

“*Eleh Ezkerah*”: Re-reading the *Asarah Harugei Malkhut*

By: NACHMAN LEVINE

The *piyut* “*Eleh Ezkerah*” (‘These I Will Remember’) on the Ten Martyrs¹ by the unknown medieval Ashkenazic author “Yehudah” (as signed in its acrostic) appears among the closing *selihot* penitential poems following (in the Ashkenazic *Maḥzor*) the Yom Kippur *Avodah* describing the Yom Kippur Temple Service. Of the many medieval *Kinot* elegies (on the Temple’s destruction, the 1171 Blois martyrdom, the Crusades, etc.²) once said after the *Avodah* and *selihot*, only “*Eleh Ezkerah*” remains. Its description of the martyrs’ Sanctification of God’s Name took on central poignancy in Jewish consciousness as a focal point in the Yom Kippur liturgy, and its emotive reading is shared by Sephardim who read this Ashkenazic poem in the *Kinot* of *Tishah b-Av* when Ashkenazim say another *kinah* about the Ten Martyrs, “*Arzei ha-Levanon*”³ of the 13th-century R. Meir b. Yehiel.

Eleh Ezkerah is based on versions of the ‘*Asarah Harugei Malkhut*’ (The Ten Martyrs) account in *Midrash Asarah Harugei Malkhut*⁴ and other later Midrashim. Its author had several versions of *Midrash Asarah Harugei Malkhut* to work with, perhaps *Midrash*

¹ D. Goldshmidt, *Maḥzor le-Yamim Noraim* (Koren, Jerusalem, 1970) Vol. II p. 568; I. Davidson, *Otzar ha-Shirah ve-ha-Piyyut, Thesaurus of Mediaeval Hebrew Poetry*, vol. I (New York, 1924).

² Goldshmidt, *Maḥzor*, p. 44.

³ D. Goldshmidt, *Seder ha-Kinot l-Tishah b-Av* (Mosad HaRav Kook, Jerusalem, 1972) p. 22.

⁴ Jellinek, *Beit ha-Midrash*, Vol. II, pp. 64–72; Vol. VI, pp. 19–35.

Nachman Levine teaches in Detroit. His works on Tanakh and Midrash appear in various journals.

Shir ha-Shirim or the Ashkenazic *Avodah*, *Amitz Koah* or others,⁵ and presumably didn't have access to the 'Sephardic' *Atah Konanta*.

It describes the torture and martyrdom of the ten rabbis in the period after the second Temple's destruction (Raban Shimon b. Gamliel, R. Yishmael the Kohen Gadol, R. Haninah b. Teradion, R. Hutzpit the Meturgeman (Interpreter, of the words of the heads of the Sanhedrin), R. Elazar b. Shamua, R. Hanina b. Hakinai, R. Yesheivav the Scribe, R. Yehudah b. Dama, R. Yehudah b. Baba). They are executed by the Roman emperor, as 'punishment' for Joseph's sale by his ten brothers (Genesis 37). He justifies it—in Jewish law selling another Jew into slavery carries a death penalty—because 'there were none like you since then,' and the generation's ten greatest sages serve as expiation for it.

Eleh Ezkerah's literary "historical" problems, like those of *Midrash Asarah Harugei Malkhut* and others, have been noted (e.g., the actual martyrs were not executed at the same time, nor were all contemporaries or even known to have been executed—or in one case, to exist, etc.).⁶

It may well be, however, that its ahistoricity is in fact *Eleh Ezkerah's* core metaphor and literary premise in invoking the totality of Jewish martyrdom as expiation. Describing the martyrs who were executed at different times in the terrible 2nd-century Hadrianic persecutions (and some possibly before or after) as executed collectively creates its meta-historical metaphor. By no means a work of inept credulousness and naiveté or worse—it is unlikely

⁵ An "Avodah" is a liturgical poem describing the Yom Kippur Temple Service, recited on Yom Kippur since the period after the Temple's destruction, as if to replicate the central Service in its absence. Primary examples are in D. Goldshmidt, *Mahzor L-Yamim Noraim* (Koren, Jerusalem, 1970) Vol. II; Michael D. Swartz and Joseph Yahalom (eds.), *Avodah: An Anthology of Ancient Poetry for Yom Kippur*, Pennsylvania State University Press 2004.

⁶ The historicity of the *piyut* and *Midrashei Asarah Harugei Malkhut* traditions were questioned since the 12th-century *Yihusei Tanaim v-Amoraim* (vol. II no. 367b) and the 15th-16th century *Sefer Yuhasin* and *Tzemach David*. See also: D. Goldshmidt, *Mahzor l-Yamim Noraim*, Vol. II p. 44, *Seder ha-Kinot l-Tishah b-Av* (Mosad HaRav Kook, Jerusalem, 1972) p. 12; A. Velner, *Aseret Harugei Malkhut* (Mosad HaRav Kook) 205, pp. 35–102.

that its author was unaware of commonly known Talmudic texts and fully fluent in the *Pirkei Heikhalot* literature—it is of supremely brilliant artistry. None of it is historical; all of it is true. It is not about an historical event. What it is about is astonishing. It is about the Yom Kippur *Avodah*.

It systematically and transparently describes the martyrdom in terms of the Yom Kippur *Avodah*'s motifs of preparation, priestly purification, lottery, calling out the Name, slaughter, skinning, spilling and sprinkling of blood, burning, etc., as its central theological idea.

Eleh Ezkerah is about the aggregate death of the righteous, which atones for Israel as the sacrifices do (Bavli *Mo'ed Katan* 28a). “The deaths of Aaron’s sons are written next to the *Avodah* of Yom Kippur to teach you that *the death of the righteous atones for Israel as Yom Kippur atones for Israel*” (Yerushalmi *Yoma* 1:1, 38b⁷). In fact, “The death of the righteous is equal to *the burning of the Temple*” (Bavli *Rosh Ha-Shanah* 18b). From the beginning, *Eleh Ezkerah* equates the Ten as sacrifices: “מלאי מצוות כרמון וכזירות”, “They were filled with mitzvot like a pomegranate and like the corners [of the altar with the blood of sacrifices, from *Zekhariah* 9:15: . . . יִמְלְאוּ” “filled as . . . the corners of the altar”⁸], and at the end with the request for God to see their spilled blood on His heavenly curtain.

The acrostic *selihot* read after the *Avodah* express our sadness on the *Avodah*'s loss (“אשרי עין ראתה כל זה . . . הלא למשמע און דאבה נפשנו”) and our responsibility for its prolonged absence (“עונות אבותנו החריבו”) (נוה והטאתנו האריכו קצו”). (Rabbi J.B. Soloveitchik writes that reciting the *Avodah* is “to feel the reality of the *Beit ha-Mikdash* which is no longer... The mourning which takes place on Yom Kippur is our recognition of sin. The destruction of the *Beit ha-Mikdash* is itself our sin.”) *Eleh Ezkerah* combines the themes of loss and responsibil-

⁷ And *Lev. Rabah* 20:10; *Pesikta de-Rav Kahana* 26:1 *Tanḥuma* (Buber) *Aḥarei Mot* 11; *Tanḥuma, Aḥarei Mot* 7.

