

“For to God it is Fitting”

כִּי לוֹ נֶאֱדָה

Ki Lo Na'eh

presented by Jonah Rank—www.jonahrank.com

For to God it is fitting, for to God it shall be fitting—the crown of Sovereignty.

Mighty in Sovereignty, Choice in the Path—God’s troops will say to God,
“To You and for You—to You, for it is for You—to You is this, and this too is for You:
Yours, God, is the Sovereignty.”
For to God it is fitting, for to God it shall be fitting—the crown of Sovereignty.

Preeminent in Sovereignty, Glorious in the Path—God’s seasoned ones will say to God,
“To You and for You—to You, for it is for You—to You is this, and this too is for You:
Yours, God, is the Sovereignty.”
For to God it is fitting, for to God it shall be fitting—the crown of Sovereignty.

Meritorious in Sovereignty, Strong in the Path—God’s appointed ones will say to God,
“To You and for You—to You, for it is for You—to You is this, and this too is for You:
Yours, God, is the Sovereignty.”
For to God it is fitting, for to God it shall be fitting—the crown of Sovereignty.

Ruling in Sovereignty, Awesome in the Path—God’s environs will say to God,
“To You and for You—to You, for it is for You—to You is this, and this too is for You:
Yours, God, is the Sovereignty.”
For to God it is fitting, for to God it shall be fitting—the crown of Sovereignty.

Humble in Sovereignty, Redeeming in the Path—God’s righteous ones will say to God,
“To You and for You—to You, for it is for You—to You is this, and this too is for You:
Yours, God, is the Sovereignty.”
For to God it is fitting, for to God it shall be fitting—the crown of Sovereignty.

Distinguished in Sovereignty, Compassionate in the Path—God’s troops will say to God,
“To You and for You—to You, for it is for You—to You is this, and this too is for You:
Yours, God, is the Sovereignty.”
For to God it is fitting, for to God it shall be fitting—the crown of Sovereignty.

Resolute in Sovereignty, Supportive in the Path—God’s unblemished ones will say to God,
“To You and for You—to You, for it is for You—to You is this, and this too is for You:
Yours, God, is the Sovereignty.”
For to God it is fitting, for to God it shall be fitting—the crown of Sovereignty.

כִּי לוֹ נֶאֱדָה, כִּי לוֹ יֵאָדָה כְּתָר מְלוּכָה. Ki LO na-EH, KI LO ya-EH KE-ter melu-KHAH.

אֲדִיר בְּמְלוּכָה, בְּחֹר כְּהֻלָּה, גְּדוּדֵי יֵאָמְרוּ לוֹ: Ad-DIR bimlu-KHAH, ba-ḤUR kahala-KHAH, gedu-DAV yome-RU LO:
לָדָּה וְלָדָּה, לָדָּה כִּי לָדָּה, לָדָּה אִף לָדָּה, Le-KHA ul-KHA, le-KHA KI le-KHA, le-KHA AF le-KHA,
לָדָּה ה' הַמְּמַלְכָּה, le-KHA ado-NAI hammamla-KHAH,
כִּי לוֹ נֶאֱדָה, כִּי לוֹ יֵאָדָה כְּתָר מְלוּכָה. KI LO na-EH, KI LO ya-EH KE-ter melu-KHAH.

אֲדֹגֵל בְּמְלוּכָה, הָדוּר כְּהֻלָּה, וְתִקְוֵי יֵאָמְרוּ לוֹ: Da-GUL bimlu-KHAH, ha-ḌUR kahala-KHAH, vati-KAV yome-RU LO:
לָדָּה וְלָדָּה, לָדָּה כִּי לָדָּה, לָדָּה אִף לָדָּה, Le-KHA ul-KHA, le-KHA KI le-KHA, le-KHA AF le-KHA,
לָדָּה ה' הַמְּמַלְכָּה, le-KHA ado-NAI hammamla-KHAH,
כִּי לוֹ נֶאֱדָה, כִּי לוֹ יֵאָדָה כְּתָר מְלוּכָה. KI LO na-EH, KI LO ya-EH KE-ter melu-KHAH.

זַכַּי בְּמְלוּכָה, הַסִּין כְּהֻלָּה, טַפְסֵי יֵאָמְרוּ לוֹ: Zak-KAI bimlu-KHAH, ha-SIN kahala-KHAH, tafse-RAV yome-RU LO:
לָדָּה וְלָדָּה, לָדָּה כִּי לָדָּה, לָדָּה אִף לָדָּה, Le-KHA ul-KHA, le-KHA KI le-KHA, le-KHA AF le-KHA,
לָדָּה ה' הַמְּמַלְכָּה, le-KHA ado-NAI hammamla-KHAH,
כִּי לוֹ נֶאֱדָה, כִּי לוֹ יֵאָדָה כְּתָר מְלוּכָה. KI LO na-EH, KI LO ya-EH KE-ter melu-KHAH..

יָחִיד בְּמְלוּכָה, קַבִּיר כְּהֻלָּה, לְמוֹדֵי יֵאָמְרוּ לוֹ: Ya-HID bimlu-KHAH, kab-BIR kahala-KHAH, limmu-DAV yome-RU LO:
לָדָּה וְלָדָּה, לָדָּה כִּי לָדָּה, לָדָּה אִף לָדָּה, Le-KHA ul-KHA, le-KHA KI le-KHA, le-KHA AF le-KHA,
לָדָּה ה' הַמְּמַלְכָּה, le-KHA ado-NAI hammamla-KHAH,
כִּי לוֹ נֶאֱדָה, כִּי לוֹ יֵאָדָה כְּתָר מְלוּכָה. KI LO na-EH, KI LO ya-EH KE-ter melu-KHAH.

מוֹשֵׁל בְּמְלוּכָה, נוֹרָא כְּהֻלָּה, סִיבֵי יֵאָמְרוּ לוֹ: Mo-SHEL bimlu-KHAH, no-RA kahala-KHAH, Sevi-NAV yome-RU LO:
לָדָּה וְלָדָּה, לָדָּה כִּי לָדָּה, לָדָּה אִף לָדָּה, Le-KHA ul-KHA, le-KHA KI le-KHA, le-KHA AF le-KHA,
לָדָּה ה' הַמְּמַלְכָּה, le-KHA ado-NAI hammamla-KHAH,
כִּי לוֹ נֶאֱדָה, כִּי לוֹ יֵאָדָה כְּתָר מְלוּכָה. KI LO na-EH, KI LO ya-EH KE-ter melu-KHAH.

אֲנִי בְּמְלוּכָה, פּוֹדֵה כְּהֻלָּה, צַדִּיקֵי יֵאָמְרוּ לוֹ: A-NAV bimlu-KHAH, po-DEH kahala-KHAH, tzaddi-KAV yome-RU LO:
לָדָּה וְלָדָּה, לָדָּה כִּי לָדָּה, לָדָּה אִף לָדָּה, Le-KHA ul-KHA, le-KHA KI le-KHA, le-KHA AF le-KHA,
לָדָּה ה' הַמְּמַלְכָּה, le-KHA ado-NAI hammamla-KHAH,
כִּי לוֹ נֶאֱדָה, כִּי לוֹ יֵאָדָה כְּתָר מְלוּכָה. KI LO na-EH, KI LO ya-EH KE-ter melu-KHAH.

