

The Liturgical Poetry Of The High Holiday Prayers

Why Did Liturgical Poetry Develop?

The conflict between the need to create a fixed text with the hope that each person will add his own personal prayers.

Mishna Brachos, 4, 4-R. Eliezer says: if a man makes his prayers a fixed task, it is not a genuine supplication.

Mishnah Avos, 2, 13- R. Shimon said: be careful with the reading of Shema and with prayer, and when you pray, make not your prayer a set task, but an appeal for mercy and an entreaty before the All-Present, for it is said: for He is gracious and compassionate, long-suffering and abundant in mercy, and accepts the repentance of the evil.

S.D. Gotein, A Mediterranean Society, University Of California Press, 1999

Page154-The most time consuming portion of the service was the piyyut, the poetical segments inserted randomly into the official order of prayer. (The word is derived from Greek poet[es] and is pre-Islamic. In Arabic, these poetical pieces are called *hizana*, because it was during this part of the service that *hazzan*, or cantor, had to prove his mettle.) The biblical exhortation “Sing unto the Lord a new song” (Psalm98:1), echoed in the Talmudic injunction “Everyone is obligated to say something new in his prayer every day,” was taken seriously in the Geniza period, thus continuing a tradition of liturgical poetry dating back some five hundred years prior. Tens of thousands (perhaps over a hundred thousand) leaves with religious poems have been found in the Geniza, a reflection of the astonishing output of the more famous liturgical poets of old, as well as the large number of authors, otherwise unknown, who were active in composing those poems.

page 156-The popularity of the piyyut should not be attributed solely to its music, as important as that might have been; otherwise, we would not find the cantors competing with each other so eagerly to find (or produce) ever new texts. Even at the end of the classical Geniza period, there must have been in any large community a considerable number of persons who were able to understand and to appreciate those difficult poems. The synagogue, we ought to remember, was not only a house of worship, but also a place of study; or rather, as often said, study was worship. It may be that the piyyut served to titillate the imagination and puzzle the intellect; since almost every line contained a hidden allusion to a Bible verse or a passage of talmudic literature, every new poem must have prompted a vigorous contest to determine the poet’s sources and his aesthetic intent. While the melodies were a devotional pastime for the many, the effort required for the full understanding of the texts was an intellectual exercise for a sophisticated and learned audience.

The Liturgical Poetry Of The High Holiday Prayers

Litanies-1

One word per line alphabetical acrostics

You instituted the Sabbath, You favored its offerings. You commanded its specific laws along with the order of libations. Those who delight in it inherit eternal glory, those who relish it merit life, and those who love its teachings have chosen greatness. Even before . . .

תְּכִנָּת
שְׁבָתָה,
רְצִיָּת
קְרֵבָנוֹתִיתָה,
צְבִיהָ
פְּרוֹשִׁיחָה
עַם
סְדוּרִי
נְסָכִיָּה
מְעַנְגִּיה
לְעוֹלָם
כְּבוֹד
יְנַחֲלוּ
טְוֹעֲמִיה
מִיּוּם
זְכוּר,
וְגַם
הָאוֹהָבִים
דְּבָרִיָּה
פְּדָלָה
בְּחֻרְיוֹן
אָז

The blessed G-d, great in knowledge, prepared and made the rays of the sun. He who is good formed glory for His name, surrounding His power with radiant stars. The leader of His hosts, the holy ones, exalt the Almighty, constantly

אֱלֹהִים
בָּרוּךְ
גָּדוֹל
דָּעַת,
הַכִּינָה
וּפְעָלָה
זָהָרִי
מְפַמָּה,
טוֹב
יְצִירָה
כְּבָדָד
לִשְׁמוֹ,
מְאוֹרָזָה
נְתַנוּ
סְבִיבּוֹת
עָזָה,
פְּנָוֶת
אַבָּאֵי
קְדוֹשִׁים
רוּמָמִי
שָׁדֵי,
תְּמִיד