⁸ Goldshmidt, *Maḥzor*, p. 571. See also Ps 144:12-13.

⁹ *The Lord is Righteous*, pp. 622-623; 638-639, and A. Lustiger, *Before Hashem You Shall Be Purified : Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik on the Days of Awe*, Edison:1998, pp. 150–157, from the 1979 *Teshuvah Derashah*.

ity in the *Avodah's* acrostic form to describe a tragic anti-*Avodah* directly caused by the absence of the Temple *Avodah*.

Yom Kippur and the Sale of Joseph

R. Akiva is described in *Semahot* 8 (itself post-Talmudic) as executed at Caesarea, which is certainly plausible since it was the seat of the Roman procurators of *Provincia Judaea*. In Yerushalmi *Berakhot* 9:5, *Sotah* 5:5 he was executed before the Roman procurator Tornus Rufus [Quintus Tineius Rufus]. Certainly the Ten Martyrs were not tried in Rome before Hadrian or anybody else there. Dio Cassius mentions Hadrian being in Israel in 130 CE, passing through to Egypt (the visit is depicted on a Roman *sestarius* struck in honor of the occasion), and he is described in Jewish sources as executing thousands of Jews in Israel¹⁰ and having dialogues with the Jewish sages and others in Israel.¹¹ He visited Beit Shean and was received by Tinius Rufus, as indicated by a number of inscriptions found in the temple compound of the Beit Shean agora. But if the martyrs were tried before him in Israel, that would certainly have appeared in Jewish sources. In the larger metaphor, the officer in *Eleh Ezkerah* simply stands for Rome and the Emperor,¹² just as a Roman *Aelia* coin's iconography depicts Hadrian plowing Jerusalem in the Roman *circumductio* city-dedication ceremony,¹³ though actually Tornus Rufus plowed it on the emperor's behalf.¹⁴

¹⁰ Yerushalmi *Ta'anit* 4:5, etc.

¹¹ *Gen. Rabah* 10:3; 28:3; *Esther Rabah* 10:11; *Lam. Rabah* 3:21, etc., as well as a Jewish farmer he meets in Israel before and after the war (*Lev. Rabah* 25:5, *Tanhuma Kedoshim* 8).

¹² If any of the Martyrs were tried in Israel in Hadrian's time, they would be presumably tried before Tornus Rufus and not Hadrian. Ironically, in all manuscript texts of *Eleh Ezkerah* the events happen: "בימי הקיסר," "In the days of the Caesar," who tries them (see Goldshmidt, *Mahzor*, p. 447). This somehow got corrupted in sound in most traditional *Mahzorim* today to: "בימי השר," "in the days of the officer." So reading the correct manuscript text will describe something that likely never happened, while reciting the corrupted traditional *Mahzor* text describes something that plausibly could have happened.

¹³ Kadman, L. *The Coins of Aelia Capitolina* (Jerusalem, 1956), p. 80, no.1. Ovid, *Fasti*, IV; Dio Cassius, *Hist. Rom.* 73.

¹⁴ Bavli *Ta'anit* 29b; Dio Cassius, *Historia Romana*, 69.12.1-2.

And there is no record in the Babylonian or Jerusalem Talmuds or earlier Midrashim of the Martyrs being executed on Yom Kippur. In the later *Ma'aseh Asarah Harugei Malkhut* (ver. 2) Elijah buries R. Akiva on Yom Kippur and R. Elazar b. Shamua is executed then; in *Midrash Eleh Ezkerah* Elijah tells R. Akiva's students of his execution on Yom Kippur Eve.

The pretext for their execution is the sale of Joseph by his brothers. The motif of their martyrdom for Joseph's sale doesn't appear in the Talmuds or earlier Midrashim. But the sale of Joseph *does* have associations with Yom Kippur. *Tanḥuma Ki Tisa* 10 connects the half-Shekel after Yom Kippur with atonement for Joseph's sale. (*Jubilees* 34:12, a non-Rabbinic sectarian work, describes the sale as being on Yom Kippur and thus the reason for the day's affliction, forgiveness and scapegoat.)

Sifra Shemini 1 connects Joseph's sale and the worship of the Golden Calf as archetypal sins at the heart of the Yom Kippur *Avodah*.¹⁵

יש בידכם בתחילה ויש בידכם בסוף, יש בידכם בתחילה "וישחטו שעיר עזים,"
ויש בידכם בסוף "עשו להם עגל מסכה." יבא שעיר עזים ויכפר על מעשה עזים,
יבא עגל ויכפר על מעשה עגל.

You have in your hands [a sin] from *the beginning* and you have in your hands [a sin] *in the end*. *You have in your hands in the beginning*: “They [Joseph's brothers] *slaughtered a goat and dipped the coat in blood*” (Gen. 37:31), and you have in your hands in the end: “They have made themselves a molten calf” (Ex. 32:8): Let a goat come and atone for an action with a goat; let a calf come and atone for an action with a calf.

(Maimonides, *Moreh Nevukhim* 3:46 sees this source as the definitive rationale for the Yom Kippur *Seir l-Azazel* scapegoat, adding: “Let this reason not be insignificant in your eyes.”)

The *Sifra Shemini* source echoes *Sifra, Aḥarei* 5:1-2's legal discussion about the Yom Kippur goat sacrifices' expiation:¹⁶

¹⁵ The Golden Calf as archetypal sin requiring atonement in every generation: Bavli *Sanhedrin* 102a.

"כל שיש בה ידיעה בתחילה ובסוף והעלם בינתיים הרי זו בעולה ויורד. יש בה ידיעה בתחילה ואין בה ידיעה בסוף, שעיר הנעשה בפנים ויום הכפורים תולה ... אין בה ידיעה בתחלה אבל יש בה ידיעה בסוף, שעיר הנעשה בחוץ ויום הכפורים מכפר, "שנאמר מלבד חטאת הכיפורים".

"Whenever there is awareness [of being impure] at *the beginning* [before entering the Temple or eating sacred food] and *in the end* [after entering the Temple or eating sacred food] and unawareness in between [=forgetting], one is obligated in a sin-offering. If there *is* awareness in *the beginning* and not *in the end*, the *goat* whose *action* is inside [sacrificed inside the Holy of Holies on Yom Kippur] and *Yom Kippur* [itself] atone, until he is aware and brings his sacrifice. If there is no awareness in *the beginning* but there is awareness *in the end*, the *goat* whose *action* is outside [sacrificed outside the Holy of Holies on Yom Kippur] and *Yom Kippur* atone, as it says, "besides the sin [of-fering] of the *Kippurim* (Num. 29:11)."