קָדוֹשׁ בְּמְלוּכָה, רַחוּם כְּהֻלָּה, שִׁינ'אֵי יֵאָמְרוּ לוֹ: Ka-DOSH bimlu-KHAH, ra-ḤUM kahala-KHAH, shin'a-NAV yome-RU LO:
לָדָּה וְלָדָּה, לָדָּה כִּי לָדָּה, לָדָּה אִף לָדָּה, Le-KHA ul-KHA, le-KHA KI le-KHA, le-KHA AF le-KHA,
לָדָּה ה' הַמְּמַלְכָּה, le-KHA ado-NAI hammamla-KHAH,
כִּי לוֹ נֶאֱדָה, כִּי לוֹ יֵאָדָה כְּתָר מְלוּכָה. KI LO na-EH, KI LO ya-EH KE-ter melu-KHAH.

תִּקְוֵי בְּמְלוּכָה, תּוֹמֵךְ כְּהֻלָּה, תֵּמִימֵי יֵאָמְרוּ לוֹ: Tak-KIF bimlu-KHAH, to-MEKH kahala-KHAH, temi-MAV yome-RU LO:
לָדָּה וְלָדָּה, לָדָּה כִּי לָדָּה, לָדָּה אִף לָדָּה, Le-KHA ul-KHA, le-KHA KI le-KHA, le-KHA AF le-KHA,
לָדָּה ה' הַמְּמַלְכָּה, le-KHA ado-NAI hammamla-KHAH,
כִּי לוֹ נֶאֱדָה, כִּי לוֹ יֵאָדָה כְּתָר מְלוּכָה. KI LO na-EH, KI LO ya-EH KE-ter melu-KHAH.

**Thoughts On These Words and Their Place in Memories of Leaving *Mitzrayim***

In recent years, my practice of recalling *Yetzi'at Mitzrayim* (יְצִיאַת מִצְרַיִם, “Emerging from Egypt”) has not been about imagining myself leaving the literal Land of Egypt. It’s been about leaving a more personal *Mitzrayim* (מִצְרַיִם, “Egypt”). Even though *Mitzrayim* is the Hebrew name for Egypt, it contains the letters of the Hebrew root צ-ר-י (*tzadei-reysh-yod*), from which we get the word “*tzarot*” (צָרוֹת, or “troubles” or “tragedies”), or—as we say it in Yiddish—“*tzures*”. This connection between *Mitzrayim* and the *tzarot* that the Jewish people have experienced is drawn out in the Biblical commentary of Yitzhak ben Yehudah Abravanel (1437-1508), who comments on Exodus 3 saying, “מִצְרַיִם הִיְתָה אֶרֶץ צָרָה” (***Mitzrayim* was a land of distress**.)” In a similar vein, when I fulfill the *Mitzvah* (מִצְוָה, or “commandment”) of seeing myself leaving *Mitzrayim*, I consider what *tzarot* are on my mind, and I realize what a miracle it is that I can find that Divine, narrow passageway through which I can successfully escape and leave behind my *tzarot*—letting each fear drown in a sea of tears and anxieties I hope never to see again.

This *piyyut* (פִּיּוּט, “liturgical poem”), “*Ki Lo Na'eh, Ki Lo Ya'eh*” (“כִּי לֹו נָאֵה, כִּי לֹו יָאֵה,” or “For To God It is Fitting, For To God It Shall Be Fitting”) is of unknown authorship but appeared in the *Haggadah* (הַגְּדָה) in the Middle Ages. As to how these words relate to *Pesah* (פֶּסַח, or “Passover”), one mystical explanation comes from the Hasidic master Rabbi Kalonymos Kelman Halevi Epstein (1751-1823) of Poland in *Ma'or Vashemesh* (מְאוֹר וְשֶׁמֶשׁ, “*Illuminator and Sun*,” Epstein’s commentary on Leviticus). He suggests that Kabbalists understood the great power in the numerology of the words of this piece: *Na'eh* (נָאֵה) and *Ya'eh* (יָאֵה), in *Gematriyyah* (גִּמְטְרִיָּה), add up to 72 ( $[ה + א + נ = 50 + 1 + 5 = 56] + [ + י ה + א = 10 + 1 + 5 = 16] = 72$ ), and so does the word *Hesed* (חֶסֶד, “Lovingkindness”); “*Hesed*” ( $ד + ס + ח = 8 + 6 + 4 = 72$ ) is not only a term for socially conscious actions, but also one of the ten names of the aspects of God in Kabbalah. Written in the section of *Ma'or Vashemesh* referred to as *Ramzey Pesah Ufeyrush Al Hahaggadah* (רַמְזֵי פֶּסַח וּפְרִיּוּשׁ עַל הַהַגְּדָה, “*Mystical Allusions of Pesah and Commentary On the Haggadah*”), this teaching suggests that we should credit *Yetzi'at Mitzrayim* to the Divine aspect of *Hesed*, which we recall through “*Ki Lo Na'eh, Ki Lo Ya'eh*.” In addition, Epstein’s commentary notes that our saying “*Ya'eh*” is a way of rearranging the letters of God’s name—for, aside from the name of י-ה-ו-ה, God is introduced allusively to Moses in Exodus 3:14 as “*Ehyeh*,” as in “*Ehyeh Asher Ehyeh*” (אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה, or “I Am That Which I Am”). Through this song, we may aim to reconstruct the Good Name by the virtue of which we merited a miraculous *Yetzi'at Mitzrayim*.

Aside from the refrain, each strophe of the *piyyut* is written in an alphabetical fashion: the first letter of each word unique to each strophe comes from the letter that is next in the Hebrew alphabet. As there are 22 letters in Hebrew and only 3 unique words per strophe, the final (and eighth) strophe has 3 words each beginning with the final letter, *Tav* (ת). Alphabetical acrostics like this are commonly found in early Medieval *piyyut* literature. The exercise of going through the alphabet allows both the author of the *piyyut* and all of its readers to imagine the many ways and words through which we may articulate different nuances of Godliness that we have experienced in our personal lives and in the Jewish collective memory.

Words are very powerful in the Jewish tradition. Even before Kabbalists wrote about the magical powers of letters, the mere utterance of words was the means by which God created the Universe in the first chapter of Genesis. To the rabbis of the *Talmud*, every individual word in the *Tanakh* (תַּנַּ"ךְ, or “Hebrew Bible”) had an educational purpose beyond its grammatical place in the sentence; it could allude to a word

elsewhere in *Tanakh* or perhaps a Midrashic story not written anywhere in the *Tanakh*. In a *piyyut*, every word too has a special resonance with a chord struck long ago in Jewish history. The appearance of an uncommon word or phrase refers the reader back to those rare moments in Jewish literature when that word came up, and the nuances of these words remind us of each of our own unique relationships with God as have expressed them through the Jewish tradition.

### ***Ki Lekha* = כִּי לְךָ = For it is for You**

We begin the *Piyyut* with a taste of the refrain, each phrase of which echoes a unique thought-provoking teaching beneath its surface. The phrase “*Ki Lekha*” (כִּי לְךָ) appears (among other places) in Genesis 13:17 as God’s words offering Abraham ownership of, as well as responsibility over, all of the land that Abraham sees during this moment of dialogue with the Divine. The phrase challenges us to take ownership of or responsibility over what we see before us in the moment.

