

V'chol Ma'aminim

וכל מאמינים WE BELIEVE
This piyyut is 1500 years old, having been composed by one of the earliest liturgical poets, Yannai, who lived in the Land of Israel some time between the 5th and 7th century. The poem is a double alphabetical acrostic: the first line states an attribute of God, and the second uses the same letter to describe the human perspective. As much as he can, the poet alliterates an entire line, thus emphasizing the particular quality.

א

Verse 1

הַאֲוִחוֹ בְּיַד מִדַּת מְשַׁפֵּט.
וְכָל מְאֲמִינִים שֶׁהוּא אֵל אֲמוּנָה,
הַבּוֹחֵן וּבּוֹדֵק גְּנֹזֵי נִסְתָּרוֹת.

Verse 2

וְכָל מְאֲמִינִים שֶׁהוּא בּוֹחֵן כְּלִיּוֹת,
הַגּוֹאֵל מִמָּוֶת וּפּוֹדֶה מִשַּׁחַת.
וְכָל מְאֲמִינִים שֶׁהוּא גּוֹאֵל חֹזֵק,

KNOWS OUR DEEPEST FEELINGS בּוֹחֵן כְּלִיּוֹת. Literally, "examines our kidneys." Priests would examine the innards of sacrificed animals to determine the future or to interpret messages from God.

THE STEADFAST REDEEMER גּוֹאֵל חֹזֵק. The poet is paraphrasing Jeremiah 50:34, where the prophet asserts that only God—no earthly nation—will redeem Israel.

SOLE JUDGE OF ALL THAT LIVES ON EARTH

הַדֵּן יְחִידֵי עוֹלָם. This phrase, taken from the Mishnah, is echoed in *U-netaneh Tokef*: all that lives on earth passes before God, the sole Judge on this judgment day.

A PROMISE OF THE FUTURE אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה. In God's revelation to Moses at the burning bush, God replies to Moses' question, "Who shall I say sent me?" with the phrase quoted here, explicating the name of God: יְהוָה. The phrase has been variously translated as "I am that which I am," "I will be that which I will be," or "I will be there with you in the way that I will be there with you."

י

Verse 3

הַקֹּצֵר בּוֹזְעִים וּמְאָרִיף אֶפֶי.
וְכָל מְאֲמִינִים שֶׁהוּא קָשָׁה לְכַעוֹס,
הַרְחוּם וּמְקַדִּים רַחֲמִים לְרַגְזוֹ.
וְכָל מְאֲמִינִים שֶׁהוּא רַף לְרִצּוֹת,
הַשּׂוֹה וּמִשׂוּה קִטָּן וְגָדוֹל.
וְכָל מְאֲמִינִים שֶׁהוּא שׁוֹפֵט צָדֵק,
הַתֵּם וּמִתְמָם עִם תְּמִימִים.
וְכָל מְאֲמִינִים שֶׁהוּא תְּמִים פְּעֵלוֹ.

תִּשָּׁבַב לְבַדְּךָ, וְתִמְלֹךְ עַל כָּל בְּיַחוּד, פִּכְתוּב עַל יַד
נְבִיאֶיךָ: וְהָיָה יְהוָה לְמֶלֶךְ עַל כָּל־הָאָרֶץ, בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא
יְהִיָּה יְהוָה אֶחָד וּשְׁמוֹ אֶחָד.

MAY YOU BE SOVEREIGN
וְהָיָה יְהוָה לְמֶלֶךְ. Zechariah
14:9.