Forgotten Synagogue Classics Part III

The Adler/Routledge Machzor: Prayer, Poetry, and a Transatlantic Battle of the Translators

I. Are Piyyutim Worthwhile?

1) Siddur Rabbi Yaakov Emden (18th century)

המחילות . זיסיר בדילי המנהגים וסיגי פיזטים אשר היו בעוכרית .
לטג וקלם לסביבותית . על כן אין עונה וסונה ללעקחת . גם המלאכים
ודאי איק מכירין בלשומת הזרות והמשונות אשר נתערבו בהם . נלעג
לשון אין בינה . כאילו באת מעם עמקי שפה . תחת אשר היית כגולם י
מכל העמיה ע"י לשונית הקדוש והעהור כל אמרת אלום צרותה . ודי
בזו הערה קלכה . לאש תבונה ובעל דעה ישרה . וכך המפסיר מברך :

And remove the tin-like customs and dross of the *piyyutim* that oppress us / Making us a laughingstock to those that surround us / Therefore He does not answer or turn to us when we cry out / The angels too certainly do not recognize the foreign and bizarre terms that are mixed up in them / The stammering of tongues that is not understood / As if it comes from a people of speech too obscure to comprehend / Instead of coming from the treasured among all nations through our holy and untainted language where every utterance of God is pure.

2) R. Avraham Ibn Ezra (12th century), Commentary to Kohelet 5:1

ולא אוכל לבאר אחד מני אלף מטעות הפייטנים. והטוב בעיני שלא יתפלל אדם בהם, כי אם התפילה הקבועה

And I cannot explain even one-thousandth of the ways that the paytanim are mistaken. In my eyes it's better that people don't recite them, but instead stick to the fixed prayers.

3) Maharal (R. Yehuda Loew, 16th century), Netivot Olam, Netiv Ha-Avodah 12

כי השירות צריך שיאמר אותם בשמחה ובטוב לב שהרי נקרא שירה והשירה באה מתוך שמחה, והתפלה היא בהכנעה יתירה שעומד באימה וביראה וכל אשר הוא בשמחה מדבר דברים שהם רחוקים כאשר לבו של האומר פתוח אז הוא מפליג בדבר, וכאשר מפליג בשבח הוא ג"כ סבה שאין הלשון כ"כ מובן, וכל זה בשביל הפלגת השיר והשבח שכל שירה הוא הפלגה, וכאשר השירה בעצמה [אינה] כמו שאר דברים שמדברים בני אדם לכך ג"כ הלשון קצת אינו רחוק מן דקדוק הלשון לעשות מן עומד יוצא או מן יוצא עומד, שכל זה הוא הפלגה שאינו מדבר דברים כמו שדרך בני אדם לדבר. ולפיכך תמצא כי בפיוט של פורים שהיה הנס דבר שהוא הפלגה ביותר ולכך הפיוט מפליג בלשון מאוד מאוד, וכל זה בשביל שבא לספר הנס ולתת שיר על זה ולכך הפליג בלשון ג"כ. וכן בט' באב ג"כ במקום שאומרים הפיוט בט' באב שטפנו גודל ההתאוננות הפליג הלשון ביותר, וכן כל הקינות הכל מפני גודל התאוננות הפליגו הלשון

As for the songs, you need to say them with joy and a full heart because they're called songs and songs come from a place of joy, and [fixed] prayer is with great submission as one stands in reverence and fear. And when one is happy one says things that are far-fetched, as the heart is open and one exaggerates, and when one exaggerates in praise that's also the reason why the language is not so understandable ... for all this is exaggeration when one doesn't say things the way that people normally speak. And therefore, you find that for the *piyyut* of Purim where the miracle was excessively great the *piyyut* also uses greatly exaggerated language. ... Also for Tisha Be-Av, when we say the *piyyut* the mourning washes over us and the language is greatly exaggerated, so for all the *kinnot*, because of the greatness of the mourning the language is exaggerated.

