Ariel Zinder, קומי רוני: קריאות בפיוטי סליחה ותחנונים מאת משוררי בבל וספר המוסלמית בימי הביניים [*Arise and Sing: Readings in Medieval Hebrew Penitential Poetry from Iraq and al-Andalus*]. Jerusalem: The Hebrew University Magnes Press, 2024. Paper. Pp. 298. $33. ISBN: 978-9-6578-3944-7.
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Ariel Zinder takes the title of his elegant and inviting monograph, "Qūmî rōnî (קומי רוני)," from Lamentations 2:19. In English versions, from King James to the New Revised Standard Version updated edition, the phrase is rendered, "Arise, cry out!"; however, in isolation, it might just as easily be understood to mean, "Arise, rejoice!" or—as translated in the volume's official short title, "Arise and sing!" The divergent possible meanings, all equally valid, capture the motives and tensions at the heart of Zinder's study, which focuses on Jewish liturgical prayers of communal repentance from the late antique Muslim world. Zinder highlights the philosophical and experiential tensions between the individual and the collective latent within these works, even as he takes seriously the range of emotions, from grief to relief, expressed in them, and he attends with great care to threads of continuity alongside significant forms of innovation, particularly as his focus moves from East to West.

In *Arise and Sing*, Zinder displays an easy familiarity both with the long history of scholarship on penitential prayer and with the substantial history of scholarship on Jewish liturgical

poetry (i.e., *piyyut*, a term derived from the Greek ποίησις). He grounds his work in the foundational studies and methods of Jefim (Hayyim) Schirmann, Ezra Fleischer, and Shulamit Elizur, but he also puts the scholarship of the newer generation, including Avi Shmidman and Ophir Münz-Manor, on display. These scholars, and Zinder himself—following the lead of Joseph Yahalom and Wout van Bekkum, among others—have integrated the study of *piyyut* into an ever-expanding array of scholarly conversations. Zinder takes *piyyut* seriously as literature, and he inclines more toward philosophy than philology—but his analysis reflects solid philological training, nonetheless. Zinder desires to understand how poetry works affectively, and while his work is "text-centered" and not theory heavy, he is clearly at home with theorists including Adorno, Benjamin, and Derrida, as well as Catherine Bell, Charles Taylor, Fredric Jameson, and Saba Mahmood.

In the preface, Zinder establishes his intention to take both ritual practice and liturgical context seriously; his use of rabbinic interpretations of Cain's confession of guilt and grief in Genesis 4:13 to establish the importance of rhetoric and interiority in Hebrew petition is particularly noteworthy. The first part of the volume treats materials from the tenth century in Babylonia and focuses on two of the most important early prayerbooks: the Siddur of Rav Saadia Gaon and the Seder of Rav Amram Gaon—each compilation of prayers (including *piyyutim*) attributed to the head (*gaon*) of the Babylonian academy, although not the work of a single hand. Zinder consistently grounds his arguments in specific textual examples, which he reads contextually, that is, he examines the poems not as generalized works to be analyzed universally (e.g., "this poem says . . ."), but rather as works that contain shades of possible meanings and impulses which were shaped in dynamic with their surroundings. Zinder takes all invoked and implied parties seriously, including the petitioners (the mortals) and the petitioned (the deity), which lends the work a distinctly philosophical tone but also means he attends to pragmatic elements, such as performance. In chapter 1, Zinder delineates his method; in the second and third chapters, he analyzes specific examples of *seliḥot* from the Siddur of Rav Saadia Gaon (including specific *seliḥot* rituals); while in the fourth, he examines specific penitential rituals contained in the Seder of Rav Amram Gaon. While Zinder is aware of the historical issues at play connecting the various rites and rituals, his focus is on the experiential possibilities created by the poetry the prayerbooks contain: what interiority and theology they create, and how, in a specific performative context.

In part 1 of the volume, Zinder relies, out of necessity, on prayerbooks: works with complex textual histories that cannot be assigned "authorship." In part 2, by contrast, he is able to focus on the innovations made by specific poets. A preface to this section establishes the distinctive, relevant elements of Jewish penitential ritual (particularly the nocturnal *seliḥot* rituals of the month of Elul, preceding the High Holy Days) and liturgy in Muslim Spain. The fifth chapter focuses primarily (although not exclusively) on poetry by Joseph ibn Abitur and Isaac ben Levi and explores the complex relationship between a newly distinctive individual voice and the collective community to whom and for whom he speaks, and new tones of intimacy. In chapter 6, Zinder focuses on *seliḥot* by Solomon ibn Gabirol, where the twin strands of individualism and religious desire, both shaped by Neoplatonism, manifest as a yearning for metaphysical happiness and become his poetic legacies. (Ibn Gabirol was the subject of Zinder's earlier book, *Is This Thy Voice? Rhetoric and Dialogue in Solomon Ibn-Gabirol's Liturgical Poems of Redemption* [2012].) Zinder reads the *seliḥot* of Isaac ibn Ghiyyat, in chapter 7, as a kind of response to the poetry of ibn Gabirol; ibn Ghiyyat, Zinder notes, employed forms familiar from ibn Abitur and Isaac ben Levi, and expresses an affinity for Neoplatonic thought, like ibn Gabirol, but key elements of ibn Ghiyyat's relationship to the community and understanding of the self, as well as his use of concepts such as joy and redemption in the context of *seliḥot*, set him apart from his contemporaries. Finally, in chapter 8, Zinder considers two *seliḥot* by Moses ibn Ezra. (Zinder notes that time does not permit him to address the voluminous relevant work by Judah Halevi

or Abraham ibn Ezra.) Zinder selected these specific poems because they share a key word: "maybe." This lexeme of uncertainty, embedded in works which otherwise clearly owe a debt to the work of other poets examined here, provides a fruitful way to round off the study while leaving the lines of inquiry open.

In *Arise and Sing*, Zinder takes liturgical poetry seriously as both liturgy and poetry; that is, he analyzes it as prayer that was theologically, philosophically, and emotionally meaningful for both author and congregation, and he uses the tools of literary criticism to understand how meanings are made possible and actualized. Penitential prayers, expressed in often allusive rhyme, meter, and song, prove to be an especially fruitful topic for such an approach to *piyyut*, for as Zinder reveals, they permit poets to locate themselves along a range of points in relationship to the community and the deity, and to express a range of emotions in regard to both: affinity and estrangement, despair and delight. Confronting the same task, each poet responds in a different way, or seeks to create different experiences in his congregation; some "cry out" while others "sing." This volume is not an exhaustive study but provides an excellent point of entry for thinking seriously not only about what liturgical poems do, but also why and how. Each chapter is grounded in specific texts, which Zinder carefully and subtly explicates, while ample annotations enable readers to follow his line of thinking in a variety of new directions. Far from being a final word, this volume is an invitation to continue a conversation.

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