

El Adon

אל אדון

Lord of All

Study Guide to an Acrostic Piyyut

Booklet #2 in the “Siddur as an Instrument of Resilience” Series

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Most recent update: September 30, 2022

El Adon is an ancient type of prayer called a piyyut, or sung poem. It is composed in the form of an alphabetic acrostic. Its author is unknown, however, it is ascribed to the mystics that were called “Explorers of the Supernatural World” (*Yorde Merkava*) who contemplated the Chariot (or throne) of G-d, as written about in the Book of Ezekiel. They were active in the Middle East from about 100 BCE to 1100 CE.

On Sabbath, *El Adon* immediately follows *Ein Aroch* (“None is Like You”) during the Shacharit (“Dawn Service”). The two songs are often sung together and are part of the Yotzer Or (“Creator of Light”) blessing which celebrates the new day and G-d as its Creator, immediately following the Bar’khu (“Call to Worship”).

יֵאל עַל כָּל הַמַּעֲשִׂים.
בְּרוּךְ וּמְבָרֵךְ בְּפִי כָּל נְשָׁמָה.

גָּדְלוֹ וְטוֹבוֹ מֵלֵא עוֹלָם.
יְדַעַת וּתְבוֹנָה סוֹבְבִים אוֹתוֹ.

הַמְתַּגָּאָה עַל חַיּוֹת הַקִּדְּשׁ.
וְנִהְדָר בְּכַבּוֹד עַל הַמְרַכְּבָה.

זְכוּת וּמִישׁוֹר לְפָנָי כֶּסֶאִי.
חֶסֶד וְרַחֲמִים מֵלֵא כְבוֹדוֹ.

טוֹבִים מְאֹד שְׂבָרָא אֱלֵהֵינוּ.
יִצְרָם בְּדַעַת בְּבִינָה וּבְהַשְׁכֵּל.

כַּח וּגְבוּרָה נָתַן בְּהֵם.
לְהַיּוֹת מוֹשְׁלִים בְּקֶרֶב תִּבְלִי.

מְלֵאִים זִיו וּמְפִיקִים נוֹגָה.
נָאָה זִיוֹם בְּכָל הָעוֹלָם.

שְׂמִיחִים בְּצִאתָם וְשֹׁשֵׁיִם בְּבוֹאֵם.
עֹשִׂים בְּאִמָּה רְצוֹן קוֹנֵם.

פְּאֵר וְכַבּוֹד נוֹתְנִים לְשִׁמּוֹ.
צְהִלָּה וְרִנָּה לְזִכָּר מַלְכוּתוֹ.

קָרָא לְשִׁמְשׁ וַיִּזְרַח אוֹר.
רָאָה וְהִתְקִין צוּרֵת הַלְבָנָה.

שָׁבַח נוֹתְנִים לוֹ כָּל צָבָא מְרוֹם.
תְּפִאָרֵת וּגְדִלָּה שְׂרָפִים וְאוֹפָנִים וְחַיּוֹת הַקִּדְּשׁ

{א} El adon al kol hama'asim.
{ב} Baruch um'vorach befi kol neshama.

{ג} Godlo ve'tuvo lifnei (maleh) olam,
{ד} da'at u'tvuna sovevim hodo (oto).

{ה} Hamitgaeh al chayot hakodesh,
{ו} venedar bechavod al hemerkavah.

{ז} Zechut umishor lifnei kiso,
{ח} chesed ve'rachamim lifnei kvodo.

{ט} Tovim meorot shebara eloheinu,
{י} yetzaram beda'at, bevinah uvhaskel.

{כ} Koach u'gvurah natan bahem,
{ל} lihiyot moshlim bekerev tevel.

{מ} Mele'eim ziv, umfikim noga.
{נ} Naeh zivam bechol haolam.

{ס} Semechim betzetam, vesasim bevoam,
{ע} osim be'eimah retzon konam.

{פ} Pe'er ve'chabod notnim lishmo.
{צ} Tsoholah verinah lezecher malchuto.