Samuel Field Y Adult Center
The Liturgical Poetry Of The High Holiday Prayers

Litanies-2

Older Selichos

vvv Answer us, *GOD*, answer us. Answer us, our God, answer us. Answer us, our Father, answer us. Answer us, our Creator, answer us. Answer us, our Redeemer, answer us. Answer us, You who seeks us, answer us. Answer us, faithful God, answer us. Answer us, You who are steadfast and kind, answer us. Answer us, You who are pure and upright, answer us. Answer us, living and enduring One, answer us. Answer us, good and beneficent One, answer us. Answer us, You who knows our nature, answer us. Answer us, You who suppresses anger, answer us. Answer us, You who dons righteousness, answer us. Answer us, Supreme King of kings, answer us. Answer us, You who are awesome and exalted, answer us. Answer us, You who forgives and pardons, answer us. Answer us, You who responds in time of distress, answer us. Answer us, You who redeems and rescues, answer us. Answer us, righteous and upright One, answer us. Answer us, You who are close to those who call upon Him, answer us. Answer us, You who are hard [to be provoked] to anger, answer us. Answer us, You who are easy to be pacified, answer us. Answer us, You who are merciful and gracious, answer us. Answer us, You who listens to the destitute, answer us. Answer us, You who supports the wholesome, answer us. Answer us, God of our fathers, answer us. Answer us, God of Abraham, answer us. Answer us, Dread of Isaac, answer us. Answer us, Mighty One of Jacob, answer us. Answer us, Helper of the Tribes, answer us. Answer us, Stronghold of the Matriarchs, answer us. Answer us, You who responds in a time of favor, answer us. Answer us, Father of orphans, answer us. Answer us, Judge of widows, answer us.

vv He who answered our father Abraham on Mount Moriah, may He answer us. He who answered his son Isaac, when he was bound on the altar, may He answer us. He who answered Jacob in Beth-El, may He answer us. He who answered Joseph in prison, may He answer us. He who answered our fathers at the Sea of Reeds, may He answer us. He who answered Moses at Horeb, may He answer us. He who answered Aaron with the censer, may He answer us. He who answered Pinchas when he rose from amid the congregation, may He answer us. He who answered Joshua in Gilgal, may He answer us. He who answered Samuel in Mitzpah, may He answer us. He who answered David and his son Solomon in Jerusalem, may he answer us. He who answered Elijah on Mount Carmel, may He answer us. He who answered Elisha in Jericho, may He answer us. He who answered Jonah in the bowels of the fish, may He answer us. He who answered Hezekiah, King of Judah, in his illness, may He answer us. He who answered Chananyah, Mishael and Azariah in the fiery furnace, may He answer us. He who answered Daniel in the lion's den, may He answer us. He who answered Mordechai and Esther in Shushan the capital, may He answer us.

Samuel Field Y Adult Center

The Liturgical Poetry Of The High Holiday Prayers

Litanies-3

אָבִינוּ מַלְכֵינוּ

AVINU MALKEINU

On Shabbat Avinu Malkeinu is not said.

THE ARK IS OPENED.

The following is said standing.

Our Father, our King, we have no King but You.

Our Father, our King, act [benevolently] with us for the sake of Your Name.

Our Father, our King, renew for us a good year.

Our Father, our King, remove from us all harsh decrees.

Our Father, our King, annul the intentions of our enemies.

Our Father, our King, foil the plans of our foes.

Our Father, our King, wipe out every oppressor and adversary from against us.

Our Father, our King, close the mouths of our adversaries and accusers.

Our Father, our King, remove pestilence, sword, famine, captivity, and destruction from the members of Your covenant.

Our Father, our King, withhold the plague from Your inheritance.

Our Father, our King, bring us back to You in wholehearted repentance.

Our Father, our King, send a complete healing to the sick of Your people.

Our Father, our King, rend the evil [aspect] of the verdict decreed against us.

Our Father, our King, remember us with a favorable remembrance before You.

Our Father, our King, inscribe us in the book of good life.

Our Father, our King, inscribe us in the book of redemption and deliverance.

Our Father, our King, inscribe us in the book of livelihood and sustenance.

Our Father, our King, inscribe us in the book of merits.

Our Father, our King, cause deliverance to flourish for us soon.

Our Father, our King, exalt the glory of Israel Your people.

Our Father, our King, exalt the glory of Your anointed one.

Our Father, our King, fill our hands with Your blessings.

Our Father, our King, fill our storehouses with plenty.

Our Father, our King, hear our voice, have pity and compassion upon us.

Our Father, our King, accept our prayer with mercy and with favor.

Our Father, our King, open the gates of heaven to our prayer.

Our Father, our King, let it be remembered that we are but dust.

Our Father, our King, we beseech You, do not turn us away from You empty-handed.

Our Father, our King, may this hour be an hour of mercy and a time of favor before You.

Our Father, our King, have compassion upon us, and upon our infants and children.

Our Father, our King, do it for the sake of those who were slain for Your holy Name.

Our Father, our King, do it for the sake of those who were slaughtered for Your Oneness.

Our Father, our King, do it for the sake of those who went through fire and water for the sanctification of Your Name.

Our Father, our King, avenge the spilled blood of Your servants.

Our Father, our King, do it for Your sake, if not for ours.

