

A Vocabulary of Desire

The Song of Songs in the Early Synagogue

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CHAPTER 10

Like Stars of Light: Eleazar (birabbi Qallir?), *Yotzer Shir ha-Shirim*

Eleazar (birabbi Qallir?—late sixth century, Galilee)

Yotzer Shir ha-Shirim (Davidson 8 8007)¹

This piyyut is the earliest known Song of Songs *yotzer*. A *yotzer* is a piyyut that embellishes the prayers that precede the morning Shema (the Yotzer Or and Ahavat Olam, as well as the Qedushah de Yotzer); the term also refers to the first unit of such a piyyut. Although the earliest *yotzerot* date from the classical period of piyyut, if not earlier,² the genre did not become popular until the Middle Ages; eventually, the *yotzer* displaced the *qedushta* in popularity. While we now possess pre-classical *yotzerot* from among the Cairo Genizah treasures, this poem is particularly valuable because it represents the earliest example of what would become the most popular medieval genre of Song of Songs poem. In the centuries after Qallir, a lineage of Song of Songs *yotzerot* came into being—most famously, “Light of Salvation for the Upright” (*Or Yesha Me’usharim*) by Solomon ha-Bavli (Rome, tenth century), recited on the first day of Passover in the standard Ashkenazi rite; “I Will Utter Prayer and Song” (*Afiq Renen ve-Shirim*) by Meshullam bar Qalonymos (Lucca-Mainz, tenth–eleventh century), read on the second day; and “Your Loved Ones Love You” (*Ahuvékha Ahevukha*) by Simeon bar Isaac (Mainz, tenth century), read on the intermediate Sabbath. The Qalliri’s *yotzer* is thus the prototype of what would prove to be an enduring Ashkenazic liturgical genre, even though it did not remain in liturgical use in any Ashkenazic or other Western European rite.³ The

1 The translation is based on the Ma’agarim text. The text was first published by Fleischer, *Solomon ha-Bavli*, 371–377.

2 Fleischer’s *The Yotzer* is the definitive treatment of the genre as a whole; he discusses this piyyut in several locations in that volume, particularly in his account of the development of the medieval Passover *yotzerot* (106n, 287n, 651, 674–676, 691–693, 699–701). On the origins of the *yotzer* as a liturgical rubric, see also the discussion in Aharon Mirsky, “Origins of the Blessings of the Yotzer” [in Hebrew], in *HaPiyyut*, 11–17.

3 The Qalliri’s *yotzer* is preserved in the Cairo Geniza and in one unique European rite, Minhag Candia (the rite of the Jews of Crete), where it appears in MS London Asher Meyer, from which Zunz knew of it (my thanks to Gabriel Wasserman for this information). The European works

liturgical setting of the *yotzer*, quite different from that of the *qedushta*, encouraged the poet towards a different thematic focus than we have seen in the other early Song of Songs piyyutim. The poem sparkles with *yotzer*-influenced images of light and is rich with angelological references, and much of the poem reflects the benedictory rubric of creation-revelation-redemption that surrounds the Shema. The poet's individual voice is distinctive throughout.

Yotzer Shir ha Shirim for Passover (Eleazar [beRabbi Qallir?], late sixth century, Galilee)

אלעזר (בירבי קליר)

יוצר שיר השירים לפסח

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם יוצר אור ובורא חושך עשה שלום ובורא את הכל
אור עולם / אוצר חיים / אורות מאופל / אמר ויהי

יוצר: יחידה א

אֲשִׁירָה וְאֶזְמְרָה שְׁמוֹ	1
אֶשְׁנֶן חֲמִשָּׁה־אֲלֶף מִשִּׁירֵי שְׁלוֹמוֹ	
שִׁיר הַשִּׁירִים אֲשֶׁר לְשִׁלְמֹה	2
בְּאַהֲבָה וּבְחֶשֶׁק וּבְחֵשֶׁק	3
בְּתוֹרָה וּבְמִשְׁנֵה הַמִּשְׁנָה	

Blessed are You, O Lord our God, Ruler of the world, who fashions light and creates darkness, who makes peace, and creates all: / Eternal light / (from within the) storehouse of life; / "Light from out of darkness!" / He said, "... And it was so."

Unit 1: *Yotzer* (Song 1:1–2:7)⁴

- 1 I will sing and I will make music (to) His name⁵ / I will study five-and-a-thousand songs from His complete treasury of songs⁶
- 2 *The Song of Songs, which is Solomon's*⁷
- 3 With love and with affection and with desire / with the Torah and with the Mishnah so desirable

4 This unit embeds an alphabetical acrostic, one letter per line; the refrain contains an acrostic that spells out the poet's name, Eleazar. The Song citation follows its embellishment here, as in unit 6, creating a symmetrical structure; in the interior units the citation precedes the embellishment, as is customary.

5 Judg 5:3.

6 1Kgs 5:12; here "songs" may be equated with Torah.

7 A pun on "his complete (works)" (*shillumo*) and "Solomon" (*shelomoh*). "Solomon" is understood here as a code name for God, "the King to whom peace belongs" (*ha-melekh she-ha-shalom she'io*).

that participate in this lineage of *yotzerot* are listed in an appendix to Fleischer, *Solomon ha-Bavli*, 378–379.

	יִשְׁקֵנִי מִנְּשִׁיקוֹת	4
	גְּלִי יָם עֲבַרְתִּי נְחִיבִים	5
	גָּהַץ לִבִּי בַדְּבָרִים עֲרֻבִים	
	לְרִיחַ שְׁמֵנֶיךָ טוֹבִים	6
	פזמון:	
	אֲנַצִּיחַ לָךְ אֲדִיר וְנֹאזֵר	
	עֹשֶׂה כְּשִׁלְמָה אֹר	
	זָרַח לְחַשְׁכֹּתֵינוּ אֹר	
	רְאוֹת בְּאֹרֶךְ נִרְאָה אֹר – קְדוֹשׁ	
	דוֹדֵי לִישְׁעֵי כִנְצָא דְבָרָה יָפָה כְּתַרְצָה	7

4 *Let Him kiss me with kisses!*

5 Through the waves of the sea I crossed on pathways / My heart rejoiced in sweet words

6 *For the scent of Your oils is good*

Refrain:⁸

I will glorify⁹ You, O Magnificent and Radiant One¹⁰

Robed, as with a garment, in light¹¹

Make light shine upon our darkness¹²

To see (that) “In Your light we shall see light”¹³—*O Holy One!*

7 “My Beloved, For my salvation He went forth”¹⁴—She who is beautiful like Tirzah¹⁵ spoke:

8 The refrain spells out the name “Eleazar.”

9 The root *n-tz-h* has connotations of brightness, making it especially appropriate for a *yotzer*.

10 Ps 76:5.

11 Ps 104:2.

12 Ps 139:12.

13 Ps 36:10.

14 Isa 51:5.

15 A pun on the root *r-tz-h*, “to be willing.”

	קִישְׁנִי אַחֲרֶיךָ נִרְצָה	8
	הֵבִיאֵנִי אֶל־בֵּית־הַיַּיִן וְדִגְלוּ עָלַי אַהֲבָה	9
	הוֹדוּ עָלַי שִׁוְהָ	
	שְׁתַּחֲרַח אֲנִי וְנֹאזִיחַ	10
	וְשָׁמְנֵי כְרָמִים נוֹטְרֹת	11
	וּמֹזֵר וּלְבוֹנָה מְקַטְרֹת	
	אֵל תִּרְאוּנִי שְׁאֲנִי שְׁחַרְחַרְתִּי	12
	אֲנַצִּיחַ לָךְ אֲדִיר וְנֹאזֵר	
	עֹשֶׂה כְּשִׁלְמָה אֹר	
	זָרַח לְחַשְׁכֹּתֵינוּ אֹר	
	רְאוֹת בְּאֹרֶךְ נִרְאָה אֹר – קְדוֹשׁ	

8 “Draw me after You! Let us run!”

9 He brought me to the house of wine and His banner over me was love¹⁶ / He set His splendor over me

10 *I was black but lovely*

11 He made me a guardian over vineyards¹⁷ / perfumed with myrrh and frankincense¹⁸

12 *Do not look upon me, that I am darkened*

Refrain:

I will glorify You, O Magnificent and Radiant One

Robed, as with a garment, in light

Make light shine upon our darkness

To see (that) “In Your light we shall see light”—*O Holy One!*

16 A quotation of Song 2:4, interpreted in *Song Rab.* and others as a reference to Sinai.

17 This phrase, from Song 1:6, anticipates the lemma, from the same verse.

18 Song 3:6, describing here the speaker.

- זמן יצאתי חפשי 13
 זממתי למרוממי מרפשי
 הגידה לי טאהבה נפשי 14
 חמושים כעלו מענושים
 חק לידעם בפרושים
 אם-לא תדעי לך היקה בנשים 16
 טמאים פרעות בפרעה
 טס על עב קל לרועעו
 לסוסי ברכבי פרעה 18

- 13 At the time of "I went forth to freedom"¹⁹ / I murmured against the One who lifts me up from my filth²⁰
 14 *Tell me, You whom my soul loves*
 15 Platoons of fifty,²¹ when they went up from their oppression / A law to inform them, with its interpretation²²
 16 *If you don't know, O most beautiful of women!*
 17 (Against) the impure ones, He took His retribution²³ / He flew upon a swift cloud²⁴ to smash him
 18 *Like a mare in the chariots of Pharaoh*

19 Exod 21:2, the opening of the laws for freeing a Hebrew bondsman, is here put into the mouth of Israel at the time of the Exodus.

20 A reference to Israel's complaints against God and Moses in the wilderness, from Exod 14 on.

21 Exod 13:18; the word *hamushim* has military connotations, "arrayed for battle in groups of fifty."

22 The poet here juxtaposes the Exodus with Sinai.

23 Judg 5:2, but here alluding to the Egyptians. Pharaoh's presence is suggested through the unusual spelling of "in His taking retribution" (*be-far'o*) with a final *heh* rather than a final *vav* (see, similarly, Exod 32:25). Qallir has reversed the word-order from Judg 5:2 for the sake of the rhyme.

