

SUPPLEMENT

Introduction To The Linear Translation Of The פיוטים Of The ארבע פרשיות

The Beurei Hatefila Institute urges synagogues that follow נוסח אשכנז to encourage their congregants to review the פיוטים of the ארבע פרשיות before coming to synagogue on those שבתים. To assist the synagogues in that activity, the Beurei Hatefila Institute will be publishing an linear translation of the פיוטים for each special שבת. The linear translation of the פיוטים for פרשת שקלים are attached hereto. They can be distributed by e-mail or printed out and distributed as handouts.

Some Ashkenazic synagogues may be considering a move towards omitting the פיוטים on the ארבע פרשיות due to the fact that most congregants do not understand the words of the פיוטים and choose to talk instead of reciting the פיוטים while they are being recited. Should the synagogues omit the פיוטים? Absolutely not. One of the chief distinguishing features of a synagogue that follows נוסח אשכנז as opposed to one that follows the Sephardic tradition is the practice to recite פיוטים during the repetition of the three opening ברכות of שמונה עשרה. This difference in practice represents a difference of opinion between the מחבר and the רמ"א that can be found in the 'שולחן ערוך אורח חיים סימן קיב' ס"ק ב'. To omit the פיוטים would be tantamount to accepting a Sephardic custom. More importantly, the פיוטים were composed to enhance our תפילות on each of the ארבע פרשיות. Do we not wish to have an enhanced prayer experience? Before considering a move towards omitting the פיוטים, synagogues should attempt to teach their congregants as to what is contained within the פיוטים. That is the reason that the Beurei Hatefila Institute will be publishing a linear translation of the פיוטים. On the Friday nights before each of the ארבע פרשיות, the Rabbis of the synagogues should urge their congregants to review the translations of the פיוטים. Perhaps with that form of preparation, the congregants will choose to recite the פיוטים over holding conversations while the פיוטים are being recited. Consideration could also be given to having the שליח ציבור read each line of the פיוטים aloud while the congregation reads the English translation.

Each פיוט represents the personal expression of prayer of one individual, the author of the פיוט. His poem was adopted into the prayer service by so many congregations and repeated each year because those congregations understood his words and felt that his words enhanced their prayer experience on those days. We owe a debt to the authors of the פיוטים and to the hundreds of generations who recited the פיוטים with joy, to attempt to understand what they saw in the words. Something that until now has eluded us.

פרשת שקלים of פיוטים The

אז מאז זמות בכל פועל
 From before creation did You plan, in all Your works¹,
 במספר במשקל כל לך להעל
 To bring into being all things by number and weight,
 גדת בכך למשוי ממי שעל
 Therefore did You speak unto him who was drawn out of the water (Moses),
 דעת מפקד יופי פעמי נעל
 To take the census of Israel who dryshod passed over the sea,
 העל המירו כבוד רע בבעל
 But because they exchanged the glory of G-d for a calf
 וזה² ללא זה פצחו במעל
 And in their apostasy called the idol "G-d,"
 זנחו בחרון אף ונגף וגעל
 They were cast away in Your wrath and plagues overwhelmed them,
 חל בעדם חבר והצרי תעל
 Then did their friend (Moses) intercede for them, and his prayer brought about their
 healing,
 טורח משאם הגד לו שאת
 He was told to bear their cumbrance and burden,
 ישרם להליץ תלוי ראש³ לשאת:
 To plead their just cause that they might be raised high above all.
 כפרם פיך תת לאומים משאת
 G-d spoke of forgiving them. Punish the nations in our place;
 לנטלם לנשאם בכי תשא את:
 Because of the halfshekel offering, my head have You exalted over all, and have uplifted
 me to the heights
 ראשיי על כל ראש נשאת.
 My head have You exalted over all by giving us the Torah,
 גוי על מרומי קרת התנשאת:
 And have uplifted me by bringing me to Eretz Yisroel.
 אהבה על כל פשע כפיתי.
 Your love has covered up my every transgression.

1. Translation taken from the book: יוצרות לארבע פרשיות translated by Rabbi Dr. Joseph Marcus published 5726, by Pardes.

2. From the verse: וזה א-להיך ישראל.

3. They should have been sentenced to hanging for committing idolatry.

להבין את התפלה

בגין צל ימינך לגונני התנשאת.

