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The Longings of Sarah, Rachel, and Hannah
Through Text and Music

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"Sing Out, O Barren One"
The Longings of Sarah, Rachel, and Hannah Through Text and Music

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Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of
Requirements for Master of Sacred Music Degree

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction:

Consider the procreative history of the biblical narrative: God commands generation upon generation to reproduce and uphold the divine promise of redemption—a promise articulated to Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3) and re-articulated in subsequent generations to Isaac (Gen. 26: 1-5) and Jacob (Gen. 28: 13-15). Yet in each generation, (with the exception of the unloved Leah), the biblical matriarchs, Sarah, Rebecca, and Rachel are initially barren. Moreover, several other biblical women including Hannah and Samson's unnamed mother are initially barren. However, with God as the miraculous progenitor, the women ultimately conceive and the narrative of national fecundity continues.

A variety of Jewish texts invoke images, both literal and metaphoric, of the barren biblical woman. Biblical and rabbinic texts are concerned with the laws surrounding procreative responsibility and sexual status. Moreover, the rabbis invoked an allegorical understanding of barrenness to speak of Israel in a rootless state.[1] This idea continues in modern times in the Yiddish literature from Eastern Europe in the form of "*tkhines*"--

[1] Wendy Zierler, "Barrenness, Babies, and Books: The Barren Woman in Modern Jewish Literature" in *And Rachel Stole the Idols: The Emergence of Hebrew Women's Writing.* Book manuscript currently being prepared for publication, 2000, 1-2.

women's supplicatory prayers which often make reference to biblical barren women and locate the desire for children in the intensely personal voice of the individual woman. A number of modern Israeli authors and poets also allude to barren matriarchs in their work.

How best can one explore the lives of women in the Bible and their experience of barrenness and birth? Susan Niditch, Professor of Religion at Amherst College, posits that several academic disciplines are necessary to answer questions about women's lives in the Bible. She suggests that biblical scholarship, women's studies, literary criticism, anthropology, and sociology are helpful. This is primarily due to the fact that the material in the Hebrew Bible is "rich and varied, the relative bibliography is extensive, and the methodologies employed by students of women and the Bible are interdisciplinary, daring, and often at the very crest of scholarship."[2]

Aviva Zornberg, another contemporary scholar, also employs a range of sources to investigate the Bible and draws attention to the complexity of the identity of the matriarchs. Using Sarah as an example, Zornberg argues that Sarah suffers from the pain of barrenness *and* feels great joy when she becomes a mother.[3] However, as Zornberg points out, these are not successive or linear stages of Sarah's development. In other words, the joy of motherhood does not completely replace or mitigate the pain of barrenness; rather, Sarah, like Rachel and Hannah, incorporates both the pain of

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[2] Susan Niditch, "Portrayals of Women in the Hebrew Bible," in *Jewish Women in Historical Development, 2d edition*, ed. Judith R. Baskin (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1998), 25.
[3] Aviva Zornberg, Genesis: The Beginning of Desire (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1995), 77.

barrenness and other components in her identity in a non-linear, dualistic way. While all three women experience pain from the barrenness, Sarah also rejoices (Gen. 18:12), Rachel also weeps (Jer. 31:14), and Hannah also prays (I Sam. 1-2).

Images of barren women (namely Sarah, Rachel and Hannah) appear in a wide variety of Jewish music as well. From Yiddish folk songs to cantorial recitatives to Sephardic welcoming songs, the image of the barren mother together with images of children abounds. In particular, the plight of the barren matriarch (particularly Sarah) has been a kind of "traveling motif"[4] through Yiddish music and other types of Ashkenazic song. Moreover, there are several anonymous Yiddish folk songs about the bitterness of the abandoned or barren wife.[5] In the Sephardic tradition, songs for birth ceremonies (circumcision feasts and welcoming songs) are common.[6]

The music associated with barrenness explored in this thesis is both liturgical and non-liturgical and is intended for different types of usage. In some cases the music was intended for the concert hall and in other cases, the child's cradle. Some musical selections are drawn from larger works while others are meant to stand on their own. While the music invokes specific images of barren women, specifically Sarah, Rachel,

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[4] The term "traveling motif" was used by Robert Freedman, Yiddish music collector and archivist at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia. Interview by author, October 22, 2001. He credited this term to Chana Mlotek who is an archivist at YIVO in New York City.

[5] Lisa Rosenbaum Hest, *Voices of Our Mothers: Women's Lives in Yiddish and Ladino Songs*, Master's Thesis (HUC, 1988) 35.

[6] See Hest's Master's Thesis which includes "*O Que Mueve Mezes*," a Ladino song which is performed by women of the community at circumcision feasts.

and Hannah, the music often carries a universal message of God as the ultimate progenitor of the Jewish people.

Because the music is so diverse in character, cultural context, and intended usage, it is almost impossible to group the musical examples and find a common style. Instead, by placing the music side by side, viewing the musical pieces in relation to one another, an added perspective of the barren woman emerges: Sarah is barren and joyous; Rachel is barren and distraught; Hannah is barren and prayerful. These dualities within each woman are expressed in the music and support Zornberg's idea of a non-linear dualistic identity.

While various aspects and angles of barrenness are addressed in biblical, rabbinic, and modern texts, rarely does the discussion focus on the complexity and the inner pain the women must have felt. While the *tkhines* provided a *private* opportunity for woman to express their pain, the *tkhines* were never intended to be uttered in a public venue.

However, a variety of music, which incorporates various images of the barren woman, was intended for public performance. The body of music assembled in this thesis gives voice to a woman's inner pain associated with barrenness and offers a composite sketch of the barren woman. Tracing barrenness through biblical text, rabbinic exegesis, *tkhines*, and modern Hebrew literature, the investigation provides a portrayal of Sarah, Rachel, and Hannah--three archetypal personalities in Judaism. This thesis will show that the continuity of barrenness from the biblical text to its performance in music gives voice

to the pain experienced by barren or infertile women. The thesis will also show that each of the matriarchs unique response of joy, crying, and prayer is also expressed in the music and forms a repertoire of "barrenness music." Hearing the music performed acknowledges the pain of this experience and ultimately, this music (as a body) may provide some comfort to those who are, or have experienced the pain and loneliness of barrenness.

The thesis is organized in the following way. A general exploration of barrenness in biblical, rabbinic, and modern writings (including women's Yiddish supplicatory prayers as well as modern Hebrew fiction and poetry) is presented to frame the issue of barrenness in the tradition and the literary landscape. Next, an in depth exploration of three biblical women (Sarah, Rachel, and Hannah) follows. Each woman is discussed in a separate chapter, with reference to specific biblical, rabbinic, and literary material. A discussion of relevant music is included with specific music examples in the appendices. The thesis culminates with a discussion that synthesizes the literary material with the music and suggests that this body of music may be used to contextualize or even ritualize the contemporary experience of barrenness or infertility.

I. General Overview of Barrenness in Biblical, Rabbinic, Yiddish Supplicatory, and Modern Hebrew Literature:

In the biblical narrative, procreation is considered a blessing as well as a commandment (Gen. 1:28; 9:7; Rashi *ibid*). Moreover, the psalmist writes that children are seen as the greatest blessing "a heritage of God" (Ps. 127: 3-5). While the commandment "*p-ru ur-vu*" (Gen.1: 28) is a general instruction for men and women to be "fruitful and multiply," the psalmist specifies that women in particular be fertile: "Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine...thy children like olive plants..."(Psalm 128: 3-4).