24 Isa 19:1, which opens an oracle against Egypt.

- אנציה לך אדיר ונאור
 עוטה בשלמה אור
 ורח לשכתנו אור
 ראות באורך נראה אור – קדוש
 יזה נכתר בים בתרים 19
 וינה השמיע מסתרים
 נאוו לחייו בתרים 20
 כח ים בהסלילך 21
 כלה שוורה לסלסלך
 תורי זהב נעשה לך 22

Refrain:

I will glorify You, O Magnificent and Radiant One

Robed, as with a garment, in light

Make light shine upon our darkness

To see (that) "In Your light we shall see light"—*O Holy One!*

- 19 Yah was crowned with crowns at the sea²⁵ / He proclaimed to the dove from within (her) hiding places:²⁶
 20 *How lovely are your cheeks in bands*
 21 The might of the sea when You tread upon (it) / a bride singing forth in hope to your tendrils²⁷
 22 *Bands of gold we will make for You*

25 This stich alludes to the aggadic tradition that God is crowned by Israel, particularly through their prayers (and *is* connected, thus, to the *qedushat de-yotzer*). Similarly, God was crowned by Israel when they sang His praises at the sea.

26 An allusion to Song 2:14; with slightly different pointing, this stich could be translated, "He proclaimed (divine) mysteries to the dove."

27 Song 4:8 and Jer 6:9; the image is that of ancestors and their descendants ("tendrils"). The Hebrew *shorerah* has multiple potential meanings, including "to look" (as in Song 4:8) and "to sing" (2 Chr 29:28); the poet may have intended the word to have overlapping nuances here, hence the translation "singing forth in hope."

לִידִים מִחֵץ בְּחַרְבוֹ 23

לְהוֹצִיא עִם אֲשֶׁר בָּחַר בּוֹ

עַד שֶׁחֲמַלְךָ בְּמִסְבּוֹ 24

אֲנַצִּיחַ לְךָ אֲדִיר וְנֹאֹר

עוֹטָה כְּשֶׁלֶמָה אֹר

יָרַח לְחֶשְׁכֵינוּ אֹר

יָרְאוֹת בְּאֹרֶךְ נִרְאָה אֹר – קְדוֹשׁ

מִפְּרֶךְ צוֹעֲנִים כְּהַעֲלִי 25

מִלְּלַתִּי בְּזִמְרַת הַלּוּלִי

גִּדּוֹר הַמֵּר דוּדֵי לִי 26

גִּרְדֵּךְ וּכְרַכְּךָ עִטְרֵנִי יְדִידִי 27

נָעַם מִן וּשְׁלִיחַ לְעוֹדְדִי

אֲטִבּוֹל הַכֶּפֶר דוּדֵי 28

23 The people of Lud²⁸ He smote with His sword / to bring forth the people He had chosen

24 *While yet the King was upon His couch*

Refrain:

I will glorify You, O Magnificent and Radiant One

Robed, as with a garment, in light

Make light shine upon our darkness

To see (that) "In Your light we shall see light"—*O Holy One!*

25 From enslavement to those of Zoan, when He brought me up / I spoke with music my praise

26 *A bundle of myrrh is my Beloved to me*

27 (With) nard and saffron my Darling crowned me / (with) the comfort of manna and tranquility, to strengthen me

28 *A garland of henna blossoms is my Beloved to me*

28 Egypt; Gen 10:22, etc.

כַּח לִי צוּרִי בְּגִלְיוֹתַי 29

סִגְלַת צֹאן מִרְעִיתִי

הַקֶּה יִפְּחֵה רֵעִיתִי 30

אֲנַצִּיחַ לְךָ אֲדִיר וְנֹאֹר

עוֹטָה כְּשֶׁלֶמָה אֹר

יָרַח לְחֶשְׁכֵינוּ אֹר

יָרְאוֹת בְּאֹרֶךְ נִרְאָה אֹר – קְדוֹשׁ

עֲנִיתִי בְּשִׁיר נְעֻנְעִים 31

עֲנִינוּ זְמֶר נָעִים

הַקֶּה יִפְּחֵה דוּדֵי אֲחִי־נָעִים 32

פְּדוּיָה מִעַם לוֹעֲזִים 33

פָּאֵר צִנְאֶרֶךְ חֲרוּזִים

קוֹדוֹת כְּתִינוּ אֲרִזִּים 34

29 My Rock spoke to me as I ascended / "Choicest of the flock which I tend"

30 *Indeed, you are beautiful, My friend!*

Refrain:

I will glorify You, O Magnificent and Radiant One

Robed, as with a garment, in light

Make light shine upon our darkness

To see (that) "In Your light we shall see light"—*O Holy One!*

31 I responded²⁹ with a song of sistrums / (it is) a matter for music most sweet

32 *Indeed, You are beautiful my Beloved, most pleasant!*

33 Rescued from a people of strange language³⁰ / He adorned your neck with a strand of pearls

34 *The beams of our house are cedars*

29 A pun on the homonym 'anah, "to sing."

30 Isa 33:19.

- 35 צוענים מחצו בשרון / צאתי בהון וכשרון
36 אני תבועלת השרון
- אנצית לך אדיר ונאור
עוטה בשלמה אור
ירח לחשכתניו אור
ראות באורך נראה אור – קדוש
- 37 קלע באפו כסלוחים / קמתי לרוממו בשבוחים
38 כשוטנה בין החוחים*
- 39 רוממוהו יושבי שער / רננהו זמן עם גער
- 35 The people of Zoan were struck with destruction³¹ / (while) I went forth with wealth and profit³²
36 *I am the rose of Sharon*
- Refrain:
I will glorify You, O Magnificent and Radiant One
Robed, as with a garment, in light
Make light shine upon our darkness
To see (that) “In Your light we shall see light”—*O Holy One!*
- 37 He flung away the Kasluhim in His anger³³ / I arose to exalt Him with praises³⁴
38 *Like a rose among the thorns*
- 39 Exalt Him, you who dwell in the gate³⁵ / and rejoice in Him, old with young

* נוסח אחר: קיטל באפו כסלוחים / קם לדמותו ככסוחים / כשוטנה בין החוחים

31 Jer 17:18; while in modern Hebrew, “Zoanim” means Gypsies, in classical Hebrew it refers to the Egyptians (specifically the Egyptian city of Zoan).

32 Allusion to despoiling the Egyptians; Exod 3:22.

33 *Kasluhim* refers to the Egyptians; see Gen 10:14 and 1 Chr 1:12. The rest of the language recalls 1 Sam 25:29.

34 The alternative version offered by Ma’agarim states: “In His anger, He slaughtered the Kasluhim / He arose to make him resemble those who are cut off.”

35 Cf. Ps 69:13, “They who sit in the gate.”

- 40 כתפסו בגצי הקער / שת צרי קאין
41 שמרני פאישון בת ען / הביאני אל בית הין
42 אנצית לך אדיר ונאור / עוטה בשלמה אור
ירח לחשכתניו אור
ראות באורך נראה אור – קדוש
- 43 תינתי בבקשות / תתו לי עוגות מלושלוש
44 סמכוני באשיות
- 40 *Like an apple tree among the trees of the forest*
- 41 He made my enemies like nothing / He protected me like the apple of His eye³⁶
42 *He brought me to the house of wine*
- Refrain:
I will glorify You, O Magnificent and Radiant One
Robed, as with a garment, in light
Make light shine upon our darkness
To see (that) “In Your light we shall see light”—*O Holy One!*
- 43 I doubled my requests³⁷ / for Him to give me thrice-kneaded cakes:
44 *Sustain me with flagons of wine*

36 Ps 17:8.

37 The verb *tinmiti* is a Piel form from the root *t-n-h*, “to speak, lament,” but also, in Aramaic, “to repeat” and hence “to double.” The second half of the line employs the term *melushlashot*, which can mean simply “well-kneaded cakes” but takes on extra wit when understood as punning on the “doubling” in the first colon (with thanks to Gene McGarry).

תועה מארצו כגְרָשִׁי	45
תקיף דתו הורְשִׁי	
שְׂמָאלוֹ תַחַת לְרַאשִׁי	46
תמימים יצאו על עֲבֹאוֹת	47
תְּכוּנִים בְּעֵבֶר וְאוֹת	
הַשְּׁבַעְתִּי אֶתְכֶם בְּנֹת יְרוּשָׁלַם בְּעֵבֶר	48
אֲנַעֲיָה לְךָ אֲדִיר וְנֹאזֵר	
עֹטָה כִּשְׁלֵמָה אוֹר	
יִרְחַח לְחֶשְׁכֵינוּ אוֹר	
רְאוֹת בְּאוֹרְךָ נִרְאָה אוֹר – קְדוֹשׁ	

- 45 Wandering from his land when he drove me forth³⁸ / The Mighty One bequeathed me His law³⁹
- 46 *His left hand is under my head*
- 47 Pure ones went forth according to their hosts⁴⁰ / arrayed by army and sign
- 48 *I adjure you, daughters of Jerusalem, by the hosts⁴¹*

Refrain:

I will glorify You, O Magnificent and Radiant One
 Robed, as with a garment, in light
 Make light shine upon our darkness
 To see (that) "In Your light we shall see light"—*O Holy One!*

- 38 That is: I wandered in the wilderness after Pharaoh hastened my departure from his territory. See Exod 6:1 ("and with a mighty hand he [Pharaoh] shall drive them forth [*yegarshem*] from his land").
- 39 While in the wilderness, God gives Israel the Torah ("Mighty One" echoes the implied "mighty hand" of Exod 6:1). Overall, this line juxtaposes the cruel and short-sighted actions of Pharaoh ("he" in the first stich) with the beneficent, enduring gifts of God ("the Mighty One" in the second stich).
- 40 Exod 6:26, 12:51; the presence of accompanying divine hosts may also be implied.
- 41 A pun on *tzava'*, which in the context of Song 2:7 means "hind/doe" but here means "host" (as in angelic hosts) and hearkens back to the image of the army in the previous stich; see *Song Rab.* 2:20.