Because our forefathers sought your protection, You did arise to shield me against those who wished to harm me because of the sin of the Golden Calf in the shadow of Your right hand.

ברוך אתה ה' מגן אברהם.

מעתיק פלוסים צר ובורא רוח

You who moves mountains and creates winds,

ממדד ומשקל נזל עם רוח

Who forms and creates the wind, who does measure and weigh the amount of rain and wind,

נגף לבל יזיק לנרכאי רוח.

That no harm befall them who are crushed in spirit,

נובבתם תת פריזון לכל רוח:

You did command Israel to give a ransom for every soul.

שריג זד שעיר טרם עמד.

Long before the wanton scion of Esau (Haman) sprang up,

סקרת כי למוקש ולצנין יעמד.

You did foresee that a descendant of Esau would arise to act as a snare and a prickly thorn to Israel,

עצת זה לזה שמע במעמד,

You did, therefore, advise Moshe to proclaim in their representative assemblies,

עתוד שקלים מראש חודש ללמד:

To have ready the Shekel gift from the New Moon of Adar,

פרשה זאת להגות בקץ זה.

And to read the section from the Torah at this time of year in the period of history when the Beis Hamikdash would not be standing,

פלסיה להקדים לפלס צר ובוזה

That our Shekels might precede the blood-money of Haman, our adversary.

צורת מטבע כחו אבי חוזה.

The form of the Shekel that was shown to Moses, the chief of the prophets,

צוה צור לציר כן תת מתן זה.

Moshe was told by the Creator to command Israel to bring a gift in that form.

שמו משתף בעם לו עמותים.

G-d's name is interwoven with the name of the people that is close to Him,

ועליו כל היום הם מומתים:

Who daily offer up their lives for His sake

יעיר ויחשוף זרוע ויד ממתים.

Let Him rouse and bare His arm and stretch forth His hand over all men who would do harm to the Jewish People..

בזיל נטפי לקש להחיות מתים:

May the dew of life trickle for the purpose of resurrecting the dead.

ברוך אתה ה' מחיה המתים:

קצובה היא זאת לשועים וקלים.

The amount (of this ransom silver) is fixed for all; great and small;

קצינים ורשים יחד בה שקולים.

Rich and poor are appraised alike,

קצין לבל יעוז מול מקהלים.

So that the rich shall not brazenly declare before the Assembly:

קרא לומר הוני פדאני מעקולים:

"My wealth has gained me forgiveness (ransom) for my sins."

רוב עם אשר לא יספר.

The people whose number is so great that they cannot be counted,

רב עם צעיר מעשרים להספר

Whose men from twenty years onward were counted,

ראוים לעונש וזהר בסדר להתפר.

The age at which man become subject to punishment after being duly warned, so they join together to perform this mitzvah.

רשע וכל פשע לכפר ולהפר:

Through this act their iniquity and transgression is atoned and erased,

שעורים בזה שעור במפקד להגבר!

Those who are taxed are assured that they will grow in number,

שתלימו לנשיאת ראש אותם להבר

They are assured that their children will grow and join in their exaltation.

שקלי כסף כפורים כפרם להדבר.

May the silver ransom shekels that every one who is registered bring them atonement.

שמורים לזכרון תת כל העובר:

In its merit let it bring that benefit.

תמדו מאז כל עדת קדושים.

From ancient times on has the Holy Congregation,

תרום בשלשה פרקים תרומת קדשים.

להבין את התפלה

Withdrawn funds from the Shekalim contribution at three fixed intervals,

תכונה לבדק הבית וכל אשים.

For the expense of the repair of the Temple and for the cost of the sacrifices.

תת ביד הכהנים כסף הקדשים:

The sanctified funds placed into the hands of the priests,

תפן באון פיד טיט רפשונו

With compassion gaze upon our distress and misery in the Diaspora,

תביט בדכינו ועוד בל תכפישינו:

At the depth of our persecution and how we are enveloped by mire. Behold our oppression and let us no longer wallow in the dust.

תקרא דרור כמאז בו להחפישני.

Proclaim our liberty as of yore, and free us from bondage as You did from Egypt

תת המון לאמים תחת נפשונו:

Let the pagans suffer in our place.