In *Eleh Ezkerah's* literary premise, in the *Avodah's* absence the Ten Martyrs executed together on Yom Kippur serve as expiation *on* Yom Kippur for a sin *of* Yom Kippur.

The Ketonet: The High Priest's Coat and Joseph's

The High Priest's linen *Ketonet*, cloak, atoned, at all times, for murder (Bavli *Zevahim* 88a; Yerushalmi *Yoma* 7:3) as it says, "They [Joseph's brothers] *killed* a goat and dipped the *coat* ["כתונת"] in blood (*Gen.* 37:31)." There appears to be a reference similar to this in Yose b. Yose's *Avodah piyut*, "*Atah Konanta Olam b-Rav Hesed*,"¹⁷ connecting the sale with the *Ketonet* of the Yom Kippur Service:

ובכפל כתונת בד יכסה שארו ומפסי יד עד עקבת רגל... יסיר דאגת כתונת פסיב.

And with the doubling¹⁸ of the *coat of linen* [כתונת בד] he [the Kohen] will cover [atone] for his kin/from *the edge of his hands*¹⁹

¹⁶ And in *Mishnah Shevuot* 1:2-3. There: "כל שיש בה ידיעה בתחלה וידיעה בסוף והעלם בינתיים הרי זה בעולה ויורד."

¹⁷ Goldshmidt, *Maḥzor*, p. 465.

¹⁸ The *Avodah ketonet* had to be made of six-fold doubled threads (*Baraita* in Bavli *Yoma* 71b).

[מפסי יד] to the heel of his foot... he removes the anxiety of the *coat of color* [כתונת פסים].

D. Goldshmidt²⁰ sees this as atonement for wearing clothes of mixed linen and wool, citing *Lev. Rabah* 10:6. But the reference to *ketonet pasim* (Joseph’s coat in Gen. 37:3) would parallel the Bavli and Yerushalmi sources. Michael D. Swartz and Joseph Yahalom²¹ in fact understand it as a reference to atonement for Joseph’s sale. (Of course, it could allude to *both* atonements; Yose b. Yose in 4th-5th century Israel presumably had both the *Lev. Rabah* and *Talmud Yerushalmi*.)

But it is explicit in another of Yose b. Yose’s *Avodahs*, “*Azkir Gevurot Eloha*” (“*I Shall Recount the Wonders of God*”), his “masterpiece, perhaps the most influential *Avodah Piyut*, that was probably the best known of the ancient *Avodah piyutim* and set the pattern for subsequent compositions”²²:

עלמות קומה־ימלא בכתונת־כפולה משובצת־על פסי יד.
עון בית יעקב־יכפר בזאת־מוכרי צדיק־על כתונת פסים.

Strong of stature/he will fulfill with the coat [כתונת]/doubled,
woven/as far as the sleeves of his hands [על פסי יד].
The sin of the House of Jacob/he will atone for with this/of
the sellers of a righteous one/for a coat of many colors [על כתונת
פסים].

And the connection is clear in the medieval Ashkenazic *Avodah*, “*Asopeah Niflaotekha*”²³:

די מדותיו לבש־דמיון האיש בדים מלובש־דמי הטבלות רצה הנכבש־דגול
ידיה במחלצות התלבש.

His fitting coat he [the High Priest] wore/in the image of the
man dressed in linen [Gabriel: *Dan.* 10:5]/the bloods of the

¹⁹ The length of the *ketonet* according to the *baraita* in Bavli *Yoma* 72b.

²⁰ Goldshmidt, *Mahzor*, p. 465.

²¹ Swartz and Yahalom, *Avodah: An Anthology of Ancient Poetry for Yom Kippur*, p. 316

²² Swartz, Yahalom, *Avodah*, p. 263.

²³ Goldshmidt, *Mahzor*, p. 447.

dipping of the covered-up murder/the great man washes away with the garments he wore.

R. Meir Simḥah ha-Kohen, *Mesbekh Hokhmah* (Lev. 16:31), connects the primacy of the Yom Kippur *Avodah's* *Ketonet* (Mishnah *Yoma* 3:7; Bavli *Yoma* 35b) with the statement in *Midrash Mishlei* 1 that Joseph's sale left an impact for generations. He notes too that the Yom Kippur prayers are the only ones in the liturgy to mention the Tribes, Joseph's brothers ("You forgive the Tribes of Yeshurun") and concludes that the *Avodah* atones for that archetypal sin between Man and Man as it does for that of the Golden Calf, between Man and God.

He notes: 1) The *cloth* band on the horns of the expiating Yom Kippur scapegoat weighed "two *selaim*" (Bavli *Yoma* 41b), parallels *Bavli Shabbat* 10b's description of Joseph's coat: "For two *selaim* of *cloth* Jacob gave Joseph, the brothers were jealous." 2) The Yom Kippur Service in the Holy of Holies was in Benjamin's portion, not in the *Azarah* courtyard in the portion of Judah (Bavli *Yoma* 12a) who sold him. (He cites *Sifrei Brakhab*: "Benjamin merited [the Holy of Holies] as he wasn't involved in selling Joseph"; God said, "They will pray before Me, I will be filled with pity, but they didn't pity their brother." 3) The Kohen enters there without the *Hoshen* breastplate with the Tribes' names on it, just as he doesn't enter wearing gold that would condemn rather than atone in its association with the Golden Calf (*Yerushalmi Yoma* 7:3).

R. Yishmael's Ascent

The evil king orders his palace filled with shoes and commands the Ten to judge the case of Joseph's sale. (The shoes are an allusion to *Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer* 38 and *Targum Jonathan* Gen. 37:28, that the brothers all bought shoes with the sale's proceeds, based on *Amos* 2:6.) The imagery of the palace filled with shoes, from *Midrash Asarah Harugei Malkhut*, opposes the Jewish Sanhedrin, source of the Torah in Israel (Bavli *Ta'anit* 16a) in the Temple, into which it is forbidden to enter with shoes (*Mishnah Berakhot* 9:5), with the

court in Caesarea/Rome in which Torah is studied to plot against Israel.²⁴

The martyrs ask for three days to prepare, examine their actions and determine guilt. R. Yishmael Kohen Gadol [*Mesaret Dar Maon*] prepares himself just as the Kohen Gadol does before Yom Kippur. The others look to him to consult Heaven, just as the Kohen Gadol consults the *Urim v-Tumim* when consulted by the Sanhedrin or “for one whom the community needs” (*Mishnah Yoma* 7:5). They call upon him to call out the Holy Name (להזכיר את השם) as the Kohen does on Yom Kippur (*Mishnah Yoma* 6:2). And so he does [“להזכיר את השם”]. The officer/king says the decreed punishment is done to them “in place of your fathers” (“תחת אבותיכם”), paralleling the Yom Kippur Reading description of the atonement to be done by Aaron’s descendants, “The Kohen who will serve in place of his father will atone” (“וכפר הכהן אשר... ימלא את ידו תחת אביו”) (16:32). Like him, his descendants atone in his place, but unlike him, they are themselves the atonement.