### ***Af Lekha* = אַף לְךָ = And this too is for You**

Appearing in the main refrain (though it does not appear in the snippet of the refrain in the beginning here) is the phrase “*Af Lekha*” (אַף לְךָ), which also appears in Psalms 74:16 and 89:12 to indicate a merism—a phrase where two opposites are mentioned so as to include everything that could come between two ends of the spectrum. In the former, we read: לְךָ יוֹם אֶרְפָּא לְךָ לַיְלָה (“Yours is the day; so too Yours is the night”)—that God is the master of all time. In the latter, we read: לְךָ שָׁמַיִם אֶרְפָּא לְךָ אֲרֶצַּח (“Yours are the heavens; so too Yours is the earth”)—that God is the master of all space. When we declare, “*Af lekha*,” we are challenged to imagine something in our lives that we can attribute entirely to God.

### ***Lekha Adonai Hammamlakhah* = לְךָ ה' הַמְּמַלְכָּה = Yours, God, is the Sovereignty**

The phrase “*Lekha Adonai Hammamlakhah*” (לְךָ ה' הַמְּמַלְכָּה) in the main refrain (again, not in the snippet at the beginning) is a quote from I Chronicles 29:11, amidst a list of Divine attributes in a prayer King David recites in 29:10-19. In this passage, David describes the God he envisions before he makes the request he ultimately wants to make of God. In this *piyyut*, we recall different ways in which we have recognized God. But in reciting this phrase in particular, we keep in mind how we envision God, and we also consider what we ultimately need from God at this hour.

### ***Keter Melukhah* = כִּתְרֵי מְלוּכָה = Crown of Sovereignty**

The words “*Keter Melukhah*” (כִּתְרֵי מְלוּכָה, “Crown of Sovereignty”) do not appear in all versions of this song, but the inclusion of them allows the poem to read a bit more clearly. Without the phrase, it is not clear *what* will become fitting to God—the refrain, without “*Keter Melukhah*,” would read “as, to God, *it* is fitting; as, to God, *it* shall be fitting.” Although we cannot be sure whether it accidentally disappeared as the poem was reintroduced or if the phrase was added in to help clarify the ambiguity of the poem, “*Keter Melukhah*” is an image that is simultaneously vivid and vague.

The phrase “*Keter Melukhah*” appears in *Haggadah Shel Pesah Binyan David* (הגדה של פסח בנין דוד), attributed to the 19<sup>th</sup> Century Ḥasidic Rabbi David Dov Meisels (מרן דוד דוב מייזליש); the *Haggadah* of the Munkatch Ḥasidim published in 1998 (by Ateres Publishing); and the

*Haggadah Shel Pesah Im Peyrush Nahalat Avot* (הגדה של פסח עם פירוש נחלת יעקב) of the Transylvanian sage Rabbi Natan Tz'vi Brisk (נתן צבלי), published in Kleinwardien in 1919. Some traditions have two-word phrases other than “*Keter Melukhah*” at the end of the refrain, but the final word of the pair is usually related to *Melukhah*.

“*Keter Melukhah*” is not an early metaphor from Talmudic literature. *Keter* (כִּתְרָה, “Crown”) and *Melukhah* (מְלוּכָה, sovereignty) have each become synonymous with the most supernal of God’s mystical qualities in later Jewish literature, but the two words may not have appeared together until *Siddur Rashi*—the *Siddur* that the commentator *Rashi* (1040-1125 C.E.) is traditionally thought to have used. On top of that, the phrase itself remains rarely explained in Rabbinic literature; however, the 18<sup>th</sup> Century Ḥasidic master Rabbi Ze’ev Wolf of Zhitomir spoke powerfully of “*Keter Melukhah*” in *Or Hamme’ir* (אור המאיר, “*The Illuminating Light*”) on Deutereonomy/*Sukkot*, he speaks of “*Keter Melukhah*” (literally, the “crown of sovereignty”) as something which we proffer to God through enthusiastic prayer—just as any earthly ruler should be coronated with heartfelt excitement. Perhaps most poignantly, this Ḥasidic master writes that a moment of ecstatically recognizing Divine Sovereignty is intended “לְהַרְאוֹת שְׂמֵחַד־שֵׁים הַמְּלוּכָה, וְלִשְׁמְעוּ רְחוּקִים וְנִבְאֹו גַם כֵּן לִיתֵן כִּתְרַ מְלוּכָה” (“to show that we renew the sovereignty, and so that those who are distant will hear and will also come to give the Crown of Sovereignty”). For Rabbi Ze’ev Wolf of Zhitomir, the Divine *Keter Melukhah* is something that, not only do we renew constantly for God’s sake, but we renew to remind ourselves when he have become distanced from recognizing God in our lives.

#### **Addir = אַדִּיר = Great, Mighty, Powerful, Strong, Wonderful**

The word “*Addir*” (אַדִּיר) appears 7 times in the *Tanakh*—each time, interpreted as related to Divine *Melukhah*:

- (1, 2) In Isaiah 33:21, the word appears twice: “כִּי אִם־שָׁם אַדִּיר ה' לָנוּ מְקוֹם־נְהַרִים יְאֻרִים רַחֲבֵי יַדַּיִם בְּלִי־תֵלֶדַד בּוֹ אֲנִי־שֹׁיֵט וְצִי אַדִּיר לָא” (“For, indeed, there, the mighty Lord shall be for us as a place of rivers and Niles of wide hand-breadths wherein no sea-fleet or **mighty** navy may pass...”). Not only is the might of a human fleet said to hold no clout here against the might of God, Isaiah says these words in contemplation of the inefabable greatness of a, doubtlesly, Divine *Melekh* (מֶלֶךְ, “Sovereign”), as mentioned in verse 17.

- (3) Ezekiel 17:23, God is quoted promising: “בְּהַר מְרוֹם יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשַׁתְּלֶנּוּ וְנִשְׂא עֲנָף וְעֵשֶׂה פְּרִי וְהָיָה לְאֶרֶץ אַדִּיר וְשָׁכְנֵנוּ תַּחְתָּיו כֹּל צִפּוֹר” (“At a high mountain of Israel, I will plant it, and it shall raise branches and create fruit, and it shall be a **mighty** cedar, and beneath it shall dwell every bird and every wing; in the shade of its boughs, shall each dwell”). This Divine gift to Israel is certainly not only an imparting of God’s *Addir* quality, but the 18<sup>th</sup> Century rabbi David Altschuler writes—in his commentary *Metzudat David* (מְצוּדַת דָּוִד, *The Fortress of David*)—regarding the words “*veshakhenu tahtav*” (וְשָׁכְנֵנוּ תַּחְתָּיו, “and beneath it shall dwell”): “ר”ל כֹּל־הָאוֹמוֹת יִהְיוּ נִשְׁמָעִים לוֹ וְסָרִים: (“the text intends to say: all nations will listen to It and be servants in Its service”). To Altschuler, this is a verse where God not only gives Israel a great cedar to provide shade for animals, but God plants God’s own presence amidst the highest point of Israel so as both to provide cool shade for all those who seek this rest, and, ultimately, to tower above those resting in the shade of the Divine Sovereign, to whom a universe of benefactors has now become a multitude of patient servants.