תזכור להעלות נשואי רחם מדכים

O remember to raise us up from the depth of our suffering,

תמוכים נזורים בהוד טוב עדים:

Them that put their faith in You that in the future You will crown them once again with the crowns they wore at the giving of the Torah at Har Sinai.

תוקף עוז אדרוך על ים.

Remember the mighty song of victory that the Jews sang at the Splitting of the sea,

תזכור לעם מספרם כחול הים:

Remember the people whose number is as the sand by the sea who glorified Your name on the Red Sea by saying:

ימלך י-י לעולם א-להיך ציון לדור ודר הללוי-ה:

ואתה קדוש יושב תהלות ישראל א-ל נא:

מי יוכל לשער כל הפקודים.

Who can compute the exact number of the Jewish people?

אשר בחבל ובחלש לא נפקדים.

Who cannot be counted simply by measure or lot.

ברית כרותה למו מאז מפקדים. לבל יחסר המזוג מחומש פקודים;

A covenant was made with them a long time ago that their number shall never be less than that recorded in the Book of Numbers.

ואם כתורן וכנס יושרדו מפקדים. לא ימעטו מששים רבוא מנקדים.

Were they to be left as a single tree or as an ensign on a hill, yet their number will never be below sixty myriads, at least.

ואם לנגף ואנף באף מפקדים. כסף תת כופר הם מופקדים:

Should pestilence and grievous plagues be ordained for them, then shall they bring the silver half-shekel as their ransom.

ובכל ערב נשמתם בידך מפקידים. ובכל רגעי בקר נבחנים ונפקדים.

Every evening they commit their spirit into Your hand, and every morning they are tried and visited by You.

ולי מה יקרו עלי הפקודים, אלו הפקודים והמתפקדים

As for me, G-d, how precious are Moshe and Aaron, and those who are counted according to these ordinances,

שמור פקודים ונפקדים, ושוקדים להיות משקדים, ולך קודים:

O, Lord, protect those who follow Your request and allow themselves to be counted; who give up their lives for You; who pray to You and to You they bow their heads—

חי וקים נורא ומרום וקדוש

אומן בשמעו כי תשא את ראש. הל ויחת איך אותם דרוש:

When the nursing-father (Moses) heard the command "When you take the census of the children of Israel" he trembled and quaked.

לעם אשר לא ימד ולא יספר. איככה אספרם ולא נתנו להספר:

“How can a people be fathomed that cannot be measured or numbered?”

עקדם כנאמר לו הבט וספור, שב ויושב אם תוכל לספור:

When their ancestor Abraham was told 'Look now, and count the stars,' he stood off, as he was told again, 'if you be able to count them.'

זרעם כחול ימים וכוכבים ספורים. ואני איך אספרם ולעד פרים:

Their seed is like the sand of the sea and like the stars of the heaven. How, then, can I count them since they continually multiply?"

רם חוה לו אות מספרם. איך למנותם ולעמוד על ספרם:

The exalted God then taught Moshe a device to compute their number.

בקור ראשי שמותם לחשבון תעלה. ומדת מנינם בידך אז תעלה:

Add the numerical value (in Thousands) of the names of the tribes and the total of their number will result.

יקר שלישי בתוכם לא הפקד. כי לגיון מלך לברו נפקד:

The noble third tribe (Levi), however, was not counted among them; the King's personal army was numbered separately.

רשום מבטן להפקר במשמרת הקודש.

Distinguished from birth, appointed to be in charge of the Sanctuary,

וצבאו ופקודיו נמנים מבן חודש:

The children of Levi were numbered from a month old and upward.

בשמעו אומר ונתנו איש כופר. פיץ במה יתרצה אשכול הכופר:

להבין את התפלה

When Moses heard the command: "Then shall every man give a ransom" he asked: "How can man gain reconciliation with the Creator of all?"

יציר מה יתן פדיון נפשו. וימצא חנינה פני שם נפשו:

"What can a creature give as the ransom for his soul, to find grace in the eyes of the Creator of his soul?"

קדוש כחפץ להצדיק עם זה. כמין מטבע אש הראהו במחזה:

Then showed the Holy One, who desired to free His people from guilt, the likeness of a fiery coin to Moses in a vision.