Bearing children was an expectation and a measure of value for women who lived in biblical times. A woman who could not bear successfully or displeased her husband (by denying conjugal rights) could be divorced (Deut. 24: 1-4).[7] However, a married man who was childless could try to have offspring with a handmaid or a second wife. If a man died childless, his widow was expected to marry his brother (known as a levirate marriage) in expectation that the union would produce an heir for the deceased man.[8]

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[7] A woman is offered protection against divorce in some cases. In the *Mishnah*, a woman may ask for a divorce if her husband's smell displeases her.(*Ketubot* 7:10). Also, if accusations of premarital unchastity are proven false, she may not be divorced (Deut. 22: 13-19).

[8] Michele Klein, *A Time To Be Born. Customs and Folklore of Jewish Birth* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1998), 15.

Niditch approaches the problem of barrenness in the Bible from a functionalist perspective. She points to how women's role functions in terms of marital and sexual status. This is especially evident when young women marry, shift locality, and cross a liminal fault-line as they transition from the role of daughter to wife. In this transition, discovering that one is infertile becomes problematic as it tears at the very definition of what it meant to be a wife. "The married woman who does not bear children is in an especially marginalized position, for she is no longer a virgin in her father's home yet does not fully function in her husband's."[9] As such, a barren woman is marginalized because she does not function fully in her new role, which in turn carries sharp implications for loss of status.

The barren wife is also a favorite biblical motif, which marks the birth of a hero.[10] Expanding the heroic birth motif, J. Cheryl Exum argues that "the barren matriarch is a common theme since barrenness provides a threat that the needed son might not appear and offers an opportunity for the deity to intervene."[11] All the matriarchs, (with the exception of the unloved Leah) are able to bear children (the *avot* or the "heroes") but only with difficulty; moreover, Hannah, mother of Samuel, and Samson's unnamed mother, who appear later in the Bible, also share this predicament.[12] However, as Niditch

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[9] Niditch, 30.
[10] *Ibid.*, 30.
[11] J. Cheryl Exum, "Mother in Israel," in *Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*, ed. Letty M. Russell (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1985), 76.
[12] Niditch, 32.

explains below, it is in the child-related spheres that women reveal their strength as well as a certain closeness to the divine.

> Communication about as yet unborn children are some of the few instances in which God is seen to speak to women. The annunciation to Samson's mother in Judges 13 is of special relevance, for the divine emissary makes it quite clear that he wishes to speak to the woman and not her husband who is portrayed as a doubting fearful dolt in contrast to his more sensible down-to-earth wife. Sarah has the nerve to laugh when she hears a child is to be born (Gen. 18:12). Hannah *herself* [emphasis mine] prays for a child at the sanctuary and interacts with the priest Eli (I Sam. 1:9-18). Sarah and Rebecca, moreover, employ God's blessing to further the careers of their favorite son, the younger offspring, as when Sarah has Hagar and Ishmael expelled, and Rebecca tricks Isaac into giving Jacob his blessing. These women, like Samson's mother are seen as having the inside track to God's will.[13]

Because of their longing, these women have a certain agency and spiritual closeness to the divine in the matter of conception and birth.

In biblical Hebrew, the term "*akarah,*" meaning "uprooted," is likened to a tree torn out of the land and left to whither without offspring.[14] The term itself, *akarah,* comes from the Hebrew word "*akar*" meaning barren, impotent, infertile or sterile. Perhaps this is why a Yiddish women's prayer for children likens a woman to "...a tree which is fully grown but bears no fruit."[15] A similar proverb from the Yemenite tradition suggests a tree which bears no fruit should be cut down.[16] As

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[13] *Ibid.*, 32

[14] Klein, 15.

[15] T.G. Klirs., comp., *The Merit of Our Mothers: A Bilingual Anthology of Jewish Women's Prayers* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1993), 114.

[16] The Jews of Yemen use a related proverb regarding an infertile woman: "A tree that doesn't give fruit should be cut down." A. Stahl, *Proverbs of Jewish Communities* (Hebrew), no publisher given, Tel Aviv, 1975, 238, in Issachar Ben-Ami, "Customs of Pregnancy and Childbirth Among Sephardic and Oriental Jews" in Yedida K. Stillman & George K. Zucker, eds., *New Horizons in Sephardic Studies* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1993), 264, footnote 8.

such, *akarut*, the state of being barren, really carries a double meaning of infertility and rootlessness.

In the prophetic literature, the book of Isaiah contains an image of female *akarut* as a metaphor for Israel in a rootless state.

> In Isaiah 54 [:1], the barren woman becomes a metaphor for the suffering people of Israel whom God will ultimately liberate, just as he gave children to the matriarchs "Sing O barren woman, you who did not labor with child..." says the prophet setting the stage for the allegorical understanding of the barrenness theme which figures most prominently in rabbinic literature.[17]

The metaphoric language of the prophet likens exile to barrenness but the opposite may be even more poignant: barrenness may be a kind of exile, a personal rootlessness.

This allegorical understanding continues in *Pesikta d'Rabbi Kahana* 20:1. In this passage, the rabbis explain that there are seven barren women in the Bible: Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, Leah, Manoach's wife, Hannah, and Zion. Zion itself is characterized as a barren woman. Wendy Zierler, professor of Modern Jewish Literature and Feminist Studies adds "that the inclusion of Zion in this list of barren women underscores the traditional view of barrenness as standing for something other than just itself."[18]

Two particular *midrashim* inquire why the matriarchs (as a unit) were barren. To summarize the discussion, two main arguments are given. First, a discussion in *Bereshit*

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[17] Zierler, 1-2.
[18] *Ibid.*, 2.

Rabbah Chapter 45, Section 4 equates pregnancy with ugliness: "Rabbi Meir said ...as soon as a woman becomes pregnant she becomes ugly and repulsive to her husband."[19] A second kind of midrashic argument supposes that barrenness will assure women's prayer:

> And why were the Mothers made barren? Rabbi Levi in the name of Rabbi Shila of the village of Tamarta and Rabbi Helbo in the name of Rabbi Yochanan said that it was because the holy One Blessed Be He yearned for their prayers. The Holy One Blessed be He said 'They are wealthy, they are beautiful and if I give them children, they will not pray to me.'[20]

In addition to the allegorical understanding and interpretive discussions of *akarut*, the rabbinic literature also elaborates on the specifics of a childless marriage: The Mishnah and the Talmud expound on the specific issue of a childless marriage. A man may divorce his wife after ten years of marriage if the couple has been unsuccessful in producing children.[21] Moreover, the Talmud explains that a person without children was said to be cut off from all communication from God and is accounted as dead.[22]

Given the crucial importance of children and the pain of infertility present in biblical and rabbinic texts, it is not surprising that women offered prayers to conceive children. Jewish women of Ashkenazic descent often prayed for children in the form of *tkhines*: supplicatory prayers recited in Yiddish by Central and Eastern European Jewish

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[19] *Bereshit Rabbah* 45:4, Bar Ilan translation.
[20] *Midrash Tanhuma Parashat Toldot*, section 9, Bar Ilan translation.
[21] According to *Mishnah Yevamot 6:6*, "If a man took a wife and lived with her for ten years and she bore no child, he may not abstain [any longer from the duty of propagation]. If he divorced her, she is permitted to marry another, and the second husband may also live with her for [no more than] ten years."
[22] *Avodah Zarah 5a; Nedarim 64b.*

women.[23] The *tkhines* often invoke the names of biblical women who were barren and were later blessed with children. A woman in the 19th century wrote the following *tkhine* for children.