Samuel Field Y Adult Center

The Liturgical Poetry Of The High Holiday Prayers

The Prayer Leader Asks For Permission To Lead The Service-1

The chazzan recites the following prayer before Musaf:

Here am I, deficient in meritorious deeds, trembling and awe-stricken from fear of the One who is enthroned upon the praises of Israel, standing and pleading before Him on behalf of His people Israel who have sent me, though I am unworthy and unqualified for the task. Therefore, I entreat You, God of Abraham, God of Isaac, and God of Jacob, Lord, Lord, benevolent God, compassionate and gracious, God of Israel, Omnipotent, fearful and awesome, grant success to the mission which I am undertaking, to stand and plead for mercy for myself and for those who have sent me. (I beseech You, do not hold them guilty on account of my sins, nor condemn them because of my iniquities; let them not be disgraced because of my transgressions; let them not be ashamed of me nor I of them.) Accept my prayer as if it were the prayer of a man advanced in years and experienced in prayer, whose conduct in his youth was unblemished, whose beard is fully suffering and distress, for us and for all Israel, to gladness and joy, to life and peace—[for the people who] love truth and peace. May there be no stumbling in my prayer. May it be Your will, Lord, God of Abraham, God of Isaac and God of Jacob, the great, mighty and awesome God, exalted God, “I Will Be What I Will Be,”¹ that all the angels who occupy themselves with [our] prayers bring my prayer before the Throne of Your Glory and spread it before You for the sake of all the righteous, the pious, the perfect and the upright, and for the sake of Your glorious, great and awesome Name; for You hear the prayer of Your people Israel with mercy. Blessed are You who hears prayer.

The Liturgical Poetry Of The High Holiday Prayers

The Prayer Leader Asks For Permission To Lead The Service-2

מִתְחָדֵשׁ [With words] based upon the teachings of the wise and the understanding, and upon the knowledge acquired from the discerning, I open my mouth in prayer and in supplication, to beseech and implore the countenance of the supreme King of kings and Master of masters.

מִתְחָדֵשׁ I am awe-stricken as I open my lips to utter words of prayer, as I rise to plead before the most awesome One. Few are my good deeds, therefore I tremble; I lack understanding, how, then, can I hope and pray? O my Creator, grant me discernment that I may possess [the Torah] my heritage; strengthen me and fortify me against weakness and fear. May my whispered prayer find favor like the incense-offering; may my words be as sweet as pure honey. May they be accepted as truly sincere, for I am not a pretender—to obtain atonement and forgiveness for those who have made me their emissary. May my prayerful cry be

pleasant and not irritating; respond to the supplications of [Israel, Your humble people,] who consider themselves as lowly creeping creatures. Gracious God, as You promised [Moses] in the cleft of the rock,¹ hearken to my cry as I begin. My innards shrink [when I consider] that You search the recesses of my heart; from the fear of judgment, my soul trembles! If You were to requite us according to our deeds, the heart would quake, the fountains of my eyelids would flow as a stream; I hope and pray for mercy from You, remember for good the merit of my forefathers. My heart is hot like glowing embers as I offer my prayer; it seethes within me as I begin [to pray].

Samuel Field Y Adult Center
The Liturgical Poetry Of The High Holiday Prayers

Oo'Nisaneh Tokef וְנַתֵּן תָּקוֹף

Cong. ¹We will celebrate the mighty holiness of this day, for it is one of awe and terror. Thereon is thy dominion exalted and thy throne is established in mercy, and thou sittest thereon in truth. Verily it is thou alone who art judge and arbiter, who knowest and art witness; thou writest down and settest the seal, thou recordest and tellest; yea, thou rememberest the things forgotten. Thou unfoldest the records, and the deeds therein inscribed proclaim themselves; for lo! the seal of every man's hand is set thereto.

Reader. The great trumpet is sounded; the still small voice is heard; the angels are dismayed; fear and trembling seize hold of them as they proclaim, Behold the Day of Judgment! The host of heaven is to be arraigned in judgment. For in thine eyes they are not pure; and all who enter the world dost thou cause to pass before thee as a flock of sheep. As a shepherd seeketh out his flock, and causeth them to pass beneath his crook, so dost thou cause to pass and number, tell and visit every living soul, appointing the measure of every creature's life and decreeing their destiny.

¹ For the authorship of this meditation and the legendary account of its composition see Note III on page 288.

On the first day of the year it is inscribed, and on the Day of Atonement the decree is sealed, how many shall pass away and how many shall be born; who shall live and who shall die, who at the measure of man's days and who before it; who shall perish by fire and who by water, who by the sword, who by wild beasts, who by hunger and who by thirst; who by earthquake and who by plague, who by strangling and who by stoning; who shall have rest and who shall go wandering, who shall be tranquil and who shall be harassed, who shall be at ease and who shall be afflicted; who shall become poor and who shall wax rich; who shall be brought low and who shall be upraised.

But Penitence, Prayer and Charity
avert the severe decree.

