This piyyut, commonly attributed to the mystics of the 1st millennium, uses imagery based on the visions of Ezekiel that describe a variety of heavenly hosts. It further develops the theme enunciated in the previous prayers that everything in creation praises God. Here that thought is extended to the heavenly hosts: even heavenly powers offer praise to God. The use of an alphabetical acrostic may suggest that God’s word is the primary constitutive element of all creation.

HAPPY несат. Not infrequently in alphabetical poetry, the letter sin (י) is substituted for the similarly sounding samekh (ש), as it is here. Such substitutions are even found in biblical acrostics. Most, if not all, worshippers in ancient times did not have prayer-books, and this substitution is quite natural in an oral culture.

SRAFIM OFANIM נראים אفئדים. Angelic songs figure prominently in ancient mystical texts. Descriptions of different groups of angels singing hymns to God surely mirrored the seekers’ own mystical experiences. The angels pictured here are closest to God’s throne. In Jewish mystical thought, the eanim are the wheels of God’s chariot, first mentioned by the prophet Ezekiel; the srafim are the fiery angels pictured as flaming serpents in Isaiah’s vision of heaven. The holy beings (hayot ha-kadosh) were thought of as the legs upholding God’s throne.

 Sheldon Leek, Master, 151 שחליחה שבתח Tears of Gold - קריית ספר בארצותיה
A Prayer for the World

Let the rain come and wash away
the ancient grudges,
the bitter hatreds
held and nurtured over generations.
Let the rain wash away the memory
of the hurt, the neglect.
Then let the sun come out and
fill the sky with rainbows.
Let the warmth of the sun
heal us
wherever we are broken.
Let it burn away the fog
so that
we can see each other clearly.
Let the warmth and brightness
of the sun melt our selfishness.
So that we can share the joys and
feel the sorrows of our neighbors.
And let the light of the sun be so strong that we will see all people as our neighbors.
Let the earth, nourished by rain,
bring forth flowers to surround us with beauty,
And let the mountains teach our hearts to reach upward to heaven. Amen.

—HAROLD KUSHNER

God, master of all existence,
praised by all that breathes,
the world is filled with Your greatness and glory;
knowledge and understanding surround You.

Exalted above holy beings,
resplendent in glory on Your chariot,
integrity and mercy stand before Your throne,
love and merit accompany Your presence.

How good are the lights that our God created—
fashioned with understanding, intelligence, and insight;
endowed with the strength and power
to have dominion over earthly realms.

Fully luminous, they gleam brightly,
radiating splendor throughout the world.
Happy as they go forth, joyous on their return,
they accomplish, with awe, the will of their creator.

They give glory and honor to the name of God,
invoking God’s sovereignty with joyful song.
God called forth the sun, and light dawned,
then considered and set the cycles of the moon.

And so the array of heaven,
s’rafim, ofanim, and holy beings,
all the heavenly hosts,
give praise; and glory, and honor to God—

El adon al kol hama-asisim, barukh u-m’vorakh b’ni kol n’shamah.
Godlo v’tuvo malei olam, d’at u-t’vunah sov’vim oto.
Ha-mitga-eh al hayot ha-kodesh, v’nehdar b’khavod al ha-merkavah.
Z’khut u-mishor lifnei khiso, hesed v’ra’hamim lifnei kh’vodo.
Tovim me’ortot she-bara eloheinu, y’tzaram b’d’a-at b’vinah u-v’haskel.
Ko-ah u-g’vurah natan ba-hem, lihyot moshlim b’kerev teiveil.
M’lei-im ziv u-m’fikim nogah, na-eh zivam b’khol ha-olam.
S’mel’him b’tzeitam v’asa’im b’vo-am, osim b’eimah r’tzon konam.
Pe’eir v’khavot notnim lishmo, tzolah v’rinah l’eiziker Malkhuto.
Kara la-shemesh va-yizrah or, ra-ah v’hitkin tzurat ha-lavanah.
Shevah notnim lo kol tz’va marom,
Tiferet u-g’dulah, s’rafim v’ofanim v’hayot ha-kodesh.