> I entreat you, Oh God, who graciously remembered our mothers Sarah and Hannah, Have mercy upon my lamentation and remember me with the blessing of fruitfulness. Let our union be blessed with a strong and healthy child, in whom we may plant your holy religion. Hallow our life with your attention to this lofty matter. God, you know our pains; you know the painful empty heart of the childless. Have mercy and redeem us from this pain. Amen.[24]

In this particular *tkhine*, a woman articulates the pain and fear associated with childlessness in a private moment of reflection. Additional examples of *tkhines* are given in subsequent chapters in conjunction with specific discussion about Sarah, Rachel and Hannah.

Another type of writing that contains themes of barrenness is modern Hebrew literature. While a number of Israeli writers have taken up this subject,[25] one example is S.Y. Agnon's story, "*Aggadat Hasofer*," (The Tale of the Scribe, 1919). *Agadat Hasofer* is the tale of a religious scribe named Raphael and his barren wife, Miriam. The narrator alludes to the Jewish textual past and invokes a section from *Genesis Rabah* 45:4 in which the rabbis explain that God made the matriarchs barren because God desired their

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[23] Chava Weissler, "Prayers in Yiddish and the Religious World of Ashkenazic Women" in *Jewish Women in Historical Perspective, Second Edition*, ed. Judith R. Baskin (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1998), 169.

[24] F. Neuda, *Hours of Devotion*, translated by R. Vulture (Vienna: Jos. Schlesinger, c. 1900), 110, adapted by Michele Klein in Michel Klein, *A Time to be Born: Customs and Folklore of Jewish Birth* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1998), 21.

[25] See Wendy Zierler's chapter (footnote 1) which provides a number of examples of Israeli women writers invoking themes of barrenness.

prayers.[26] In Agnon's story, the narrator, searching for an explanation of the couple's barrenness, makes reference to the biblical text and explains "Because the Holy One, blessed by He, desires the prayers of the righteous, He closed her [his wife's] Womb."[27] However, as Wendy Zierler points out, the irony in that the couple is childless simply because they have never had sex. "Raphael's devotion to his work involves a regime of prayer, the goal of which is to save him from all sin and desire, impulses which he then sublimates into the work of sacred writing."[28]

Empathizing with the biblical mothers, Modern Hebrew poet, Rahel Bluwstein (1890-1931) invokes both Rachel and Hannah in her poem "*Akarah*" (1928) in which the speaker of the poem likens her desire for a child to the bitterness of Rachel's struggle and Hannah's prayer at *Shiloh.*

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[26] *Midrash Tanhuma Parahat Toldot*, Section 9, mentioned earlier in the chapter also argues that God made the matriarchs barren because God describes the prayer of the righteous.
[27] S.Y. Agnon, "The Tale of the Scribe," in *Twenty-One Stories*, ed. Nahum N. Glatzer (New York: Schocken Books Inc., 1970), 10.
[28] Zierler, 2.

Akarah (Barren)

If only I had a son! A little boy,
Black-curled and clever.
Just to hold his hand and stroll slowly
Through park lanes.
A boy.
Small.

Uri I'd call him, my Uri!
Soft and clear is this short name.
A bit of light.
For my dark-haired boy,
"Uri!"—
I'd call out!

Still, I'll complain like Rachel.
Still, I'll pray like Hannah in Shiloh,
Still, I'll wait for him.[29]

In this poem, the speaker prays for a son, just like Sarah, Rachel, Hannah. The desired boy is dark-haired yet his name, "Uri," means "my light." The adjacency of dark and light suggests that some kind of positive outcome may spring from the pain and darkness of *akarut*. The contemporary image of longing for a child (to "stroll slowing through park lanes") in contrast to the biblical image of Hannah praying at Shiloh juxtaposes modernity with antiquity. As such, the text bridges contemporary barrenness with Hannah's ancient prayer for a child and allows the reader to identify with the

[29] Rahel Bluwstein "*Akarah*" Bar Ilan translation.

foremothers. This poem has been the subject of several music compositions and will be discussed below in greater detail.

To summarize, the metaphoric likening of exile to barrenness (Is. 54:1) illustrates how the Bible capitalizes on the use of barrenness as a literary device and how barrenness carries nationalistic connotations. Rabbinic exegesis discusses legal issues of childless marriage and even equates a childless person to one who is dead (*Avodah Zarah* 5a). In addition, the rabbis offer midrashic explanation as to why the matriarchs were barren and also invoke an allegoric understanding of *akarut.*[30] *Tkhines* and modern texts make reference to many biblical and rabbinic themes and provide the subject matter for much of the music discussed. Below, a similar chronological investigation of sources (biblical, rabbinic, and modern literary texts) as well as relevant musical examples, are discussed in conjunction with each biblical barren woman: Sarah who rejoices at motherhood, Rachel who cries for her children, and Hannah who prays from her heart.

[30] Zierler, 1-2.

II. Sarah:

"Now Sarai was barren, she had no child." (Gen. 11:30)

Sarah, the first Jewish woman, and ultimately, the first Jewish mother is introduced as having an absence.[31] While Abraham is defined by a lineage and extended family, Sarah, in contrast, is defined by her barrenness. At first, Sarah chooses surrogate motherhood as a fulfillment of God's will and offers her handmaid, Hagar, to Abraham. "God has kept me from bearing. Consort with my maid; perhaps I shall have a son through her" (Gen. 16:2). As mentioned above, a married childless man could try to have offspring with a handmaid or a second wife--a normal practice in biblical times.[32]

Despite Sarah's barrenness, God makes it clear that only Sarah can bear the child of the promise.[33] Sarah's destiny and status is insured through a story in which three men, who ultimately prove to be divine messengers, visit Abraham and Sarah. After some rest and food, the guests inquire about Sarah. Told that she is in the tent, one visitor (now singular) reveals that upon his return in the spring, Sarah shall have a son (Gen. 18:10).

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[31] Ellen Frankel, *The Five Books of Miriam* (San Francisco: HarperCollins Publishers Inc., 1996), 14.
[32] Klein, 24.
[33] Phyllis Trible, "Genesis 22, The Sacrifice of Sarah" in *Women in the Hebrew Bible*, ed. Alice Bach (New York and London: Routledge, 1999), 282.

Sarah, hearing this pronouncement, laughs within herself (Gen. 18: 12) as she is old and as the Bible notes, post-menopausal (Gen.18: 11).

Notwithstanding Sarah's age, the rabbis argue that Sarah remained beautiful. They maintain that her body did not suffer the ugliness of pregnancy and "for the entire ninety years during which Sarah did not give birth to a child, she was like a bride under the marriage canopy."[34] The rabbis seem interested in preserving Sarah's beauty and bride-like youthfulness. As such, the explanation mitigates any "ugliness" she would have due to old age. In addition, it reinforces the extraordinary quality of her conception because ordinarily, one would not equate a ninety year-old woman with the youthful beauty of a young bride.