The living expiate for the dead to carry the *sins of the fathers*: The Roman king/procurator tells them: “And you will carry the sin of your fathers” (“ואתם תשא עון אבותיכם”), to paraphrase the Yom Kippur Torah Reading’s “The scapegoat will carry upon itself all their sins” (“ונשא השעיר עליו את כל עוונותם”) (Lev. 16:22). The first and primary martyr, R. Yishmael Kohen Gadol, thus serves as both sacrifice and *Klei Kaparah*” (the Kohen Gadol’s description in *Atah Konanta*): Kohen in place of his father (Aaron) and the scapegoat, for and in place of his fathers (Joseph’s brothers).

R. Yishmael ascends to heaven and descends as in *Yoma* 45a: “On Yom Kippur the Kohen Gadol ascends and descends on the middle of the altar to show he is a *ben bayit*,²⁵ a comfortable resident before God.” R. Yishmael here is a *ben bayit* in the heavenly realms.²⁶ He purifies himself (“טהר את עצמו”) as the Kohen does [in

²⁴ Suggested to me by Rabbi Shmuel Irons, Rosh ha-Kollel of the Detroit Kollel.

²⁵ Rashi ad. loc., s.v. “*Mishum Kevodo*.”

²⁶ R. Yishmael’s ascensions to heaven: *Pirkei Heikhalot Rabati* (*Batei Midrashot* Vol. I, p. 63), *Ma’aseh Merkabah* [*Mesekhet Heikhalot l-Rabi*

Midrash Asarah Harugei Malkhut: "בטבילה ובקדושיין": "with immersion and sanctifications"] and ascends to heaven, just as the Kohen does on Yom Kippur (*Mishnah Yoma* 3:3: "חמש טבילות ועשרה קדושיין": "with five immersions and ten sanctifications") and ascends: "ירד וטבל", "He [the Kohen] goes down, immerses and ascends, and dries himself" (*Mishnah Yoma* 3:6).

While much here seems based on R. Yishmael's heavenly ascensions in the *Heikhalot* literature, no such descriptions about him appear in the Talmud as they do about his contemporary colleague, R. Akiva (Bavli *Hagigah* 15b). It seems the 2nd-century R. Yishmael, who was a Kohen (Bavli *Hullin* 49a), is fused here with the Second Temple-period R. Yishmael Kohen Gadol and his mystical entry in the Holy of Holies. (It is argued that he may be the one who was actually executed.²⁷) In Bavli *Berakhot* 7a that R. Yishmael Kohen Gadol says, "One year I went in [the *Kodesh ha-Kodashim* on Yom Kippur] to burn the incense and saw Akatriel Who said, 'Yishmael, my son, bless me'; I said, 'May it be Your will that Your mercies conquer Your anger,' and He nodded with His head."

Midrash Mishlei draws on the *Heikhalot* literature²⁸ and clearly, *Midrash Eileh Ezkerah*, *Midrash Asarah Harugei Malkhut*, etc. draw heavily on their described heavenly ascensions, heavenly *Avodah*, decree and execution. In *Masekhet Heikhalot d-Rabi Yishmael Kohen Gadol* (*Batei Midrashot* 1), R. Yishmael ascends six *Heikhalot* to the innermost sanctum to stand in prayer at the opening of the seventh, asking to enter as Aaron's descendant. Fiery angels ask who he is, from which nation (as in Yom Kippur's *Maftir Yonah* (1:8)) and

Yishmael Kohen Gadol] (*Batei Midrashot* I, p. 51, *Otzar ha-Midrashim* p. 107) *Shalshelet ha-Kabalah* 29.

²⁷ For the discussion of which of them (or both, or neither): Bavli *Sotah* 48b; *Sanhedrin* 11a; *Avodah Zarah* 11a; Yerushalmi *Sotah* 9:14; *Shir ha-Shirim* 8; Tosefta *Sotah* 13:4; Y. HaLevi, *Dorot ha-Rishonim*, 4:38, pp. 615–620; M. Auerbach, "Asarah Harugei Malkhut, *Yeshurun* 1923 1, pp. 60–65; G. Alon, *Toldot ha-Yehudim b-Eretz Yisrael b-Tekufat ha-Mishnah v-ha-Talmud*, vol. I, pp. 262–263; A. Velner, *Aseret Harugei Malkhut*, pp. 43–58

²⁸ See Y.H. Wertheimer, *Pirkei Heikhalot* (*Batei Midrashot* I, p. 63; S. Buber, Introduction to *Midrash Mishlei*).

from which tribe; the *Sar ha-Penim*, officer of the inner sanctum (the *Kodesh ha-Kodashim*) says he is “chosen by God from the tribe of Levi from the sons of Aharon to serve with the crown of priesthood,” paraphrasing Aaron’s election that begins *Amitz Koah* (and all primary Avodah poems). He brings him in to see evil decrees on Israel. In *Midrash Asarah Harugei Malkhut* the angels tell him of a heavenly altar Above on which the souls of the righteous are brought; happy are the Ten Martyrs who merit sacrifice upon it.²⁹

In *Pirkei Heikhalot* 5 the angels say the Ten Martyrs are given into the hand of Samael, *officer of Rome*, who will yet be slaughtered with the officers of the kingdoms Above “like the sheep and goats of Yom Kippur.” *Pirkei Heikhalot* describes the Avodah above as the Martyrs’ below, described in chapter 6. In chapter 28, R. Yishmael sees the angels sing “*ha-Aderet v-ha-Emunah l-Hai ha-Olamim*”; in the medieval liturgy this *Pirkei Heikhalot* Piyut was sung only on Yom Kippur. (Maharil, *Hilkhhot Yom ha-Kipurim*: “MaHaRil Segal said a community may not sing it on any day of the year but Yom Kippur.”)

The Avodah Carried Out—and Executed

R. Yishmael emerges from the heavenly *Kodesh ha-Kodashim* not in joy as the *Kohen Gadol* would on Yom Kippur (*Mishnah Yoma* 7:4) but in sadness, descending with the verdict. (In *Midrash Asarah Harugei Malkhut* his colleagues cry, but rejoice to be martyrs and for the prophesied vengeance for Israel. In *Pirkei Heikhalot* 15 he gathers them, “the Sanhedrin, in the great third hall in the House of God,” reversing *Mishnah Yoma* 1:5’s description of the *Sanhedrin* Elders administering an oath to the *Kohen Gadol* in the Temple’s Beit Avtinos to do the Avodah correctly in the *Kodesh ha-Kodashim*: “and they and he separate and cry” (because one who wrongly suspects the innocent will be punished (*Bavli Yoma* 19b): here too they cry because they are punished though innocent.))

