

what my circumstances are! Therefore, by trusting in Hashem and following His light) I am safe and will always be able to rise above my physical and spiritual enemies. אל תסתַר פָּנֶיךָ מִמֶּנִּי—Please, Hashem, do not hide Your Presence and light from me! הוֹרֵנִי יְהוָה דְּרֶכְךָ—Show me the right path and help me make the correct decisions. קְוֵה אֶל יְהוָה (Proclaims David HaMelech:) “Put your trust in Hashem; (and) חֲזַק וַיֵּאֱמָץ לְךָ—that itself will give you the courage and strength to persevere! (And if Hashem has not yet given you what you asked for); וְקְוֵה—continue to place your trust in Hashem (for all that He does is for your best).”

יְהוָה אֲבִקֶּשׁ: אֶל תִּסְתֵּר פָּנֶיךָ מִמֶּנִּי, אֶל
תֵּט בְּאֶף עֲבֹדָה עֲזָרְתִּי הָיִיתָ, אֶל תִּטְשֵׁנִי
וְאֶל תַּעֲזֹבֵנִי אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: כִּי אָבִי וְאִמִּי
עֲזָבוּנִי, וַיְהוָה יֹאסֶפְנִי: הוֹרֵנִי יְהוָה דְּרֶכְךָ,
וְנִחֵנִי בְּאַרְחַ מִישׁוֹר לְמַעַן שׁוֹרְרִי: אֶל
תִּתְּנֵנִי בְּנַפְשׁ צָרִי, כִּי קָמוּ בִּי עֵדֵי שֶׁקֶר
וַיִּפְחֵ חֶמְס: לוֹלֵא הָאֱמֻנָתִי לְרֹאוֹת בְּטוֹב
יְהוָה בְּאַרְצָ חַיִּים: קְוֵה אֶל יְהוָה, חֲזַק
וַיֵּאֱמָץ לְבָבָהּ וְקְוֵה אֶל יְהוָה: קְדִישׁ יְתוֹם

TRYING TO DESCRIBE WHAT CANNOT BE DESCRIBED

שִׁיר הַכְבוֹד—אֲנָעִים זְמִירוֹת

This deep and lofty poem was written by the Kabbalists in the 1100s (some say it was Rav Yehudah HaChassid; others say it was his father). It speaks about the impossibility to use words to describe Hashem, and that all the various metaphors, visions, and seemingly “human” references we find in Tanach and the tefillos do not even begin to properly give us an understanding of the essence of Hashem. Because of the great hidden Kabbalistic secrets and concepts woven into this tefillah, some communities do not say it all! There are some who say it only on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur when one has the sanctity and concentration to focus properly. Others say it on the Yamim Tovim, while some say it every Shabbos.

All we can do here is to present an extremely simplified overview of the main ideas of each stanza.

Because of the sanctity of this song, the aron kodesh is opened.

Four-line introduction as to the goal of this song:

חֲזוֹן: אֲנָעִים זְמִירוֹת וְשִׁירִים אֶאֱרֹג, כִּי אֵלַיךְ נַפְשִׁי תַעֲרוֹג:

I will compose and sing sweet songs, because my
soul longs for a relationship with You.

קֹהֵל: נַפְשִׁי חֲמֻדָּה בְּצֵל יְדֶךָ, לְדַעַת כָּל רֵז סוּדְךָ:

My soul yearns to be under Your shelter, and to
understand the mysteries of Your secrets.

חֲזוֹן: מִדִּי דַבָּרִי בְּכְבוֹדָהּ הוֹמָה לְבִי אֶל דּוֹדֶיךָ:

Whenever I speak about Your glory, my heart yearns for Your closeness and love.

קהל: עַל כֵּן אֲדַבֵּר בְּךָ נִכְבְּדוֹת, וְשִׁמְךָ אֶכְבֵּד בְּשִׁירֵי יְדִידוֹת:

Therefore I will speak about Your glory and praise, and
I will honor Your name with songs of love.

The song of praise and glory of Hashem following the aleph-beis:

חזן: אֶסְפָּרָה כְּבוֹדְךָ וְלֹא רְאִיתִיךָ, אֲדַמָּךְ אֶכְנֶנָּה וְלֹא יִדְעִיתִיךָ:

I will speak of Your glory even though I cannot see You (*and thus cannot come close to properly praising You*); I will use my imagination and try to describe You (*using all sorts of human analogies and terms*), even though, in truth, I have no real understanding of Your Essence.

קהל: בְּיַד נְבִיאֶיךָ בְּסוֹד עֲבָדֶיךָ, דְּמִית הַדֶּר כְּבוֹד הוֹדְךָ:

(*And why do I even have the right to attempt such a thing?*) Because You showed Your prophets and servants various imageries of the splendor of Your glory.