Meanwhile, parallel to Sarah's barrenness is the barrenness of the wife of Avimelekh, king of Gerar. Avimelekh had originally taken Sarah for himself before he knew she was married to Abraham. Ultimately, Avimelekh returns Sarah to Abraham upon learning (from God) that Abraham is a prophet and will pray for him (Gen. 20: 7). Abraham not only prayed for Avimelekh but for his entire house (including his wife and his servants) and Avimelekh's wife ultimately bore children (Gen. 20:17).

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[34] *Bereshit Rabbah,* Chapter 45, Section 4.

Shortly thereafter, the narrative reports "God visited Sarah..." (Gen. 21:1).[35] Because Abraham prayed for Avimelekh, Rashi explains that Abraham will also personally reap the benefits of this prayer.

> 'God had visited Sarah...' It (scripture) places this section after the preceding one to teach you that whoever prays for mercy on behalf of another when he himself also is in need of that very thing *for which he prays on the other's behalf*, will himself first receive a favorable response from God...[36]

Thus, Rashi affirms that Abraham would ultimately be rewarded (with a son) for praying for the fertility of another man and his household.

Another commentator further develops the notion of praying or engaging in an act of kindness for an entire household as a form of *tzedakah* (righteous giving). The story of Abraham and Avimelekh is included in a story in which a childless man visited the Chafetz Chayyim, a pious teacher of the early 20th century. The Chafetz Chayyim advised an act of *tzedakah* so that God might reward him with fertility, just like Abraham and Avimelekh.

> The visitor was seeking advice on sympathetic rituals that would ensure his fertility. The Chafetz Chayyim said 'I do not have any such knowledge, but I will tell you this: choose one act of kindness to tend to here in the city, and perhaps God will reward you for caring for the needs of others...' Three years later, this visitor had a son. As Abraham prayed for the household of Avimelekh, so the visitor cared for the needs of the community. And both were rewarded.[37]

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[35] Additional discussion of the verb "visited" (*pakad et*) and its importance appears below in the text.
[36] *Chumash With Targum Onkelos, Haphtaroth and Rashi's Commentary*, translated by A.M. Silberman and M. Rosenbaum (Jerusalem: Silberman, 1985), 87.
[37] *Someone once visited the Chafetz Chayyim...* Yisrael Meir ben Aryeh, *Sefer Shem Olam* (Jerusalem: Hamesorah, n.d.), pt. I, chapt 8. In Nina Beth Cardin, *Tears of Sorrow Seeds of Hope* (Woodstock, Vermont: Jewish Lights Publishing, 1999), 49-50.

In this case, the Chafetz Chayyim's suggestion of an "act of kindness" is likened to Abraham's prayer for the household of Avimelekh. The Bible, Rashi and the Chafetz Chayyim all suggest that God may reward one with fertility for caring for the needs of others.[38] While there are other stories and *tkhines* for women praying for fertility, this story illustrates a proactive role for a man who wants to increase or ensure his fertility.

While the Chafetz Chayyim's message of *tzedakah* is universal, the visitor in this anecdote is a man who is concerned about *his* fertility—not his wife's fertility per se. This is notable because the Bible does not speak of Abraham (or other men) as barren (*akarah)*. However, a man without an heir (during biblical times) was known as "*ariri*" from the root meaning "destroyed."[39] Moreover, in post-biblical times, the rabbis continue the discussion and are most concerned with a married man who had not fulfilled his duty to have children.[40] As such, childlessness casts stigma on both men and women: a woman is *akarah* (uprooted) while a man is *ariri* (destroyed).

While Sarah is initially *akarah* (barren), the Bible reports that Sarah was ninety years old (Gen. 17:17) when she gave birth to Isaac. "God took note of Sarah as God had promised and God did for Sarah as he had spoken" (Gen. 21: 1-2). The Hebrew verb "took note" (*pakad*

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[38] Rabbi Nina Beth Cardin underscores the Chafetz Chayyim's notion that *tzedakah* is no guarantee of fertility. However, she notes a strong connection between fertility and *tzedakah*. Giving opens one up to receiving. Thus, one can redirect a negative experience to influence one's self or life in a positive way.
[39] The *akarah* is different from the *aylonit* ("ram-like") who has never menstruated. See Rashi on Gen. 15:2 concerning a man without an heir, in *Chumash With Targum Onkelos, Haphtaroth and Rashi's Commentary*, translated by A.M. Silberman and M. Rosenbaum (Jerusalem: Silberman, 1985), 59.
[40] Klein, 16.

et Sarah) is also used in connection with the birth of Samuel (I Sam. 2:21). In both cases, the verb connotes the direct involvement of God in human affairs. Furthermore, both new-born infants are children of destiny.[41] The Hebrew root (*p-k-d*) reinforces God's involvement in both births.

> The Hebrew stem *p-k-d* connotes the direct involvement or intervention of God in human affairs. This can be of a providential nature or it can be judgmental or redemptive. The verb is a leitmotif of the divine promises of national redemption from Egyptian slavery. The birth of Isaac thus marks a new and momentous stage in the unfolding plan of history. The multiplicity of descriptive terms for the event in verses 1-2 further emphasizes its extraordinary nature.[42]

Another extraordinary birth, in addition to Isaac is the birth of Moses: Jochebed, was one hundred thirty years old when she gave birth to Moses. According to the rabbis, birth to such geriatric mothers implies the hold of a divine hand.[43] This is what makes the story of Sarah so remarkable. In fact, Phyllis Trible notes that Sarah's name appears four times in the narrative in conjunction with her old age.[44]

Birth to aged parents is also found in a Hassidic story about a couple of advanced age who came to the rabbi for advice. In Sadeh's, *Jewish Folktales,* a collection of Hebrew folktales compiled in 19th century, one particular folktale equates reward with

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[41] *Jewish Publication Society Torah Commentary*, ed. Nahum M. Sarna. (Philadelphia, New York and Jerusalem: The Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 145.
[42] *Ibid.*, 145.
[43] Genesis Rabah 94: 9
[44] Trible, 283.

fertility (punishment with barrenness).[45] In this story, a tailor fathers a son at age 70. Like the story of Abraham and Sarah, Michele Klein notes that the late arrival of a son to aged parents is considered to be a gift from God.

Another Hassidic story from *Legends of the Ba'al Shem Tov* illustrates a similar point: The *Ba'al Shem Tov*, the 18th century founder of Hassidism, prophesizes that a couple of advanced age would soon have a child for honoring the Sabbath.[46] Following the advice of the sage, the couple conceives even though it would seem physiologically impossible. Both stories point to the divine involvement in a birth to aged parents.

Along with the folk tales, both the rabbis and the biblical narrative suggest that Sarah was a geriatric (yet beautiful) barren woman. Aviva Zornberg points out that Sarah's identity occupies a kind of paradoxical existence as she is described as both the "barren one" and the "joyous mother." Zornberg maintains that these are not simply successive stages of life but both remain necessary functions of her identity.[47] She is always both *akarah* and mother of children. As such, Sarah grows to celebrate an event that developed from pain and struggle. But Zornberg hints that the pain of *akarut* is not completely mitigated by the joy of motherhood. Rather, both the pain and the joy remain constant parts of Sarah's identity, functioning together in a kind of dialectic relationship.