R. Yishmael and R. Shimon both ask to die first. A lottery is thrown, paralleling that of the Yom Kippur scapegoat carrying the community’s sins. R. Shimon is *slaughtered* (“כרות ראשו”), the cruel

²⁹ The motif of martyrs as Divine sacrifices: *Tosefta Sanhedrin* 13:11.

ruler *hurries to spill his blood like that of an ox* ("לשפוך דמו מהר כשור) (פר"י), just as the High Priest *hurries to sprinkle* the Yom Kippur ox's blood on the Inner Sanctum curtain, in 'Ata Konanta': "מהר ונטל דם".
הפר והזה"

(*Arzei ha-Levanon* by clear allusion identifies the Martyrs as Yom Kippur sacrifices: "טהורי לב קדשי קדשים שחיטתן במיתה חמורה," "Pure of heart, holiest of holy ones, *Kodshei Kodashim*, their slaughtering in a severe death," paraphrasing *Mishnah Zevahim* 5:1: איזהו מקומן של זבחים קדשי קדשים שחיטתן בצפון פר ושעיר של יום הכפורים שחיטתן בצפון, "*Kodshei Kodashim*, their slaughtering is in the north, *the ox and goat of Yom Kippur*, their slaughtering is in the north.")

R. Yishmael is left alive, just as in the *Avodah* the lottery is thrown for the sacrifice and scapegoat before the Kohen Gadol, one slaughtered and one left alive. R. Meshulam b. Kalonymus' Yom Kippur *Avodah* poem, *Amitz Koah*, describes the *Avodah* lottery this way:

לכפר עון בת השובבה "צמד שעירים מהון העדה צמודים אחוים שוים בתאר
ובקומה צגים

A pair of goats from community funds/paired together equally in appearance and height/to atone for the sin of the *wicked daughter* (i.e., Israel: *Jer.* 31:21).

In the *piyut*'s reversal the king's daughter, בת הבליעל, *daughter of the wicked one* (or: "*wicked daughter*"), wishes to reverse the sacrificing and non-sacrificing of the two goats that atone for the sin of the *wicked daughter* (עון בת השובבה), i.e., Israel as described in *Jer.* 31:21. The two goats are described as paired in *appearance*: צמודים אחוים שוים. בתאר ובקומה. She sees R. Yishmael's beautiful *appearance* (in *Amitz Koah*: תאר יפיו בלבה חמדה: "חיתו") and asks for "his life to stand" (להעמידה), paraphrasing the Yom Kippur Torah Reading: "The goat on which the lottery arose shall stand alive before God to atone" ("יעמד חי לפני ה' לכפר עליו") (*Lev.* 16:10).

The angels protest the execution done for the "בת הבליעל," "*daughter of the wicked one*," the king's daughter; a heavenly voice ("daughter of a voice," "בת קול") responds, threatening to return the world to *water and Tobu va-Vohu*. (Angels of fire ("שרפי מעלה") protest; God threatens a return to *water*.) Both (Ashkenazic and Sephardic) *Avodahs*, *Amitz Koah* and *Atah Konanta*, Yose b. Yose's "*Atah Konanta Olam b-Rav Hessed*," and other *Avodahs* (the

Ashkenazic “*Asoheah Niflaotekha*”³⁰), all begin with the creation of the world from *Tohu va-Vohu* and the separation of the upper and lower waters to uncover the earth, leading up to the *Avodah*. God threatens to return the world to that *Tohu va-Vohu* and to that water, to reverse the *Avodah* and the Creation.

R. Yishmael takes R. Shimon’s head (“וכשנחתך ראשו נטלו”); in *Arzei ha-Levanon*: “נטל את ראשו” and says “בעוונות” “because of sins,” the tongue (“לשון,” *lashon*) that taught beautiful teachings now licks the dust.” This parallels the confession of sins the Kohen makes, placing his hands on the scapegoat’s head, after which a red band (“לשון,” *lashon*) is placed on its head for atonement (Mishnah *Yoma* 4:2).

This slaughtering is followed by the removal of R. Yishmael’s skin (“להפשיט עורו”), just as the Yom Kippur sacrifice is skinned, here “to the place of the *tefillin*,” which is the place of the *Tzitz*, which atones (Bavli *Zevahim* 19a). R. Yishmael the Kohen Gadol screams (“צרה”) (in *Arzei ha-Levanon*: “שימע צעקה”; in the *Midrash*: “צעק”) as in *Amitz Koah* the Kohen Gadol screams the Name after the lottery: “צעק בקול רם לה’ חטאת”. *Eleh Ezkerah* stresses R. Yishmael’s beauty at his death as the Ashkenazic Piyutim “*Mareh Kohen*” and “*Amitz Koah*” describe the Kohen’s beauty upon finishing the *Avodah*. Here it describes the beauty of the Kohen as he is slaughtered.

Then R. Akiva is executed. In *Arzei ha-Levanon* a heavenly voice declares: “Happy are you, R. Akiva, your body pure in all ways of purity” (“אשריך ר’ עקיבא, גופך טהור בכל מיני טהרה”), paraphrasing Bavli *Berakhot* 60a (“אשריך רבי עקיבא שיצאה נשמתך באחד”) as well as his own description of the Yom Kippur atonement in *Mishnah Yoma* 7:8: “Happy are you Israel, before Whom do you become pure, Who purifies you, your Father in heaven” (“אשריכם ישראל לפני מי אתם מטהרים ומי”) (“מטהר אתכם איביכם שבשמים”). Then R. Hananiah b. Tradion is burned, just as the slaughtered Yom Kippur sacrifices are burned.

The death of R. Elazar b. Shamua is reported as:

רעדה תאחז כל שומע שמוע/ותזל על עין דימוע.
ונהפך לאבל כל שעשוע/בהריגת רבי אלעזר בן שמוע.

³⁰ Goldshmidt, *Mahzor*, p. 447.

Trembling takes hold of all who hear the hearing/and every eye will drip *tearing* [דימוע].

And every delight is turned to mourning/with the execution of R. Elazar b. Shamua [שמוע].

Goldshmidt³¹ sees "שימוע" \ "דימוע" as the author's invented words for the benefit of the rhyme ("חידושי הפייטן לטובת החרוז"). But there may be more here in a clear allusion to Bavli *Menahot* 18a:

אמר לו: יוסף, כמדומה אני שלא כיווננו שמועתינו עד עתה
... זלגו עינינו דמעות של רבי אלעזר בן שמוע

He [R. Elazar b. *Shamua*] said: "Yosef, it appears we did not until now accurately record our [Mishnaic] *traditions* (שמועתינו)..."

The eyes of R. Elazar b. Shamua *dripped tears* [דמעות]."

The double sense in the allusion describes *crying tears at hearing* of the loss of R. Elazar b. Shamua, the meticulous transcriber and repository of *traditions*, שמועות, *shemu'ot* (itself a play on his name in Bavli *Menahot* 18a). R. Elazar b. Shamua's tears appear also in *Sifrei Devarim* 80: "R. Elazar b. Shamua and R. Yohanan HaSandlar were going to Netzivim [in Babylonia]... and reached Sidon and remembered the Land of Israel; *they raised their eyes and dripped tears*": "זקפו עיניהם וזלגו דמעותיהם" Y. Ha-Levi, *Dorot ha-Rishonim*, vol. IV pp. 689-690, feels they were in fact escaping the Hadrianic decrees.