למדו זה יתנו ולא יתמתנו. ולכל יתנו את אשר נתנו:

He instructed him: "This shall they give without delay, and they shall publicly declare the sum that they pay."

י-ה לא מצאנוך שגיא כח. כאשר נקית חטא גבורי כח:

O Eternal, we cannot comprehend You, so mighty in strength are You. As You did of yore cleanse from sin those that were mustered in strength,

רחום כרחמת נשואיך בכסף כפורים. כן שעה שפתינו בשלום פרים:

Just as You did show mercy to Your children by the atonement silver, so do You accept the rendering of our lips in the place of the offering of bullocks.

א-ל נא לעולם תעריץ, ולעולם תקדש, ולעולמי עולמים תמלוך ותתנשא, הא-ל מלך נורא מרום וקדוש.

Because we are delaying the recital of Kedushah, we say this now: O Lord! Forever shall You be adored and eternally sanctified, and forever and shall You reign in exaltation, O God, revered, great and holy King.

כי אתה הוא מלך מלכי המלכים. מלכותו נצח. נוראותיו שיהו. ספרו עזו. פארוהו צבאיו.

קדשוהו רוממוהו. רון שיר ושבת. תוקף תהלות תפארתו:

For You are the King of Kings whose kingdom is enduring. Proclaim His wondrous works, recount His might, glorify Him, you His hosts, sanctify Him, exalt in hymn, song and praise His awesome grandeur.

עד אשא ראש. כמו מראש. להקדיש לקדוש:

Until I will raise my head on high when we are finally rescued, as in earlier days My holy God and Lord to praise;

עד במאזני צדק יכריעני לצדק. נורא וקדוש:

Until G-d allows the scales of justice to fall in my favor; the feared and sanctified One.

אלה, אזכרה את אשר נעשה. בהיותי בטח ושקט בנכון ונשא.

Now in exile, well do I remember the events of long ago, when I dwelt safe and secure on the towering Temple Hill.

נועלתי בעבר ושקלי איך אשא:

But because of my sins I was driven out; how, then shall I bring my Shekel offering?

די שקלי עד לא שקלתי. הנם למס עובר היום שקלתי.

Because formerly I did not regularly pay my shekels, I am forced now to pay them as tribute to the oppressor.

ובחטא עוול שקל לרשע נשקלתי.

Also, for the sin of false balance I have been given over to the tyrant.

זווי ללא תתי לשכני בגילה, הבתי לתשלום דרכמון לעולי גולה.

Because I did not give my obligation with joy, I am obliged to pay a gold daric to the returning pilgrims.

טבעו גם הם והוערמתי מנלה:

And now they, too, have vanished and I am denuded bare.

יושר שלש קפות משלשות סאים. כנוסות למקה שי מריאים ושיים.

In three baskets, each holding three Seahs, collections were made for purchasing the offerings of bullocks and lambs,

לקחו ואין עוד בצעי נושאים:

Of them, too, I am deprived; they are no longer available to obtain atonement for the sin of covetousness.

מדת שופרות תקלין חדתין ועתיקין. נדבות אשר בם היו מעתקין.

The Shofar-like chests which contained "New Shekel dues," and "Old Shekel dues," and the "Free-will offering" chests in which collections were made,

סרו כמה מני והדברים עתיקין:

Have long been taken away from me, long, long ago.

עוצם המון חוגג שוטף כנהר. פזר ונותרתי כתורן בראש ההר.

The mighty throng in festival procession, like an overflowing river, has been scattered, and I am left lonely like a flag upon the hill.

צדק מלוני שערר כתל הר

My sacred dwelling lies waste like a hill of rubbish.

קן צפור קרא למרום הרים, ראש נשואיך כמאז בו להרים.

O, call again the scattered bird-nest to the exalted hill, and lift us up again, as in ancient times, the head of those borne by You,

שבעה ושמונה עליהם לראש תרים

And raise over them seven shepherds and eight princes (Micah 5,4).

עד אשא ראש, כמו מראש להקדיש לקדוש:

Until my head on high I raise, As I did in ancient days. My holy G-d and Lord to praise.

ובבן ולך תעלה קדשה כי אתה קדוש ישראל ומושיע:

And thus may sanctification ascend unto You, for You are the Holy One of Israel, our Savior!