- (4, 5) In Psalm 8 verses 2 and 10 read as follows: “ה' אֲדַגְנִינוּ מִה־אַדִּיר שְׁמֶךָ בְּכָל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר־תָּנָה הַחוּדָךְ עַל־הַשָּׁמַיִם:” (“Lord, our God, how **mighty** is Your name throughout all the earth—You, having given Your splendor upon the heavens!”), and “ה' אֲדַגְנִינוּ מִה־אַדִּיר שְׁמֶךָ” (“Lord, our God, how **mighty** is your name throughout all the earth!”). These two verses frame the main psalm itself, which praises

all the works of God but—given God’s greatness—questions God’s transferrance of Divine sovereignty to humanity in verses 5-7: “מִה־אֲנוֹשׁ כִּי־תִזְכְּרוּנוּ וּבְרֹאֲמֹם כִּי תִפְקְדֶנּוּ וּתְחַסְרוּהוּ מְעַט מֵאֱלֹהִים וְכַבֹּד וְהַדָּר תִּעֲטָרֶהוּ תִמְשִׁילֶהוּ בְּמַעֲשֵׂי יָדָיֶךָ כָּל שְׂתֵתָה תַחַת־רַגְלָיו:” (“What is a human that You should recall one, or the offspring of humanity that You should be mindful of it? You have made it a bit less than divine, yet with substance and glory do You adorn it!? **You made it master** over the works of Your hands, and all matters beneath its feet!”) In addition to this allusion to transferring Divine sovereignty, the juxtaposition of the words *Addir* and *Shimkha* (שְׁמֶךָ, “Your name”) very clearly resonates the language of a coronation ceremony. Both in the *Tanakh* and many other ancient Near Eastern texts, a sovereign is coronated or declared via ritual language during which the name of the ruler is proclaimed.

- (6) In Psalm 76:5, we read: “נִאֲוָר אֶתָּה אֲדֹנָי מִתְּהַרְרֵי־טָרִי:” (“Resplendent were You, **mighty** amidst mountains of prey”). This Psalm, describing God as a warrior-ruler, ends with “יִבְצֹר רוּחַ נְגִידִים נֹרָא לְמַלְכֵי־אֲרָץ:” (“God restrains the spirit of princes and incites fear among the rulers of the earth”). God is a **mighty Sovereign**—mightier than any earthly ruler.

- (7) In Psalm 93:4, the Psalmist exclaims: “מִמֵּי רַבִּים אֲדִירִים מִשְׁבַּרְיָם אֲדֹנָי בְּפָרוֹם הִנֵּה:” (“Above the sounds of great waters—mightier than those who break the sea—**mighty**, on high, is the Lord.”). These words appear, describing the God who transcends the greatest of natural wonders, in a Psalm whose first two words “*Adonai Malakh*” (ה' מַלְאָךְ, “The Lord is Sovereign”) begin a series of descriptions of God’s majesty. The might is part of the sovereignty. Literally, the *Addir* is in the *Melukhah*. God is *Addir bimlukhah* (אֲדִיר בְּמִלּוּכָה “Mighty' in Sovereignty”).

**Bahur = בַּחור = Choice, Chosen, Loved one, Male**

The word *Bahur* (בַּחור, “choice”) is generally used in the *Tanakh* to talk about humans—usually men going to war; however, in the Song of Songs 5:15, the word *Bahur* is used to describe the male lover, who, in Rabbinic interpretations of Song of Songs, is a metaphor for God, lover of Israel.

**Halakhah = הַלְכָה = Jewish law, Leading, Path, Walking**

**Kahalakhah = כְּהַלְכָה = According to (the) Law/Governance/Guidance/Halakhah/Sovereignty, In Accordance with (the) Law/Governance/Guidance/Halakhah/Sovereignty**

**Bimlukhah = בְּמִלּוּכָה = In Governance, In Guidance, In Sovereignty**

**Melukhah = מְלּוּכָה = Governance, Guidance, Sovereignty**

The frequent appearance of the term *Halakhah* (הַלְכָה), which normally refers to “Jewish law,” feels a bit out of place in this *piyyut*. The word *Halakhah*, which literally means “walking” or “path,” when used in the phrase *Kahalakhah* (כְּהַלְכָה, “according to *Halakhah*”) somehow parallels the word *Bimlukhah* (בְּמִלּוּכָה, “in Sovereignty”). Though *Halakhah* and *Melukhah* are not the same word, they still rhyme and contain the same final root letters—*Halakhah* being derived from *heh-lamed-kaf* (ה-ל-כ), and *Melukhah* coming from *mem-lamed-kaf* (מ-ל-כ). However, the *heh* and the *mem* that separate their roots however might point to the narrow gap that really exists between Jewish Sovereignty and Jewish Law (or Jewish “Walking”, or the Jewish “Path”). After all, a *horeh* (הוֹרָה, “parent”) and a *moreh* (מוֹרָה, “teacher”) are—along with the

word *Torah* (תּוֹרָה)—all derived from the same root of *yod-resheh-heh* (י-ר-ה), which always refers to “projection” (frequently, projecting values—whether pedagogically or parentally). For grammatical reasons—and probably linguistic reasons (different ways of pronouncing the same words)—the letter *heh* (ה) is frequently garbled into the letter *mem* (מ). One may be inclined to wonder if Psalm 104:3’s *hamhallekh* (הַמְהַלֵּךְ, “the Moving One”) is a non-garbled way of saying *hammelekh* (הַמְלִיךְ, “the Ruler”), or if they are truly separate words. One then may consider the case of Jeremiah 2:6’s calling God “*hammolikh*” (הַמּוֹלִיךְ, “the Guide”). When we keep in mind that our earliest Hebrew texts were not written with vowels and that certain consonantal letters (most notably: *alef, heh, vav* and *yod*—א, ה, ו, and י) were frequently omitted for being consonantally silent (or quiet), we are reminded that, from seeing the letters *heh-mem-lamed-kaf* (המלך) with no vowels, we could pronounce these letters as *hammelekh* (הַמְלִיךְ) or *hammolikh* (הַמּוֹלִיךְ). Furthermore—if the word *hamhallekh* (הַמְהַלֵּךְ), which appears only once in the entire Bible, was misspelled (as in, it should **not** have been vocalized as *hamhallekh*)—it is possible that a more accurate reading of this word would render *המהלך* as another spelling, or synonym, of *hammolikh*. Perhaps the word may have once been pronounced *hammahalikh* (הַמְהַלִּיךְ), or *hammohlikh* (הַמּוֹהֵלִיךְ). It is worth noting that the Arabic word for King is vocalized as *malik*—in some ways a little more similar-sounding to *Hammahalikh* or *Hammolikh* than *Hammelekh*. From these suggestions, the possibility opens up that *Melukhah* and *Halakhah* are intimately related: that *Melukhah* is a form of guiding *Halakhah* (and perhaps *Halakhah*—the ways in which Jews “walk”—helps shape how Jews imagine God as *Hammolikh*). Perhaps the *heh* and the *mem* that distinguish these terms show that *Halakhah* and *Melukhah* not only share the roots of an adjacent *lamed* and *kaf*; they also share their roots in the God and the Jewish people.

As for the significance of “*Kahalakhah*” in this *piyyut*, the term can be read in at least three ways:

- (1) “*Kahalakhah*” is the opposite viewpoint of “*Bimlukhah*.” Whereas the word “*Bimlukhah*” recalls that God must be imagined from God’s perspective of *Melukhah*, the mundanity of human *Halakhah* reminds us that people must not leave themselves out of the picture when we imagine God. Through the words “*Bimlukhah*” and “*Kahalakhah*,” we are reminded that—even if the adjectives preceding each word do not resonate solely with God’s perception of God’s self or humans’ perceptions of God—imagining God is a two-way street: God emanates to humans through *Melukhah*, and we encounter God through *Halakhah*.
- (2) The *Halakhah* discussed here may be, not how humans or Jews walk, but how God goes about doing things. God may be *Bahur Kahalakhah* because God goes about as a God who is *Bahur*, and that is the *Halakhah*; that’s how things go.
- (3) The term *Kahalakhah* may be used comedically as if to say that, not only is God *Bahur*, but God is *Bahur*, and God is so *Bahur* that it’s Halakhic: God’s Godliness is kosher and up to Jewish standards! God is a kosher God!