The *Pargod*: The Heavenly Curtain, the Earthly Holy of Holies' Curtain, and Joseph's Coat

In *Eleh Ezkerah*, R. Yishmael Kohen Gadol ascends to speak to the "Ish dressed in *Badim* [white linen clothes]" [= Gabriel, based on Ez. 9:11 and Bavli *Shabbat* 55a³²].

On Yom Kippur the *Kohen Gadol* enters the *Kodesh ha-Kodashim* in clothes of *Bad* [white linen] (*Lev.* 16:4). In Yerushalmi *Yoma* 7:2: "Why does the *Kohen* serve in white clothes? As the ser-

³¹ *Maḥzor*, p. 572.

³² See also *Tosefta Sotah* 13:5, *Lev. Rabah* 21.

vice Above: ‘And one man [Gabriel] stood dressed in white clothes’ [*Daniel* 10:5]; as the service below: “He [the High Priest] shall wear clothes of white linen” (Lev. 16:4). Here R. Yishmael meets his supernal counterpart Above, Gabriel. Significantly, *Midrash Eleh Ezkerah* describes this as: “And Gabriel met him”: “**וּפָגַע בּוֹ גַבְרִיאֵל**,” exactly echoing *Pirkei d-Rabi Eliezer* 38’s description of Gabriel’s meeting Joseph before he was sold: “And Gabriel met him”: “**וּפָגַע בּוֹ**” (**גַבְרִיאֵל**) (*Pirkei d-Rabi Eliezer* 38, *Targum Jonathan*, Gen. 36:15).

At the place of *Bein ha-Badim*, “between the curtains” (*Mishnah Yoma* 5:1), the entrance, Gabriel, the “*Ish Lavush ha-Badim*,” “the man dressed in *Badim* [white linen clothes],” tells him he heard from behind the *pargod*, “**מֵאַחֲרֵי הַפָּרְגוֹד**,” from behind the Heavenly curtain: “In *this* you are trapped.”

What does the *pargod* mean in *Eleh Ezkerah*? It means a good many things. The *pargod* appears at the *piyut*’s beginning and ending. Both appearances are related, and the *pargod* at its closing summary has a startling double sense that gives *Eleh Ezkerah* its meaning.

On one level a *pargod* is a curtain. Targum Jonathan translates Ex. 26:33 (“**וְהִבְדִּילָהּ הַפָּרְקָת לָכֶם בֵּין הַקֹּדֶשׁ וּבֵין קֹדֶשׁ הַקֹּדָשִׁים**”), “The *curtain* will divide for you between the holy and the holy of holies,” as “**וְתַפְרִישׁ פְּרִגּוֹדָא לְכוּן**,” the way he always translates this dividing curtain (**פָּרְקָת**) as **פְּרִגּוֹדָא**³³. (Onkelos always translates it as **פְּרוּכְתָא** in an almost identical shared Semitic etymology (to *divide*: related to פָּרַג or פָּרַךְ)).

From this dividing curtain the Kohen enters the *Kodesh ha-Kodashim* on Yom Kippur, just as now R. Yishmael Kohen Gadol enters the heavenly *Kodesh ha-Kodashim* Above. At the place where below, the Kohen enters from “between the curtains,” *Bein Shnei ha-Badim*, R. Yishmael meets the *Ish Lavush ha-Badim*, Gabriel.

The decree Gabriel has heard from behind the *pargod*: “*With this* (“*bi-Zot*,” **בְּזֹאת**) you are trapped,” darkly echoes the Kohen’s entry there in the Yom Kippur Torah Reading’s opening verses: “*With this* (“*bi-Zot*,” **בְּזֹאת**) [the *Avodah*] Aaron will enter the *Kodesh ha-Kodashim* (Lev. 16:2-33)”:

³³ Ex. 26:31; 33:35; 39:34; and on; Lev. 16:2; Num. 18:7, etc.

דָּבַר אֶל אֶהֱרֹן אַחִידְךָ וְאֵל יִבְא בְכָל עֵת אֶל הַקֹּדֶשׁ מִבַּיִת לְפָרֶכֶת אֶל פְּנֵי
הַכַּפֹּרֶת אֲשֶׁר עַל הָאֹרֶן וְלֹא יָמוּת כִּי בְעֵינָי אֶרְאֶה עַל הַכַּפֹּרֶת
בְּזֹאת יִבְא אֶהֱרֹן אֶל הַקֹּדֶשׁ בְּפָר בֶּן בָּקָר לְחֻטָּאת וְאֵיל לְעֹלָה

“Speak to Aaron your brother that he shall not come at all times to the *Kodesh* from outside the curtain...

With this shall Aaron come to the *Kodesh*, with a calf as a sin offering and a ram for an *Olah*.”

Now in R. Yishmael’s entry here, “*bi-Zot*” describes the decree of martyrdom as if it were a prelude to the *Avodah*.

But the *pargod*’s primary sense here is, as in many sources, of hearing decrees “מאחורי הפרגוד,” “from *behind the curtain*,” the space, between the living and the dead, *from where decrees upon the living are announced* (Bavli *Berakhot* 18b), the space between the *Shekhinah* and the heavens (*Rashi, ad. loc.*), the place of God’s Throne in Heaven (Targ. Job 26:9: “פרס היך פרגודא עלוי ענגא דיקריה”).

Thus in Bavli *Hagigah* 15a it is heard “*from behind the curtain*” that Aher’s repentance will not be accepted, or in Bavli *Sanhedrin* 89b that Isaac is himself the sacrifice. In *Devarim Rabbah* (Leiberman ed., *va-Ethanan*) the *Sar ha-Penim*, officer of the inner sanctum, tells Moshe he heard *from behind the curtain* that his prayers to enter Israel will not be accepted (combining the themes of information from behind the curtain and the *pargod* as the curtain of the Holy of Holies). Significantly, in Bavli *Yoma* 77a *Gabriel* defends Israel *from behind the curtain*.

But there’s more. In Targum Jonathan to Gen 37:17 (“And the man [*ish*] said, “They traveled from here *for I heard them say* [כִּי] “שמעתי אמרים], ‘Let us go to Dothan,’” where Joseph goes to be sold), *Gabriel* [“the *ish* Gabriel” (Dan. 9:21), here the “*Isb Lavush ha-Badim*”], tells Joseph: “ארום שמעת מבתר פרגודא,” “*For I heard from behind the curtain*,” that they went there. In dual equation, *Eleh Ezkerah* equates R. Yishmael’s entry, and its parallel danger and punishment and martyrdom for Joseph’s sale, with the Yom Kippur *Avodah* that atones for it.

The *pargod* is invoked again in the *piyut*’s closing request that God see “the spilled blood of the righteous and their *sprinkled* blood on Your *pargod* (“בפרגודך”).”

