

שושנת יעקב - Shoshanat Ya'akov

Unknown

About the Piyut

Shoshanat Yaakov is an old and anonymously composed Piyut that is central the holiday of Purim in the Ashkenazi tradition. This Piyut is sung in conjunction with the reading of *Megillat Esther* (the scroll of Esther), both on the eve and during the day of Purim. On the eve of Purim, only the last refrain is sung, opening with the words, *Shoshanat Yaakov* or the rose of Jacob. The text of the Piyut is essentially a poetic expansion of the blessing that is said after the recitation of *Megillat Esther*.

The meter and style of the Piyut hint that it was likely composed no later than the 5th century C.E. This Piyut is also an acrostic of the Hebrew alphabet (the first letter of each line spells out the *aleph bet*), which is characteristic of Piyutim composed during this period. *Shoshanat Yaakov* is written in fairly simple and accessible language, likely in order to teach the story of Esther. On first glance, it appears that the Piyut is a poetic retelling of the Purim story as it is found in the Bible. However, upon closer inspection, we find that the version of the story that is put forward in this Piyut is in fact distinct from the one found in *Megillat Esther*. In the *megillah* text, God's name is never evoked, though we are to intuit that he is the 'cause of all causes.' In *Shoshanat Yaakov*, the Paytan emphasizes both in the beginning and end of the Piyut the role of God as the savior of the Jewish people. For example, the Piyut opens with: "he who brought to naught the council of nations, and thwarts the designs of the cunning," and ends with, "you were their salvation forever, their hope in every generation."

Hebrew Text

Asher heni atzat goyim / va-yafer machshavot arumim	וַיַּפֶּר מַחֲשָׁבוֹת עֲרוּמִים	אֲשֶׁר הֵנִיא עֲצַת גּוֹיִם
B'kum aleinu adam rasha / netzer zadon mi-zera amalek	נֹצֵר זָדוֹן מִזֵּרַע עֲמָלֶק	בְּקוּם עָלֵינוּ אָדָם רָשָׁע
Ga'a b'-oshro v'-chara lo bor / u-g'dulato noksha lo lached	וַגְדִּלְתוּ נֹקְשָׁה לוֹ לָכֵד	גָּאָה בְּעֲשָׂרוֹ וְכָרָה לוֹ בּוֹר
Dima b'-nafsho likkod v'-nilkad / bikesh l'-hashmid v'-nishmad m'hera	בִּקֵּשׁ לְהַשְׁמִיד וְנִשְׁמַד מֵהֶרָה	דָּמָה בְּנַפְשׁוֹ לְלֶכֶד וְנִלְכַּד
Haman hodiya eivat avotav / orer sin'at achim labanim	עוֹרֵר שְׁנֵאת אַחִים לְבָנִים	הָמָן הוֹדִיעַ אֵיבַת אֲבוֹתָיו
V'-lo zachar rachamei shaul / ki v'chemlato al Agag nolad oyevo	כִּי בְחֻמְלָתוֹ עַל אֲגָג נֹלַד אוֹיֵב	וְלֹא זָכַר רַחֲמֵי שְׁאוּל
Zamam rasha l'-hachrit tzadik / v'-nilkad tama biydey tahor	וְנִלְכַּד טָמֵא בְיַדֵּי טָהוֹר	זָמַם רָשָׁע לְהַכְרִית צַדִּיק
Chesed davar al sh'gagat av / rasha hosif chet al chata'av	רָשָׁע הוֹסִיף חֵטָא עַל חֻטְאָיו	חֶסֶד גָּבַר עַל שְׁגַגַת אָב