{ק} Karah le'shemesh vayizrach or,
{ר} ra'ah vehitkin tzurat halvanah.

{ש} Shevach notnim lo kol tzevah marom.
{ת} Tiferet u'gedulah serafim ve'ofanim ve'chayot hakodesh.

{א} A gentle Lord of all that is
{ב} Blessed and loved by each soul alive.
{ג} Great and good You fill all space.
{ד} Delight there is in knowing You.

{ה} How You transcend all holy life
{ו} Which bears You high above any throne
{ז} Zekhut and equity radiate from You
{ח} Hesed and compassion the worlds reflect.

{ט} The stars and the planets You made to give light
{י} You formed them all conscious, all worthy and wise
{יא} Knowledge and power You gave them to shine
{יב} Like powerful assistants they serve You in space.

{יג} Much light and energy they radiate forth
{יד} No place is untouched by their gentle rays
{טו} So joyful their path is, so happy their course
{טז} En route to fulfill their Creator's command.

{יז} Praising Your glory, they honor Your name
{יח} Singing Your Majesty's anthem of joy.
{יט} Quietly suns shine to answer Your call
{כ} Reflections of moonlight change size at Your word.

{כא} Seraphim, angels, and all heavenly hosts
{כב} They praise You in concert with Sfirot on high

Translation by Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi. The translation is part of the work [Siddur Tehilat Hashem Y'daber Pi](#) hosted on the [Open Siddur Project](#). The translation is protected by the [Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported License](#). Includes 5 sung version available for download:

https://www.zemirotdatabase.org/view_song.php?id=67#rec

Included below are links to two free, online translation resources for each word of the El Adon acrostic, with just one of sometimes many possible English definitions, and its part of speech. Many of these words, especially those that are, or are derived from, root words in Hebrew, have any number of additional synonyms and / or compound meanings. These meanings may be literal or figurative. Sometimes, when striving for a comprehensive understanding of these words, a careful examination of the Hebrew vowels is required. *Google Translate* and *Morfis*, have been selected for use in this booklet because they have audio available, enabling learners to hear the words as well as see them.

Finally, for each word in the acrostic a link to the word, using the *Strong's Hebrew Dictionary* numbers at the online *Biblehub*, is provided. On these pages will be found additional information for those interested in deeper study. Included there are additional definitions and lists of placements within the Tanakh.

* A note from Rebekah Tanner regarding *Biblehub* and the reference tools found therein: Many of these resources were originally published 100 or so years ago and rely on non-Jewish versions of the canon, such as the King James Bible. I would happily include similar documentation from Jewish publications if it were readily available online for readers of English. As of the initial publication of this booklet, such sources have not yet been found by this fairly capable, non-Hebrew literate, retired librarian. I mean no offense to anyone, but these are simply the best tools that I can read that I can find as I begin my personal journey into a better understanding of Hebrew prayer.

אל

<https://translate.google.com/?hl=en&sl=iw&tl=en&text=%D7%90%D6%B5%D7%9C&op=translate>

<https://www.morfix.co.il/en/%D7%90%D6%B5%D7%9C>

The Lord (noun)

<https://biblehub.com/hebrew/410.htm>

ברוך

<https://translate.google.com/?hl=en&sl=iw&tl=en&text=%D7%91%D6%B8%D6%BC%D7%A8%D7%95%D6%BC%D7%9A%D6%B0&op=translate>

<https://www.morfix.co.il/en/%D7%91%D6%B8%D6%BC%D7%A8%D7%95%D6%BC%D7%9A%D6%B0>

Blessed (adjective)

<https://biblehub.com/hebrew/1288.htm>

גדלו

<https://translate.google.com/?hl=en&sl=iw&tl=en&text=%D7%92%D6%B8%D6%BC%D7%93%D6%B0%D7%9C%D7%95%D6%B9&op=translate>

<https://www.morfix.co.il/en/%D7%92%D6%B8%D6%BC%D7%93%D6%B0%D7%9C%D7%95%D6%B9>

Become great (verb)

