This piyyut was written by Rabbi Yom Tov Yitzhak of Joigny (Central France). Rabbi Yom Tov studied in northern France with Rabbeinu Tam, the important 12th-century rabbinic teacher, and then settled in England, where he served as the Rabbi of York. He was martyred during the massacre that took place there in 1190. His is the only piyyut written in medieval England to have entered the standard liturgy. Jews were expelled from England in 1290 and did not return there until Cromwell’s Great Revolution in the 17th century.

The poet adopts a rabbinic conceit that personifies Satan as an angel whose responsibility it is to entrap and convict the human family. In this situation, it is only God who can rescue humanity; the refrain pleads for God’s intervention. It is the directness of that expression asking God to announce forgiveness which has endeared this piyyut to generations.

The formal rhyming pattern and two-beat meter adopted by the poet creates a compactness of expression that is difficult to translate; the alphabetical acrostic is also lost in translation. Despite the formal poetic structures, the poet manages to convey a loving and personal relationship with God.

**Beloved** יד. Several times in the poem, the poet addresses God in terms of endearment, with language from Shir Hashirim (the Song of Songs), reflecting an intimate relationship between God and Israel.

**Raise Your Voice** וֹלֶכֶת בֶּקֶול. Jeremiah 25:30. There, the prophet proclaims that God has but to shout out and the enemies will be defeated.

**Silence the Prosecutor** וֹרָכְתַּב הַסָּג. The poet continues the common rabbinic conceit (stated at the beginning of the piyyut): that of a court case in heaven, determining Israel’s guilt or innocence.

**Support** שְׁעָן לְמִ. Psalm 18:19 uses this phrase to refer to God having been our support in bringing us out of Egypt.

**Abraham** אֶזְרָח. Literally, “the Ezrahite.” The midrash identifies this appellation as one of the names of Abraham (Babylonian Talmud, Bava Batra 15a).

**Flourish** לשׁוֹשָׁנָה. Literally, “may the lily flourish.” The Song of Songs is seen as a series of love poems between God and Israel. In 2:1 (which is understood as Israel’s speech to God), Israel is referred to as a lily: “I am a rose of Sharon, a lily of the field.”
Our God and God of our ancestors:

How true it is that the evil inclination rules us,
But You, Master of righteousness,
can declare us not guilty by saying “I forgive.”

Despise the one who speaks against us,
discredit his indictment.
Beloved, raise Your voice and exclaim, “I forgive.”

Silence the prosecutor;
let the defense take his place;
O Adonai, support his case, and say, “I forgive.”

May the merit of Abraham cause Israel to flourish.
Put aside our sins, and let Your voice
from heaven proclaim: “I forgive.”

Good and forgiving God,
forget the guilty, hear our plea,
respond from on high, and say: “I forgive.”
Micah 7:19 says, “You will take us back in love, You will cover up all our iniquities, and You will hurl all our sins into the depths of the sea.” The verse is quoted in the Tashlikh service and in the Haf- tarah of the afternoon service of Yom Kippur.

For Your own sake. Isaiah 43:25. In the passage in Isaiah, God speaks in the first person, “For My sake,” but the poet earlier has placed that first expression in the mouth of the penitent.

See our disgrace. The poet is referring to Jewish exile in foreign lands.
Heal my suffering, bury my sins at sea, 
and as I speak Your praise, 
for my sake, utter the words, “I forgive.”

Sweep away the sins, the evil urges of those 
of Your covenant; act with love, 
truly honor this remnant by saying: “I forgive.”

Hear the murmurs of my heart, 
and the sounds of my lips; for Your own sake, 
Forgive my errors and proclaim, “I forgive.”

See our disgrace as recompense for our errors; 
remove what is foul, and announce 
to those whose faith is in You: “I forgive.”

Hear my voice, and see the tears in my eyes; 
take up my cause and accept the words 
I have spoken, answer me by saying: “I forgive.”

Purify my stain, let it pass quickly as a cloud, 
Fulfill Your promise: wipe away the sins of this people You have sworn to save—and say, “I forgive.”