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[45] P. Sadeh , *Jewish Folktales* (New York: Doubleday, 1989), 337-338.
[46] Martin Buber, *Legends of the Ba'al Shem Tov* (New York: Schocken, 1969), 179-184.
[47] Zornberg , 77.

The great Yiddish poet, Itsik Manger, captures the image of Sarah as joyous mother in his poem "*Di Muter Sore Zingt Yitskhaklen a Shlaflied*" (Mother Sarah Sings Isaac a Lullaby). First, Isaac's name itself receives a diminutive ending which illustrates the tender closeness between mother and son. Second, Sarah's name appears twice in the poem, and each time, it is preceded with the word "*muter*" (mother). The poem begins "*Di muter Sore vigt di vig...*" (mother Sarah rocks the cradle) and concludes with the phrase "*Der muter Sores Lid*" (mother Sarah's lullaby). The entirety of the poem is encapsulated with images of Sarah as mother: rocking her son's cradle and singing him a lullaby—the loving actions of a mother. This reinforces one side of Zornberg's paradox: Manger casts Sarah as a tender loving mother celebrating a tender joyous moment, not a geriatric barren woman.

In Manger's poem, mother Sarah explains that a shepherd tends his sheep out in the yard. The lambs are arguing whether it is day or night. In the style of talmudic argument, the lambs cite examples of daily events to support their side as to whether it is day or night. For example, one explains that the dry good's man has closed his shop and therefore it must be night. Finally, the shepherd suggests that the lambs ask baby Isaac to determine the answer. Because Isaac has shut his eyes, Sarah suggests that it is night. The shepherd states an emphatic "well-then" and tip-toes away and takes with him (in his flute) mother Sarah's lullaby.

The two lambs evoke the scholarly banter of the rabbis, each searching for evidence to support his argument. The image of God as a shepherd is familiar: "God is my Shepherd, I shall not want" (Ps. 23:1). What is the symbolism then of the shepherd taking with him Sarah's lullaby? The shepherd *takes note* of Sarah, taking the song from her mouth, just as God *took note* of her so that she conceived. Perhaps the shepherd's visit is akin to God's divine visitation of Sarah (*pakad et Sarah*) or the angel's visit to Abraham and Sarah. It is during the shepherd's visit that the "truth" is revealed to the arguing lambs. So too in God's visit to Sarah, the promise is revealed.

One setting of Manger's poem by Leybu Levin (1914-1983) is a gentle lullaby written for two voices. The melody (arranged by Abram Vindernitz) is included on a compact disc titled *Songs of Leybu Levin*, published posthumously by Workmen's Circle, New York in 1998. The melody is soothing and it evokes the loving sounds that a mother would hum to her most precious child. Written in a conventional western harmonic style, the piece is firmly set in f minor with some detours into the relative major key of A flat. There are two melodies, which are denoted (in Appendix 1) as melody "A" and "B."

The piece begins with melody A with both voices in harmony explaining together that mother Sarah rocks the cradle; this melody is subsequently used in conjunction with other images of Sarah and Isaac. For example, melody A is used a second time at verse six (measure 43) where the Shepherd suggests that the flock ask *Isaac* himself whether it is day or night and continues as Mother Sarah explains that the shepherd and the sheep

are at the door. Melody A, with slight variations (vocal harmonic writing in sixths as opposed to thirds), notated as A_2, recurs at measure 58. This slight shift in melody and harmony appears as mother Sarah explains that it must be night because *Isaac* has shut his eyes.

Melody B is used in conjunction with the bantering lambs as they debate whether it is day or night. In a quasi-cantorial style, Levin uses a recitation tone to express the emphatic assertion of the first lamb that it must be day (measure 11). The second lamb "responds" (measure 13) and argues that it must be night. The lambs go back and forth arguing, each one citing examples in a talmudic style as to whether it is day or night.

The piece concludes with melody A as the shepherd tip-toes away, taking with him mother Sarah's lullaby. As in the beginning of the piece (and like the other A sections), both voices sing together in harmony. The two sections flow effortlessly and underscore the excitement of the lamb's debate cast against Sarah's soothing care of her son, Isaac.

As mentioned above, the poetic image of the shepherd symbolizes God's visitation to Sarah. In addition, the shepherd is ultimately the greatest arbiter for the lambs, helping them to settle their debate. So too was God the ultimate progenitor of the promise of future generations, visiting Sarah so that she may conceive.

Manger was not the only one to develop the idea of Sarah singing a lullaby to Isaac. In the biblical operetta, "*Akeydas Yitskhok*" (The Binding of Isaac) by Abraham

Goldfaden (1840-1908), mother Sarah sings "*Shlaflied*" (a lullaby), a melody arranged by Henry A. Russotto, to her baby, Isaac. Similar to the Levin piece, the lullaby evokes the maternal love by using the idiom of the lullaby.

In the Levin melody, the lullaby is soothing. In Goldfaden's melody, the lullaby is more haunting and a bit melancholy. The sad and haunting musical quality reflects Goldfaden's words "For see how lonely Sarah rocks her only child." Unlike Levin's melody which underscores Sarah in a tender joyous moment and frequently refers to her as "mother Sarah," Goldfaden's image of Sarah tends more toward the other side of Zornberg's paradox: Sarah as lonely, rootless or *akarah*.

The Goldfaden piece (Appendix 2) begins with Sarah speaking directly to God saying, "Oh dear, true God, praise be Thou for remembering me. Now I thank Thee for this gift, presented to such oldsters." The language evokes the style of the *tkhine*, which often begins by thanking God for a particular action.[48] Also, the words "remembering me," reference the biblical language of divine visitation or remembrance (*pakad et*). God was aware of Sarah's suffering insofar as God took note and remembered Sarah.

The phrase "...presented to such oldsters." (*oif der elter ihr geshenkt*) highlights the divine intervention of a miraculous birth to a mother of old age. The theological message of Sarah's pregnancy is that only God can make a physiological impossibility a

[48] A *tkhine* for Blessing of the New Moon begins with "Please, I beseech You, blessed God, who generously provides food and clothing to all creatures..." Tracy Guren Klirs *The Merit of our Mothers* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1992), 78.

Neither Rachel nor Hannah had any specifically named physiological reasons that prevented conception. It Sarah's case, God transcends the physical limitations of old age.

The music expresses Sarah's dualistic identity as both barren and joyous. While both musical examples include descriptions of Sarah after she conceived, images of the pain and loneliness of *akarut* still remain. For example, in "*Shlaflied*" she is described as lonely as she rocks (her only son) Isaac's cradle. However, in "*Di Muter Sore...*" she is joyous as she tends *Yitskhaklen* "darling Isaac" in his cradle. Musically, "*Shlaflied*" is a bit more melancholy while "*Di Muter Sore...*" is more soothing. Placing these lullabies side by side, the implication is that the pain and loneliness of barrenness does not disappear with the birth of a child. The emotional pain in conjunction with her joyous motherhood is retained and absorbed into Sarah's identity. Sarah, like Rachel and Hannah below, are complex figures whose personal *akarut* resonates with other aspects of their identity as women and mothers.