<https://biblehub.com/hebrew/1431.htm>

דַּעַת

<https://translate.google.com/?hl=en&sl=iw&tl=en&text=%D7%93%D6%B7%D6%BC%D7%A2%D6%B7%D7%AA&op=translate>

<https://www.morfix.co.il/en/%D7%93%D6%B7%D6%BC%D7%A2%D6%B7%D7%AA>

Knowledge (noun)

<https://biblehub.com/hebrew/1847.htm>

הַמְתַּאָּה

<https://translate.google.com/?hl=en&sl=iw&tl=en&text=%D7%94%D6%B7%D7%9E%D6%B4%D6%BC%D7%AA%D6%B0%D7%92%D6%B8%D6%BC%D7%90%D6%B6%D7%94&op=translate>

<https://www.morfix.co.il/en/%D7%94%D6%B7%D7%9E%D6%B4%D6%BC%D7%AA%D6%B0%D7%92%D6%B8%D6%BC%D7%90%D6%B6%D7%94>

To be proud (verb)

<https://biblehub.com/hebrew/1343.htm>

וְנִהְדָּר

<https://translate.google.com/?hl=en&sl=iw&tl=en&text=%D7%95%D6%B0%D7%A0%D6%B6%D7%94%D6%B0%D7%93%D6%B8%D6%BC%D7%A8&op=translate>

<https://www.morfix.co.il/en/%D7%95%D6%B0%D7%A0%D6%B6%D7%94%D6%B0%D7%93%D6%B8%D6%BC%D7%A8>

Magnificent (adjective)

<https://biblehub.com/hebrew/1923.htm>

זְכוּת

<https://translate.google.com/?hl=en&sl=iw&tl=en&text=%D7%96%D6%B0%D7%9B%D7%95%D6%BC%D7%AA&op=translate>

<https://www.morfix.co.il/en/%D7%96%D6%B0%D7%9B%D7%95%D6%BC%D7%AA>

Purity (noun)

<https://biblehub.com/hebrew/2136.htm>

טוֹן

<https://translate.google.com/?hl=en&sl=iw&tl=en&text=%D7%97%D6%B6%D7%A1%D6%B6%D7%93&op=translate>

<https://www.morfix.co.il/en/%D7%97%D6%B6%D7%A1%D6%B6%D7%93>

Kindness (noun)

<https://biblehub.com/hebrew/2617.htm>

טוֹבִים

<https://translate.google.com/?hl=en&sl=iw&tl=en&text=%D7%98%D7%95%D6%B9%D7%91%D6%B4%D7%99%D7%9D&op=translate>

<https://www.morfix.co.il/en/%D7%98%D7%95%D6%B9%D7%91%D6%B4%D7%99%D7%9D>

Good (adjective)

<https://biblehub.com/hebrew/2895.htm>

יצרם

<https://translate.google.com/?hl=en&sl=iw&tl=en&text=%D7%99%D6%B0%D7%A6%D6%B8%D7%A8%D6%B8%D7%9D&op=translate>

<https://www.morfix.co.il/en/%D7%99%D6%B0%D7%A6%D6%B8%D7%A8%D6%B8%D7%9D>

To form (verb)

<https://biblehub.com/hebrew/3335.htm>

כח

<https://translate.google.com/?hl=en&sl=iw&tl=en&text=%D7%9B%D6%BC%D7%97%D6%B7&op=translate>

<https://www.morfix.co.il/en/%D7%9B%D6%BC%D7%97%D6%B7>

Power (noun)

<https://biblehub.com/hebrew/3581.htm>

להיות

<https://translate.google.com/?hl=en&sl=iw&tl=en&text=%D7%9C%D6%B4%D7%94%D6%B0%D7%99%D7%95%D6%B9%D7%AA&op=translate>

<https://www.morfix.co.il/en/%D7%9C%D6%B4%D7%94%D6%B0%D7%99%D7%95%D6%B9%D7%AA>

To be (verb)

<https://biblehub.com/hebrew/1961.htm>

מלאים

<https://translate.google.com/?hl=en&sl=iw&tl=en&text=%D7%9E%D6%B0%D7%9C%D6%B5%D7%90%D6%B4%D7%99%D7%9D&op=translate>