II. The Routledge/Adler Machzor

4) Herbert Adler, "Tribute to Arthur Davis," Adler Shavuot Machzor (1909)

About the year 1900 he first conceived the idea of making a new translation of the Festival Prayers. Realizing the inadequacy of existing English renderings to express the form and beauty of the compositions that make up the Jewish liturgy, he aimed at the production of a new translation more worthy of the original. Commencing with the Kol Nidré service, with the assistance of his daughters, Elsie Davis and Nina Davis (now Mrs. Redcliffe Salaman), he embarked on the work of translation, himself rendering prose into



Nina Salaman (1877-1925)

5) Adler Sukkot Machzor (1908), Hoshanot, *Ana Ezon Chin Te'eivei Yishakh* (trans. Nina Salaman)

O save, we beseech thee. I beseech Thee, give ear to their cry that implore Thee to save, That seek to give joy unto Thee with the willows that wave-O save! I beseech Thee, deliver the stock thou hast planted, and say On the day when Thou sweepest the remnant of nations away: I beseech Thee to look to the covenant sealed at our birth, When Thou castest men down to the darkness under the earth, And save. I beseech Thee, remember the father who knew Thee alone, To his children to-day make Thy kindnesses
Then save. When we say, known "; I beseech Thee, O worker of wonders for hearts without stain, Be it known that herein is the wonder of Thee-that again Thou wilt save. I beseech Thee, O honoured in strength, give salvation to us, For in ages of yore Thou didst swear to our forefathers thus: " I will save." I beseech Thee, fulfil their desire that do call Thee in woe, That are bound as Thy suppliant was on the mountain, when lo! Thou didst save. I beseech Thee, the trees of Thy planting !- give shelter to these; When uprooting the mighty-Almighty, remember Thy trees, And save. I beseech Thee, throw open Thy treasures of rain; let us see The good of the land that is thirsting for showers from Thee, And save. 1 Cant. iii. 6.

אָנָא הושיעה נָא:
אָנָא אַוון חון הָאָבי יִשְׁעֶךְּי בְּעַרְבֵי גַחַל לְשַׁעְשְׁעֶךְּי
אָנָא גָּוון חון הָאָבי יִשְׁעֶךְּי בְּעַרְבֵי גַחַל לְשַׁעְשְׁעֶךְּי
אָנָא גָּאוֹל כָּנָת גִטְעֶךְי הּוֹסֶה בְּטַאְטָאָךְי וְהוּשִׁיעָה נָא:
אָנָא הַבּט לְבְרִית טַבְעֵּךְי וּמִחֲשׁבֵּי אָרֶץ בְּהַטְּבִיעָךְי
אָנָא וְכָר לְנוּ אָב יִדְּעֶךְי חַסְדְּךְּ לֵמוֹ בְּהוֹדִיעֶךְי
אָנָא טְהוֹרֵי לֵב בְּהַפְּלִיאָךְי וַמְדֵע כִּי הוּא פִּלְאָךְי וְהוּשִׁיעָה נָא:
אָנָא טַבְּיר כְּחַ הָּן לֵנוּ יִשְׁעֶךְי לַאֲבוֹתִינוּ כְּהִשְּבְעָךְי וְהוּשִׁיעָה נָא:
אָנָא סַבֵּר מִשְׁאָלוֹת עַם מְשַׁוְעֶךְי לַאֲבוֹתִינוּ בְּהַעְּבִי נְטְעָרְי עִריצִים בַּהַנִיעָּךְי וְהוּשִׁיעָה נָא:
אָנָא סְנֵב אָשְׁלֵּי נִסְעָרְּי עָרִיצִים בַּהַנִיעָּךְּי וְהוּשִׁיעָה נָא:
אָנָא סְנִה אָשְׁלִוֹת וְבְּעִרְי עִרִיצִים בַּהַנִיעָּךְי וְהוּשִׁיעָה נָא:
אָנָא בְּנִה אַשְׁלוֹת וְבְּעִרְי עִרִיצִים בַּהַנִיעָּךְי וְהוּשִׁיעָה נָא:
אָנָא מְהַח לֵנוּ אוֹצְרוֹת רְבְעִרְּי צִיְה מִהָם בְּהַנִּעְרָּי וְהוּשִׁיעָה נָא:

6) ArtScroll Siddur (1984)

Please listen to the plea of those who long for Your salvation;

— and bring salvation not as You sweep away Dumah
— as You sweep away Dumah
— and bring salvation not as You sink the ones who darken the earth
— and bring salvation not and bring salvation not not behalf the Patriarch who perceived You;

Please recall on our behalf the Patriarch who perceived You;

Please recall on our behalf the Patriarch who perceived You;

Please recall on our behalf the Patriarch who perceived You;

Please recall on our behalf the Patriarch who perceived You;

Please recall on our behalf the Patriarch who perceived You;

Please recall on our behalf the Patriarch who perceived You;

Please recall on our behalf the Patriarch who perceived You;

Please recall on our behalf the Patriarch who perceived You;

Please recall on our behalf the Patriarch who perceived You;

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Please recall on our behalf the Patriarch who perceived You;

Please recall on our behalf the Patriarch who perceived You;

Please recall on our behalf the Patriarch who perceived You;

Please recall on our behalf the Patriarch who perceived You;

Please recall on our behalf the Patriarch who perceived You;

Please recall on our behalf the Patriarch who perceived You;

7) Nina Salaman, The Voices of the Rivers (1910)

THE NINTH OF AB.*

"He hath not remembered His footstool in the day of His anger."—Lamentations ii. 1.

