

Put a Curse on My Enemy

by Meir ben Elijah of Norwich

(England, late 13th century)

Put a curse on my enemy, for every man supplants his brother.

When will You [God] say to the house of Jacob, come let us walk in the light?

You are mighty and full of light, You turn the darkness into light.

Tear out their hearts – they who brought harm to those who come in Your Name,

When I hoped for good, evil arrived, yet I will wait for the light.

You are mighty and full of light, You turn the darkness into light.

The words of the seer are garbled, for the foe has mocked Your children

Until they don't know which path is the one that gives off light.

You are mighty and full of light, You turn the darkness into light.

The land exhausts us by demanding payments, and the people's disgust is heard

While we are silent and wait for the light.

You are mighty and full of light, You turn the darkness into light.

They make our yoke heavier, they are finishing us off.

They continually say of us, let us despoil them until the morning light.

You are mighty and full of light, You turn the darkness into light.

Let their victory spatter Your garment/for Your beloved's heart is distressed

But she will be consoled for this; her lord will remain until light.

You are mighty and full of light, You turn the darkness into light.

Have You forgotten to be gracious, My God? When will You gather in the camps
Scattered to the corners [of the earth], like infants that have not seen the light
You are mighty and full of light, You turn the darkness into light.

Let the King bring home His banished one, let Him smell his savory offering.

The foes who make his savor stink will never see the light.

You are mighty and full of light, You turn the darkness into light.

And if You have continued to afflict him [Israel], be abundantly merciful, be gracious to
him.

For he has despaired of [returning to] his dwelling, and of Your ways of radiant light.

You are mighty and full of light, You turn the darkness into light.

The vision of His intimates tarries; the predicted time has passed.

Let their [the enemies'] hold on us weaken, one and all, until the light [dawns].

You are mighty and full of light, You turn the darkness into light.

If his vision shall be hidden, with no interpreter for his dreams

Why should the glory of the crown remain with the filthy one until the light [comes]?

You are mighty and full of light, You turn the darkness into light.

Even if his [Israel's] sins have really enraged [You], why should his foes wage war
[against him]?

They whose mouths have spoken arrogantly, they are rebels against the light.

You are mighty and full of light, You turn the darkness into light.

They scattered him with their horns, but he hoped in hidden prophecies

For the men of visions have sealed [themselves] up and do not know the light.

You are mighty and full of light, You turn the darkness into light.

Malicious men have cast down his crown, and presumed to annihilate him.

They put him in prison, where in twilight he hoped for the light.

You are mighty and full of light, You turn the darkness into light.

Bring near his End to raise him up, before he is lost in his exile,

For they have boasted to annihilate him; they mistake the darkness for light.

You are mighty and full of light, You turn the darkness into light.

All his days, he [Israel] has surely hoped; day after day [he awaits] consolation.

O Awesome and Mighty One in Heaven, who brings His justice into the light

You are mighty and full of light, You turn the darkness into light.

If You have given me unto my enemy, rise up to plead my cause.

Establish the Messiah's reign, [so that] light will be seen in Your light.

You are mighty and full of light, You turn the darkness into light.

Translated by Susan Einbinder, in her article ‘Meir b. Elijah of Norwich: poetry and persecution amongst English Jews’, *Journal of Medieval History* 26:2 (2000).

Further translated examples of Meir’s poetry can be seen in Ellman Crasnow and Bente Elsworth, *Into the Light: The Medieval Hebrew Poetry of Meir of Norwich* (Norwich, 2013).