<https://www.morfix.co.il/en/%D7%9E%D6%B0%D7%9C%D6%B5%D7%90%D6%B4%D7%99%D7%9D>

To be full (verb)

<https://biblehub.com/hebrew/4390.htm>

נאה

<https://translate.google.com/?hl=en&sl=iw&tl=en&text=%D7%A0%D6%B8%D7%90%D6%B6%D7%94&op=translate>

<https://www.morfix.co.il/en/%D7%A0%D6%B8%D7%90%D6%B6%D7%94>

To be beautiful (verb)

<https://biblehub.com/hebrew/4998.htm>

Where did the letter "samek" go? Why is "sin" used at this place in the acrostic? Having read a few different explanations for this occurrence, none of which fully satisfies my curiosity... The most likely of those seems to be that at a time when poetry was often a means for the transmission of culture, words that spelled differently but sounded similar might cause such a thing as this. However, as speakers and students of Hebrew have, throughout the ages, been rather concerned with the actual meanings of individual letters, I am just not sure about that, in this case. Whatever the reason, this is what we have inherited: instead of the letter named "samek" we find a word that is pronounced "samech."

שִׂמְחָה

<https://translate.google.com/?hl=en&sl=iw&tl=en&text=%D7%A9%D6%B0%D7%82%D7%9E%D6%B5%D7%97%D6%B4%D7%99%D7%9D&op=translate>

<https://www.morfix.co.il/en/%D7%A9%D6%B0%D7%82%D7%9E%D6%B5%D7%97%D6%B4%D7%99%D7%9D>

To rejoice (verb)

<https://biblehub.com/hebrew/8055.htm>

עָשָׂה

<https://translate.google.com/?hl=en&sl=iw&tl=en&text=%D7%A2%D7%A9%D6%B4%D7%82%D7%99%D7%9D&op=translate>

<https://www.morfix.co.il/en/do>

To do (verb)

<https://biblehub.com/hebrew/6213.htm>

פְּאֵר

<https://translate.google.com/?hl=en&sl=iw&tl=en&text=%D7%A4%D6%B0%D6%BC%D7%90%D6%B5%D7%A8&op=translate>

<https://www.morfix.co.il/en/%D7%A4%D6%B0%D6%BC%D7%90%D6%B5%D7%A8>

Beauty (noun)

<https://biblehub.com/hebrew/6287.htm>

צָהַלָה

<https://translate.google.com/?hl=en&sl=iw&tl=en&text=%D7%A6%D6%B8%D7%94%D6%B3%D7%9C%D6%B8%D7%94&op=translate>

<https://www.morfix.co.il/en/%D7%A6%D6%B8%D7%94%D6%B3%D7%9C%D6%B8%D7%94>

To shout (verb)

<https://biblehub.com/hebrew/6670.htm>

קָרָא

<https://translate.google.com/?hl=en&sl=iw&tl=en&text=%D7%A7%D6%B8%D7%A8%D6%B8%D7%90&op=translate>

<https://www.morfix.co.il/en/%D7%A7%D6%B8%D7%A8%D6%B8%D7%90>

To read (verb)

<https://biblehub.com/hebrew/7121.htm>

רָאָה

<https://translate.google.com/?hl=en&sl=iw&tl=en&text=%D7%A8%D6%B8%D7%90%D6%B8%D7%94&op=translate>

<https://www.morfix.co.il/en/%D7%A8%D6%B8%D7%90%D6%B8%D7%94>

To see (verb)

<https://biblehub.com/hebrew/7200.htm>

שִׁבַּח

<https://translate.google.com/?hl=en&sl=iw&tl=en&text=%D7%A9%D6%B6%D7%81%D7%91%D6%B7%D7%97&op=translate>

<https://www.morfix.co.il/en/%D7%A9%D6%B6%D7%81%D7%91%D6%B7%D7%97>

To Praise (verb)