סילוק: יחידה ב

אופנים וגדודים	קול	49
האמה מסלדים	דומה	
גאלה למשעבדים	ענה	50
דולקו אש גדלו מגידים	כי	
הפיחו	הנענים	51
ופגיה ורחו	התאנה	
זמירוניה האגריחו	יונתי	52
חורשיה וברחו	אחזו לנו	

Unit 2: *Silluq* (Song 2:8–4:11)⁴²

- 49 *The sound / of the Ofanim and the Legions⁴³ // It resembles / those who jump for joy⁴⁴ in love*
- 50 *He answered / with redemption for the enslaved // Even / those who kindle fire⁴⁵ declare His greatness*
- 51 *The blossoms / wafted (scent) // The fig-tree / and its unripened figs appeared radiant⁴⁶*
- 52 *My dove / her songs they welcomed⁴⁷ / Catch for us / those who plot against her—and slip away!⁴⁸*

42 An alphabetical acrostic, one letter per stich.

43 Lit., "bands," a reference to the angelic host; see Job 19:12, 25:3; Mic 4:14.

44 Job 6:10.

45 Adapted from Ezek 24:10, where it describes a symbolic act representing the destruction of Jerusalem. Here it becomes a positive, or at least redemptive, identifier.

46 The root *z-r-h* has connotations of shining that the present translation attempts to capture.

47 "My dove" refers to Israel. "They" refers to the angels as Israel went forth, who welcomed Israel and helped to show them the way (*orah*).

48 Lit., "flee." "Those who plot against her" renders "the foxes" of the lemma, i.e., the Egyptians. The Israelites then escape.

טַעֲמֵי מִתּוֹקִים	דְּוִד	53
וְבָאֲרָם לְהוֹגֵי מִמֶּתֶּקִים	עַד	
בְּרוֹבֵים בְּסֵאוֹ תְּקוּקִים	עַל	54
לְקַדֵּשׁ שִׁירוֹ מִפִּיקִים	אֶקְדֶּמָה	
מִתְנַחֵת קְדוּשִׁים	מִצְאֵינִי	55
נוֹצְצֵי קְדִישִׁין	מִמַּעַט	
שָׂרְפֵי תְּשֻׁשִׁים	הִשְׁבַּעְתִּי	56
עֲדַת מִקְדָּשִׁים	מִי זֹאת	

- 53 *My Beloved* / His ordinances are sweet // *While yet* / He will explain them to those who meditate upon sweet things
- 54 *Upon* / engraved cherubim is His throne⁴⁹ // *Let me arise* / to sanctify (Him), (with) those who pour forth His song⁵⁰
- 55 *They found me* /—(the) holy camps—// *Scarcely [had I left them]* /—the sparkling Holy Ones⁵¹
- 56 *I adjured* / the burning⁵² Seraphim // “*Who is this?*” / The congregation of the sanctified

- 49 See Ps 80:2. This line seems to refer to a tradition (recorded in *b. Hag. 13b*) according to which images of the face of a cherub are engraved on God’s throne (in response to Ezekiel’s prayer that the face of the ox, a reminder of the golden calf, be replaced). Here, however, the language suggests multiple cherubic images. Alternatively, this might be a pleonastic reference to Jacob’s features being engraved on God’s throne, which is borne aloft by the cherubs (thus: “*Upon* / cherubim is His engraved throne”).
- 50 A conflation of the Song of Songs and the Qedushah as God’s songs. While the language of this line is difficult, the sense is that the speaker here joins the angels (the cherubim who pour forth their prayer) in worship.
- 51 Ezek 1:7; the image is of the poet/Israel arriving just as the angels (Holy Ones) commence prayer. I have supplied two additional words from the lemma to clarify the image.
- 52 For this translation, see Isa 5:24; while this understanding of the root *h-sh-sh* fell out of common usage in rabbinic Hebrew, it reappeared in payyetic Hebrew. See Zulay, “Matters of Language in the Liturgical Poetry of Yannai,” 195, with thanks to Gabriel Wasserman (who credits Yaron Zini) for this reference.

פְּלֻדוֹת אֵשׁ מֵאֲשָׁשִׁים	הַנָּה	57
צְנוּפֵי אִישִׁים	כֶּלֶם	
קָדָשׁ קְדָשִׁים	אֶפְרַיִן	58
רְצוּפֵי שִׁישִׁים	עַמּוּדָיו	
שְׂאֲנוֹת נָשִׁים	צְאֵינָה	59
שְׁלֹלָה מְגוּזֵי קְדָשִׁים	הַנֶּקֶד	
תּוֹקְנֵי תַרְשִׁישִׁים	טַגְיָה	60
שְׁפַתְחֵיךְ הַשִּׁים	כַּחַט הַשָּׁנִי	

- 57 *Indeed* / torches of smoldering flame⁵³ (are they) // *All of them* / turbaned princes⁵⁴
- 58 *A palanquin* / is the Holy of Holies // Its pillars / are inlaid with alabaster
- 59 *Go forth*⁵⁵ / O most carefree of women // *Indeed, you are* / freed⁵⁶ from a nation of prostitutes⁵⁷
- 60 *Your teeth* / (have) the might of Tarshishim⁵⁸ // *Like a scarlet thread, your lips* / are whispering⁵⁹

53 Nah 2:4.

54 The translation of *ishim* (an unusual plural of *ish*).

55 The verb is plural and speaks to “the women” but in the following *stich*, the speaker seems to single out an individual (i.e., Israel).

56 Lit., “taken as plunder,” perhaps alluding to the Israelites despoiling the Egyptians (here associated with sexual licentiousness). That is, the Israelites plundered Egypt when they took their wealth, and God plundered Egypt when He freed the Israelites. Yet, because the surrounding lines refer to the Temple rather than the Exodus from Egypt, the word *qedeshim* could, alternatively, be vocalized as *qaddishim*, “angels, holy beings,” and understood as reference to Moses’ acquisition of the Torah, despite angelic opposition—a common aggadic motif.

57 The poet refers to Egypt here as (male) cult prostitutes; perhaps a derogatory descriptor of religious practices along the lines of Lev 18:3.

58 A kind of jewel (perhaps *topaz*); used here to refer to a category of angel, based on Ezek 1:16.

59 A description of prayer.

רָכַב וּפָרָשִׁים	כַּמְגֵּדָל	61
עֲשָׂרוֹנִים מְגִישִׁים	שֵׁנִי	
עוֹגוֹת בְּלֵי הַמֶּצֶה לְשֵׁים	עַד	62
הַקִּים לְהַפְצִיחֵם דְּרוֹשִׁים	כֶּלֶךְ	
מִצְוֹתֶיהָ יוֹרְשִׁים	אֵתִי	63
כְּעִירֵי יְקָדִישֵׁן	לְבַבְתִּי	
לְקַדוֹשׁ מְקַדְּשֵׁן	מִן יָפוֹ	64
מְסִיפִים וּמְשִׁלְּשִׁים	נֶפֶת	

- 61 *Like a fortress* / (with) chariots and teams of horses⁶⁰ // *two-* / tenths presenting⁶¹
- 62 *While* / cakes without leaven kneading⁶² // *You, in your entirety*, / (received) laws sought for their delights⁶³
- 63 *With Me* / her laws they will possess // *Hearten Me* / like the Wakeners and the Holy Ones⁶⁴
- 64 *How beautiful* / to the Holy One as they sanctify // *Flowing* / pouring forth (prayer) and doing so threefold⁶⁵

60 A difficult line that lends itself to several possible readings. The “tower” or “fortress” in Song 4:4 (see also Song 7:5) is usually understood as the Temple, but here it may refer to the dangerous flight of Israel from Egypt; Exod 14:2 puts the Israelites between Migdol (a pun on *migdal*, “fortress”) and the sea as the Egyptian chariotry and horses approach. Alternatively, “chariots and horsemen” could allude to the divine chariot here (see 1 Kgs 10:26, describing Solomon; the lemma refers to David, i.e., the Beloved) or it could metaphorically describe Israel’s might. The line may also pun on the root *g-d-l*, “to make great” (as in the language of the Qedushah) and *p-r-sh* in the sense of “interpreting.”

61 The word *maggish* used of offerings occurs only in Malachi. The phrase “two-tenths” probably refers to the recipe for the meal offering in Lev 23:13 (“two-tenths of an ephah of flour mixed with oil”; see also Lev 24:5; Num 28:9; 29:3); the next stich refers to the meal offering. However, it may also suggest the *ma’aser sheni*, the second tithe.

62 The meal offering must be unleavened; see Exod 29:2 (the investiture of Aaron), Lev 2:11, etc.

63 *Song Rab.* 4:17 understands the phrase “You are wholly beautiful,” from the lemma, as referring to Israel at Sinai. Here it seems to underscore the fact that the Torah was given to all Israel (men, women, children). The gift of Torah predates the institution of various rituals, such as the one described in the first stich. The word “sought” (*derushim*) implies exegesis (as in “midrash”) as well as possession.

64 Two kinds of angels; see Dan 4:14. The preposition *ke-* may possibly be rendered “with.”

65 A reference to the three festivals as well as the threefold repetition of “Holy, holy, holy” in the Qedushah.

לְאֵל נֶעְרַץ בְּסוּד קְדוּשִׁים

זה מזה מקבלים ואומרים: קדוש קדוש קדוש יי צבאות מלא כל הארץ כבודו

אופן: יחידה 1

אֲרָאִים וְגַל אֹפָנִים	גַּ	65
בְּרָקִים לְכָל-צַד פּוֹנִים	שְׁלֵחֵךְ	
גִּנְתְּךָ בְּשֵׁם טְעוּנִים	נֶרֶךְ	66
דְּבַשׁ וְחֶלֶב מִכְּנִים	מִעֵן	
הַבִּיעִי זְמַר וּרְנָנִים	עִירִי	67
וְשִׁמְעֵתִי קוֹל מְרַנְּנִים	בְּאֵתִי	
זְמַר בְּשׁוֹנִים	אֶרְיִתִי	68
הַדְּשִׁים גַּם וְשֵׁנִים	אֲכַלְוּ רְעִים	

To the God adored in the circle of Holy Ones:⁶⁶

This one receives from that one and says: “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts; all the earth is filled with His glory!” (Isa 6:3)

Unit 3: *Ofan* (Song 4:12–6:3)⁶⁷

- 65 *A garden* / of Erelim and a fountain of Ofanim⁶⁸ // *Your limbs* / are lightning bolts, turning every which way
- 66 *Nard* / is Your garden, loaded with spices // *A fountain* / of honey and milk prepared
- 67 *Arise* / Gush with song and rejoicing // *I came* / and I heard the sound of rejoicers
- 68 *I plucked* / song with learning⁶⁹ // *Eat, friends* / new things and old things, too

66 “Holy Ones” describes both the angels and Israel.