HAST Thou forgotten for ever?
Lord, Thou art silent so long;
Hast Thou forgotten?—O Master!
Forgotten our day of disaster,
Our life that is barren of song?
Hast Thou forgotten for ever?
Why art Thou silent so long?

Thou, sitting throned on the heavens,
With earth lying prone at Thy feet,
If Thou have ceased to remember,
Tread out our flame till the ember
Lie cold and the gloom be complete;
Look once from Thy throne on the heavens,
And crush out the life at Thy feet.

8) Adler Yom Kippur Night Machzor (1904), Omnam Kein (trans. Israel Zangwill)

38	EVENING SE	ERVICE			
Our God, and God of our fathers,					
A y, 'tis thus B y Thy grace	Evil us guilt efface	hath in bond; and respond, "Forgiven!"			
C ast scorn o'er D ear God, deign		th' informer's word; to make heard, "Forgiven!"			
E ar in lieu F avouring,	give him who answer, King,	intercedes; when he pleads, "Forgiven!"			
G rant also H eal our shame		in Abram's right; from Thine height, "Forgiven!"			
J ust, forgiving, L ist our cry,	Mercy living, loud reply	sin condone; from Thy throne, "Forgiven!"			
M y wound heal, N ow gain praise		stain and flake, "For My sake, Forgiven!"			
O forgive! P raised for grace,		from Thee reft; to those left, "Forgiven!"			
R aise to Thee S in unmake	this my plea, for Thy sake	take my pray'r, and declare, "Forgiven!"			
T ears, regret, U plift trust	witness set from the dust	in sin's place; to Thy face— "Forgiven!"			
V oice that sighs, Weigh and pause,					
Y ea, off-rolled—Z ion's folk,	as foretold—free of yoke,	clouds impure, O assure "Forgiven!"			

9) Israel Zangwill, My Religion (1926)

So little racial am I that I have not made my eldest-born "a son of the covenant." I cannot, with my vision and knowledge of history, carry on the nineteen-century-old tradition of trying to sit between two stools. Before the war a Maida Vale Jew offered to send a five-pound note to any charity I pleased if I would tell him if my son was circumcised. I was sorry to rob a charity, but I left the inquisitive letter unanswered. If the writer is still alive—as I hope—he can send the "fiver" to the Jewish refugees stranded by pitiless America's emigration policy. I will add—and he may perhaps rise to a "tenner" at the glad news-that my younger son is circumcised. But that was only because the doctor advised it. Circumcision has in fact become so popular a prophylactic that it can no longer connote the covenanted isolation of the Jew.





Israel Zangwill (1864-1926)

III. The Transatlantic Controversy

10) Philip Birnbaum (c. 1901-1988), Introduction to the Siddur (1949)

A good translation ought to be authentic and free from deceptions. One must not read into the original what is not there. No new poetry should be introduced into the Siddur presumably as the translation of the Hebrew text.

. . .

The Siddur contains prayer-poems which should be annotated but not translated. Such are the הוֹשַעְּנוֹת, replete with historical and midrashic allusions and constructed in an involved poetic fashion. They comprise many intricate acrostics and a variety of Hebrew synonyms which, if translated, are likely to create a wrong impression and confuse the reader. One of these prayer-poems is composed of an interesting alphabetic list of twenty-two Hebrew synonyms for the Temple; another presents an alphabetic description of Israel's qualities; a third enumerates types of locusts and destructive forces of nature mentioned in the Bible. It may well be said that the editions that have included the available English translation of the Hoshanoth have not been enhanced by it. The Hoshanoth can be appreciated only in the Hebrew.