<https://biblehub.com/hebrew/7624.htm>

תְּפִאָּרָה

<https://translate.google.com/?hl=en&sl=iw&tl=en&text=%D7%AA%D6%B4%D6%BC%D7%A4%D6%B0%D7%90%D6%B6%D7%A8%D6%B6%D7%A&op=translate>

<https://www.morfix.co.il/en/%D7%AA%D6%B4%D6%BC%D7%A4%D6%B0%D7%90%D6%B6%D7%A8%D6%B6%D7%AA>

Glory (noun)

<https://biblehub.com/hebrew/8597.htm>

The editors of the *Siddur Lev Shalem* (Rabbinical Assembly: 2016) decided to include this poem, written by Rabbi Harold S. Kushner, in the sidebar of the page 151, where *El Adon* can be found:

A PRAYER FOR THE WORLD

Let the rain come and wash away
the ancient grudges, the bitter hatreds
held and nurtured over generations.

Let the rain wash away the memory
of the hurt, the neglect.

Then let the sun come out and
fill the sky with rainbows.

Let the warmth of the sun heal us
wherever we are broken.

Let it burn away the fog so that
we can see each other clearly.

So that we can see beyond labels,
beyond accents, gender or skin color.

Let the warmth and brightness
of the sun melt our selfishness.

So that we can share the joys and
feel the sorrows of our neighbors.

And let the light of the sun
be so strong that we will see all
people as our neighbors.

Let the earth, nourished by rain,
bring forth flowers
to surround us with beauty.

And let the mountains teach our hearts
to reach upward to heaven.

Amen.

For additional contemplation of the *El Adon* and its message regarding the honor given to the name of G-d by the heavenly lights in their cycles, I suggest also looking at the Seventh B'rakah of the Amidah for Sabbath (p. 165), "Sim Shalom" with its reference to "the light of G-d's countenance."

RESOURCES:

Most Common Siddur Words:

<https://images.shulcloud.com/1177/uploads/SJS-PDFs/Common-Hebrew-Vocabulary-Tier-I.pdf>

<https://images.shulcloud.com/1177/uploads/SJS-PDFs/Common-Hebrew-Vocabulary-Tier-II.pdf>

El Adon (Riverdale Niggun) · Josh Warshawsky · Ayo Awosika · Susan and Marc Sacks: Chaverai Nevarech Vol. II: The Shabbos EP

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ildf_0Dh3RI

Hadar.org Tefillah & Music Shabbat Shacharit Yotzeir Or Eil Adon

<https://www.hadar.org/tefillah-element/s-sh-eil-adon>

Recordings of a dozen different versions of El Adon, available for download.

El Adon: Finding God in the Shifting Light

<https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/el-adon-finding-god-in-the-shifting-light/>

Yotzer Or: How to Remain True to God — And Each Other

<https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/how-to-remain-true-to-god-and-each-other/>

Open Siddur Project

<https://opensiddur.org/prayers/solilunar/shabbat/shabbat-shaharit/el-adon-a-piyyut-attributed-to-the-yordei-hamerkavah-translation-by-sara-kinneret-lapidot/>

Shoroshim: The Ultimate and Unique English Thesaurus of Hebrew Root Verbs. Compiled by Ruven Brauner, 2014.

<https://halakhah.com/rst/shoroshim.pdf>

ENHANCED BROWN-DRIVER-BRIGGS HEBREW AND ENGLISH LEXICON, with an appendix containing the Biblical Aramaic, based on the lexicon of William Gesenius as translated by Edward Robinson, by Francis Brown, with the cooperation of S. R. Driver and Charles A. Briggs. Based on the 1906 edition originally published by Clarendon Press: Oxford. References to Strong's

Concordance , Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament , and Goodrich-Kohlenberger numbers have been added by Logos Research Systems, Inc.

<https://hebrewcollege.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/BDB.pdf>

The Internet Archive has many different formats for download:

<https://archive.org/details/hebrew-and-english-lexicon>

Rabbi Eric Levy has formatted it as a Web page here:

<http://www.ericlevy.com/revel/bdb/bdb/main.htm>

James Strong's *The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*: showing every word of the text of the common English version of the canonical books, and every occurrence of each word in regular order; together with A comparative concordance of the authorized and revised versions, including the American variations; also brief dictionaries of the Hebrew and Greek words of the original, with references to English words.