67 An alphabetical acrostic, one letter per stich.

68 The Erelim and Ofanim are two types of angels.

69 The phrase evokes both musical skill and pedagogy, which in turn indicates the blurring between “song” and “Torah.” The image of a skilled musician becomes the image of the rabbinic sage.

	טְבוּעָה וַיִּשְׁכַּח בְּגָנִים	אָנִי	69
	דִּי לְתוֹפֵף בְּגַנְנִים	קִטְטִיתִי	
	כְּבוֹדוֹ בְּפֶאֶר מְשֻׁנָּים	הַיְדִי	70
	לְשִׁבְחוֹ בְּשִׁית תְּהַנְנִים	קִמְתִּי	
	מֵעַנִי מוֹל כְּרוּבִים הַמְתַּנְּנִים	קִתְחִיתִי	71
	נוֹאֲקָת מְרֻצוֹן לְבָנִים	מִצְאָאִי	
	שְׂרָפִים קְדוֹשׁ עוֹנִים	הַטְּבַעֲתִי	72
	עָנּוּ מְצִיבֵי צִיּוֹנִים	מִהַ דִּדְךָ	
69	<i>I / am sealed</i> ⁷⁰ and dwell in gardens // <i>I spread / my hand to play musical instruments</i>		
70	<i>My Beloved / His glory is in the explication of those who learn // I arose / to praise Him with entreaties</i>		
71	<i>I began</i> ⁷¹ / my answer in front of the reciting ⁷² cherubim // <i>They found me / groaning from the oppression of bricks</i> ⁷³		
72	<i>I adjured / the Seraphim who answer "Holy"</i> ⁷⁴ // <i>"What is your Beloved (like)" / answered those who erect the markers</i> ⁷⁵		

70 As a verb, the root *t-b-* has connotations of lowliness and being sunken, but as a noun it indicates something engraved or pressed, such as a signet ring or a minted coin, and through that has marital connotations, as in the vow, "By this ring ..."

71 Lit., "opened."

72 Taking *ha-metannim* from the root *t-n-n*.

73 That is, Egyptian slavery.

74 An allusion to the angelic liturgy of Isa 6, the core of the Qedushah prayer.

75 An allusion to the messianic imagery of Jer 31:21. The term "those who erect the markers" here describes angels.

פֶּאֶרוֹ מְלֵאכִים מְזַמְנִים	דוּדֵי	73
צְנוּף כְּתֵר מְשֻׁנָּים	רֵאשׁוֹ	
קְצוֹת נִיא צוֹפּוֹת צְפוּנִים	עֵינָיו	74
רְצוּא וְשׁוּב פּוֹנִים	לְחָיו	
שְׁלַח לְחַפְשֵׁי מִמְעַנִּים	יָדָיו	75
שִׁבְחוֹ כְּתִי שְׁנֵאנִים	שׁוֹקֵיו	
הַרְשִׁישִׁים הַמוֹנִים הַמוֹנִים	חֲבוֹ	76
תְּקַפּוּ בְּעֵלְיוֹנִים וּבַתְּחִתּוֹנִים	אָנָּה	
יְפַאֲרוּהוּ בְּשִׁית הַיְדִיִּים	הַיְדִי	77
שִׁירוֹ אֲשׁוּרֵךְ כְּחַיִּית וְאוֹפְנִים	אָנִי	

73	<i>My Beloved</i> ⁷⁶ / His diadem ⁷⁷ is the angelic host ⁷⁸ // <i>His head</i> is crowned with a crown of those who learn ⁷⁹	
74	<i>His eyes / look out to the ends of the earth, (to) hidden things // His cheeks / dashing to and fro they turn</i> ⁸⁰	
75	<i>His hands / He sent to free me from my oppressors // His thighs / the cohorts of the carefree</i> ⁸¹ praised	
76	<i>His palate / is multitudes and multitudes</i> ⁸² of Tarshishim // <i>Whither / does His power extend? Over the ones above and below</i>	
77	<i>My Beloved: / They glorify Him with talk of texts // I / His song will they sing, like the Hayyot and the Ofanim</i>	

76 The manuscript has *dodim* (lovers) rather than *dodi* ("my Beloved"), which would yield a stich that reads: "Lovers / are His diadem, the angelic host."

77 The word rendered "His diadem" (*pe'ero*) is, more literally, "His turban" (or, in keeping with midrashic readings, it may refer to tefillin). The root *p-r* has connotations of splendor or glory as well; in the Bible, the turban is associated with the bridegroom (Isa 61:10) and not worn in mourning (Isa 61:3, Ezek 24:17). A well-established aggadic tradition states that God is crowned by Israel's prayers. See Green, *Keter*, 33–41.

78 Lit., "appointed angels."

79 The word *meshannenim* means, literally, "sharpening, polishing" but has overtones of "learning" from the related root *sh-n-h*. The sense here is that just as angels are a diadem, Israel is a crown.

80 Ezek 1:14; a description of how angels complete divine missions: instantaneously.

81 A term for bands of angels.

82 The term *hamon* has overtones of noise, pomp, and bustle, and connotes the intense hubbub of angelic presence. The Tarshishim here, as in line 60 above, are a kind of angel.

והאופנים וחיות הקדוש ברעש גדול מתנשאים לעומתם משבחים ואומרים:
ברוך כבוד יי ממקומו

מאורה: יחידה ד

מְבַעֲרֵת שְׁאוֹר	יִפְּחֵ אֶת	78
אֲשֶׁר כְּכֹכְבֵי אוֹר	תִּקְבְּי עֵינֶיךָ	
הוֹגֵוֹת בְּתוֹכָהּ אוֹר	שִׁנֶּיךָ	79
מִחֻשְׁקוֹת לְעֵתִיד אוֹר	כַּפְלֵל הַדְּמִיוֹן	

ככתוב: והיה יום אחד הוא יודע ליי לא יום ולא לילה והיה לעת ערב יהיה אור
ונאמר: לעושה אורים גדולים כי לעולם חסדו

*And the Ofanim and Hayyot of the Holy One lift themselves with a mighty clamor
towards each other and say:*

"Blessed is the glory of the Lord from His place!" (Ezek 3:12)

Unit 4: *Me'orah* (Song 6:4-7)⁸³

- 78 *You are beautiful* / burning leaven⁸⁴ // *Turn your eyes* / that are like stars of light⁸⁵
79 *Your teeth* / talking over the Torah are light // *Like a slice of pomegranate* / joined
to the future light

As it is written: "And there shall be one day which shall be known as the Lord's—
Not day and not night, but it shall come to pass that at evening time there shall
be light" (Zech 14:7)

And as it is said: "To the one who made the great lights, for His kindness endures
forever" (Ps 136:7)

83 No formal structuring device.

84 See Exod 12:19; Deut 16:4. A reference to the burning of chametz, just prior to the beginning
of Passover.

85 Ps 148:3.

ברוך אתה יי יוצר המאורות

אהבה: יחידה ה

וּשְׁמוֹנִים תַּעֲבֹתָ	שְׁשִׁים	80
שֵׁשׁ־לְמוֹת אֶהְבֶּתָּ	אַתָּה	
אֲשֶׁר־אֵינִי	מִי זֹאת	81
שְׁעָרֵי צִיּוֹן אֲשֶׁר תֵּאבֹתָ	אֵל	

ככתוב: אוהב יי שערי ציון מכל משכנות יעקב
ונאמר: כי יעקב בחר לו יה ישראל לסגולתו

Blessed are You, O Lord, who creates the lights

Unit 5: *Ahavah* (Song 6:8-11)⁸⁶

- 80 *Sixty* / and eighty You loathe⁸⁷ // *One* / more than the (other) maidens⁸⁸ You love
81 *Who is this* / whom You desire? // *Towards* / the gates of Zion for which You yearn

As it is written: "The Lord loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of
Jacob" (Ps 87:2)

And as it is said: "For Jacob has the Lord chosen for Himself, Israel as his own
possession" (Ps 135:4)

86 No formal structuring device.

87 See *Song Rab.* 6:39, which states: "There are sixty queens and eighty concubines' (Song
6:8). R. Hiyya of Sepphoris and R. Levi referred this verse to the nations of the world.
R. Hiyya said: Sixty and eighty make a hundred and forty. Forty of them have a language
of their own but no script; forty have no language of their own but they have a script. 'And
maidens without number': this refers to the rest of them who have neither language nor
script of their own."

88 I.e., nations.

ברוך אתה יי הבורח בעמו ישראל באהבה
שמע ישראל יי אלהינו יי אחד
...ואהבת...
...והיה אם שמוע...
...ויאמר...
אמת

זולת: יחידה ו

אָדָר לְמַלְכּוֹ תָנִי 82
כְּמֵאָז בּוֹ לְהִתְחַתֵּנִי
לֹא יָדַעְתִּי נִפְשִׁי שְׂמַחְתִּי 83

Blessed are You, O Lord, who chose His people Israel in love.⁸⁹
Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is One ... (Deut 6:4)
And you shall love ... (Deut 6:5–9)
And it shall be, if you hearken ... (Deut 11:13–21)
And then He said ... (Num 15:37–41)
True ...

