם אֲסִיפָתִי	אֶסֹף נָא אֶת עֲוֹנוֹתַי
V'-yom lechti l'fanecha r'tzeh na et halichati	רְצֵה נָא אֶת הֲלִיכָתִי	וְיוֹם לֶכְתִּי לְפָנֶיךָ
V'-im osi r'tzonach t'na s'char p'ulati	תְּנָה שְׂכַר פְּעֻלָּתִי	וְעִם עוֹשֵׂי רְצוֹנֶרְ
V'-tishlach malachey ha-chen v'-yatzu na l'umati	וְיֵצְאוּ נָא לְעֻמָּתִי	וְתִשְׁלַח מַלְאֲכֵי הַחֵן
V'-shalom boacha yomru b'-kol echad b'viyati	בְּקוֹל אֶחָד בְּבִיאָתִי	וְשֶׁלוֹם בּוֹאֲבֶ יֹאמְרוּ
Yaviuni l'-gan edn'cha v'-sham tihyeh y'shivati	וְשָׁם תִּהְיֶה יְשִׁיבָתִי	ָיְבִיאוּנִי לְגַן עֶדְנָךְ
V'-etaden b'-orecha v'-sim kavod m'nuchati	וְשִׂים כָּבוֹד מְנוּחָתִי	ָוְאֶתְעַדַּן בְּאוֹרֶבָ
V'-or ganuz l'fanecha y'hi sitri v'-sukati	יְהִי סִתְרִי וְסֻכָּתִי	ָוְאוֹר גָנוּז לְפָנֶיךָ
V'-tachat tzel k'nafecha / t'na na et m'chitzati	תְּנָהָ נָא אֶת מְחִצְתִי	וְתַחַת צֵל כְּנָפֶּיךְ

English Translation

O			
My longing, My God, is for You	I was advised and tempted by it	I have loathed Your teachings	Return me and I will return
My desire and love is for You	With devices toward my evil ways	And have chosen my own teachings	And You will desire my repentance
My heart and innards are Yours	To Him, and none but Him	I have abandoned Your will	Show me Your ways
My soul and breath are Yours	My anger and complaints	And I have followed my desire	And straighten my path
My arms and legs are Yours	And when into my heart ascend	I have fulfilled my inclination's will	And You will hear my prayer
My character is from You	My sins, as I lie in bed	And I have not considered my end	And You will answer my supplication
My bones and blood are Yours	I am afraid, I tremble too	I have added many sins	I have sought You wholeheartedly
My skin and my body	My confusion increases	To my wickedness and my guilt	Answer me, God, with what I seek
My eyes and thoughts are Yours	I am agitated when I mention	Therefore my face is covered	I pour out my tears to You
My shape and my form	My sins before You	By my shame and my embarrassment	Wipe away my sins as I cry
My spirit and strength are Yours	I stand naked before You	I have no refuge but You	My soul says, "My portion
My trust and my hope is You	What will my answer be	My forgiveness comes from You	God is my inheritance"

My heart, blood, and fat are Yours	On the day my deceptions testify against me	There is no pardoner but You	Please gather up my sins
Like the sheep I sacrifice, my offering	I will eat the fruit of my actions	My pardon comes from You	In Your kindness on the day I am gathered up
To You, the One with no second	The days of payment will come	If you bring Your servant to judgement	And the day I walk before You
My only soul will acknowledge You	The time of punishment draws near	What is my might worth	Please accept my walking
Yours is kingship, majesty Yours	When I hear your tidings	What am I, what is my life	And with those who do Your will
My praise befits You	I quake and fear very much	What is my strength and my power	Place the reward for my actions
Help in troubled times comes from You	Who can stand before You	Like blowing chaff driven away	And send the angels of favor
Be my help in the time of my trouble	And who can be my exchange	How will You remember my mistakes	And let them go out to me
My hope when I tremble is to You	How can I give an account to You	I have become mute and ashamed	And they will say, "Come in peace"
When I sigh like a woman giving birth	How can I be righteous in my claim	And my shame has covered me	With one voice when I arrive
I hope to You, heal my fracture	I am ashamed and I have ambushed	I will always ask for Your favor	Let them bring me to Your Garden of Eden
My pain and my wounds	I have betrayed and I have scorned	To grant my requests:	And let my dwelling be there
I long, without quieting, for You	I have stolen and I have robbed	And wash me thoroughly	And I will enjoy Your light
Until You illuminate my darkness	I have become evil and wicked	from my iniquities and my sins	And place honor in my resting place
Eternity is Yours, I trust in You	I have also been rebellious and corrupt	See my great distress	The light hidden before You
My strength is You	I have sinned and caused others to sin	And my helplessness in my exile	Will be my protection and my shelter
I call to You, I cling to You	I have strayed and I have advised wrongly	Please do not hide Your ear	And under the shade of Your wings
Until I return to my land	I have deceived and I have denied	From my sighing and crying out	Please give me my place
While I still live I am Yours	I have mocked and I have scorned	Your servant is also an advocate for good	
And even after my death	I have rebelled and I have defied	Please say, "Enough" to my troubles	

I admit and confess before You	I have spurned and I have committed adultery	Show me your salvation
For my sins and my wickedness	I have been stubborn and I have exceeded limits	Before the day I die
My salvation is Yours, forgive my wickedness	I have distorted and caused distortion	And the day I fall into my enemies' trap
My crimes and my guilt	I have sinned and I have become blemished	Support me in my falling
I bow and spread my hands to You	I have been hostile and I have caused pain	My soul is sated with wormwood
Please hear my supplication	I have cursed and I have gone wrong	Making me weary of my life
I cry with a downtrodden heart to You	I have been evil and I have been corrupt	Display for me a sign for good
With my many complaints and my grief	I have been abominable and made mistakes	And rise to my aid
Kindness is Yours, mercy Yours	And I have left your path	For You are my portion
Have mercy on all my hardship	And my shame has covered me	My joyful cry and my good
My sin is too great to bear	I have increasingly done evil	My fate and my praise
My lapses too large	And continued in my evilness	All my joy and happiness
Therefore my pains are great	And I have lied and I have been treacherous	My heart's exultation, the light of my eyes
My planting falls short	I have extorted and I have oppressed	My strength and my desire
And alas! woe is me	I sinned at my beginning	My rest and my delight
If You judge me according to my wickedness	And I was evil at my end	My quietness and my serenity
My inclination is my constant enemy	I was guilty in my youth	Teach me to understand Your service
Like an adversary against me	And I rebelled in my old age	My service will be to You

Translation by Abigail Denemark