The Liturgical Poetry Of The High Holiday Prayers

Who Authored The Poem Of Oo'Nisaneh Tokef-1?

Ohr Zarua- Story Of Rav Amnon- I found a handwritten letter from Rav Ephraim Mi'Bonn, son of Yaakov, in which he relates that Rav Amnon from Mayence composed the Piyut: V'Nisaneh Tokef in connection with a heartbreaking incident that occurred to Rav Amnon. This is what Rabbi Ephraim wrote: A story about Rav Amnon of Mayence who was an outstanding scholar of his generation, wealthy, from a noteworthy family, handsome and blessed with a good personality when the local officials and the Governor began urging Rav Amnon to convert to their religion but Rav Amnon regularly deflected them. Because of his resistance to their daily pleading, the Governor grew angrier and angrier with him. Their pressure reached such a level of intensity that in order to gain some peace, Rav Amnon suggested that he be given a three day respite to seek advice and to consider what he should do. Immediately upon leaving the presence of the Governor, Rav Amnon began to regret having suggested the possibility that he would convert, that he needed time to seek advice and give some thought about denying the Living G-d. When he returned home, he was so despondent that he refused to eat or to drink. He became sickened from his actions. His relatives and friends came to comfort him but he refused to be comforted because he had already resolved to end his life due to his sorrow. He cried and was utterly heart broken.

At the conclusion of the three days during which Rav Amnon felt overwhelmed by sorrow and worry, the Governor sent for Rav Amnon but Rav Amnon refused to go see him. The Governor sent many additional and respected officials to summon Rav Amrom but he refused to go. The Governor then issued an order directing that Rav Amnon be brought to him by force. Rav Amnon was brought before the Governor and was asked: what is the meaning of your refusal to come to meet with me? Why did you not keep the agreement you made with me that after considering my proposal and seeking advice concerning it, you would agree to my request. Rav Amnon responded: let me suggest what should be my punishment. Cut out my tongue which spoke thus. Rav Amnon suggested such a punishment because Rav Amnon wanted to undertake an act that would sanctify G-d's name for having spoken poorly. The Governor responded: No, I will not accede to your request and remove your tongue. Your tongue spoke properly. Instead, I will amputate the legs that did not bring you to me at our appointed time and I will also remove all your other limbs. The Governor then ordered that the punishment be carried out. Rav Amnon's fingers and arms were severed and his legs amputated. As each limb was being removed, Rav Amnon was given an opportunity to convert and each time he refused.

The Liturgical Poetry Of The High Holiday Prayers

Who Authored The Poem Of Oo'Nisaneh Tokef-2?

After completing the amputation of Rav Amnon's limbs, the evil one, the Governor, ordered that Rav Amnon be placed in a bin together with his severed limbs and sent home. That is why this person became known as Rav Amnon. He believed in G-d out of love and was willing to undergo terrible suffering to protect his beliefs because he allowed his mouth to express doubt. Soon after this incident, the High Holidays arrived. For Rosh Hashonah, Rav Amnon requested that his family carry him to synagogue along with his decaying limbs and to lay him next to the prayer leader. And so they did. When the prayer leader came to Kedushah, the prayer leader first recited the Piyut: V'Chayos Asher Hinei. Rav Amnon said to himself: I will wait a moment and then I will sanctify G-d's name. He then called out in a loud voice, saying: Oo'V'Chein Lecha Sa'Aleh Kedushah; in other words: I underwent these terrible afflictions in order to reaffirm Your Hegemony and Your Uniqueness. He then opened with: Oo'Nisaneh Tokef Kedushas Ha'Yom. He continued with: Emes Ki'Ata Dayan Oo'Mochiach. In doing so, Rav Amnon acknowledged to G-d that the loss of his limbs and the other difficulties he suffered were justified acts. Rav Amnon then said: V'Chosem Yad Kol Adom Bo V'Sifkod Nefesh Kol Chai; in other words: what had happened to Rav Amnon had been decreed the Rosh Hashonah before. When he completed the recital of his Piyut, he expired in front of all those present in the synagogue. Apparently, G-d showed mercy upon him and took his life. It is about people like Rav Amnon that it is written (Tehilim 31, 20): Oh how great is Your goodness, which You have prepared for those who fear You; which You have arranged for those who trust in You, in the sight of the sons of men!

Three days after his death at the point when Rav Amnon found his place in Heaven, Rav Amnon appeared in a dream to Rabbi Kolonymous son of Rabbi Mishullam son of Rabbi Kolonymous son of Rabbi Moshe son of Rabbi Kolonymos. Rav Amnon then taught him the words of the Piyut: Oo'Nisaneh Tokef Kedushas Ha'Yom that Rav Amnon had composed. Rav Amnon requested that Rabbi Kolonymos send a copy of the Piyut to all the Jewish communities around the Diaspora so that it serve as a memorial for what had occurred to Rav Amnon. The Gaon, Rabbi Kolonymos, complied with his request.