Unit 6: *Zulat* (Song 6:12–8:7)⁹⁰

- 82 Render splendor⁹¹ to your King / From of old He meant to marry me⁹²
83 *I did not know; my soul set me*⁹³

- 89 What follows are the cues for the recitation of the complete Shema.
90 An alphabetical acrostic, one letter per stich. Here, as in the first unit, the quotation from the Song closes each strophe until the very final lines.
91 The initial word, *eder*, suits the acrostic; however, the word's second meaning, "cloak," may have marital overtones; see Ruth 3.
92 Lit., "From of old it was in Him (His intent) to marry me." The marital language here is explicit.
93 Israel's bond with God was formed before Israel was aware of it, and it predates the period of Egyptian servitude and rescue. See *Song Rab.* 6:27, which relates among other teachings: "Rabbi Hiyya taught: [We may compare Israel] to a king's daughter who was gathering stray sheaves, when the king passed by and recognized her, so he sent his friend to take her and place her by him in his carriage. Her companions thereupon began to gaze at her in astonishment, saying, 'Yesterday you were gathering sheaves and to-day you sit in a carriage with the king!' She said to them: 'Just as you are astonished at me, so I am

בֵּית הַתְּצִיר הַפְּנִימִית 84
בְּלֹא עָגַל וְתַרְמִית
שׁוֹבֵי טוֹבֵי הַטּוֹלְמִית 85
גּוֹמְלֵת עוֹלָלִים 86
וּמִיִּשְׁרֵת מַפְעָלִים
מִהֲיָפוּ פְּעֻמּוֹת בְּנִגְעָלִים 87

- 84 The House with the innermost courtyard⁹⁴ / Free of sin and deceitfulness⁹⁵
85 *Turn, turn, O Shulamite.*⁹⁶
86 She weans (her) babes⁹⁷ / And sets (their) deeds aright⁹⁸
87 *How beautiful are your feet in sandals!*

astonished at myself'; and she applied to herself the verse, 'Before I was aware, my soul set me.' So when Israel was in Egypt they had to work with bricks and mortar and they were repulsive and contemptible in the eyes of the Egyptians. Hence when they became free and were delivered and placed in authority over the whole world, the nations were astonished and said: 'Yesterday you were working with bricks and mortar, and today you have become free and lord it over the whole world.' And Israel said to them: 'Just as you are astonished at us, so we are astonished at ourselves'; and they applied to themselves the verse, 'Before I was aware, my soul set me ...' An anecdote later in the same passage, about Justa the Tailor, concludes: "[Justa] said to them: 'You are astonished at me, and I am astonished at myself more than you'; and they applied to him the verse, 'Before I was aware, my soul set me [among the chariots of a] princely people ('*ammi nadiv*): [that is,] with me (*'immi*) walked the Prince, the Eternal."

- 94 I.e., the Temple; see 1 Kgs 6:36, etc.
95 Zeph 3:13, which describes how Israel will be in the future. This line blurs the boundary between people and Temple: when the people are pure, the Temple (restored) will also be pure.
96 That is, after Israel repents ("turns"), the Temple will be rebuilt and purity restored.
97 Perhaps an allusion to Ps 131:2, where "weaned child" describes a tranquil soul; or Isa 11:8, where an impervious babe provides an image of ultimate security? "She" in this line refers to Israel.
98 This line recalls Prov 20:11 ("even a child is known by his actions"), but here the parent (Israel) appears to be known by the deeds of her offspring (the children of Israel). The second stich says, more literally, 'she makes deeds straight'; it could refer to Israel's own deeds.

- 88 דְּמוֹתַי תִּנְהַר
כַּיּוֹם קַהְלוֹת הַר
- 89 שְׂרָרְךָ אֵגוֹן הַסֵּהָר
- 90 הַלֵּנָה בַּכְּפָרִים
וְנֹאָה בַשְּׁעָרִים
- 91 שְׁנֵי שְׂרָרְךָ כַּשְּׁנֵי אֶפְרַיִם
- 92 וּמִטּוֹבוֹ לֶךְ יִדְשֵׁן
מִעֵיזוֹ עֲשֵׂת שֵׁן
- 93 צִנְאָרְךָ כַּמִּגְדָּל הַשֵּׁן
- 88 Your appearance is radiant⁹⁹ / Like the day of (your) assemblies at the Mount¹⁰⁰
89 *Your navel is a rounded bowl*¹⁰¹
- 90 She who lodges among the heathers / and is pleasant within the gates
91 *Your two breasts are like twins of a gazelle*
- 92 And through His goodness He will refresh you / His belly is a tablet of ivory¹⁰²
93 *Your neck is like a tower of ivory*

99 The root *n-h-r* (to be radiant) has overtones of the splendor of the restoration; see Isa 60:5; Jer 31:12; Ps 34:6.

100 Sinai. This line recalls the tradition that at Sinai Israel became like the angels, or even like God (i.e., immortal), only to have their human state restored as a result of the golden calf.

101 Usually interpreted in aggadic midrashim as a reference to the Sanhedrin; see *Song Rab.* 7:6.

102 Song 5:14.

- 94 זְכֹרֵי אֶסְפֵּת כַּרְמֶל
וְתַעֲוֵב פֶּסֶל וְסֶמֶל
- 95 רֹאשׁוֹ עָלֶיךָ כַּכַּרְמֶל
- 96 חוֹלָה בְּמָה הִתְרַעַמְתָּ
בְּעוֹגָה אֲשֶׁר טַעַמְתָּ
- 97 מַחֲיִיפִית וּמַהֲיַעַמְתָּ
- 98 טוֹעֲנֵת כָּל־מִינֵי זָמֵר
לְהַמְתִּיק כֹּל מֵר
- 99 זֹאת קוֹמְתָךְ הַמְתָּה לְהַמֵּר
- 94 Remember what was taken from the orchard¹⁰³ / and the abomination of idol and image¹⁰⁴
95 *Your head upon you is like the Carmel*
- 96 O sick one, how could you complain so? / Through the cake that you have tasted¹⁰⁵
97 *(Yet) how beautiful and how pleasant you are*
- 98 Bearing all kinds of musical instruments¹⁰⁶ / to sweeten all that is bitter
99 *Thus is your stature: you resemble the date-palm*

103 "Orchard" renders the Hebrew *karmel*. The line alludes to the negative imagery ("joy and gladness are taken from the orchard") in Isa 16:10 and Jer 48:33.

104 Alluding to Deut 4:16. The reference to the Carmel in the previous stich suggests that *this* refers to the golden calves of Samaria or, more generally, other Northern Kingdom offenses (a Northern proclivity for idolatry goes back, in biblical memory, to the idol of Micah in Judg 17–18).

105 See Hos 3:1, where God says that He loves Israel "though they turn to other gods and love cakes of raisins."

106 In this passage, Qallir may hint at performative elements of piyyut.

יפה נוף מעלה	100
בברכות ממלא	
אמרתיו מעלה	101
כלתי בלב טוב	102
פצחי בקמח טוב	
וחבך כיון הטוב	103
לבבתי לירידי	104
באחוזי תפי ידי	
אני לדודי	105
מגדלת בשדה	106
ריחה כריח שדה	
לקה דודי נצא השדה	107

- 100 Beautiful elevation exalted¹⁰⁷ / with blessings filled
 101 *I said, "I will ascend"*¹⁰⁸
- 102 My bride, with a good heart / Be happy with your good portion¹⁰⁹
 103 *And your palate is like good wine*
- 104 I ravished my Beloved / when I seized the timbrel with my hand¹¹⁰
 105 *I am my Beloved's*
- 106 She who grew up in the field¹¹¹ / Her scent is like the scent of the field
 107 *Come, my Beloved, let us go out to the field*

107 Mount Zion; see Ps 48:2.

108 That is, Israel will ascend to the Temple mount.

109 "Good portion" refers to Torah; see Prov 4:2.

110 Miriam in Exod 15:20.

111 Ezek 16:5, 7.

נארות בשמים	108
נאנה בבית עולמים	
נשכימה לכרמים*	109
קמדר הפרח	110
וריחו הפיה	
הדודאים נתנו ריח	111
עזי וגואלי	112
ומעזי מעלי	
מי יתנה כאח לי**	113

- 108 She who was a guest among the spices¹¹² / is lovely in the Eternal House¹¹³
 109 *Let us go early to the vineyards*
- 110 The grape-blossom has bloomed / and its scent has wafted
 111 *The mandrakes give off their scent*
- 112 My Strength and my Redeemer¹¹⁴ / and my Refuge¹¹⁵ who lifts me up¹¹⁶
 113 *If only You could be like a brother to me*

* נוסח אחר: נוהגת ימים / ברגל שלוש פעמים / נשכימה לכרמים
 ** נוסח אחר: עושנת מפלי / טלאים להדלי / מי יתנה כאח לי

112 That is, in the Temple, rich with associations of incense and fragrant cedar.

113 This translation conflates lines from two variants: the first states, "She who was a guest (among) the spices / in threefold pilgrimage are her feet"; the second reads, "She walks for days / lovely in the Eternal House."

114 These divine epithets appear most famously in Exod 15:2 and Ps 19:5.

115 Jer 16:9.

116 The alternative version including in the Ma'agarim version states: "The fire(-pillar) of the one who works wonders burning / to water (His) flocks."

פְּתַחִי מְבוֹאֶיךָ	114
צֵאתְךָ וּבֹאֶיךָ	
אֶהְיֶיךָ אֲבִיֶיךָ	115
צוּרִי חֲרָשִׁי	116
זְכְרִי וְדַרְשִׁי	
שְׂמֹאלוֹ תַחַת רִאשִׁי	117

114 My opening is Your entryway¹¹⁷ / when you go forth and when You enter

115 *I will lead You, I will bring You*¹¹⁸

116 My Rock is My maker¹¹⁹ /—Remember me and seek me out¹²⁰

117 *His left hand is under my head*

117 Language from Prov 8:3, which describes the location of Wisdom (i.e., Torah).

118 See *Song Rab.* 8:2, which interprets the phrase as “I would lead You from the upper world to the lower”—that is, Israel will induce God to leave His heavenly abode for earth, a reference to the Temple or Sinai.