11) Philip Birnbaum, Yom Kippur Machzor (1951)

Yes, it is true, an evil impulse controls us;		אֱלֹהֵינוּ וַאלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתִינוּ	
Thou canst clear us, Merciful One, so answer us	I forgive.		אָמְנֶם בֵּן יָצֶר סוֹבֵן בָנוּ,
Cast scorn on the informer, reject his report; Beloved God, make thy thundering word heard	I forgive.	סֿלְטְתִּי.	בְּדְ לְהַצְּהֵק רַב צֶהֶק וַשְׁנְנוּ
ing the reign of Richard the Lionhearted, the Jews of York were besieged by a frenzied mob forcing them to submit to baptism. Rabbi Yom Tov, who is		סֿלְחְתִּי.	ּנְעַל מְרַנֵּל נְנֵם פַּנֵּל סְפְּרוֹ, דוֹד שׁוֹאֵג בְּקוֹל יָחֵן קוֹל דְּכָרוֹ

Zangwill's translation of this hymn was an attempt to preserve the meter, rhyme and alphabetical acrostic of the original Hebrew, at the expense of interpretative clarity and readability. For example:

> Ay, 'tis thus hath in bond: By thy grace guilt efface and respond "Forgiven!" Ear in lieu give him who intercedes; Favoring. answer, King, when he pleads, "Forgiven!" Tears, regret, witness set in sin's place; Uplift trust from the dust to thy face-"Forgiven!

12) Philip Birnbaum, "Siddur Chadash Ba le-Medinah," Hadoar 40:6 (Dec. 9, 1960)

ולהאדירה. שאם לא כן, הייתכן שהרפנים הכשירו את תרגומי ישראל זנגביל שאינם תרגומים אלא חיקויים חרגומי ישראל זנגביל שאינם תרגומים אלא חיקויים חפשיים החדורים צורות הבעה מעולם אחר. עולם הנצרות? בתפילת גשם, למשל, זנגביל מכנה את אברהם אבינו Thy shepherd son ואת משה רבינו משה אלעזר הקליר אינו (עמוד 568), אף־על־פי שהפייטן רבי אלעזר הקליר אינו מזפיר כלל וכלל את המלה "בן" במקור העברי. עד כמה אין תרגומו של זנגביל חופף על המקור העברי מוכיחה השורה האחרונה שם: "תפן כי נפשנו אפפו מים", שהוא מתרגמה — לא יאמן כי יסופר — ככה Without Thy מרגומו של face their spirits whirl as in a swirl זנגביל לא זו בלבד שריח הסגנון של הליטורגיה הנוצרית נודף הימנו ... אלא שפעמים הסתייע בתרגום חפשי, נודף הימנו שלא הבין את פירוש המלות. את השורה "נמו דלה

Could it be that the rabbis [of the RCA] approved the translations of Israel Zangwill that are not translations, but free imitations infused with expressions from another world, the world of Christianity? In the Prayer for Rain, for example, Zangwill calls Avraham Avinu, "Thy blessed son," and Moshe Rabbenu, "Thy shepherd son," even though the *paytan* R. Elazar HaKallir never mentions the word "son" in the original Hebrew. The extent to which Zangwill's translation does not overlap with the Hebrew is proven from the last line there: "*tefen ki nafsheinu afifu mayyim*." He translates—it's got to be seen to be believed—like this "Without Thy face their spirits whirl as in a swirl." Zangwill's translation not only has the odor of the Christian liturgy wafting from it ... but sometimes he is assisted by free translation because he did not understand the meaning of the words.

13) Adler Sukkot Machzor, Tefillat Geshem (trans. Israel Zangwill)

Our God and God of our fathers,

Remember one who followed Thee as to the sea
Flows water,
Thy blessed son, like tree well set where rivers met
Of water.

Where'er he moved, Thou wast his shield; in fire or field
Or water,
And heaven-proved, his seed he sowed, wherever flowed
A water.

For Abram's sake send water!

II.

Remember one whose heralds three beneath the tree

אָלהַינוּ נְאַלהַי אָבוֹתִינוּ זְכוֹר אָב נִמְשַׁךְּ אַחָרֵיךּ בְּמַיִם - בַּרַכְתּוֹ בְּצֵץ זְכוֹר אָב נִמְשַׁךְ אַחְבוֹרֵיךּ בְּמַיִם - בַּרַכְתּוֹ בְּצֵץ זְכוֹר אָב נִמְשַׁךְ אַחְבוֹרוּ בְּמַיִם - בַּרַכְתּוֹ בְּצֵץ בּמַכוּרוֹ אַל הִּמְנֵע מָיִם: במוּרוֹ אַל הִמְנֵע מָיִם:

14) Response of R. Charles Chavel (1906-1982) to Birnbaum in Hadoar

מטרת התרגום בסידורנו הוא לסבר את אוזן היהודי האמריקני, ששפתו אנגלית ומטבע הלשון העברית זרה לרוחו, כדי שיבין את כל השגב והיופי הצפונים בתפילות ישראל. לכן אנו צריכים להתחשב עם צורות לשוניות של שפת המדינה. מעולם לא נתכוונה ח"ו הסתדרותנו להכנים את התרגום בתור ממלא מקום המקור העברי. למותר להדגיש שחברי הסתדרות הרבנים דורשים ותוב־ עים מן הציבור היהודי, מקהילותיהם, שיתפללו בלשון הקודש. התרגום בא לשם ביאור, ולא לשם אמירה. אם כן, מדוע בא המבקר ומצטט מימרא שאין לה זיקה כלל לביאורים ופירושים? דברי חז״ל, כל השונה ממטבע שקבעו הכמים בברכות אינו אלא טועה, מתיחסים לתפלות ולא לתרגום. תרגומי הפיוטים של זנגביל (ולא השתמשנו בהם אלא רק ביחס לדברי פיוט, שאמירתם אינה חשובה מצד ההלכה) אינם מדויקים, והמתרגם השתמש רק במוטיב הפיוטי ולא במשמעות המילולית של הדברים. אף על פי שאין אנו חייבים ללמד סניגוריה על זנגביל, מכל מקום בטוחים אנו, שגם הוא ידע את ההבדל בין יחיד לרבים, והפירוש של "נמו דלה דלה", רק למען צחות הלשון והחרוז השתמש בניבים אחרים, כמו שזה מוכח מתוכו של התרגום החופשי לפיוט זה.

The translation in our Siddur is for the American Jew whose language is English and to whom the style of Hebrew is foreign, in order that he understand the loftiness and the beauty that is hidden in the prayers of Israel. Thus, we needed to consider common English expressions. Our organization never intended, God forbid, for the translation to substitute for the Hebrew original. I need not even mention that RCA rabbis ask and require their congregants to pray in *Lashon Hakodesh*. The translation is to explain, not to recite. ... Zangwill's translations (and we only used them for *piyyut*, the recitation of which is not important from a halakhic perspective) are not precise, and the translator works poetically, not literally. Even though we are not obligated to defend Zangwill, still we are sure that he knows the difference between singular and plural...

IV. Modern Directions

15) ArtScroll Machzor (1986), Omnam Kein

אָמְנָם כֵּן. יֵצֶר סוֹכֵן בָּנוּ. כָּךְ לְהַצְּדֵק. רַב צֶדֶק. וַעֲנֵנוּ. סָלְחְתִּי

It is indeed true that passion rules us; / so it is for You to justify (*le-hatzdek*), O abundantly just (*rav tzedek*), / and to answer us, 'I have forgiven!

16) ArtScroll Siddur, Ashrei

רצוֹן־יִרַאַיו יַעַשָּה וָאֵת־שַׁוְעַתַם יִשְׁמַע וִיוֹשִׁיעֵם

The will of those who fear Him He will do; and their cry He will hear, and save them.

17) R. Nosson Scherman, Introduction to the ArtScroll Siddur

The Men of the Great Assembly had the ability to combine letters, verses, and ideas in ways that unlock the gates of heaven. Their composition of the tefillah is tantamount to an act of creation, which is why it is so important not to deviate from their language and formulation. This is not to denigrate the importance of comprehension and emotional involvement. Prayer in the language one understands is sanctioned by the Sages themselves, and surely, a well-understood prayer is immeasurably more worthy than one that is merely mouthed as a string of uncomprehended sounds. Nevertheless, this does not detract a whit from the importance of praying in the Holy Tongue; it merely points up the responsibility to understand the prayers in their original, holiest form.

18) R. Elli Fischer, "Fallacy or Ideology? On the ArtScroll Translation of the Siddur?" *Torah Musings* (2010)

In other words, the goal of the translation is solely to enable the reader to understand the original Hebrew. To that end, the closer to an exact correspondence the translation adheres, the easier it is for the reader to keep one finger on the original and one on the translation, using the latter as a lexicon for decoding the meaning of the former. All questions of style, idiom, and art—any literary element beyond that of basic comprehensibility—are rendered largely irrelevant in comparison with the main objective of facilitating comprehension of the metaphysically charged original.

19) R. Jonathan Sacks, Koren Siddur (2009), Adon Olam translation

LORD OF THE UNIVERSE,

who reigned before the birth of any thing -

When by His will all things were made then was His name proclaimed King.

And when all things shall cease to be He alone will reign in awe.

He was, He is, and He shall be glorious for evermore.

He is One, there is none else, alone, unique, beyond compare;

Without beginning, without end, His might, His rule are everywhere.

He is my God; my Redeemer lives. He is the Rock on whom I rely -

My banner and my safe retreat, my cup, my portion when I cry.

Into His hand my soul I place, when I awake and when I sleep.

God is with me, I shall not fear; body and soul from harm will He keep.