חנון הביטה ממרומים\תשפוכת דם הצדיקים ותמצית דמם.
תראה בפרגודך והעביר כתמים\א-ל מלך יושב על כסא רחמים.

Merciful One, look down from the heights/the spilled blood of the righteous and the sprinkling of their blood. You should see on your *pargod* and remove stains/God, king who sits on the throne of mercies.

What is "תראה בפרגודך," "See [the spilt and sprinkled blood of the righteous...] on Your *pargod*"?

At its simplest level it has a double meaning. On one level a *pargod* is a *curtain*,³⁴ here the curtain of God's heavenly Holy of Holies, which parallels the earthly one that no longer exists. The request that God see "the spilled blood of the righteous and their *sprinkled* blood ("ותמצית דמים") on His *pargod* references "its *blood* shall be *sprinkled* on the altar" ("ונמציה דמו על קיר המזבח") (*Lev.* 1:15), here to remove other (blood) stains of impurity,³⁵ Israel's sins, which are expiated by the blood sprinkled on the *Kodesh ha-Kodashim's curtain* on Yom Kippur (*Lev.* 16:14-15), here the blood of the righteous.

But a *pargod* is also a *coat or tunic*.³⁶ In *Gen. Rabbah* 84:16: "And they [the brothers] removed from Joseph the *Ketonet Pasim*": "This is the *pargod*," "זה הפרגוד": "coat" [Greek, παραγαυδα, *parangauda*, of the same Semitic origin³⁷]. Targum Jonathan in fact describes both Joseph's colored *coat* in *Gen.* 37:3, and the heavenly *curtain* in Gabriel's statement to him in *Gen.* 37:17 as פרגודא, "*pargoda*."

Bavli *Zevahim* 88a and Yerushalmi *Yoma* 7:3, Yose b. Yose's "Atah Konanta Olam b-Rav Hesed," etc., equate Joseph's *ketonet* with the *ketonet* of the *Avodah*. But here, "[See] the blood on Your *pargod*" means both the goat's blood sprinkled on the Holy of Holies *curtain* on Yom Kippur (*Lev.* 16:14-15) and the goat's blood on Joseph's *coat*.

The blood on Joseph's coat becomes the expiating blood of the righteous on the curtain in God's *Kodesh ha-Kodashim*, like the

³⁴ *Mishnah Keilim* 29:1.

³⁵ The imagery of menstrual blood stains on a garment as impurity is from *Mishnah Niddah* 7:5.

³⁶ Yerushalmi *Shekalim* 3:2; Bavli *Shabbat* 120a; Yerushalmi *Shabbat* 16:15

³⁷ See A. Kohut, *Arukh ha-Shalem*, "Parguda"; William Smith, ed. "A Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities," London, 1875, "Pargauda."

blood sprinkled on the curtain of the earthly *Kodesh ha-Kodashim* on Yom Kippur. In its transacted double imagery, the sin becomes the requested atonement. We implore God to see “the spilled blood of the *righteous*” (“תשפוכת דם הצדיקים”) “on Your *pargod*” (“בפרגודך”) and mercifully remove the stains of *Israel’s* sins.

Pargod/Porphyrion?

But now with additional meaning and argument, “*Your pargod*” also means asking God to see the spilled blood—*on His coat*.

This is explicit in *Midrash Tehillim* (Buber) 9:13: God demands the spilled blood of the *Asarah Harugei Malkhut* and all Israel, and inscribes in blood on His *porporya*, His purple-dyed royal cloak, the name of every martyred righteous person. In *Yalkut Shimoni Ps.* 869, cited from *Midrash Yelamdenu*, God takes the blood of every soul killed by Esau/Rome³⁸ and dips His *porporin* in it (“וטובל,” “ויטבלו את פורפוריון שלו עד שצבעה דם,” “הִקְתָּ נֶת בְּדָם” “They dipped the coat in blood”). The motif of the blood on God’s *porphyryion* appears in several Franco-German *piyutim*³⁹ in the Medieval Ashkenazic liturgical literature invoking God’s vengeance for Jewish martyrdom.⁴⁰ While its source is from

³⁸ BT *Berakhot* 62b; *Gittin* 57b; *Avodah Zarah* 10b; Yerushalmi *Shabbat* 10:9; *Taanit* 4:8; *Gen. Rabbah* 63:7, 67:10; *Lev. Rabbah* 13:45; 15:9; 22:4; *Lam. Rabbah* 22:1; *Tanḥuma Bereishit* 7; *Targum Isa.* 34:9.

³⁹ See: Yisrael Yaakov Yuval, *Ha-Nekem ve-ha-Kelalah: me-Alilot ha-Kedoshim le-Alilit ha-Dam, Zion*, 58:1, 1993, pp. 33–90; *Shenei goyim be-vitnekh: Yehudim ve-Notsrim, dimuyim hadadiyim*, Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 2000. *Two Nations in Your Womb: Perceptions of Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, University of California Press, 2006.

⁴⁰ Yuval cites nine *piyutim*: a *selihah* and a *kinah* of R. Eliezer b. Natan (A.M. Habermann, ed. *Sefer Gezerot Ashkenaz ve-Tsafat*, Jerusalem, 1971, p. 81, 87); a Yom Kippur *Selihah* of R. David b. Meshulam (D. Goldshmidt, *Mahzor*, p. 538) and one by R. Ephraim b. Yitzhak of Regensburg (Goldshmidt, *Mahzor*, p. 557) and two *piyutim* in the *Mahzor of Worms* (D. Goldshmidt, *Mehqerei Tefilah u-Piyut*, Jerusalem 1980 p. 13, 17); a Tishah b-Av lament by R. Kalonymus b. Yehudah, composed in the wake of 1096 pogroms (D. Goldshmidt, *Seder ha-Kinot Li-Tishah b-Av*, p. 109), and a *Kinah* mentioned in *Arugat ha-Bosem* (E.E. Urbach, ed., *Sefer Arugat ha-Bosem le-R. Avraham b. Azriel*, Jerusalem 1939, p. 52, 38–39); and another by R. Ephraim b. Yitzhak of Bonn (Haberman, *Piyutei R. Ephraim ben Yaakov mi-Bonna*, Jerusalem 1969, p. 45); a *selihah* of R.

the third-century Palestinian Midrash tradition, it became “one of the strongest symbols of Jewish martyrdom in Germany.”⁴¹ It appears, mostly after 1096, in the context of vengeance for martyrdom in the Crusades (and Christian persecution before then). Its recurrent motif in liturgical texts is of God’s coat, stained with the blood of martyrs, invoked in a demand for divine vengeance. In particular the *Yom Kippur selihot* are marked by this demand.⁴² [Particularly interesting is a *Yom Kippur selihah* by R. Ephraim b. Yitzhak of Regensburg (witness to the 1137 Regensburg pogroms and the Second Crusade⁴³), “*Ani, Ani, ha-Medaber*,”⁴⁴ whose explicit idea is how the expiating *Yom Kippur*’s sacrifices’ bloods have been replaced by the spilt blood of contemporary Jewish martyrs on God’s *porphyryion*, which should be avenged.] The motif has been read in the context of the Crusades martyrology, which has had extensive historical/literary analysis.⁴⁵

Baruch b. Shmuel of Magence (E.E. Urbach, “The Piyyutim of R. Barukh bar Shmuel of Magence” [Hebrew], *Yediat ha-Makhon le-Heker ha-Shirah ha-Ivrit bi-Yerushalayim*, 6 (1946)). One by R. Shimon b. Yitzhak of Magence predates the Crusades. The messianic *porphyryion* is mentioned in the writings of R. Eleazar b. Yehudah of Worms, whose family was murdered in the Crusades, *Kiryat Sefer* (Lemberg, 1905), p.12.