119 The translation here follows Fleischer, who has *haraši* in place of Ma’agarim’s *haddeši* (“renews me”). As read here, the phrase seems to be a play on the language of Ps 28:1 (“My Rock, do not be deaf to me”)—“deaf” being another meaning of the root *h-r-sh*—but the psalm verse’s plea does not suit the tone of the unit or the piyyut overall. The idea of “artisan,” associated with the root *h-r-sh*, “to create, fashion,” seems more appropriate.

120 The lemma is interpreted variously in *Song Rab.* 2:19 as referring to the ways God’s commandments support Israel (the Ten Commandments, tallit and tefillin, the Shema and Amidah, etc.); this *stich*, which introduces the lemma, seems to petition an apparently absent God to remember His people and to teach them the proper ways to fulfill His wishes. The unquoted phrase of the lemma, “His right hand embraces me,” is explicated in *Song Rab.* 2:19 as a reference to the messianic era. The manuscript tradition here becomes a little confused. An alternative version of this line, included in the Ma’agarim version and which begins with the Hebrew letter *qof* (which is the acrostic letter for the next stanza), states: *qenuyah horishi / tza’adta le-hakhtir qedoshi*, “(As) a possession He acquired me / I strode forward to crown my Holy One / His left hand is under my head.”

קְרִיאַת יוֹם גְּאֻלְתְּכֶם	118
לְבַל תִּעֲוֹרְרוּ בִּינֹתֵיכֶם	
הַשְּׂעֵעֵתִי אֲתֶכֶם	119
רוֹמְמוֹת מַעְלָה	120
תְּלוּלָה וּמַעְלָה	
מִי זֹאת עוֹלָה	121
שְׂבִטֵי אִישׁ תָּם	122
עַל לֵב מְחַתֵּם	
שִׁמְנֵי כְחוֹתֶם	123
תַּאֲוַת לְקְבוֹת	124
עֲזוּזוֹת אֱהוּבוֹת	
מִים רַבִּים לֹא יוֹכְלוּ לְכַבּוֹת*	125

118 A proclamation of the day of your redemption: / do not awaken (it) among yourselves¹²¹

119 *I adjure you*

120 Exalted in ascent¹²² / lofty and uplifted

121 *Who is this who ascends*

122 Tribes of the pure man¹²³ / (who was) sealed upon the heart

123 *Set me like a seal*

124 Desire of hearts / empowered (and) beloved

125 *Mighty waters cannot quench*

* נוסח אחר: צמחך להרבות / צהלתי בתלאובות / מים רבים לא יוכלו לכבות
121 That is, the day of redemption is set, but Israel must remain ignorant of it and the people must not encourage each other to seek more knowledge. The line warns against succumbing to the impulse to engage in messianic speculation. The final words could also be translated (with minor repointing) as: “Do not awaken your understanding.”

122 I.e., pilgrimage.

123 I.e., Jacob (Gen 25:27).

מים נעשו תרבה 126
 בלבים לעבור קרבה
 שירה לדובה 127
 צמחי רובה*

בגילה ברנה בשמחה רבה

ואמרו כולם:

מי כמכה באלים יי מי כמכה נאדר בקודש נורא תהלות עושה פלא

מים 128
 קהלכו הלוד
 אחות לנו
 ניהגתה להלוד

126 Waters became dry land / she approached the heart of the sea, in order to cross over

127 A song for her, she who (now) streams across,¹²⁴ / a multitudinous host¹²⁵

In joy, in rejoicing, in great happiness

They said, all together:

"Who is like You among the divine beings, O Lord? Who is like You, splendid in holiness, awesome in praiseworthiness, working wonders?" (Exod 15:11)

128 Waters / when they strode across // We have a sister / You led her, walking across¹²⁶

* נוסח אחר: מים נעשו לחרבה / ובלב חרד לעשות קרבה / ובשירים ארים שיר לבבה / לקוריע לה ים המליכה המליכוך באהבה. בגילה ברנה...

124 See Song 7:10. The image is that the sea has dried up and now Israel flows across.

125 Lit. "sprouts/shoots of multitude"; see Ezek 16:7. The alternative version of this line (in Ma'agarim), also lovely, states: "The waters became dry land / and into (its) heart, trembling to do (it), she approached / but through songs, I will raise a heartfelt song / to Him who split for her the sea: He crowned her and they crowned You in love."

126 *Song Rab.* 8:13 understands "We have a sister" as referring to Israel's restoration after the Babylonian exile; here, it appears to refer to the Exodus from Egypt, or each stich may refer to a different restoration.

מלוד תקלוד 129
 אים תוקמה היא
 פצתי יי ימלוד
 אני בין גלים

זה צור ישענו פצו פה ואמרו:

יי ימלוד לעולם ועד

נטע בגילה 130
 פרם
 פרמי שלי
 אום נדלה
 נחלה וסגלה 131
 הויטבת פננים
 ברח דודי
 ותצמיח לי גאלה

ברוך אתה יי צור ישראל וגואלו

129 *If she is a wall / You shall surely rule¹²⁷ // I / between the waves asserted, "The Lord will reign!"*

"This is the Rock of our redemption,"¹²⁸ they opened (their mouths) and said: "The Lord will reign forever and ever" (Exod 15:18)

130 *A vineyard / He planted in joy // My vineyard / A nation of bannered hosts¹²⁹*

131 *She who dwells in the gardens / A portion and treasure // Hurry, my Beloved / Bring forth for me redemption!¹³⁰*

Blessed are You, O Lord, Rock of Israel and its Redeemer

127 See *Song Rab.* 8:12, which states: "Said the Holy One, blessed be He: 'If Israel stand firm in their virtue like a wall, we will build upon them and deliver them.'" This stich implies the reverse, so to speak: God's kingship depends upon Israel's firmness. A similar lesson is implied, less strongly, in *Song Rab.* 8:13: "*If she is a wall*": had the Israelites gone up from Babylon [after the exile] like a wall [i.e., en masse and unified], the Temple would not subsequently have been destroyed a second time."

128 This "quotation" is a conflation of Exod 15:2 ("This is my God") and Ps 95:1 ("the Rock of our redemption").

129 Or: "a nation outstanding"; see Song 6:4.

130 The final line is a messianic peroration.

Commentary

The fact that Eleazar ha-Qallir authored three of the poems in this volume—the *Shivata shel Tal*, the *Groom's Qedushta*, and this prototype of a *yotzer*—testifies both to his remarkable creativity (compositional as well as thematic), his tremendous productivity, and his role as a poet of pivotal importance in the history of Hebrew letters.¹ When Ezra Fleischer first published this piyyut in 1973, as an appendix to his volume on Solomon ha-Bavli, he did so because it was the long-lost prototype of a genre of poetry that has persisted into the modern prayerbook: the Song of Songs *yotzer*. As a *yotzer*, this piyyut signals a new development in poetic preferences, as it reveals the kind of Passover piyyut that would eventually supplant the Song of Songs *qedushta* in medieval Italian and Ashkenazic Judaism—as, indeed, the *yotzer* in general would supplant the *qedushta* as a locus for payyetic creativity.

This piyyut provides a fitting conclusion to this volume as a whole. In chapter 5, we looked at an anonymous piyyut that is among the oldest of the surviving *qedushta'ot* and may shed light on how the genre developed into its more familiar classical form. This final piyyut of the volume is, on the one hand, a marker of the end of the *qedushta's* dominance, but within its own genre it is a pathbreaker. The formal significance of this piyyut is self-evident. That such an early *yotzer* is also a Song of Songs piyyut suggests that Passover and its association with the Song of Songs provided a particularly inviting occasion for innovative poetic self-expression. As Fleischer's initial publication makes clear, despite the disappearance of this work from living liturgy, it lived on through its heirs: a translation of the old form of the Song of Songs poem into a new style that endured for centuries.

Form and Function

As a *yotzer*, this piyyut has a natural affinity for a cluster of themes present in its liturgical context, the blessings surrounding the recitation of the Shema: the Yotzer Or (“Creator of Light,” on creation), the Ahavat Olam (“An Eternal Love,” on revelation), and the Ge’ulah (“Redemption”). These themes, we will see, resonate with the Song of Songs, too: “light” evokes the Song’s brightness and its

¹ The piyyut is signed simply “Eleazar” and it is possible that a different *payyetan*—one other than ha-Qallir—authored this work.

keen attention to the senses; “love” resonates with the Song’s descriptions of desire, yearning, and intimacy; and “redemption” plays naturally into the Song’s erotic depictions of consummation desired but, as yet, unfulfilled. The synthesis of these two traditions—the liturgical *yotzer* and the textual Song—proves to be both potent and lovely.

Yotzerot in general, and this work in particular, pay particular attention to imagery pertaining to light—perhaps a given, as the name of the poem derives from the phrase “creator (*yotzer*) of light,” which concludes the first benediction prefacing the Shema. And yet light is not understood simply. Light imagery appears in both literal and metaphorical ways, as a symbol of all three elements of the *yotzer* prayer-rubric: creation, revelation, and redemption. Light can also be “embodied,” in the form of angels, and *yotzerot* abound with angelology, reflecting the poem’s overall interest in “heavenly bodies” and the splendor of the divine evoked by the *Qedusha de Yotzer*, the recitation of the mystically-charged *Qedushah* embedded in the liturgical rubric. The third unit of this piyyut is labeled an *ofan*, a name derived from a category of angels described in Ezek 3; while later *yotzerot* are lengthier and composed of more units, angelological sections such as the *Ofan* remain part of the standard form. It could be said that the *yotzer* takes the *qedushta's* overarching interest in “holiness” and infuses it with the additional element of visual radiance, just as the *Qedushah* itself is enveloped in the liturgical blessings of the *yotzer*.

A single, and singularly early, text cannot be used to define an entire genre of writing, but this particular piyyut nonetheless provides a compelling example of the tremendous thematic difference liturgical context makes. The *yotzer* (embellishing the blessings surrounding the morning Shema) differs in a number of ways from the other works studied here, all of which are, in some fashion, *qerovot*, piyyutim that embellish the blessings of the Amidah. The fact that this poem is a *yotzer* that is structured on the Song of Songs has implications for both its form and its content.