Being that each of these is a plausible explanation of *Kahalakhah*—which is a vague term throughout the *piyyut*—chances are that the author of this *piyyut* intended for each of these readings to resonate with us. The word *Kahalakhah* reminds us that we imagine God as God is, and God is kosher! As Rabbi Ze’ev Wolf of Zhitomir suggested regarding the phrase “*Keter Melukhah*”, it is this combination of sincerity and joy (even joyful silliness) that truly allows us to recognize God as we imagine God in our universe.

### ***Gedudav* = גְּדוּדָיו = God’s battalions, God’s regiments, God’s troops**

The word *Gedudav* (גְּדוּדָיו) appears in Job 19:12, when Job fears God sending out God’s troops to fight Job. Job fears that God hates him and intends to torment him. Sometimes we, like Job, are challenged to see God as a source of love or perfection. In this *piyyut* though, *Gedudav* are God’s troops, apparently devoid of both malicious intent and means for harming humanity. All these troops can do is join us in coronating God through joyous song.

### ***Dagul* = דָּגוּל = Distinguished, Outstanding, Preeminent, Signified**

The term *Dagul* (דגול) only appears Biblically in Song of Songs 5:10: “דוֹדִי צַהֵל וְאֶדוֹם דָּגוּל מֵרֶבֶבָה:” (“My beloved is light-skinned yet ruddy—**preeminent** among ten thousand”). God is simultaneously hard to see yet well-colored: prominent amidst a large crowd. Even when we find ourselves amidst a confusing mass of stress or doubt or chaos, our Jewish identity still challenges us to identify God’s role in the universe.

### **Hadur = הדור = Beautiful, Elegant, Glorious**

“*Hadur*” (הדור) appears in the Tanakh only once: in Isaiah 63:1, the prophet asks (and is then answered by God), “מִי־זֶה | בָּא מֵאֲדוֹם חֲמוֹץ, “Who is this, coming from Edom, in red clothes from Botzrah—this One **glorious** in the One’s dress, inclining in the One’s great power?” ‘I speak righteously, with the greatness of salvation.’”) *Hadur* arises in a verse that, like the verse in which *Dagul* appears, imagines a certain beautiful red coloring on a human-like Divine figure. The position of *Hadur* in the *piyyut* here is not only important because of the redness-connection to *Dagul*, but also because Isaiah’s use of the word *Hadur* imagines God walking along a path—engaging in an act of *Halakhah* as walking. God here is *Hadur* according to *Halakhah*.

### **Vattikav = ותיקו = God’s great ones, God’s righteous ones, God’s seasoned ones**

The root of “*Vatikav*” (ותיקו) does not appear in the *Tanakh*; however, the words *Vatikin* (ותיקין) and *Vatikim* (ותיקים) both appear in the earliest strands of Rabbinic literature. The former appears in both the Babylonian Talmud (Berakhot 9b, 25b and 26a) and the later medieval *Yalkut Shim’oni* (Psalms, Section 606), wherein the *Vatikin* are great sages of yore who would always complete their recitation of the *Shema* “עִם הַנֶּחֱמָה” (“with the budding of the sun [at the precise moment of sunrise]”), beginning their *Amidah* right after reciting the last blessing recited after the *Shema*—this blessing being called “*Ge’ullah*” (גאולה, or “redemption”) by the Rabbis. According to these rabbis, the *Vatikin* would use that precise moment of sunrise to adjoin *Ge’ullah* with *Tefillah* (תפילה, or “prayer,” one of the other names of the *Amidah*). The word *Vatikim* appears in *Sifrey Devarim* (*Parashat Devarim*: Segment 13) and in *Midrash Tanna’im* for Deuteronomy (1:13)—followed by “*ukhsheirim*” (וּכְשָׁרִים, literally “and kosher”) to indicate that these elders of long ago were upstanding, suitable (*kahalakhah*!) and pious men. Both the *Vatikin*—who stood before the red Sun—and the *Vatikim*—kosher, like well-prepared red meat—are *Vatikav*. The ruddy *Vatikav* stand together with the sanguine God who is undubitably *Dagul* and *Hadur*.

### **Zakkai = זכאי - Innocent, Meritorious, Owning Rights, Pure**

The word *Zakkai* (זכאי) is never used in the *Tanakh*, but, in Rabbinic literature, it may have the meanings of “pure,” “innocent,” “meritorious,” or “owning rights.” The term *Zakkai* though is derived from the root letters of *zayin* and *kaf* from which the Biblical verb *Zakhakh* (זָכַךְ, meaning “to be bright” or “to be pure” or “to be clear”), the Biblical adjective *Zakh* (“pure,” “clean,” or “righteous”), and the Biblical noun of *Zekhokhit* (זְכוּכִית, “glass”) are derived. After imagining God enrobed in red, the *piyyut* suggests that we remove that thought from our head: now we must imagine God as translucent, clear, without color, without image.

### **Hasin = חסין = Mighty, Strong**

“*Hasin*” (חסין) is yet another Biblical hapax legomenon—another word appearing only once in the *Tanakh*. In Psalm 89:9, the Psalmist asks, “הָיָה לַיהוָה יְצוּרֵי צָרָה מִיְּבוֹדֶיךָ חֲסִין | גְּהֵוָה יִצְמַח חֲסִין וְיִצְמַח חֲסִין” (“Lord, God of Hosts, who is strong like You—with Your faithfulness as Your

surroundings!?) In the following verse, we see that, as we might expect of the God of *Melukhah*, this is a God who *moshel* (מוֹשֵׁל, “rules”) over certain natural forces. (Just two verses after that, we find the Psalmist—as we do in this *piyyut*—reminding God of what exactly is “*Af Lekha*.”)

### **Tafserav = טַפְּסְרָיו = God’s appointed/demanded**

Although “*Tafserav*” (טַפְּסְרָיו) never appears in the *Tanakh*, two different forms of the word do appear: one in Jeremiah 51:27, and one in Nahum 3:17. The word, uttered both times by God, refers to human military marshals whom God demands Israel call into action. *Tafserav*, those humans for whom God has called, manifest the God who is simultaneously *Zakkai*—invisible to the untrained eye—yet *Hasin*: through Godly actions performed by humans, we can begin to see the substantive effect that an intangible God has on the world around us.