This is a large download and is available in a number of file types at The Internet Archive:

<https://archive.org/details/exhaustiveconcor1890stro>

About this booklet:

This is the second in a series of little booklets being created because their author has been pondering these questions:

When the first words of creation were spoken and the very first atoms went whirling into the void, upon the breath of the Almighty, did the Creator speak in Hebrew? If not, then in what language were the syllables that formed the primal molecules of matter spoken?

These booklets are the work of a retired librarian, a person gifted in the art of inquiry, not a linguist or language teacher. The hope here is that they will inspire individuals to think about the meanings of words, especially the words of Jewish liturgy. Perhaps small groups of individuals will form self-guided learning circles where they can use these booklets as a starting point in discussions of topics that interest them as regards the Siddur. They are not the work of an expert.

If users of this booklet have suggestions for additional sources, corrections to errors of fact, or constructive criticisms regarding the text; those remarks can be sent to Rebekah Tanner, foxgull@foxgull.com

About the "Siddur as an Instrument of Resilience" Series:

Inspiration for this work originated with the online ScholarStream presentations of May, 2022 provided by the Rabbinical Assembly entitled "Liturgy of Resilience." In particular, "*I Shall Not Fear*": *Liturgy, Emotional Honesty, and Resilience* presented by Rabbi Jan Uhrbach.

Find it here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Yz5XEHWYo4>

That inspiration was then reinforced by reading the Pew Research Center document entitled "Jewish Americans in 2020."

Find it here:

<https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2021/05/11/jewish-americans-in-2020/>

These brief studies about significant / frequently used words found in the Jewish prayer book (Siddur) are not intended to be especially religious – although any spiritual benefit one might derive from them would be a lovely additional outcome. It might be that understanding some core liturgical vocabulary could enrich individuals' experiences during worship services. The hope is that as people learn some basic liturgical vocabulary they will feel empowered in their own prayer life, rather than feeling like audience members at a performance mostly provided by the Cantor.

These booklets are intended to be the scaffolding around which small peer-to-peer groups of interested adults will develop their own word studies based upon a select group of Hebrew words. It is just as simple as that. This research is freely offered as a place to begin – may the learning journeys that result be a source of joy to all who utilize the “Siddur as an Instrument of Resilience.”

Acknowledgements:

This project would not have been conceived without the inspiration of Rabbi Jan Uhrbach, founding director of the Block / Kolker Center for Spiritual Arts at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York City.

It then would not have come to fruition without the encouragement of the Temple Adath Yeshurun community in Syracuse, NY. Particular thanks to Board Member and Chair of the Programming Committee, Lauren Beth Thirer and to Cantor Esa Jaffe.

About the author:

Rebekah Tanner has masters degrees in Library Science, and Museum Studies, and an Advanced Certificate in Interdisciplinary Trauma Studies. In addition to her extensive formal education she is an autodactic with interests in learning about a diverse body of information from archaeology to etymology, meteorology to thanatology and more; fine craft, Asian Studies, poetry, local history and genealogy – the list goes on.... Throughout her life she has also enjoyed sharing what she has been learning with others.

As a young woman, while working as a public librarian in New York City during the era of Ronald Regan’s presidency, Rebekah watched in horror as the lives of several colleagues and acquaintances were devastated, and sometimes ended, by the unaddressed AIDS epidemic. The first time she saw Keith Haring’s now famous “SILENCE = DEATH” graphic, she was made to recall Rabbi Meir Kahane’s phrase “Never Again” and began to make connections about how society actively works to marginalize certain groups of individuals.

Having parents of differing races / ethnicities / religions from one another, and being a Lesbian who was still very much in the process of coming out in the 1980’s, this intersectionality made a profound impression upon her. Already deeply interested in the ways that the peoples of the world expressed their cultures, this became a major force behind the direction of her career and personal political involvements over the years.