The most obvious difference between this piyyut and the other Song of Songs piyyutim lies in its content: the identity of the benedictions it embellishes and the influence of the themes of those blessings, elements discussed below. As important as that contextual element of this *yotzer* is, it is not the feature that is perhaps most striking upon initial encounter with this piyyut. Rather, from its opening word, this piyyut alerts us to its difference, because where almost every other Passover piyyut in this volume began with the word “Song (*shir*)” from Song 1:1, this piyyut does not.² Specifically, in the opening and closing

² The *Groom's Qedushta* in chapter 9 above is not a Passover hymn. *Shivata shel Tal* in chapter 8

sections of this piyyut (units 1 and 6), the quotation from the Song closes each line, whereas in the other works studied here the quotation initiates the line.³ The net effect in the opening and closing units, then, is to foreground the creativity of the *payyeta*n, while the closing unit itself becomes a kind of terse *petihta* (midrashic proem): the quotation from the Song is predetermined, yet the route to that quotation is only revealed in the moment.

This feature is possibly Qallir's idiosyncratic choice rather than a formal requirement of the *yotzer*, particularly since the genre was still emerging and its conventions were probably still fluid. Whatever the poet's reason, this structure creates poetic units that are intellectually engaging—both because of their difference from the other Song of Songs piyyutim and because they raise the question of how the poet will integrate the quotation into his strophe—and, on a more subtle level, deeply meaningful. Rather than being the scaffolding or frame of the piyyut, the Song becomes its deep architecture—the quotation retroactively determines the rhyme-scheme of each strophe—and it emerges organically from the language of the poem itself. In the other piyyutim (and even within the middle units of this piyyut) the words of the *payyeta*n trail the words of the Song, but here the language of the Song emerges with subtlety from the poetry that encompasses it. The effect is simultaneously a flowering of language in each line—a sense that the familiar phrases of the Song will emerge anew in the poet's new setting—and a certain inevitability, as the rhyme scheme established in the first two stichs anticipates the citation in the third. Instead of establishing the tone, theme, or imagery of a given strophe, as is the case when the Song of Songs verse opens the line, in these two units that bookend the *yotzer* the verse becomes a destination. For the listener, as for the lover, anticipation increases delight.

The interior units of the piyyut are more conventional, in that they front the quotation from the Song; in their short, staccato-like composition they bear a strong resemblance to the *shivata*.⁴ Nevertheless, the framing of this poem in the *petihta* style remains significant; even if it is retrospectively regarded as conventional for a *yotzer*, it remains a formal indication of the piyyut's innovation with respect to the *qerova*. Furthermore, the integration of the Song in this more intricate way—the pattern of alternation (closing-opening-closing with a verse) that governs the piyyut as a whole—has a larger, more sweeping

effect when the thematic elements of the piyyut are considered. The piyyut as a whole can be read as a meditation on the themes of the three benedictions it adorns—creation, revelation (especially in the middle units, where the Song of Songs citation comes first), and redemption—and the Song becomes an integral part of this theological, historical cosmology.

Creation, Revelation, and Redemption

An initial reading of this piyyut may well yield the impression that it lacks narrative cohesion—much like the Song of Songs itself. Voice, perspective, place in time, even the relationship between phrases can seem unsettled, unclear, rough. Closer inspection, however, reveals that each section of this work (again, like each unit of the Song) has a readily detectable theme lurking near the surface. The first unit recounts the history of the Exodus (including fleeting allusions to Israel's grumbling and then the revelation at Sinai); the second unit, the *silluq*, bedazzles with rich angelological imagery and links redemption to revelation, and revelation to piety; the third, the *ofan*, amplifies and expands the angelic imagery from the *silluq*, focusing on Torah as something that spans and unifies earth and heaven; the fourth unit, the *me'vrah*, dwells on light imagery across time, using texts that link creation (Ps 136:7) and the end time (Zech 14:7); the fifth meditates on "love" *qua* love (rather than love as revelation), citing Pss 87:2 and 135:4 which both emphasize God's love for Zion and Israel; and the sixth unit, the *zulat*, interweaves a complicated pattern of motifs including the Temple (built and rebuilt), the language of ascent (both as a pilgrimage and in the context of restoration), reminiscence of romantic redemption in the past, and anticipation of a repetition of that elopement in the future yet to come. The tenor of the piyyut as a whole is joyful and, like the Song of Songs, it delights all the senses. It appeals not only to the eyes with its luminous imagery but to the ears, with its ringing references to music and musical instruments, which powerfully convey a sense of God's physical presence, and its rich evocations of scent and taste—all motifs present within the Song but amplified here into a welter of experience that is both carefully crafted, sensually charged, and unsettlingly kaleidoscopic. Furthermore, while the themes of the *yotzer* are, generically speaking, the distinct foci of creation, revelation, and redemption, the poet uses the fluidity and ambiguity of his rhetorical medium to blur the boundaries between these topics: creation is an act of revelation imbued with the promise of redemption; revelation tells both of creation and restoration; and redemption is the fulfillment of all that came before. And light is the symbol of all three, the unifying element of the piyyut.

begins with a quotation from Ps 23:2 in its "preface" but begins its first actual unit with the first word of Song 1:1.

3 As indicated in the preceding note, *Shivata shel Tal* does not begin with a quotation from Song 1:1, but it does begin with a quotation.

4 Fleischer suggests that the *shivata* is, in fact, the predecessor of the *yotzer* (*The Yotzer*, 45–47).

One distinctive element of the three piyyutim of Qallir studied here is their use of true and developed refrains; we saw this in his works in the previous two chapters, and we see it here as well. The initial unit has a four-line refrain that embeds the signature acrostic “Eleazar.” This refrain, in its context, offers a beautiful example of how the poet interweaves the three themes of creation, revelation, and redemption in a way that creates a unity out of the various elements of his craft. The refrain (which is first recited after line 6) states:

I will glorify (*antziah*) You, O Magnificent and Radiant One,
 Robed, as with a garment, in light;
 Make light shine upon our darkness,
 To see (that) “In Your light we shall see light.”

The refrain is radiant: the poet imbues every phrase, every element, with light. But what is the actual topic of this stanza? Creation and revelation both seem to lie close to the surface here. The phrase “spreads out light like a curtain” echoes Ps 104:2, changing only the word order from the biblical source. This psalm describes the creation of the world, with the effect that Eleazar’s allusion refers at a secondary level to the creation narratives in Genesis. Redemption is expressed even more clearly: the present tense is “our darkness” (an allusion to Ps 139:12), while redemption will be a vision of light (an allusion to Ps 36:10). Even this language, however, is vague and open to overlapping readings. “Our darkness” recalls the primordial darkness; in turn, redemption yields a new creation—a whole fresh start. Temporal connotations are unstated, present only by implication; light may refer to morning, darkness to night, and the hope that “in Your light we shall see light” becomes a prayer, perhaps, for insight rather than restoration. The refrain’s imagery operates simultaneously on cosmic and individual scales. And if creation and redemption are subtle, revelation is present only in the most oblique of ways: in addition to the possible prayer for wisdom (“Make light shine upon our darkness”) in the third line of the refrain, it is evoked most strongly by the scriptural allusions and quotations that texture all four lines. That is, revelation is made manifest through allusive quotation.

Like this refrain, the poem as a whole weaves these three key motifs together. As an example, the Exodus dominates much of the piyyut—a natural circumstance given that the holiday of Passover recalls that biblical event. But the Exodus is not only the paradigm of redemption; it is also a moment of creation, when a nation comes into being, when Israel and God “wed” (as in the first line of unit 6, line 82) and became something fundamentally new. In turn, the references to creation, blurring as they do into the present and into national

understanding, render the love between God and Israel, so powerfully evoked by the Song of Songs, as eternal as well as enduring; it is woven into the fabric of the world itself. Likewise, revelation—both as a symbol of love, the record of it, and the language of its retelling—becomes both the record and the language of this sacred love story; the allusiveness of the piyyut creates a pervasive unity belied by its disparate voices, parts, and elements. Creation, revelation, and redemption—ciphers for past, present, and future—are revealed to be sparkling facets of a single gem.

If revelation is implicit in the allusions that texture every strophe of the piyyut, it is made explicit by the quotations from the Song, from Scripture, that punctuate every line and stanza. The Song lends its language of love and longing to this cosmic-national story; in turn, the Song itself acquires connotations of the elements it connects: creation, revelation, redemption. It becomes a Song of totality: past and future; God and Israel; loss and longing and reunion. The implicit expansion of the Song into this comprehensive love song echoes the Midrash of the Ten Songs discussed in relation to Qallir’s *Groom’s Qedushta* (chapter 9). In both cases, the Song of Songs becomes a Song that spans from creation to redemption, even as it is an encryption of revelation—“revelation writ small,” yet expansive in scope. The Song of Songs is the thread that ties together the whole. Here, the sense that the Song has this eternal quality is evoked not by repeated mentions of “songs” (as in the *Groom’s Qedushta*) but through the juxtaposition of the language of the Song in a context resonant with the liturgical motifs of creation, revelation, and redemption.

Light and Love, Angels and Song

If creation, revelation, and redemption are the dominant liturgical themes of the *yotzer* as a whole, light—and angels, who are light and fire given bodily form—are the primary motifs of the Yotzer Or benediction, a prayer that, by Qallir’s day, included a repetition of the mystical Qedushah. The Qedushah itself is an angelic text, composed out of words overheard in the heavens (specifically Isa 6:3 and Ezek 3:12) and brought down to the children of Israel by prophets who came close to the divine. Because this piyyut is our only example of a *yotzer* in this anthology, it is worth pausing to consider how Qallir uses these two images—light and angels—in his piyyut.