III. Rachel:

"And the Lord saw that Leah was hated and he opened her womb, and Rachel was barren." (Gen. 29:31)

Jacob had two wives and he loved one more than the other (Gen. 29:30). Rachel was the loved one—the one for whom Jacob had worked seven years. However, Jacob was given, Leah, the older daughter, as was custom during that time. Leah believed that mothering Jacob's firstborn son, she would gain Jacob's love. "Surely now my husband will love me"(Gen.29: 32), she explains. Leah ultimately bears Jacob six sons and one daughter (and two sons, Gad and Asher, through her handmaid, Zilpah,) while Rachel remains barren. The reader feels sympathy for both women--for Leah, who is not loved and for Rachel who longs for a child but has none.[49]

Rachel, envious of her sister, airs her frustration to Jacob. Rachel comments, "Give me children or else I will die" (Gen. 30:1). Jacob, angrily retorts, "Can I take the place of God, who has denied you fruit of the womb?" (Gen. 30:1-2) Aviva Zornberg explains a bit about the language, and argues that Rachel, (based on the commentary of Rashi and Seforno) is describing a meaningless existence without children as opposed to an angry threat to her husband.

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[49] Exum, 79.

> Literally, the Hebrew translates as "or *I am dead.*" Rashi quoting the *midrash*, writes "One who has no children is accounted as dead."[50] Seforno quotes from Isaiah 56:3 "I am a withered tree." Both commentators understand Rachel not to be having a feminine tantrum—threatening her husband with dire consequences, if he does not "give" her children. Rather, she is simply describing a dull meaninglessness, a loss of sap in her life. And Jacob's anger becomes comprehensible. It is painful for him to hear his wife—whom he loves for himself, not as a means for procreation—declare so plainly that her primary passion is not for him.[51]

Zornberg uses the image of a loss of tree sap, which invokes the aforementioned idea of an *akarah* as an uprooted tree. Like Sarah's anger at Abraham (Gen. 16:5), Exum notes that [Rachel's] dissatisfaction with her position receives recognition, but the real locus of the problem, the patriarchal system, remains unacknowledged; thus, the matriarchs can only vent their frustration at the patriarchs.[52]

Rachel, barren and angry, gives Jacob her maidservant, Bilhah, so that Jacob may have children through her. Ellen Frankel, writing in a modern midrashic voice through the eyes of Rachel, explains the significance of the two children (and their names) that Bilhah bears on Rachel's behalf.

> Mother Rachel recounts...I gave my husband my maid, Bilhah, as a concubine so that "through her I too may have children." I said to Jacob: "consort with her, that she may bear on my knees"(Gen. 30: 3). The names I gave Bilhah's two sons expressed my own bitter disappointment: *Dan*, which I took to mean "God has vindicated me; indeed, God has heeded my plea and given [*dananni*] me a son" (Gen. 30:6); and *Naphtali*, meaning "a fateful contest I waged

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[50] *Bereshit Rabah* 71:6.
[51] Zornberg, 210.
[52] Exum, 79.

[*naphtule...niphtalti*] with my sister; yes, and I have prevailed" (Gen. 30:8). What a hollow victory these births were for me![53]

Rachel, desperate for children, takes initiative and asks her sister Leah for fertility-producing *duda'im*, mandrake plants or "love flowers,"[54] a botanical folk-remedy which was said to be some type of aphrodisiac[55] in exchange for Jacob's conjugal services (Gen. 30: 14). When he returns from the field, Leah orders him to sleep with *her* that night—a reference to the fact that Rachel had suggested that Jacob lie with Leah in exchange for the *duda'im*. Without questions, he performs his duty (Gen. 30: 14-18), yielding Leah an unexpected son.

Finally, Rachel conceives. "God remembered Rachel; God harkened to her and opened her womb" (Gen.30: 22). In this verse, God "remembers" Rachel from the root "*zachar*" which means "remembered." The Talmud suggests that God remembered Rachel in the sense the God took cognizance of her virtues; in addition, this event was said to have taken place on Rosh Hashanah, the Day of Remembrance.[56]

Moreover, the Torah uses different verbs to describe God's involvement and intercession with the matriarchs. As mentioned in the previous chapter, "God took note of Sarah" (*pakad et Sarah*). While the Hebrew verb "*pakad*" connotes the direct

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[53] Frankel, 57.
[54] Encyclopedia Judaica, 1971 ed., s.v. "Barrenness and Fertility," 258.
[55] The Artscroll Tanach commentary suggests possible translations for *duda'im* including jasmine, violets, and basket of figs.
[56] *Rosh Hashanah* 11a.

involvement or intervention of God in human affairs,[57] "*yizkor*" or "remembering" (in the Bible) "particularly on the part of God, is not the retention or recollection of a mental image, but a focusing upon the object of memory that results in action."[58] In other words, God's remembering of Rachel carries an implication of action—in this case—conceiving and giving birth.

Rachel is also invoked as a metaphoric mother of Israel in the book of Jeremiah. She weeps for her children who have been exiled from the land of Israel.

> Thus said God, A voice is heard on high, wailing, bitter weeping, Rachel weeps for her children; she refuses to be consoled for her children, they are gone. Thus said God: Restrain your voice from weeping and your eyes from tears; for there is reward for your accomplishment—the word of God –and they will return from the enemy's land. There is hope for your future—the word of God—and your children will return to their border (Jeremiah 31: 15-16).

Rashi interprets "a voice is heard on high" to mean Rachel's voice in the heavens --*b'ramah*. However, Jeremiah refers to the actual geographical location (*ramah*), which is located five miles north of Jerusalem between *gibeon* and *beeroth* (see Joshua 18:25). The double entendre on "*ramah*" bridges the heavens (where Rachel is heard) and the earth (where Rachel is buried). According to ancient Jewish legend, "Jacob intentionally

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[57] *Jewish Publication Society Torah Commentary*, ed. Nahum M. Sarna. (Philadelphia, New York and Jerusalem: The Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 145.
[58] *Ibid.*, 56.

buried her [Rachel] there by the road-side, because he foresaw that his descendants would pass by on the way to exile and she would weep and intercede for them."[59]

Rachel's tomb (*kever rachel*) has long been a pilgrimage site for women who are infertile and wish to conceive; moreover, Klein notes that it has been common for the childless to visit the graves of holy persons who have had their prayers answered.[60] Many people hope that by visiting Rachel's grave, they too will be "remembered."

Invoking Jeremiah, a particular *tkhine* recalls Rachel's merit. Known as "*Tkhine* of the Matriarchs: Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah," the *tkhine* comes from a prayer book known as *Korban Mincha Siddur.*[61] Noting the section of Jeremiah in which Rachel weeps for her children, the speaker asks God to accept her prayers by the merit of Mother Rachel who was said to be faithful and by whose merit her children Israel would go forth from exile. As such, Rachel's motherhood was a metaphor for mothering the children of Israel and their liberation from exile. The speaker continues and explains how Israel cried and wailed by Mother Rachel's tomb when they were led into the captivity of Nebuzaradan.

> Our faithful mother, how can you look on as we are being led into exile? Rachel rose up to God, blessed by [sic.] He, and spoke with a bitter cry: "Master of the Universe! Your mercy is certainly greater than that of any human being. Therefore, since I had compassion on my sister Leah, when our father switched us and gave her to my husband Jacob in my stead, then You, O God, who is

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[59] A. Cohen, *Jeremiah with Hebrew Text and English Translation.* Commentary by H. Freedman, (London: Soncino Press, 1961), 206.
[60] Klein, 23.
[61] Rivka Zakutinsky, *A Voice From the Heart*, rev. ed. (Brooklyn: Aura Printing, Inc., 1999), 75.