<i>Taman b'libo machshavot arumav / va-yitnaker la'asot ra'a</i>	וַיִּתְנַכֵּר לַעֲשׂוֹת רָעָה	טָמַן בְּלִבּוֹ מַחְשְׁבוֹת עֲרוּמָיו
<i>Yado shalach bi-k'doshey El / kaspo natan l'hachrit zichram</i>	בָּסָפוֹ נָתַן לְהַכְרִית זִכְרָם	יָדוֹ שָׁלַח בְּקִדּוּשֵׁי אֵל
<i>Kir'ot Mordechai ki yatza ketzef / v'datey Haman nitnu b'-Shushan</i>	וַדְּתִי הָמוֹן נִתְּנוּ בְּשׂוֹשָׁן	כְּרֹאוֹת מְרֹדְכִי כִּי יֵצֵא קֶצֶף
<i>Lavash sak v'-kashar mispad / gazar tzom va-yeshev al ha-efer</i>	גָּזַר צוֹם וַיֵּשֶׁב עַל הָאֶפֶר	לְבַשׁ שָׁק וְקֶשֶׁר מִסָּפֵד
<i>Mi zeh ya'amod l'chaper sh'gaga / limchol chatat avon avoteinu</i>	לְמַחֵל חַטָּאת עִוֹן אֲבוֹתֵינוּ	מִי זֶה יַעֲמֵד לְכַפֵּר שְׁגָגָה
<i>Netz parach mi-lulav chen / Hadassa amda l'orer y'shenim</i>	הַדָּסָה עֲמָדָה לְעוֹרֵר יְשָׁנִים	נֶץ פָּרַח מְלוּלָב חֵן
<i>Sariseyha hivhilu l'-Haman / lhashkoto yeyn chamat taninim</i>	לְהַשְׁקוֹתוֹ יַיִן חֶמֶת תַּנִּינִים	סָרִיסֶיהָ הִבְהִילוּ לְהָמוֹן
<i>Amad b'-oshro v'-nafal b'-risho / asa lo etz v'-nitla alav</i>	עָשָׂה לוֹ עֵץ וְנִתְּלָה עָלָיו	עָמַד בְּעֶשְׂרוֹ וְנָפַל בְּרִשְׁעוֹ
<i>Pihem pat'chu kol yoshvey tevel / ki pur Haman nehefach l'-pureinu</i>	כִּי פוּר הָמוֹן נִהְפָּךְ לְפִוְרָנוּ	פִּיהֶם פָּתְחוּ כָּל יוֹשְׁבֵי תֵבֶל
<i>Tzadik nechelatz miyad rasha / oyev natan tachat nafsho</i>	אֹיֵב נָתַן תַּחַת נַפְשׁוֹ	צַדִּיק נִחְלָץ מִיַּד רָשָׁע
<i>Kiy'mu aleihem la'asot purim / v'-la'asot b'-chol shana v'-shana</i>	וְלִשְׁמֹחַ בְּכָל שָׁנָה וְשָׁנָה	קִיְּמוּ עֲלֵיהֶם לַעֲשׂוֹת פּוּרִים
<i>Ra'ita t'filat Mordechai v'-Esther / Haman u-vanav al ha-etz talita</i>	הָמוֹן וּבָנָיו עַל הָעֵץ תָּלִיתָ	רָאִיתָ תְּפִלַּת מְרֹדְכִי וְאַסְתֵּר
<i>Shoshanat Ya'akov tzahala v'-samecha / bir'otam yachad t'chelet Mordechai</i>	בְּרֹאוֹתָם יַחַד תִּכְלַת מְרֹדְכִי	שׁוֹשְׁנַת יַעֲקֹב צָהָלָה וְשִׂמְחָה
<i>T'shu'atam hayita lanetzach / v'tikvatam b'chol dor va-dor</i>	וְתִשׁוּעַתָּם בְּכָל דּוֹר וָדוֹר	תְּשׁוּעַתָּם הָיְיָ לְנֶצַח

English Translation

He who brought to naught the council of nations	And thwarts the designs of the cunning
When an evil man rose up against us	A wicked scion of the seed of Amalek
He flaunted his wealth and dug his own pit	His insistent self-importance set his own trap
He intended to entrap and was entrapped	He sought to destroy and was swiftly destroyed
Haman proclaimed the hatred of his fathers	Wakened the hatred of brothers in their sons
He did not remember the mercy of Saul	For due to his compassion for Agag an enemy was born

A wicked plotted to eradicate the righteous	And the impure was captured by the hands of the pure
Grace overcame the misstep of the father	The wicked added sin to his sins
In his heart he concealed his cunning notions	And gave himself over to wrongdoing
He sought to harm those holy to God	His money he lent to destroy any trace
Once Mordechai saw that the wrath has gone forth	And the decrees of Haman we made in Shushan
He dressed in sackcloth and lamented	Decreed a fast and sat on the ashes
Who will atone for the unintentional transgression	Forgive the offence and sin of our fathers
A blossom bloomed from a Lulav Chen*	Hadassa came to awaken the sleeping
Her chamberlains hurried to bring Haman	To intoxicate him with wine of the venom of serpents
His riches were his power and his malice his demise	He prepared the gallows and was hung upon it
All who dwell on earth told of how	The pur (lot) of Haman became our Purim
The righteous escaped the clutches of the wicked	The enemy was taken in his stead
They took upon themselves to celebrate Purim	And to rejoice every year
You heard the payers of Mordechai and Ester	And hung Haman and his sons on the gallows
The rose of Yaakov delighted and joyous	Upon seeing Mordechai in royal robes of blue
You were their salvation forever	Their hope in every generation

Recording by the Chayim David