חזן: גִּדְּלָתְךָ וּגְבוּרָתְךָ, כִּנּוּ לְתוֹקֶךָ פְּעֻלָּתְךָ:

They used words like “greatness” and “power” to describe the strength of Your actions (*even though those words fall short of a true description of Hashem*).

קהל: דְּמוּ אוֹתְךָ וְלֹא כִפִּי יִשָּׁה, וַיִּשְׁוּדְךָ לְפִי מַעֲשֶׂיךָ:

They did not (*and could not!*) describe the reality of You, rather they described You by the things that You do.

חזן: הַמְּשִׁילוֹךְ בְּרוֹב חֲזִיוֹנוֹת, הִנֵּךְ אֶחָד בְּכָל דְּמִיוֹנוֹת:

Though they symbolized You by various visions, in truth of course, You are One!

קהל: וַיַּחֲזוּ בְּךָ זְקֵנָה וּבַחֲרוּת, וַשְּׁעָר רֹאשְׁךָ בְּשֵׁיבָה וּשְׁחָרוּת:

They used imagery of You being “old” and “young”—with white hair and black hair:

חזן: זְקֵנָה בַּיּוֹם דִּין וּבַחֲרוּת בַּיּוֹם קָרֵב, כְּאִישׁ מִלְחָמוֹת יָדִיו לֹא רָב:

“Old” and wise—on the day of Matan Torah and Day of Judgment; and “young” and strong on the day of war (*against the Egyptians at the Yam Suf*).

קהל: חֲבֹשׁ כּוֹבֵעַ יְשׁוּעָה בְּרֹאשׁוֹ, הוֹשִׁיעָה לּוֹ יְמִינוֹ וְזִרְעַ קִדְּשׁוֹ:

Hashem “wore the helmet of victory” when He saved us from all our troubles, fighting the battles with His own “hands” (*not needing help from any other source*).

חזן: טַלְלֵי אוֹרוֹת רֹאשׁוֹ נִמְלָא, קוֹצוֹתָיו רְסִיסֵי לֵילָה:

Hashem’s “head” is filled with dew (*referring to His chessed to reward the righteous*), while at the same time His “hair” is filled with the rain of the night (*referring to His judgments to punish the wicked*).

קהל: יִתְפָּאֵר בִּי כִי חָפֵץ בִּי, וְהוּא יִהְיֶה לִּי לְעֹטֶרֶת צָבִי:

Hashem takes pride in me (*His nation, Bnei Yisrael*) for He loves us, and in turn He is our “crown of glory.”

חזן: כֶּתֶם טָהוֹר פִּי דְמוּת רֵאשׁוֹ, וְחָק עַל מִצַּח כְּבוֹד שֵׁם קִדְשׁוֹ:

The image used to describe His “head” is pure gold (*something so beautiful in and of itself that it needs no other jewels—similarly, Hashem is beyond any possible words of praise*); and His holy name (*that we cannot even pronounce*) is “engraved on His head”—is itself His Essence (*all of which is beyond our understanding, and beyond the ability of words to describe! Nevertheless:*)

קהל: לְחֵן וּלְכְבוֹד צְבִי תִפְאַרֶתָּה, אֲמַתּוֹ לוֹ עֲטָרָה עֲטָרָה:

The fact that His nation crowns Him with words of praise, splendor, glory, and grace (*even though words are truly inadequate*) is beloved by Hashem (*since they are doing the best that humans can do*)!

חזן: מַחְלָפוֹת רֵאשׁוֹ כְּבִימֵי בַחֲרוּת, קְנוּצוֹתָיו תִּלְתְּלִים שְׁחוּרוֹת:

When He battles our enemies His “hair” becomes black like a strong youthful warrior.

קהל: נוֹה הַצֶּדֶק צְבִי תִפְאַרְתּוֹ, יַעֲלֶה נָא עַל רֹאשׁ שְׁמִיחָתוֹ:

Yerushalayim, the home of justice, is Hashem’s most beautiful place; please Hashem, raise it up so that it again will be the most important place to You.

חזן: סִגְלָתוֹ תְּהִי (נָא) בִידּוֹ עֲטָרָת, וְצִנִּיף מְלוּכָה צְבִי תִפְאַרֶת:

May He protect and guard Bnei Yisrael, His treasured nation, as one guards a crown or royal tiara.

קהל: עֲמוּסִים נִשְׂאָם עֲטָרַת עֲנָדָם, מֵאֲשֶׁר יָקָרוּ בְּעֵינָיו כְּבָדָם:

Hashem carried Bnei Yisrael (*out of Egypt*) and crowned them (*at Har Sinai*) because they are so precious to Him.