The Liturgical Poetry Of The High Holiday Prayers

Who Authored The Poem Of Oo'Nisaneh Tokef-3?

Avrohom Frankel-

The Piyut: 'Oo'Nisaneh Tokef' is a very early Piyut that is known to us from the material found in the Cairo Geniza. That fact appears to contradict the statement found in the story that links the composition of the Piyut to Rav Amnon of Mayence, a native of early Ashkenaz (about 1000 CE). This conflict between the sources caused researchers in the past to doubt the existence of a scholar by the name Rav Amnon. As a result, they viewed the story of Rav Amnon as representing a folk tale. This article will attempt to resolve the conflict between the sources by tracing the likely path the Piyut travelled over several centuries.

The path that the Piyut of 'Oo'Nisaneh Tokef' travelled can be uncovered by the use of standard research tools that trace how Piyuttim found their way into different communities:

- A. By investigating the liturgical customs of the communities to which the Piyut reached and by revealing how the Piyut was disseminated.

- B. By uncovering the influence that a Piyut had on other composers of Piyuttim during multiple eras.

- C. By undertaking a fresh investigation of the origin of the story of Rav Amnon (or more precisely: by analyzing the details in the story that relate to the Piyut itself) in light of historical information.

These three research tools when applied to the origin of the Piyut of 'Oo'Nisaneh Tokef' lead to one conclusion: 'Oo'Nisaneh Tokef', which is clearly an early Piyut that was composed in Eretz Yisrael, travelled first from Eretz Yisrael to Italy and during the course of the 1100's and 1200's spread to the Jewish communities in Ashkenaz and in France.

In addition, it will become clear that the name 'Amnon' was a standard name that Jews in Italy used for their sons and that Rabbi Amnon from Mayence was in fact a scholar from an Italian-Jewish family. Even the ethnic origin of Rabbi Kolonymos son of Meshullam, to whom Rabbi Amnon, according to the legend, taught the words of the Piyut, is Italy. Rabbi Amnon and Rabbi Kolonymos knew the Piyut from the Italian liturgical tradition that they followed and they encouraged the dissemination of the Piyut throughout Ashkenaz. That portion of the legend which describes the dissemination of the Piyut throughout Ashkenaz, portrays an early Ashkenazic historical reality, circumstances that pre-date by a significant amount of time the era of Rabbi Ephraim from Bonn (who lived in the second half of the 12th Century) who was the first to put the story into writing.

The Liturgical Poetry Of The High Holiday Prayers

Who Authored The Poem Of Oo'Nisaneh Tokef-4?

May be the re-telling of the Death Of The Ten Martyrs

Midrash-The next to be brought out was Rabbi Yehudah son of Dama. The day was Erev Shavuos. Rabbi Yehuda said to the Emperor: May it please the Emperor if the Emperor would allow me a moment to recite Kiddish Ha'Yom, the sanctification of the day, the Mitzvah that opens the holiday of Shavuos, so that I may heap praise on G-d who gave the Jewish people the Torah. The Emperor responded: You still believe in the Torah and the G-d who gave it to the Jewish People? Rabbi Yehudah answered: Yes. The Emperor then asked: what is the reward that you expect to receive for keeping the laws of the Torah? Rabbi Yehudah responded: About the Torah King David wrote (Tehillim 31, 20): Oh how great is Your goodness, which You have prepared for those who fear You; which You have done for those who trust in You, in the sight of the sons of men! And so the Emperor retorted: There are no greater fools than you in this world if you believe that an afterlife exists. Rabbi Yehudah responded: No, there are no greater fools than you in the world if you deny the existence of a living G-d. Woe unto you. How great will be your embarrassment and humiliation when one day you will see us seated next to G-d surrounded by the light of life while you will be sitting in the lowest level of Hell. Hearing this, the Emperor became enraged and immediately ordered that Rabbi Yehudah's hair be tied to the tail of a horse and that he be dragged through the streets of Rome. As a sign of his continued anger, the Emperor ordered that Rabbi Yehudah's body be cut bone by bone. Eliyahu Ha'Navi then came and gathered the bones and buried them in a cave next to a river that flowed into Rome. For thirty days, the Romans heard the sound of crying and weeping emanating from that cave. They went and reported the noise to the Emperor. The Emperor responded: even if what I do causes the world to be destroyed, I will not rest until I fulfill my wish to murder all ten Rabbinic scholars as I vowed to do.

