

Ben Adam
Anonymous

<i>Ben adam, ma lecha nirdam / kum kra be'tachanunim</i>	קוּם קְרָא בְּתַחֲנוּנִים	בְּנוֹ אָדָם מַה לְּךָ נִרְדָּם
<i>shfoch sicha drosh slichu / me'Adon ha'Adonim</i>	מֵאֲדוֹן הָאֲדוֹנִים	שִׁפְךְ שִׁיחָה דְרֹשׁ סְלִיחָה
<i>Rechatz u'tehar ve'al teachar / be'terem yamim ponim</i>	בְּטָרֵם יָמִים פּוֹנִים	רַחֵץ וְטַהַר וְאַל תִּתְּחַר
<i>U'mehera rutz le'ezra / lifnei shochan me'onim</i>	לִפְנֵי שׁוֹכֵן מְעוֹנִים	וּמְהֵרָה רוּץ לְעֵזְרָה
<i>U'mipesha ve'gam resha / be'rach u'pachad me'asonim</i>	בְּרַח וּפְחַד מְאֻסוֹנִים	וּמִפְשַׁע וְגַם רָשַׁע
<i>Ana sh'eh shimcha yodei / Yisrael ne'emanim</i>	יִשְׂרָאֵל נְאֻמָּנִים	אָנָּה שְׁעָה שִׁמְךָ יוֹדְעֵי
<i>Lecha Adonai hatzdakah / ve'lanu boshet hapanim</i>	וְלָנוּ בִשְׁתַּת הַפָּנִים	לְךָ אֲדֹנָי הַצְדָּקָה
<i>Amod ke'gever ve'hitgaber / le'hitvadot al chataim</i>	לְהִתְוַדוֹת עַל חַטָּאִים	עֲמֵד כְּגִבּוֹר וְהִתְגַּבֵּר
<i>Ya El drosh be'choved rosh / lechaper al peshaim</i>	לְכַפֵּר עַל פְּשָׁעִים	יְהִי אֵל דְרֹשׁ בְּכִבּוֹד רֹאשׁ
<i>Ki le'olam lo ne'elam / mimenu niflaim</i>	מִמֶּנּוּ נִפְלְאִים	כִּי לְעוֹלָם לֹא נִעְלָם
<i>Ve'chol ma'amar asher yeamar / lefanav hem nikraim</i>	לִפְנֵי הֵם נִקְרְאִים	וְכָל מֵאֲמָר אֲשֶׁר יֵאָמֵר
<i>Ha'merachem hu yerachem aleinu / ke'rachem av al banim</i>	כְּרַחֵם אָב עַל בָּנִים	הַמְרַחֵם הוּא יִרְחַם עָלֵינוּ
<i>Lecha Adonai hatzdakah / ve'lanu boshet hapanim</i>	וְלָנוּ בִשְׁתַּת הַפָּנִים	לְךָ אֲדֹנָי הַצְדָּקָה

English Translation

Man, Woman! Why do you sleep?
Rise up and voice your pleas!

Pour out your words, seek forgiveness
from the Master of All.

Wash yourself clean, do not wait
For many days to go by.

Quickly, seek help
From the One who dwells beyond, within.

Flee from all wrongdoings
And fear their unintended consequences.

God, please hear the prayers of Israel
Who faithfully call on Your Name.

You are the Source of all that is right;
And we are truly humbled.

Rise up, be strong and take courage
So you may confess your failings!

Seek God with reverence
and find atonement.

In this realm of the spirit
Wonders never cease.

Every word that is said
Will be received.

The Compassionate One will have compassion on us
As parents do toward their children.

You are the Source of all that is right;
And we are truly humbled.

Interpreted and translated by Rabbi Nancy Flam

About the Piyut

Ben Adam opens the collection of *Selichot* poems in the Sephardic nusach, which are recited early in the morning during the month of Elul. The words of *Ben Adam* are the first to be recited during the period of *Selichot*--calling us to wake up, both physically and spiritually. The poem begins with a call to human worshipers (*ben adam*), and concludes with a call to God (*Adonai*), demonstrating the distance that exists between our earthly world and the divine presence. The poet urges us to repent, reflect and plea--actions that will bring us closer to God. The poet also portrays a compassionate, forgiving God, who comes closer to us as we pray and awaken spiritually.