### **Yahid = יָחִיד = Alone, Lone, Lonely, Lonesome, One, Only, Single, Singular, Solitary, Special, Unique**

“*Yahid*” (יָחִיד) appears in the *Tanakh* in three places: Jeremiah 6:26, Amos 8:10, and Psalm 25:16. In each of these places, the *Yahid*-being is described as a solitary, lonesome, impoverished human. However, the word *Yahid*, meaning “singular,” more easily alludes to the God described in the doctrinal words of *Shema* (taken from Deuteronomy 6:4): *Shema Yisra’el Adonai Eloheynu Adonai Ehad* (שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל ה' אֶחָד: אֱלֹהֵינוּ ה' אֶחָד—“Hear, Israel: *Adonai* our God is *Adonai* of One.”)—a phrase whose meaning is unclear. To imagine God as One usually yields our considering God to be singularly unique, special, or the only God (or at least the only God relevant to us among false gods, or gods who bear no direct impact on the people Israel). The root of *Yahid* may also remind us of the times when God is also coronated under the declaration “*Ushmo Ehad*” (וְשִׁמוֹ אֶחָד: or “God’s name is One”) in Zechariah 14:9, as most *Siddurim* include at the end of the prayer *Aleynu*. Whereas two strophes ago, we imagined the God *Ehad* (אֶחָד, “One”) as One who rises above the rest and is prominently *Dagul*, the *piyyut* now challenges us to imagine God not as *Ehad* but as *Yahid*, One who sinks to a subpar life of poverty. God is both the *Dagul* above humanity and the *Yahid* beneath human satisfaction. Through this understanding of *Yahid*, as an opposite extreme of *Dagul*, we come to understand the God *Ehad* as the Unifying Force that encapsulates, is present for, and has the power to control the extremes of life, as if both the ups and downs of life were all part of One system of living.

### **Kabbir = כָּבִיר = Big, Grand, Great, Strong**

The adjective *Kabbir* (כָּבִיר) appears in the *Tanakh* in 7 places. (1) In Isaiah 16:14, *Kabbir* is what the despised population of Moab will *not* be; these people will not be great like the God who is *Kabbir*. (2) In Job 8:2, Bildad calls Job’s frustrated and powerful words merely a windy air that is *Kabbir*—strong but without substance. (3) In Job 15:10, Eliphaz rebukes Job for not recognizing the *Kabbir* collective of elders among humans; the mere ages of these pious sages, Eliphaz implies, should be reason enough for Job to be satisfied with God’s role in the cosmos. (4) In Job 31:25, Job asks sarcastically if he was punished for having rejoiced too proudly in the *Kabbir* lot he had merited. (5) In Job 34:17, Elihu (also) rebukes Job, asking Job if he would truly dare to speak maliciously of the Just and *Kabbir* God. (6, 7) Driving his point further in 36:5, Elihu affirms to Job that God is not only *Kabbir*, but also *Kabbir* in power. The word *Kabbir* appears to come only at moments of content, rebuke, strife, and struggle. Although *Kabbir* is synonymous with other terms expressing God’s grandeur, *Kabbir* itself is a term that arises in these undesirable contexts. God is *Yahid* in the low times, but God remains *Kabbir* all the same. God is *Kabbir Kahalakhah*, for, in difficult times, God is *Kabbir*, and that’s the way things go and must be.

### **Limmudav = לִמּוּדָיו = God’s Students, God’s Studies, God’s Studying Bings, God’s Taught Beings, God’s Teachings**



The term “*Limmudav*” (לִּמְוֹדָיו) is never used in the *Tanakh* or Talmudic literature in reference to something that is God’s alone. (The term’s sole appearance is almost certainly not relevant: *Mishnah, Kelim* 5:9.) The word *Limmudim* (לִּמְוֹדִים, “students” or “teachings”) does appear though in Isaiah 54:13 where God declares that the children of the barren woman Israel will be peaceable *Limmudim* devoted to God, and it appears again in Isaiah 50:4 in reference to learned *Limmudim* from which a prophet can gain rousing Divine inspiration. The term *Limmudav* might refer in Isaiah to God’s students, but the concept of God’s spoken *Limmudav* as God’s teachings that are (themselves!) capable of speaking provokes one to consider God offering a gift that never ceases to be given. Through the speech of God’s speech, we see that that which emanates from God continues to emanate further. Preceding the wild multitude of *Lekhas* we will soon recite, the infinite emanation of God’s gifts is particularly poignant here. *Yahid* finds us examining a lowly God, *Kabbir* raises us up to a grand God even when we are low, and *Limmudav* tells us that—not only is God high above—God emanates infinitely, and, with each *Lekha*, we are reminded of each proceeding step in the Path along which God’s Presence continues to emanate further and further and thereby restore the strength within us.

***Moshel* = מוֹשֵׁל = Allegorize/Allegorizer, Commander/Commanding, Poet/Poeticizing, Ruler/Ruling**

The word “*Moshel*” (מוֹשֵׁל) is found in the *Tanakh* 12 times: twice in II Samuel 23:3; and once in I Kings 5:1, Micah 5:1, Psalm 89:10, Proverbs 23:2, Proverbs 29:26, Ecclesiastes 9:17, I Chronicles 29:12, II Chronicles 7:18, II Chronicles 9:26, and II Chronicles 20:6. Of these instances, the two most striking usages of this word in describing God are in I Chronicles 29:12 and II Chronicles 20:6, where God is praised for being *Moshel* over all entities—even rulers. God is the *Moshel* above all those who are ruled and those who rule, for all those who rule are also ruled over—by God, the *Moshel*. In addition to *Moshel* being about rulership, the word *Moshel* also means “allegorize.” God as the ruler is also the Divine being who, through the allegorical legends of the Jewish people, weaves together a fabric of meaningful metaphors for understanding our place in God’s cosmos. God is not only politician, but also poet: God is the ultimate *Moshel*.

***Nora* = נוֹרָא = Awe-inspired/Awe-inspiring, Awesome, Awful, Awfully-frightening, Feared, Frightening**

There are 16 appearances of the word *Nora* (נוֹרָא) in the *Tanakh*. In Genesis 28:17, “*Nora*” is how Jacob describes that sacred space in the wilderness in which he (perhaps in a dream) climbed a ladder to the heavens and encountered God and divine angels. In Exodus 15:11, Moses and the Children of Israel sing the Song of the Sea, in which God the miracle-worker is understood as *Nora* (in the sense of “awe-inspired”)—following the words *nedar bakkodesh* (נִאֲדָר בְּקֹדֶשׁ, “strengthened in sanctity”), the former word relating to *Addir* (at the beginning of this *piyyut*) and the latter relating to *Kadosh* (nearing the end of the *piyyut*). In Exodus 34:10, Moses describes God as “*Nora*” upon the creation of the second set of stone tablets that contained the Ten Utterances (usually called “the Ten Commandments”). In Judges 13:6, after Manoah has informed a barren woman that she will give birth to a Nazirite son, she tells her husband that someone who appeared to be an angelic, *Nora* man of God told her that she will soon give birth. In Isaiah 18:2 and 18:7, the sinful nation Israel is considered eternally *Nora* (understood to be “awful,” as opposed to “awesome”). In Zephaniah 2:11, God is then understood as terribly *Nora* (in the “awfully-frightening” or “feared” sense) in God’s retributions against Moab and Ammon. According to God’s words of reward and punishment in Malachi 1:14, God’s name is *Nora Vaggoyim* (נוֹרָא בְּגוֹיִם: “Awfully-frightening to the nations”). In Psalm 66, verses 3 and 5, God’s work is described as *Nora* above human potential. In Psalms 47:3 and 76:8, God’s self is deemed *Nora*; in 76:13, God is deemed even more *Nora* than God’s sacred spaces; in 68:36, God is deemed even more *Nora* than God’s sacred spaces. In Psalm 96:4, God is praised for being more *Nora* than any other of the *Elohim* (אֱלֹהִים), able to be translated as either “gods” or “judges”—and the latter possibility is especially poignant considering Elihu’s use of the word *Nora* in Job 37:22, after Job’s speeches in which he imagines himself in a court room with God. In the end, our reading of *Nora*—if it does reflect

Biblical readings of *Nora*—is one of the most emotionally diversified terms in this entire *piyyut*. God as *Nora* seems to be the extremes of God—the malevolent and the benevolent, the awful and the awesome, the frightening and the inspiring, the creative and the restrictive, the miracle-worker and a force behind tragedies. The God who is *Nora* is—as poignantly placed in Exodus 15:11—not so far from the God who is frightfully *Addir* yet calmingly *Kadosh*. Articulating God as *Nora* reminds us of the Divine presence that is with us when all things seem right, when all things seem wrong, and when we are in the state between extremes. The process of traveling along the medium path between the many extremes of *Nora* is a travel *Kahalakhah*.