The Application Of Interpretation Techniques To The Piyut Of Oo'Nisaneh Tokef, Aharon & Rozanson

Before moving on and because we are dealing with the link between liturgical poems and stories, it is appropriate to elaborate and to compare the story of Rav Amnon with the story of the Ten Martyrs, which should also be viewed, in my opinion, as a creation of the Middle Ages. The story of the Ten Martyrs led to the composition of a Selicha, a liturgical poem, as well, which is included in Tefilas Mussaf of Yom Kippur. Clearly, the central theme that links the two stories is the willingness of a Jew to be put to the test and to offer himself as a sacrifice in sanctification of G-d's name, a common theme among the Ashkenazic Pietists. The Selicha is centered around an incident that occurred during the period of the "Ruler": "For in that Ruler's time there was no reprieve for the ten who were murdered by the Ruler." From that point forward we find that the plot of the story told in the Selicha thickens. Three elements within the story of the Ten Martyrs need to be singled out because they also appear in the story of Rav Amnon: the request for time to consult, a statement about the beauty of the victim and the detailed description of the torture.

The Liturgical Poetry Of The High Holiday Prayers

Who Authored The Poem Of Oo'Nisaneh Tokef-5?

Retelling Of An Incident From The Crusade Chronicles

Eidelberg- And it came to pass that the holy and righteous Jewish community of Mayence, guardian and shield for all the Jewish communities, known among all Jewish communities, learned that a portion of the Jewish community in Speyer had been massacred and for a second time, the community of Worms was overwhelmed by swords. The news caused the hands of the Jewish community of Mayence to weaken. Their hearts melted and became like water. They called out to G-d with all their hearts and pleaded: “G-d of Israel, is it now Your plan to bring the Jewish People to an end? Where are Your miracles and wonders that our forefathers described to us as follows: Did G-d not rescue the Jewish People from Egypt and free them from Babylonia? Has G-d not saved Jewish communities on numerous occasions? How is it possible that G-d has now abandoned and neglected our community, allowing us to fall into the hands of the evil Christians who wish to annihilate our community? Please do not distance Yourself. The danger is imminent and no one is available to save us.” The leaders of the community gathered to develop a plan that might save the community. One said to the other: Let us choose among our elders those who can make a recommendation. If not, this evil will destroy us. They then unanimously agreed to pay a ransom for their souls, to spread their money among all possible saviors and to bribe government officials at all levels.

The heads of the community who were known to be closest to the Governor rose to meet with him and his advisors and to seek counsel from them. The community leaders asked: what can we do to avoid the fate of our brothers in Speyer and in Worms who were massacred? The Governor’s advisers responded: accept the following suggestions: bring all your money to our treasury. You, your wives, your sons and daughters and your complete households should seek refuge in the courtyard of the Governor’s home until the armed battalion passes through. That is the way to be saved from the evil ones. The Governors’ advisors made this recommendation in order to gather the Jewish community into one place so that they would be like fish in a tank. It would then be easy to turn the community over to the Crusaders. The end of all stories reveals the initial intent. The Governor gathered all of his followers, from the highest level to the lowest, in order to assist the Jews. At first he may have intended to use his abilities to rescue the Jewish community, but in the end, all of the bribes and all the efforts at appeasement did not provide protection once the disaster struck.

It was the third day of Sivan which had been designated as a day of holiness and separation in the year in which the Torah was given to the Jewish People. It was the same day of the month in which Moshe Rabbenu said: “Prepare yourselves for three days.” On that same day of the same month the Jewish community of Mayence, righteous followers of G-d, in holiness and in purity, committed to leave this world and to enter G-d’s world as one. They were dignified in life and their deaths were no less dignified.

Samuel Field Y Adult Center
The Liturgical Poetry Of The High Holiday Prayers

Repentance, Charity And Prayer Cause The Annulment Of The Evil Decree

ותשובה ותפלה וצדקה מעבירין את רע הנורה

Babylonian Talmud-Rabbi Isaac further said: Four acts can contribute to the cancellation of an evil decree that has been levied upon a person: i.e. charity, supplication, change of name and change of conduct. Charity, as it is written: and charity saves one from death.

Supplication, as it is written: then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and He delivered them out of their distress. Change of name, as it is written: as for Sarai your wife, you shall no longer call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name; and the verse continues: and I will bless her and moreover, I will give you a son from her. Change of conduct, as it is written: and G-d saw their works; and the verse continues: and G-d relented from imposing the evil decree which He said He would levy upon them and G-d did not impose the punishment. Some say that change of place also avails, as it is written: Now the Lord said unto Abram, Leave your homeland; and the verse proceeds with: and I will make of you a great nation.