חזן: פִּאֲרוֹ עָלִי וּפִאֲרֵי עָלִיו, וְקִרְוֹב אֵלִי בְּקִרְאֵי אֱלֹיוֹ:

Hashem takes pride and glory that we are His nation, and we take pride and glory that He is our personal God; and thus Hashem is close to me whenever I call to Him.

קהל: צַח וְאֶדוֹם לְלְבוּשׁוֹ אֶדוֹם, פּוֹרָה בְּדֶרֶכְוֹ בְּבוֹאוֹ מֵאֶדוֹם:

Hashem and “His clothing” will be “red” (*as if having pressed grapes in a winepress from the blood of our enemies*) when He returns from destroying Edom.

חזן: קִשְׁר תִּפְלִין הָרָאָה לְעֵינָיו, תְּמוּנַת יְהוָה לִנְגַד עֵינָיו:

Hashem showed the knot on the back of His head-tefillin to Moshe, the humblest of all, who had an imagery of Hashem before his eyes.

קהל: רוֹצֶה בְּעַמּוֹ עֲנוּיִם יִפְאֶר, יוֹשֵׁב תְּהִלּוֹת בָּם לְהִתְפַּאֵר:

Hashem loves His nation, for they are humble, and He will raise them high (*when He saves them at the End of Days*); He sits and waits to hear their praises, so that He may take pride in them!

חזן: ראש דְּבַרְךָ אֱמֶת קוֹרָא מֵרֹאשׁ, דּוֹר וְדוֹר עִם דּוֹרְשֶׁיךָ דְּרוֹשׁ:

The very first of the Aseres Hadibros (*that You spoke to us at Har Sinai—Anochi Hashem Elokecha*) is absolute truth! And Your prophets have predicted everything that would occur! Hashem, please seek out and save Your nation who constantly seeks You!

קהל: שִׁית הַמּוֹן שִׁירֵי נָא עָלֶיךָ, וְרִנָּתִי תִקְרַב אֵלֶיךָ:

Please place all the multitude of songs I sang to You (*as a crown*) on Your “head” and accept my joyous singing.

חזן: תְּהִלָּתִי תִהְיֶה נָא לְרֹאשְׁךָ עֲטוּרָת, וְתִפְלִילִי תִכּוֹן קְטוֹרֶת:

May my praise be like a crown on Your “head,” and my tefillos should be like the Ketores (*which is the most beloved of all the avodah in the Beis Hamikdash*).

קהל: תִּיקַר שִׁירְתָּ רֶשׁ בְּעֵינַיִךָ, כְּשִׁיר יוֹשֵׁר עַל קֶרְבְּנֶיךָ:

May this song—even though it was poor and completely inadequate—be accepted by You, like the songs the Leviim sang when korbanos were brought!

Three-line conclusion

חזן: בִּרְכָּתִי תַעֲלֶה לְרֹאשׁ מְשֻׁבֵּה, מְחוֹלֵל וּמוֹלִיד צִדִּיק כְּבִיר:

May my blessings and tefillos go up to You Hashem, our Sustainer, Creator, Giver of life, and mighty Righteous One.

קהל: וּבִבְרָכָתִי תִנְעֲנַע לִי רֹאשׁ, וְאוֹתָהּ קַח לְךָ כְּבִשְׁמִים רֹאשׁ:

May You please “nod Your Head” as accepting my blessing and tefillos and accept it as the finest incense.

חזן: יַעֲרֹב נָא שִׁיחֵי עָלֶיךָ, כִּי נִפְשִׁי תַעֲרוֹג אֵלֶיךָ:

May all that I have said be sweet and pleasing to You, for (*as I said in the very first line*) my soul longs for a relationship with You.

The aron kodesh is closed.

לְךָ יְהוָה הַגְדָּלָה וְהַגְבוּרָה וְהַתְפָּאָרַת וְהַנִּצָּח וְהַהוֹד, כִּי כָל בְּשָׂמִים וּבְאַרְצָן,
לְךָ יְהוָה הַמְּמַלְכָה וְהַמְּתַנַּשֵּׂא לְכָל לְרֹאשׁ: מִי יִמְלִל גְּבוּרוֹת יְהוָה, יִשְׁמִיעַ כָּל
תְּהִלָּתוֹ: קְדִישׁ יְתוּם

לְךָ יְהוָה הַגְדָּלָה — (*We conclude with pesukim that reflect the ideas above:*) Any power, victories, or glory that we have been granted—are really all Yours—because everything is really Yours! The kingship and rule of leaders (*here on earth*) derive from You! לְךָ יְהוָה הַמְּמַלְכָה — Who (*here on earth*) can truly express all the mighty acts of Hashem; Who can properly praise Him? קְדִישׁ יְתוּם