**Sevivav = סְבִיבָיו = God’s/his environs, God’s/his surrounders, God’s/his surroundings**

The exact term “*Sevivav*” appears only 6 times in the *Tanakh*. (1, 2) In Jeremiah 48:17 and 48:39, “*Sevivav*” refers to Moab’s neighbors who will come to scorn the nation Moab. (3) In Psalm 76:12, *Sevivav* refers to those loyal humans who surround God, (4) “*Sevivav*” in Psalm 89:8 refers to the Divine hosts who surround God in God’s counsel, and (5) *Sevivav* in Psalm 97:2 are the heavenly clouds and fog surrounding God above. (6) In Lamentations 1:17, the word “*Sevivav*” refers to the environs of the nation Jacob, entirely surrounded by enemies. Although one may be inclined sometimes to see *Sevivav* merely the enemies and forces of stress that surround a person, the truth is that we may also find ourselves surrounded by Godly people and Godly signs who help us find ways to articulate Godliness in our actions on this earth. We sing, “*Sevivav yomeru lo*” because we believe that, no matter our surroundings, we will find inspiration and reason to increase the Godliness with which we interact with God’s world.

**Anav = עָנִי = Humble, Modest**

“*Anav*” (albeit, spelled without a *yod*—י—in the written tradition) appears only once in the *Tanakh*—in Numbers 12:3, describing Moses as the most humble of people: וְהָאִישׁ מֹשֶׁה עָנִי [עָנִי] מְאֹד מִכָּל הָאָדָם אֲשֶׁר עַל-פְּנֵי הָאֲדָמָה: (“The man Moses was humble very much so, more than any other person who was on the face of the earth.”). In the narrative of Numbers 12, Moses the *Anav* is both utterly vulnerable to the malicious speech of his siblings yet utterly blessed by the Divine grace that seeks to retaliate against these hurtful words. In Verse 8, God describes the very intimacy of his dialogue with Moses the *Anav*: “פִּה אֶל-פִּי אֲדַבֵּר-בּוֹ” (“Mouth-to-mouth do I speak to him”). In acknowledging God as *Anav* in *Melukhah*, we imagine God, who was intimately on level with Moses, now substituted by the finest leadership quality of Moses himself. Through the attribute of being *Anav*, God, the greatest of powers in the universe, is the most humble Force in the universe: the most vulnerable Force we know (and we happen to know this vulnerable Force very personally); however, we also know how to use the force of our own words to hold up that which is *Anav* within *Melukhah*.

**Podeh = פּוֹדֶה = Redeemer/Redeeming**

The word “*Podeh*” appears only once in the *Tanakh*—in Psalm 34:23: “פּוֹדֶה ה' נַפְשׁ עַבְדָּיו וְלֹא יִאָשְׁמוּ כָּל-הַחֹסִים בּוֹ:” (“The Lord redeems the soul of God’s servants, and those who take shelter within God shall not be guilty.”) In this instance, God is a *Podeh* who guarantees our redemption upon our acceptance of God’s peace: a clear slate whereupon we bear no guilt, for the redemption of God the *Podeh*—according to *Halakhah*—gives us a chance to start over.

**Tzaddikav = צַדִּיקִים = God’s righteous ones**

The term “*Tzaddikav*”, never appearing as such in the *Tanakh*, refers to the select group of people whose pious and righteous actions reflect the actions of God. Each of these people with a clear slate (as one is when affected by God the *Podeh*) is able to do as Moses the *Anav* did: live a life emulating the actions of the Divine.

***Kadosh* = קדוּשׁ = Consecrated, Distinct, Holy, Separate, Set Aside**

The word “*Kadosh*” appears many, many times in the *Tanakh*. Although *Kadosh* means “holy,” it also means “distinct,” “separate,” “set aside,” or “consecrated.” God, via God’s *Melukhah*, is *Kadosh* for being both holy and utterly distinct from any other ruling body known to us.

***Rahum* = רַחוּם = Compassionate, Merciful**

“*Rahum*” appears 5 times in the *Tanakh* (Exodus 34:6, Deuteronomy 4:31, and Psalms 78:38, 86:15, and 103:8), each time in remarkably similar verses describing God as a merciful God, in relation to God’s forgiving of sins. Recalling God as *Rahum* in accordance with God’s own *Halakhah* helps us realize that mercy is not just some quality God holds; mercy is the law.

***Shin’anav* = שְׁנַיִם = God’s abundances, God’s multitudes, God’s repeaters, God’s repetitions, God’s students, God’s thousands, God’s troops**

The word *Shin’anav* is an alusive term never quite appearing in the *Tanakh*. Psalm 68:17 speaks of “אַלְפֵי שְׁנַיִם” (*Alfey shin’an*), which may mean “thousands upon thousands,” but the root of *Alfey* (alef-lamed-peh—א-ל-פ) can refer to (aside from “a thousand”) an “army commander,” and the word *Shin’an* is sometimes interpreted as meaning “a troop.” The word *shin’an* may be related to the root *shin-nun-nun* (שׁ-נ-נ), which means “to repeat” or “to sharpen” in the way that a multitude is a multiplication (or the repeated addition) of some number, or in the way that a troop must repeat and rehearse its skills in order to sharpen its collective cohesiveness, or in the way that a student must repeat and review material in order to sharpen one’s knowledge. Regardless of whether *Shin’anav* is literally God’s troops (human or celestial), God’s students, or God’s multitudes, the ambiguity of “*Shin’anav*” unites the many who defend God’s word through studying God’s Word with those who come to know God’s Word more intimately by compassionately defending a sacred life of righteousness.

***Takkif* = תַּקִּיף = Decisive, Forceful, Resolute, Tough**

***Tomekh* = תֹּמֵךְ = Supporting/Supportive**

***Temimav* = תְּמִימָיו = God’s innocent ones, God’s pure ones, God’s unblemished ones**

None of the acrostic-words beginning with *Tav* (ת) in this poem ever appear in the *Tanakh*; their meanings must be taken at face-value. Although God is *Takkif* in God’s *Melukhah*—declaring laws, rendering decisions, and conversing with those who populate God’s world—God is also *Tomekh* in accordance with *Halakhah*, for God is the ultimate Source of all altruism, and it is by God’s words and actions that miracles happen. For all those who come to trust in God by witnessing anything from any end of the spectrum along which God demonstrates such Divine uniqueness, the category of *Temimav* welcomes those willing to see themselves or to let God see them as without flaws—even if it be only for one sacred moment.

## TWO BONUS COMMENTARIES ON *KI LO NA'EH* TRANSLATED BY JONAH RANK INTO ENGLISH FROM THE HEBREW:

The commentary of Abrabanel (Lisbon 1437 - Venice 1508) as printed in *Haggadah Shel Pesah Im Peyrush Nahalat Ya'akov*.