⁴¹ Yuval, *Two Nations*, p. 197.

⁴² Yuval, *ibid*, and Goldschmidt *Mahzor*, p. 44.

⁴³ E.E. Urbach, *Ba’alei ha-Tosafot*, p. 170–177.

⁴⁴ D. Goldshmidt, *Mahzor*, p. 555.

⁴⁵ See: S.L. Einbinder, *Beautiful Death: Jewish Poetry and Martyrdom in Medieval France*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002; S. Shepkaru, “To Die for God: Martyrs’ Heaven in Hebrew and Latin Crusade Narratives” *Speculum* 77 (2002): 311–341, and *Jewish Martyrs in the Pagan and Christian Worlds*. Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 2006; Ivan Marcus, “Hierarchies, Boundaries, and Jewish Spirituality in Medieval Germany” *Jewish History* 1, no. 2 (1986): pp. 7–26; and “A Pious Community and Doubt: Qiddush ha-Shem in Ashkenaz and the Story of Rabbi Amnon of Mainz,” in *Studien zur Jüdischen Geschichte und Sozologie: Festschrift Julius Carlebach*, ed. Ursula Beitz et al. (Heidelberg: C. Winter Universitätsverlag, 1992), pp. 97–113; Jeremy Cohen, “Between Martyrdom and Apostasy: Doubt and Self-Definition in Twelfth-Century Ashkenaz,” *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 29 (1999), pp. 431–471; “Gezerot tatnu: mei-Kiddush ha-Shem le-martyrologiah be-kronikot 1096,” *Zion* 59 (1994): pp. 103–122; and “The Hebrew Cru-

Should this element in *Eleh Ezkerah* be read in light of the Ashkenazic vengeance liturgy? I don't know. The motif here is the same, yet there is simply no conclusive dating for *Eleh Ezkerah's* provenance. While the Ashkenazic Crusades-period *paytanim* drew on the motifs of the Classical Eretz-Yisrael *Piyut* and *Midrash*, the *Eleh Ezkerah* imagery may be actually more connected with the earlier period than with the latter and it may stand outside that genre. And in all the other sources it's always a "porphyryion," while here it is a "pargod." And the *Eleh Ezkerah* idea of the *pargod's* blood uniquely refers to the Yom Kippur *Avodah*, and only by subtle allusion to the *pargod* as a *porphyryion*. And *Eleh Ezkerah* asks not for vengeance but for forgiveness, for God to mercifully see the spilt blood on His *pargod* as expiation for (blood) *stains*, Israel's sins.

The *Selīḥah* as a Read Text

The summary "זאת קראתנו וספרנו בשנון" has the unusual sense of "This *happened* to us and we told it in recital,"⁴⁶ with an undertone of "This we *read* and told," paralleling the Yom Kippur Torah Reading about the *Avodah*. Reading the Torah Reading *Avodah* narrative is a required component of the Temple *Avodah* itself (*Mishnah Yoma* 7:1) and not merely our replicating it in recitation. In the absence of that Torah Reading (there is no Temple and the *Sefer Torah* was burnt with R. Hananiah b. Tradion), this function is fulfilled *by the readers of the piyut*.

The counter-*Avodah* we read is more than a *Kinah* or *Selīḥah*. In the Temple *Avodah's* absence, *Eleh Ezkerah* functions as the *Avodah* itself. (Rabbi Soloveitchik sees Yerushalmi *Yoma* 1:1, "Any generation in which the Temple was not rebuilt is as if they destroyed it," as the theological context for the *Selīḥot* and *Eleh Ezkerah* after the *Avodah*.⁴⁷) This *Avodah* is because of our sins and is our atonement.

sade Chronicles in Their Christian Cultural Context," in *Juden und Christen zur Zeit der Kreuzzuge*, ed. Alfred Haverkamp (Sigmaringen: Jan Thorbecke, 1999), pp. 18–40.

⁴⁶ In the Kalliric (or Kalliric period) *Hosbanah Rabbah Piyut*, "Az ke-Einei *Avadim*," there's: "וספרנו נפלאותיך בשנון."

⁴⁷ *The Lord is Righteous*, pp. 622-623; 638-639, from the 1979 *Teshuvah Derashah*.

R. Yishmael the Kohen Gadol's *Viduy*, "בעונות איך עתה לוחכת את," "Because of sins [this tongue] licks the dust," clearly does *not* describe the *martyrs'* sins. The king said their innocence was unquestioned; they serve as atonement because of their righteousness. Certainly they are innocent of the sin for which their deaths atone. It is that righteous innocence the king wishes to destroy, perversely using the institution of justice, the trial. The angels protest the absurdity and blatant injustice of the decree for their fathers' sins.

The *Piyut's* refrain and subtext, a *Viduy* ("Hatanu Tzureinu Selah Lanu Yotzreinu"), suggests that the absurdity of the suffering of the righteous *fathers* should atone for sins of their *sons*—the readers of the *piyut*. In it the king says of the martyrs that if *their fathers* were alive he would have them judged *before them*, their innocent sons. Reading this as a *Selīḥah* on Yom Kippur creates the sense that those *sons*—our *innocent fathers*—are judged in it before us *their* guilty sons. The implication is that the first atonement, absurd because of the sons' innocence, should justly balance and be redressed in the absurdity of the second, in which the sons are guilty. In the transfer of guiltless sons atoning for culpable fathers to innocent fathers atoning for guilty sons—we the readers—we take responsibility and say (the alliterative rhyming) "Hatanu Tzureinu//Selah Lanu Yotzreinu": "We have sinned, our Rock//Forgive us, our Creator," a refrain that appears as early as Yose b. Yose's "Ein Lanu Kohen Gadol."⁴⁸

In reading *Eleh Ezkerah* as both *Selīḥah* and *Avodah* we declare how we greatly desire and prefer the actual and authentic *Avodah*. In this declaration and expiation there is hope. ❧

⁴⁸ A. Mirsky, *Piyyute Yose ben Yose* (Second edition: Mosad Bialik, 1991, pp. 210–217).