Light imagery—references to light, flame, splendor, and so forth—pervades the piyyut, particularly the first unit (also known as the *yotzer*), where the refrain is structured on the image of light (as discussed above) and the *me’orah*

(unit 4), a truly lovely lyric that links the Passover offering, the people Israel (whose eyes are compared to stars), the Torah, and the redemption by describing them in radiant terms. The intertexts that follow the *me'orah* evoke, first, redemption—"a day known as the Lord's ... at evening, there shall be light" (Zech 14:7)—and, second, creation—describing God as "the one who made the great lights" (Ps 136:7). The evocation of light in so many realms—terrestrial and heavenly, past and future, human and divine—results in a poem that is dappled with radiance. Light is not a dominating, domineering image; instead, using a deft hand, the poet crafts units which shimmer.

Angelology is likewise a significant recurring motif here, but not an overwhelming one. It stands out primarily because of the comparatively subdued angelology of the other works presented here. As we might expect, the mention of angels is most concentrated here in the unit called an *ofan* (named for a class of angels mentioned in Ezekiel), which is interwoven into the biblical verses that constitute the Qedushah (Isa 6:3 and Ezek 3:12); likewise, angels most densely populate the final unit of a classical *qedushta*, where the poetic text interweaves the same biblical quotations. References to God's throne and to categories of angels (*cherubim*, *seraphim*, *ofanim*, *tarshishim*, *hayyot*, and *erelim*, among others) are common in the second section of the piyyut, too, namely the *silluq* (lit., "a taking up," in the sense of a wrapping-up or conclusion, but also suggesting "ascent"), which segues from the light-oriented imagery of the first unit to the angelology of the third. (In the classical *qedushta* a similar poem, also called a *silluq* and often a locus of angelic musings, prefaces the Qedushah.) These angels are not mere adornments to God's throne room, however; like Israel, they are engaged in prayer, and like Israel, they are immersed in Torah study. Most intriguingly, in the *ofan*, the poet constructs a scenario where he (as the feminine "I" of the Song) seems to have ascended to the heavenly realm—to "the garden of the Erelim and the fountain of the Ofanim" (line 65), where God is also present—which is depicted as the Academy on High, a place of joyful, musical study and worship. The poet says, "I plucked / song with learning" (line 68) and he describes God as "My Beloved / His glory is in the explication of those who learn" (line 70). The poet tries to join in the recitation of the cherubim (line 71) but is weak from his servitude. In the end, however, he joins the angels in their songs of praise. The poet does not interact directly with God, only with the angels, and yet there is a sense of divine immanence.

Several elements of this piyyut are intriguing. First, the poet's ascent is reminiscent of the heavenly experience of Isaiah that is at the core of the Qedushah. Secondly, the heavenly realm is a radiant (fiery, even), dramatic, but untroubled analogue to the poet's world below—the realization of an ideal—yet the angels seem to treat the human with deference and curiosity. Finally, although

the angels live "in the garden of God," they turn to the poet for insight into the divine. It is they who, in the words of the daughters of Jerusalem in Song 5:9, ask the poet, "What is your beloved?" This invitation leads the poet to tell the angels about God. The unit culminates with the affirmation that God's power is both "above and below" (line 76), but the implication is that those who are below have a knowledge of God that those above lack. Rather than gaining revelation from his visit to the Academy on High, the poet imparts knowledge.

Singular Is She

The initial sections of this piyyut are rich with a cast of characters and images. The heavenly world is imagined into life and populated with a dazzling array of creatures: fiery Seraphim, multitudinous Tarshishim, sparkling Holy Ones. And yet, while these images enliven and dramatize the liturgical context of this piyyut, rendering it uniquely radiant and otherworldly among the texts studied here, its focus never really leaves the love story that enlivens the Song of Songs and has made it such a compelling text for so many centuries. Indeed, perhaps more than the other poems studied here, this piyyut emphasizes the individual voice of "the lover." Its opening words are "I will sing and I will make music" and its final words are "Bring forth redemption for me." While the identification of the beloved can occasionally blur—sometimes it seems to be the poet himself, sometimes the community for which he speaks, and sometimes the land of Israel, a nexus of images we have encountered in other Song of Songs piyyutim as well—God's beloved is almost relentlessly singular: "she" rather than "they." This individuation of voice is strong throughout the entire *yotzer*, but it provides a way to understand the final unit of the poem, the *zulat*, which can seem a particularly cacophonous welter of images and ideas. In this unit, the specific identity of the woman fluctuates (as does the chronology, which shifts from the Exodus to redemption seamlessly) but her singularity is consistent. This singularity is not polemical—"oneness" is not contrasted with plurality or division or discord. It is totally oriented inwards and upwards.⁵

This unit is not, however, static. It is rich with motion. Motion upwards, evoking the original "ascent" of Israel (whom God "brought up" from Egypt) into the promised land, as well as the march of pilgrims up to Mount Zion in

5 On this phenomenon in medieval Christian lyric, see Astell, *The Song of Songs in the Middle Ages*, especially chapter 6 ("Religious Love Lyric and the Feminine 'I'") and chapter 7 ("Biblical Drama, Devotional Response, and the Feminine 'We'"). Although Astell focuses on Christian poetry from the High Middle Ages (the twelfth century), her understanding of the

the Jerusalem of old and yet to be, is particularly dominant, but other verbs of motion—walking, striding, joining, crossing over, going forth and returning, seizing, playing musical instruments, even exuding perfume—give the unit as a whole a tremendously kinetic vitality. The departure from Egypt and the anticipated return from exile are imagined not as desperate, fugitive flights but as stately, joyful processions. The emphasis on singularity results in a sense that the procession consists of two individuals: lover and Beloved. “She” is simultaneously “a multitudinous host” (line 127) and “a nation” (line 130) but nonetheless “she”—her singularity remains (only once does this final unit use the third-person plural: “they strode across” in line 128). The final words, embellishing Song 8:14, retain this powerfully individual voice: “Hurry, my Beloved / bring forth for me redemption!” (line 131). Not “for us”; not “for my people”; not “for Your people”—for *me*. A poetic conceit? Certainly. But perhaps a window into something more, as well.

Within the heavenly choirs, with their musical instruments and fiery light, we can detect—radiating down through the centuries—the voice of our singular poet. Not merely a mouthpiece for his people, a conduit for their hopes, the words here are also singularly his. His voice is the voice of a woman: strong but vulnerable, active but not autonomous. Like the woman in the Song, Qallir’s voice is assertive, courageous, and resolute; but unlike the woman in the Song, he does not—he cannot—seek out reunion, but instead must await rescue. Israel has become in this piyyut a figure akin to a fairytale princess: once glorious but now trapped in exile, her courage and belief in God’s love have enabled her to endure, but as the poem ends, she still awaits redemption. The only power she possesses is her voice, and her confidence that her lover will hear her. She who was free and active is now “planted” and “dwells in gardens” (lines 130–131)—gardens which are, at best, a gilded cage and at worst a place of banishment where one might fear being forgotten. Only when the two lovers, now calling to each other over the garden fence (so to speak), are fully reunited

experiential elements of religious poetry based on the Song is quite sympathetic to those found here. Astell delineates ways in which medieval vernacular poetry employs language from the Song and thus “minimizes the distinction between present experience and memory, the actual and the imaginary presence of the beloved, the world without and the world within” (146). This same effect has been noted repeatedly in the poetry studied in this volume. Likewise, in regard to the Song itself, Astell notes, “the medieval auditor of the Song could never be a mere listener, objectifying the discourse of the *Sponsa et Sponsus*; he or she had to become a speaker in its dialogue” (168). The latter point, true as it is for one who listened to the Song in a synagogue context, would hold even more true for those who participated in the recitation of synagogue poetry.

can the garden blossom. One can almost sense the agitation and impatience of this woman, earlier so vigorous, who now must wait for restoration. As in the Song itself, with its strikingly active, assertive, outspoken female voice, we find here a feminine image colored by masculinity, only this time the dynamics are reversed. Our poet—a man rhetorically inhabiting a female voice, and theologically occupying a feminine space—yearns for a restoration to action and vitality. Instead, however, trapped by historical happenstance, he paces in the garden, lifting his voice in song and petition—perhaps, we might imagine, with an element of whistling in the dark—and waits for his Redeemer to come.⁶

While this particular poem survived outside of the Genizah only in the rite of Crete, it is a fitting conclusion to this series of piyyutim, as it is the poem with the most numerous direct descendants. If, as seems likely, this piyyut was the inspiration for Solomon ha-Bavli’s much-imitated *yotzer* for Passover, “Light of Salvation for the Upright” (*Or Yesha Me’usharim*), then this poem is the antecedent for all the Song of Songs *yotzerot* in the standard Ashkenazi machzor as well as numerous other poems from minor rites.⁷ Qallir can thus be seen as a transitional figure: like his predecessors represented here, the anonymous *payyetan* and Yannai, he composed Song of Songs *qedushta’ot*, but he also stands as the father of what would become the dominant and most enduring genre of Song of Songs piyyut, the *yotzer*. This poem marks the end of one era and, quite vividly, the dawn of another. But that new age lies beyond the horizon of this volume.

6 To some extent, this issue of gender—the male speaker (and his listeners?) identifying with the female figure in the piyyut—affects all the poems in this volume. It is, however, particularly evident in this piyyut. The image of a woman left vulnerable in a garden suggests the apocryphal story of Susannah, although the woman in this piyyut is far more knowing and less naïve than Susannah. The story of Joseph languishing but remaining devout in the Egyptian prison (Gen 40) could also be pressed into service as an even older analogue, and Joseph serves as the model for the later figure of Daniel. In some ways, the tension in this piyyut between the active, self-determined, outspoken woman of the Song and the more passive, confined, feminine Israel suggests the overall transformation of ideas about women that took place with Hellenization. See Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, 203–212, and also Laura Lieber, “Jewish Women,” in *The Blackwell Companion to Women in the Ancient World* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2012), 329–342. For a fascinating study of a medieval Hebrew text that incorporates fairy-tale motifs but with unexpected gender reversals, see Michael Chernick, “Marie de France in the Synagogue,” *Exemplaria* 19 (2007): 133–205.

7 Fleischer, in his appendix to *Solomon Ha-Bavli* (378–379), counts fourteen.