**To God it is fitting; to God it shall be fitting** on account of that, during *Yetzi'at Mitzrayim*, everyone saw the *Melukhah* of the Blessed God—but not Pharaoh, King of *Mitzrayim*, or the rest of the rulers—for, behold: God released Israel from *Mitzrayim*, and *Mitzrayim* were drowned in the sea,<sup>1</sup> and all the settlers of Canaan melted away.<sup>2</sup> The *piyyut* says “*Na'eh*” and “*Ya'eh*” parallel to the heavens and the earth. The *piyyut* says “*Ya'eh*” (יָאֵה) on account of God being “soft” (*rakh*) to appease, for “*Ya'eh*” is the language of *rakh*—as in “and the eyes of Le'ah were soft [*rakkot*],”<sup>3</sup> the Aramaic translation of which is “*ya'ayan*” (יָאָיִן); or, the *piyyut* says “*Ya'eh*” on account of the verse “*Ki lo ya'ata*” (כִּי לֹא יָאֵתָהּ, “For that is Your due”)<sup>4</sup>. The *piyyut* says “*Lo Na'eh*” in a “hidden” fashion<sup>5</sup>, and does not say “*Lekha Na'eh*” (לְךָ נֵאֵה, “To You, it is fitting”)<sup>6</sup> in the presence of the Spirit<sup>7</sup>, parallel to the ways in which the universe was created, and parallel to the written *Torah* and the 35<sup>8</sup> tractates of *Talmud* written about them<sup>9</sup>. **Addir bimlukhah**: that is to say, it is fitting and it will be fitting to say of God that God is *Addir bimlukhah*. **Bahur kahalakhah**: so too, we say about God that God is the choicest among the remnant of divinity<sup>10</sup> for God is according to the rule and according to the religion and according to the law. **Gedudav**: these are the angels. **Lekha ulkha**: that is to say, “to You it is fitting to praise,”<sup>11</sup> for You informed us of Your

1. Abrabanel's language here alludes to Exodus 15:4.

2. Abrabanel's language here reflects Exodus 15:15.

3. Genesis 29:17.

4. Jeremiah 10:7.

5. Usually the term *beseter* (בְּסִתְרֵי) refers to allusive language that can only be understood through mystical conceptions.

6. These words appear in the *Hanukkah* hymn “*Ma'oz Tzur*” (מַעֲוֹז צֹר, “Powerful Rock,” usually translated as “Rock of Ages”), and in the second-to-last blessing of the *Amidah* in the words “*Hattov Shimkha Ulkha Na'eh Lehodot*” (הַטּוֹב שִׁמְךָ וְלֹךְ נֵאֵה לְהוֹדוֹת).

7. Presumably, the “Spirit” here means either “God” or the human “consciousness.” According to the former, Abarbanel argues that we don't directly address God here, and according to the latter, the words “*Lekha Na'eh*” might be what we would have expected the text to say.

8. The Hebrew here is רל"ה, presumably “and 35,” a reading that would render Abarbanel knowing of only 35 extant tractates of *Talmud*. Alternatively, the abbreviation in question could be understood as *veluhot habberit* (וְלוֹחוֹת הַבְּרִית, “the Tablets of the Covenant,” as in “the Ten Commandments”).

9. According to Abarbanel, the *Torah* and *Talmud* indirectly tell of the ways in which God created the universe, just as we indirectly praise God through the third-person language of this *piyyut*.

10. The Hebrew of *She'ar Elohut* “אֵלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים” seems to imply that Abarbanel recognizes God is being part of, if not a pantheon, then a spectrum of divinity or Godliness. From among all the godly things Abarbanel recognizes, God is deemed the best.

11. This Hebrew, “לְךָ נֵאֵה לְשַׁבְּחָהּ” (“*Lekha na'eh leshabbe'ah*”) appears in *Ma'oz Tzur*.

greatness in *Mitzrayim*; **and, to You** it is also fitting to praise for those who are with You, for example, the angels whom You informed of your cherishing of Israel, because you did not cast them to go down to commit vengeance upon *Mitzrayim*—rather, You did this Yourself in Your substance and in Your hiddenness. The *Piyyut* mentions “*Lekha*” 7 times, parallel to the 7 firmaments from which the Holy Blessed One descended in order to redeem Israel—as they are vessels<sup>12</sup> and God is *Melekh* over all of them and over all that is inside of them; or, the *Piyyut* mentions “*Lekha*” 7 times, parallel to the 7 planets, or parallel to the 7 days of the week; or, the *Piyyut* mentions “*Lekha*” 7 times parallel to the 7 texts in which *Lekha* is written:<sup>13</sup> “*Lekha Adonai Haggedullah*” (לָךְ ה' הַגְּדוּלָהּ, “**To You Adonai is greatness**”)<sup>14</sup>, “*Lekha Adonai Hammamlakhah*” (לָךְ ה' הַמְּמַלְכָהּ, “**To You Adonai is Sovereignty**”)<sup>15</sup>, “*Ki Lekha Ya'atah*” (כִּי לָךְ יָאֲתָהּ, “**As that is the due to You**”)<sup>16</sup>, “*Lekha zero'a im gevurah*” (לָךְ זְרוּעַ עִם-גְּבוּרָה, “**To You is an arm of strength**”)<sup>17</sup>, “*Lekha yom af [lekha]*<sup>18</sup> *lailah*” (לָךְ יוֹם אַף-לָךְ לַיְלָה, “**To You is the day, and also [to You]**<sup>20</sup> **is the night**”)<sup>21</sup>, and “*Lekha shamayim af Lekha aretz*” (לָךְ שָׁמַיִם אַף-לָךְ אֶרֶץ, “**To You are the heavens, and also to You is the earth**”)<sup>22</sup>. But, “*Lekha yom*” and “*Lekha lailah*”<sup>23</sup> are considered as one<sup>24</sup>. *Vatikav*: Israel, and this is a matter of piety as in “*Vatikin* would complete [their recitation of *Shema* with the precise budding moment of the sunrise]”<sup>25</sup>. *Hasin*: a matter of strength. *Tafserav*: God’s angels, and this is the subject of a commander and an officer. *Kabbir*: this is language of power and force. *Limmudav*: Israel. *Sevivav*: angels. *Tzeva'av*: Israel. *Shin'anav*: God’s angels.

In *Binyan David*, the commentary of *Devar Tzevi* says:

***Lekha af Lekha***. For if the Holy Blessed One were not to help one, one would not be able to thank the One (Kiddushin 30b); if God helps out one<sup>26</sup> in being able to thank *Lekha*—and also *Af Lekha*: this too is how *Lekha precisely* belongs.

12. The Hebrew *Kelim* (כֵּלִים) here seems to imply that humans are mere objects which God can control at will.

13. In reference to God, presumably. There however are many other Biblical references to God with the term *Lekha*.

14. I Chronicles 29:11.

15. I Chronicles 29:11.

16. Jeremiah 10:7.

17. Psalm 89:14.

18. This word is omitted in Abrabanel’s comment here.

19. This word is omitted in Abrabanel’s comment here.

20. This word is omitted in Abrabanel’s comment here.

21. Psalm 74:16.

22. Psalm 89:12.

23. Of Psalm 74:16.

24. They are not considered separate countings of the word “*Lekha*.”

25. As referenced in the Babylonian Talmud (Berakhot 9b, 25b and 26a) and the later medieval *Yalkut Shim'oni* (Psalms, Section 606).

26. Individual.