> completely merciful and compassionate, it is fitting that You have mercy." Thus God did answer: "You are right. I will redeem your children from their troubles." Therefore we pray to You that this be fulfilled by her merit.[62]

In this *tkhine*, Rachel is given a certain agency. She " rose up" to God and "spoke with a bitter cry." This is similar to Hannah's prayer, which will be discussed below. Rachel, however, is not invoked as a barren woman, but as a faithful mother of all the children of Israel. Perhaps this is because she had compassion on her sister who had precisely what she wanted most—a child. Rachel makes reference to her own compassion for her sister to argue for God's compassion on all the children of Israel. God answers her and agrees to redeem the children from exile.

The idea of Rachel as "mother of Israel" is also seen in Rahel Bluwstein's (1890-1931) poem entitled "*Rachel*," (1926). Bluwstein describes mother Rachel as "*em ha-em*" or "mother of mothers." This phrase ascribes to Rachel a kind of status as mother that is not seen in other matriarchs. While Sarah is remembered as a mother who (through God) had a miraculous birth at an old age, and Hannah is remembered as the woman who prayed to God, the ultimate progenitor, Rachel is mother of all mothers, *em ha'em*, a mother of unique status. Rachel is considered mother of mothers because biblically, she was the mother of the Benjamin and Joseph tribes, whose descendents included Ephraim

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[62] *Ibid.*, 82-83.

and Menasseh. Therefore, she was the female progenitor of the tribes that composed much of Israel, the northern kingdom.[63]

Bluwstein's other poem about mother Rachel, "*akarah*" (mentioned in Chapter I) also invokes Mother Rachel but this time, the poet writes about Mother Rachel's bitter complaining at not having a child. Bluwstein's two different descriptions of Rachel reflect the dualistic quality of Rachel: she is bitter (weeping) and yet she is also a mother of great stature. While Rachel occupies this special status of *em ha-em*, she is not spared the pain of loss.

Rachel's weeping in the text from Jeremiah (in conjunction with other biblical verses) is recited in a service called "*seder chatsot* " known also as Lamentations at Midnight. The pious are accustomed to rise at midnight, sit on the floor (without shoes), put ashes on their foreheads and read lamentations on the fall of Zion and prayers for redemption.[64] A particular paragraph from this service includes verses from Jeremiah, Isaiah, and Lamentation stitched together in the medieval style of linking *p'sukim* to create a liturgical section.[65]

Cantor David Roitman (1884-1943) set the end of the liturgical paragraph to music and titled the piece "*Rochel M'vakoh Al Baneho*," Rachel Weeps for her Children.

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[63] Encyclopedia Judaica, 1971 ed., s.v. "Rachel," 1488.
[64] Martin Buber, *Tales of the Hasidim, The Early Masters and the Later Masters*, Schocken Books ed. 1991, with a foreword by Chaim Potok, trans. Olga Marx (New York: Schocken Books,1947), 332.
[65] See Artscroll Siddur (*y'hi kavod* of the *shacharit* service) as an example of biblical verses stitched together.

Published in 1930, the great composer and music director, Abraham Wolf Binder, arranged this popular liturgical lament. The text contains five different biblical passages, which are denoted in the music (see Appendix 3) with the letters A-E. The complete Hebrew text is also included in Appendix 3. Each letter represents a new biblical passage.

The piece begins in F *Magen Avot* but is preceded by an introduction of four measures in which a b natural is heard. The b natural foreshadows the *ahavah rabah* that is used later in the piece. While the accompaniment is reminiscent of Beethoven, it is unmistakably cantorial in its use of the cantorial modes and the centrality of the voice. After the first few lines of text, the piece shifts to a feeling of B flat minor by moving up a fourth—a common shift in Jewish music. Over this B flat minor chord, Rochel's name (from Jeremiah 31:15) is heard for the fist time: "*Rochel m'vakoh al boneho.*"

At measure 12, the harmonization of the melody in the accompaniment uses the interval of the sixth, which is reminiscent of the *meshor'rim* style. B flat minor continues and cadences to a major III chord (measure 13) at the word *boneho* (children)—emphasizing the importance of the word "children" with the brightness of the major chord.

Measure 23 brings a suggestion of B flat *ahavah rabah* with a strong d natural on the word "*hu.*" The d natural sounds declamatory (coming from the E flat) which reinforces the declamation "on this day!" Isaiah explains the God has chosen "this day"

for crying and lamenting and donning sackcloth (Is. 22:12). The declamation is echoed in the accompaniment with 3 forte sixteenth-note triplets ascending the scale. In one particular recording, Cantor Joseph Malovany sings the piece with the Hungarian State Orchestra and after the words "*ba yom ha hu*," the triplet figures are boldly articulated by the brass section, communicating a kind of regal and royal announcement.

After two measures of emphatic triplets, (measures 27-28), a shift in text (to Lamentations 1:16; letter D) evokes the image of children and weeping. These images are consistent with the imagery used in the first section from Jeremiah 31:15 when the speaker first explains that Rachel is weeping for her children. Interestingly enough, this introduction of Lamentations 1:16 also marks the musical moment where the pure B flat *ahavah rabbah* is heard—the mode which "cries in the pain" in its use of the augmented second between the second and third degrees of the scale. This occurs on the words "over these I weep." The speaker continues expressing pain, "my eye continuously runs with water because a comforter to restore my soul is far from me" (Lam. 1:16).

At measure 34, the piece climaxes to a high B flat as the voice cries out the words "[my comforter is] far from me" (*ki rochak memeini*). The high note, as well as the fact that this phrase is repeated in the music with subsequent high notes, reinforces God's distance and the notion that comfort was all but gone. The pain and distance expressed in this emphatic cry underscores the pain Rachel felt as her children were sent to exile.

However, it is not only pain that Rachel experiences. Perhaps Zornberg's paradox can also be extended to Rachel: Rachel is in pain over her children's exile *and* she is also "*em ha-em,*" a mother of great status. Even the greatest mothers, the strongest women with tremendous stamina, experience great pain and are at times driven to tears. In this regard, Zornberg's dualistic approach offers a composite picture of Rachel: she possesses great strength and she has moments of utter despair. Musically, this duality is expressed in the contrast between and the regal, pride-inspiring sounds of the accompaniment (measure 23-24) and the mournful crying (measure 34).

At measure 43 (again from Lamentations 1:16), the speaker explains "my children have become forlorn because the enemy has prevailed." The word "enemy" or "*oyev*" is articulated with four 32nd notes and lands on an A flat—the subtonic of B flat *ahavah rabah*. In terms of the mode, the subtonic indicates a pre-concluding phrase and ultimately the end of the piece. The "*oyev*" figure is elongated in the accompaniment (measures 43 and 44) and exploits the use of the A flat (subtonic) to build tension and delay the finality of the piece.

The last line of text (letter E) comes from Isaiah: The prophet explains, "Behold, their herald cries out, outside, messengers of peace wept bitterly" (Is. 33:7). Again, Isaiah explains the day is bitter; this section of Isaiah (33:7) works in conjunction with Isaiah's other declamation that this is a day of crying, lamenting and donning sackcloth (Is. 22:12).

