

א-ל אליהו

ר' אברהם אבן עזרא

ספרד, המאה ה-12

א-ל אליהו
הנביא הבא נאא-ל אליהו
בזכות אליהונע בשבי פי בו
גם לא ראה שנהבו ירתום רכבו
לא שוכב לבוכחשי ומשנאות
בשור ותרעינהרב מחלי בראות
יפות ובקריאותצר עיניו ילטוש
ישראל תשעינההשקה צור מי ראש
יום עיני לקדושישע א-ל קוראות
קולן ותכפנה [ותרנה]מתי תראה אות
לך ולך נושאותלפני דל שואל
אברהם הקרה נאהמלאך הגואל
אנא הא-ל א-ל



El Eliyahu - Lord, please send Eliyahu HaNavi

R. Abraham Ibn Ezra, Sfarad, 12th Century

He will lead his chariot	restless in captivity
His heart did not rest	nor envision sleep
My illness grows as I see	my leanness while my enemies
Are beautiful fat-fleshed	and graze
Our Rock, give them poisonous water	while the enemy shall glare
My eyes to the Holy One	of Israel will be raised
When will You give a sign	of redemption to those who call out
To You, O to You they raise	their voices and weep
Angel of Deliverance	come before this poor seeker
O Lord, God of	Abraham call him forth

ABOUT THE PIYUT

“El Eliyahu” is a poem for Saturday night (Motzae Shabbat), which is sung to various tunes by most Sephardic communities. The prophet Elijah, as the harbinger of redemption, is a prominent figure in the Saturday night liturgy in which the Jews bid farewell to the Shabbat. Some commentators explain that according to tradition Elijah will not appear on the eve of the Shabbat or holidays, so as not to bother the people who are busy preparing for these special days, and it is therefore appropriate to ask for his arrival once we emerge from the celebratory mood. Others say that since the Talmud states that the observance of two Sabbaths would lead to redemption, we claim at the end of the Shabbat that we did our share and now await the coming of Elijah and with him, the Messiah. It is also very probable that the shift from the Shabbat, a day of rest and spiritual growth, to the weekly mundane routine, engenders a desire to be redeemed and delivered from the daily struggle for food and survival.

The author of the poem, whose name is alluded to in the acrostic, is most probably R. Abraham Ibn Ezra. It is interesting to note that the usually hidden poet reveals himself, be it ever so briefly, in the poem when saying “Please God, the God of Abraham, let me find...”. This is a paraphrase on the words of Abraham’s servant, in Genesis 24:12, asking God to help him find a bride for Isaac. The transition from the prayer for the other to a personal prayer is sort of an invitation and an incentive to those who follow in the footsteps of the great Rabbi Abraham Ibn Ezra to dare and create their own personal, immediate and direct communication channels with God.

El Eliyahu - Lord, please send Eliyahu HaNavi

R. Avraham Ibn Ezra

Iraq (Maqam Bayat/Husseini)

El E li ya hu El E li ya hu lich vod E li ya hu ha na vi ha veh na
Bo Yir tom Ri ch bo Na ba she vi ki bo lo sha chav li bo gam lo ra ah she na

El Eliyahu El Eliyahu	[Bizchut] Eliyahu HaNavi haveh na
Bo yirtom richbo	Na bashevi ki bo
Lo shachav libo	Gam lo ra'ah shenah
Rav machli bir'ot	Kach'shi u'msanot
yafot u'vriot	Bassar vatirena
Hashkeh tzur mei rosh	Tzar einav yiltosh
yom einai likdosh	Yisrael tish'ena
Matai tar'eh ot	Yesha el kor'ot
Lacha u'lecha nos'ot	Kolan vativkena [vatarona]
Hamalach hago'el	Lifnei dal sho'el
Ana haEl El	Avraham hakreh na





Commentary

He will lead his chariot – the meaning of this stanza is uncertain. It might suggest that the Messiah, whose arrival Eliyahu is supposed to announce, is riding his chariot harnessed to none other than Eliyahu himself. This interpretation is supported by the imagery of the messiah as a rider (Zech. 9:9 and B. San. 98:1): “Rejoice greatly, fair Zion; raise a shout, fair Jerusalem! Lo, your king is coming to you. He is victorious, triumphant, yet humble, riding on a donkey”, and of Eliyahu as the driver of a battle chariot, helping the Israelite triumph (II Kings 2:11-12 and commentators *ibid.*): “A fiery chariot and fiery horses suddenly appeared and separated one from the other; and Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind. Elisha saw it, and he cried out, “Oh, father, father! Israel’s chariots and horsemen”!”. Eliyahu is further described as someone who is constantly on the move because Israel is still in captivity – in exile. It is also interesting to compare this description to Eliyahu’s interaction with Ahab, described in II Kings (18:44-45): “Ahab mounted his chariot and drove to Jezreel. The hand of the Lord had come upon Elijah; He tied up his skirts and ran in front of Ahab all the way to Jezreel”.