

Poem by Yannai on Numbers 5, the Trial of the Suspected Adulteress¹
(Working Draft Translation by the Author)

[Poems 1 and 2 are missing]

Poem 3 : Meshallesh (acrostic spells out “Yannai” – ינאי)

- You know, O our Creator / our Evil Inclination
That it is our afflictor / crouched always at our side
- The adulterer is named as “lacking of heart” / the adulteress, “wily-hearted”
But You, Creator of the heart / probe deeply the heart’s intentions
- O Yah, extinguish the coals / which burn within us
Renew the heart of flesh / and remove the heart of stone
- Bind the Evil Inclination / and no longer shall You have to watch over
The young women, should they play harlot / nor the brides, should they prove false

*As it is written (1st vs of haftarah): “I will **not** punish your daughters when they commit harlotry, **nor** your daughters-in-law when they prove false; for they themselves consort with lewd women, and they sacrifice with harlots; and the people that is without understanding is distraught” (Hos. 4:14)*

Poem 4

From the time when that woman sinned through her hand
You lashed and bound the hands of woman
She is fire and her name is fire and she is likened to fire
Woman-from-man: / She enflames the embers in the bosom of man
She sinned and brought into being the bitterness of death
Her sin was bitter as death / brazen is she, like death
No one masters the day of his death
But all her pathways lead down to death
In her eyes: death / at her feet: death
At her feet will dance the angel of death
Until You swallow up Death and uproot the Evil Inclination
And remove the heart of stone from us

O Holy One...

Poem 5: Asiriyyah (acrostic from alef to yod)

A woman with her man / in deception, with deceit:
Unto the priest shall he hasten her / and for (her) deception, let him accuse her
Into temptation and trespass— / oh, how sinfulness beguiled her!
A curse he proclaims upon her / and an oath he makes her swear.
Indeed, just as she behaved like a beast
So, too, is her offering that of a beast
Just as she walked ‘in the way of the Egyptian’
So, too, gird her hips with Egyptian rope
Just as in the presence of a stranger, concealed, did she stand
So, too, before the Pure One, exposed, the priest stands her

¹ Original text: Cambridge University Library, T-S Genizah Collection 10H 6,6; 13H 2,4. Available via <https://maagarim.hebrew-academy.org.il/Pages/PMain.aspx>

And just as she betrayed the nature of (her) Creator
He will make her drink curses from a created vessel
The mere mention of the Holy Name, written with holiness
Will be blotted out with holy water to put to proof the (un)holy woman
The curves of her thighs will abruptly rot
And the depths of her belly will there empty out
Her lovely face will yellow and her eyes bulge
Her fingernails fall off and her sinews give way
They will see her and say, "Take her out! That alien woman,
"Before she renders the Temple Court impure!"

Please, God...Forever...

Poem 6 (full alphabetical acrostic)

..... < gap of eight lines >

She defiled her own purity without him
But the One Pure-of-Eyes (knows), for there is nothing without Him
He sees through....

.....

All who would lie down besides the adulteress
Lie themselves down in sorrow
Before the Judge, the matter will not ...

.....

From among a thousand, one can find a single man;
A single woman? Not among any of these
It was answered against her...

.....

She strayed from him, his lawfully-wedded wife
She rejected him, his young maid
Concerning her, his jealousy consumed him
"Then he shall surely be jealous..."
His mason has torn down his fence
You will disfigure her beauty because of her breach
The Rock bound her to him when she entered his dwelling
Until he examines...

His bed is too short for stretching out
When a friend lies upon it with his wife
Her head shall be bared in disgrace
And from (her) body...

His recompense, if she did not steal seed
Nor any alien lie with her, plowing her with seed
She shall acquire and sow with seed
For a blessing...

Poem 7¹: First Rahit (full alphabetical acrostic)

And thus, "She acted unfaithfully against him..." (Num. 5:12)

She bound jewels upon her head
Thus in shame she unbound the hair of her head
She grew proud and fastened fancily the braids of her hair
Thus he judged she must hide her hair
She made herself pretty, for the sake of her sin
Thus she became stupid and ugly, because of her sin
She was insolent and brazen of face

Thus pale and green became her face
 She soiled and defiled her flesh
 Thus thin and sickly became her flesh
 She concealed her perversity within her
 Thus before the eyes of all it was revealed about her
 She defied both curse and adjuration
 Thus she succumbed to both curse and adjuration
 She rebelled against that which was written for her
 Thus her sins were revealed through a written text
 She opened her thighs to the stranger
 Thus her diminishment came with the wasting of her thighs
 She called to the stranger and he embraced her belly
 Thus decayed and bloated became her belly
 She set her eye upon another
 Thus she shall belong to neither her husband nor any other

Poem 7²: Second Rahit (reverse alphabetical acrostic)

And thus, "If she has not defiled herself..." (Num. 5:28)

If she did not sin against her marital contract
 Let her be more blessed than the other women in her tent
 If she did not revel like an alien woman
 Let her resemble a fruitful vine
 If she did not show herself about outside the house
 Let her take root in the innermost house
 If she did not play the harlot and ruin herself
 Let her bear sons instead of daughters
 If she did not...
 Let her...and successfully sow seed
 If she was not false against her marriage vows
 Let her...
 If she did not rebel against he who rules over her
 Let her be comforted, foreigners not rule over her
 If she did not grow stubborn like a heifer
 Let her...if she shall be barren
 If she did not spread her knees for the wicked
 Let her be justified through a blessed pregnancy
 If she did not summon the alien to her belly
 Let her be know the merciful reward of fruit in her belly
 If she did not drink stolen waters in secret
 Let her be crowned with good favor in public and in secret

Poem 8 (transition to Oedushah)

For You, O God, dwell in secret / but everything before You is revealed and known / You give a man his tasks / and compensate him according to his deeds / the measure of affliction is diminished / and the measure of good amplified / in evil-doing You take no pleasure / but rather doing justly do You desire / and likewise...and giving thanks / bowing and bending knee and prostrating and praising / Your holy Name hallowing...

Poem 9 (the Oedushah: Isa. 6:3 and Ez. 3:12)

From...and among those who surround the Throne, wings joined one to another
Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts! The whole earth is filled with His glory!

"Holy" from...

"Holy" from the sages of...

“Holy” from a place without any women or men

“Holy”: From of old, ...

“Holy”: From of old, He decreed five afflictions for woman

“Holy”: From of old, He had compassion and took pity on the honor of woman

The one towards the other...

“From His place”:a place of ...

“From His place”: From a place of modesty He took the rib to make Woman

“From His place”: in....

Twice...

...persuading to stray; You taught us to suspect...They became drunk...In destruction, they were not wise...the head does...to see how the harlot dresses herself and hardens her face...They fell upon the harlot, “Much childishness causes it”...Impurity of the castrato...to our Lord singing...the Divine Presence...doing, the Moabite women...the straying ones will settle...a thousand they executed...for her beloved ones...who, most of them...her ways are the rejected way...