Jerusalem Talmud-Rabbi Lazar said: Three acts can cause the cancellation of an evil decree that has been levied against a person. These are the acts: Prayer, charity and repentance. All three acts can be derived from one verse: if My people, who are called by My name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek My presence, and turn from their wicked ways; then I will listen from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land. The words in the verse: and they will pray represents prayer; the words: seek My presence, represents charity, as it is written (Tehillim 17, 15) I justly will look upon you. The words in the verse: and they will turn from their evil ways represents repentance, if they perform it. What does the verse next provide? Then will I listen from heaven, and I will forgive their sin, and I will heal their land.

Match Moshe-Perhaps the basis for the order of the words is as follows: perform repentance before prayer because it is only by first repenting that prayer and charity cause the cancellation of an evil decree.

Samuel Field Y Adult Center
The Liturgical Poetry Of The High Holiday Prayers

The Ten Martyrs-1

Reader:

Lay not the sin, we beseech thee, upon us, wherein we
have done foolishly and wherein we have sinned.
We have sinned, O our Rock! Our Creator, forgive us!

Congregation:

These things I do remember: O I pour
My soul out for them. All the ages long
Hatred pursueth us; through all the years
Ignorance like a monster hath devoured
Our martyrs as in one long day of blood.
Rulers have risen through the endless years,
Oppressive, savage in their witless power,
Filled with a futile thought: to make an end
Of that which God had cherished. There was once
A tyrant searching in the Book of God
For some word there to serve him as a sword
To slay us; and he found the line which spake:
"He that doth steal a man and selleth him,
He shall be surely put to death." That king,
That dark-designing servant of false gods,

Summoned to him ten sages of the Law,
Saying: "Pervert the truth not with your lies,
But judge this thing: What if a man be found
Stealing his brother—one of Israel's sons—
And making merchandise and selling him?"
And the ten sages spake: "That thief shall die."
"Your fathers," said the tyrant, "where are they,
That sold their brother to a company
Of Ishmaelites? Lo, ye shall now receive
Justice of Heaven upon you; for if they
Were now in life, then ye yourselves should judge;
But now ye bear on you your fathers' sin."
"If we have sinned," they said, "then we shall bear
His sentence, Whose compassion fills the world."
"Give us three days," they spake. And they all looked
Unto the High Priest, Rabbi Ishmael,
Saying, "Arise, arise, pronounce the Name;
Know from our God if this be His decree."
Then Rabbi Ishmael, in purity,
Pronounced the Name, and rising up on high,
Made question of the angel clothed in white,¹
Who spake: "O righteous! O beloved! I,
Harkening within the sacred region
That ye indeed be captured." Thus he spake,
And Rabbi Ishmael, descending, told
His fellows all their doom.

And that dread king

Bade the ten sages to be slain in woe
And torture. Lo! I saw them all:
They stepped out of the ages, and they walked
Before the deathless spirit that is mad
With hunger for destruction of God's own.
Two of the great in Israel were brought forth
To slaughter first:—the High Priest Ishmael,
And Rabban Simeon, son of Gamliel,
A prince in Israel. And this one implored,
"O slay me ere ye slay him, lest I see
The death of him who ministers to God!"
And lo the lot fell, and they slew him first.
And Ishmael raised the severed head and cried—

Samuel Field Y Adult Center
The Liturgical Poetry Of The High Holiday Prayers

The Ten Martyrs-2

Bitterly loud as calls a trumpet blast:—
“How is the tongue that taught the glorious Message
Brought low to lick the dust. And while he wept
The tyrant’s daughter stood, and gazing on
His beauty, made petition for his life
With vain entreaty. Terror makes me dumb
To tell the tortures that mine eyes beheld;
Only that when the murderous hand had reached
His brow, the holy symbol’s seat, he cried
With one most bitter cry to his soul’s Lord.

Seraphim, in the heights of heaven, called
In anguish: “This is then the Law, and this
The wage thereof, O Thou who spreadest out
Light as a garment! Thus the foe blasphemeth
Thy great and awful Name, and scorns Thy Law!”
But out of Heaven’s height a voice replied:
“Let no sound more be uttered, lest I turn
The world to water, and My throne’s footstool
To sudden chaos. This is My decree;
Accept it, all of you who loved the Law
Which I created ere the world was made.”

Thus were the princes of the Law brought low,
The corner-stones jewelled with precepts. Now
Rabbi Akiba was led forth to die;
Hananya, too, who was Teradyon’s son,
Torn from his place; and yet he held the scroll
Fast in his arms.—O God, blot out their pain.

Mourn, O my people, not yet widowed;—still
As in a vision, for a worthless whim
I see your holiest slaughtered; see their blood
Shed in the Name of Heaven—as even now
The blood of Huspith the Interpreter.
Trembling takes hold on all who hear, and tears
Flow from all eyes, and all delight is dead;
For Eliezer falls, Shamua’s son.
How have our strong oppressors fed on us!
How do they give us water of gall to drink—
Slaying Hanina, son of Hakinai!

They will not take a ransom, they must take
The lives of those who speak the Law’s sweet words,
Yea, even now the Scribe Yeshebab’s life.
Sons of unreason strike us with their fear
More than the kings of earth; they slay of us
Many and many; verily they cast
Judah, the son of Dama, unto death!
Ah, thou hast said, Jacob shall be a fire,
Joseph a flame—lo, the last ashes die.
O bring the burning of the day of doom,
For Judah, son of Baba, is not spared.
Here were ten righteous men; lo, they are slain.

This hath befallen us. All this I tell
As I beheld it passing through the years
Of bygone ages. And subdued and crushed,
We pour our hearts out supplicating Thee.
Lord, Lord, give ear; O pitying, merciful,
Look from Thine height upon the blood outpoured
Of all Thy righteous. Make an end of blood
Poured out and wasted; wash the stain away,
God, King, who sittest on a gracious Throne.

We have sinned, O our Rock! Our Creator, forgive us!

Samuel Field Y Adult Center
The Liturgical Poetry Of The High Holiday Prayers

Other Well Known Liturgical Poems

וְכָל מַאמְנִים

He holds in His hand the attribute of judgment.
And all believe that He is the faithful God.
He probes and searches hidden secrets.
And all believe that He probes man's thoughts.
He redeems from death and delivers from the grave.
And all believe that He is the mighty Redeemer.
He alone judges all created beings.
And all believe that He is the true Judge.
He is called "I Will Be What I Will Be."²
And all believe that He was, He is, and He will be.
Sure is His Name, likewise His praise.
And all believe that He is, and there is none besides Him.
He remembers with a favorable remembrance those who remember Him
And all believe that He remembers the Covenant.
He apportions life to all living beings.
And all believe that He lives and is eternal.
He is good and does good to the wicked and to the good.
And all believe that He is good to all.
He knows the inclination of all creatures.
And all believe that He has formed them in the womb.
He is all-powerful and contains them all.
And all believe that He is all-powerful.
He, the Omnipotent, abides in mystery, in shadow.
And all believe that He is One Alone.
He enthrones kings and Kingship is His.
And all believe that He is King of the world.
He guides every generation with loving-kindness.
And all believe that He preserves kindness.
He is patient and He overlooks [the actions of] the rebellious.

כִּי אָנוּ עֲמִיךְ

Cong. For we are thy people, and thou art our God;
We are thy children, and thou our father.
We are thy servants, and thou art our master;
We are thy congregation, and thou our portion.

We are thine inheritance, thou our lot;
We are thy flock, thou our shepherd.
We are thy vineyard, and thou art our keeper;
We are thy work, and thou our creator.

We are thy faithful ones: thou art our beloved;
We are thy chosen: thou are the Lord our God.
We are thy subjects, thou our King;
We are thine acknowledged people, thou our acknowledged Lord.

Reader. We are brazen-faced, but thou art merciful and compassionate; we are stiff-necked, but thou art long-suffering. We are full of sin, but thou are full of mercy. As for us, our days are as a shadow; but thou art immutable, and thy years never-ending.

כָּחֹmr בַּיָּד הַיוֹצֵר

Lo! as the potter mouldeth plastic clay
To forms his varying fancy doth display;
So in Thy hand, O God of love, are we:
Thy bond regard, let sin be veil'd from Thee.

Lo! as the mason's hand the block doth hew
To shapes sublime, or into fragments strew;
So in Thy hand, O God of life, are we:
Thy bond regard, let sin be veil'd from Thee.

Lo! as the smith the rigid steel hath bent,
Softn'd with fire and wrought with strength unspent;
So in Thy hand, O God of might, are we:
Thy bond regard, let sin be veil'd from Thee.

Lo! as the seaman's hand doth cast or weigh
The pond'rous anchor in the foaming spray;
So in Thy hand, O God of pardon, we:
Thy bond regard, let sin be veil'd from Thee.

Lo! as the worker melteth vitreous flow,
And shapeth vessels from the crystal blow;
So in Thy hand, O God of grace, are we:
Thy bond regard, let sin be veil'd from Thee.

Lo! as th' embroid'r's hand the robe hath made,
At will in lines of beauty, light and shade;
So in Thy hand, O God of fear, are we:
Thy bond regard, let sin be veil'd from Thee.

Lo! as the smelter fuseth silv'ry vein,
Removing dross, that naught impure remain;
So in Thy hand, O God of healing, we:
Thy bond regard, let sin be veil'd from Thee.

*Lot as the potter mouldeth plastic clay
To forms his varying fancy doth display;
So in Thy hand, O God of love, are we:
Thy bond regard, let sin be veil'd from Thee.*