In typical modal writing, a vii to I cadence is heard at the end of the phrase, declaring the bitterness of the exile.

Rachel, while in pain at her children's exile is also a mother of great stature. Her identity is complex with moments of pride and moments of intense sadness. *In seder chatsot*, the image of Rachel crying for her children (Jeremiah 31: 14-16) is used in conjunction with an image from Lam. 1:16 of God's distance (*ki rochak memeini*). Yet, she is also the matriarch who God "remembered" (*vayizkor*)—a verb used (as explained above) to illustrate God's closeness and direct intervention. Rachel, like Hannah below, experiences both God's closeness and God's distance.

IV. Hannah:

"There was a certain man from Ramathaim-zophim, from Mount Ephraim, whose name was Elkanah... He had two wives; one's name was Hannah and the second's name was Peninnah, Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children." (I Samuel 1:1-3)

Hannah is introduced, like Sarah, as having an absence. She has no children. Yet despite the lower status of childlessness, the Bible makes it clear her husband, Elkanah, favors Hannah because she receives a double portion (of *mana*) while Peninnah and her sons and daughters received single portions (I Samuel 1:4-5). While it may appear contradictory (that the wife with no children should be given the double portion), Exum points out that only the favored wife is initially barren.[66]

God had closed her womb (I Samuel 1:6). In her pain, she prayed fervently for a child and pledges that her son, should she conceive, will serve God (I Samuel 1:11). Esther Fuchs points out that Hannah circumvents the authority of both Elkanah and Eli (the priest) by making a vow to God out of her own initiative.[67] When she began to pray for a child, Hannah prayed in such an unrecognizable way that Eli thought she was drunk (I Samuel 1:13). However, this "drunkenness" can be seen as a kind of innovation and makes Hannah unique

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[66] Exum, 78.
[67] Esther Fuchs "The Literary Characterization of Mothers and Sexual Politics in the Hebrew Bible" in *Women in the Hebrew Bible* ed. Alice Bach (New York and London: Routledge, 1999) 132.

from the other matriarchs; Wendy Zierler notes Hannah is the most innovative (of all the barren women in the Bible), creating her own kind of prayer to plead before God for a child.[68]

In rabbinic literature, Hannah's silent prayer for a child has become a Jewish prototype and paradigm for all personal prayers.[69] She was said to have moved her lips but no words emerged: "Hannah was speaking to her heart—only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard..." (I Samuel 1: 13). The notion of a silent *amida* (in which the lips move without sounding any words) mirrors Hannah's prayer at Shiloh.

In the Talmud (*Berachot* 31b) Hannah also pleads with God directly and asks "From all of the hosts of hosts that You created in Your world, is it difficult in Your eyes to give me one son?"[70] In this Talmudic discussion (*Berachot* 31b), Hannah is given a certain agency as she herself is said to be pleading with God directly—much like her pleading in the biblical text itself. There is no intercessor in this passage. This is significant because it reinforces Susan Niditch's point that women are given certain agency with the divine when it comes to matters of conception.[71]

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[68] Zierler, 8.
[69] Tikva Frymer-Kensky, *Motherprayer* (New York: Riverhead Books, 1995), 9.
[70] *Berachot* 31b.
[71] Niditch , 32.

Moreover, the Talmud likens Hannah's request of God for a child to a poor man who asks a King at his banquet for a small morsel of food.[72] In this passage, Hannah is given certain humility. She does not ask for many children—only one child—a morsel from the great banquet. In her prayer to God, she is assertive by still humble.

Over time, Hannah has become an archetype for many women who pray for children and for those who wish to conceive. A number of *tkhines* include references to Hannah and her success in giving birth. For example, a *tkhine* known as "A Pregnant Woman's Prayer" invokes Hannah who prayed for a son: "I pray unto You, Lord God of Israel, that you consider my prayer as You did that of Mother *Channo*, the prophetess who prayed for a son, the prophet *Shmuel.* "[73]

Contemporary Hebrew poet, Yocheved Bat-Miriam (1901-1980) also uses the image of Hannah praying. In her work "*Merahok*" (1932), she draws on the biblical scene of Hannah's prayer to present Hannah praying from her heart (I Sam. 1).

> Hannah who went up for the festival.
> Day after day to the tabernacle.
> To pray, to speak her heart.
> Her prayer without sound without tear.
>
> Different from her am I.
> And different also is my expression.
> But like her longing among the shadows
> I will stand and speak my heart—[74]

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[72] *Berachot* 31b.
[73] *Ahnaie Shas Techinno* (Vilna: Rochel-Esther Bas Avi-chayil of Jerusalem, c.1930) 47 in Norman Tamor, *A Book of Jewish Women's Prayers* (Northvale, New Jersey, London: Jason Aronson Inc., 1995) 16.
[74] Yocheved Bat-Miriam, "*Merahok*," Bar Ilan Translation.

How different from Rachel whose primary response was to cry! Here the speaker prays "without tear." In addition, while the speaker notes that she is different than Hannah, she likens herself to Hannah in her quest "to stand and speak [her] heart." In this regard, Hannah is a role model for those longing to speak in a tender, heartfelt manner.

Rahel Bluwstein (1890-1931), mentioned above, also invoked Hannah's story of longing in her contemporary poem "*Akarah.*" The speaker of the poem likens her desire for a child to the bitterness of Rachel's struggle and the prayer of Hannah at *Shiloh*

> Still, I'll complain like Rachel.
> Still, I'll pray like Hannah in Shiloh,
> Still, I'll wait for him.[75]

This poem has been the subject of several music compositions including Israeli composer, Paul Ben-Haim (1897-1984). Née Paul Frankenburger, Ben-Haim's composition is a romantic Lied setting[76] of Bluwstein's poem. Contemporary Israeli singer and songwriter, Achinoam Nini has also set this poem in popular style ballad.

In addition, American cantor and composer, Benjie Ellen Schiller (b.1958) composed a cantata based on the biblical text of Hannah's prayer (I Samuel 1-2) entitled "Hannah." (1991). Commissioned by North American Academy of Liturgy to be a canticle of Hannah for an interdenominational religious gathering, the piece was

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[75] Rahel Bluwstein "*Akarah*" Bar Ilan translation.
[76] Jehoash Hirshberg. *Music in the Jewish Community of Palestine 1880-1948* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 268.

premiered in an interdenominational religious service. The piece was originally written for soprano, women's chorus, and piano.[77] The cantata tells the story of Hannah, a barren woman whose prayer is answered by God (adaptation of I Samuel 1-2). In its final version, the story is told through the voice of two narrators: a soprano and a tenor.

The piece as a whole is rooted in a basic structure of functional harmony, but has a number of significant departures from a classic harmonic style. Schiller extends traditional harmony by adding fourths to major and minor triads (measure 22) and in some cases, avoiding the third degree of the scale (measures 1 and 2), which prevents the establishment of a major or minor tonality. The complexity in many of the chords (which includes added fourths or stacked thirds as well as the rich use of 7th chords) imitates a kind of impressionistic style, which runs throughout the composition.

"Hannah" can be divided into 7 sections. The first section (measures 1-38) introduces Hannah's actions, which are narrated through the voice of a soprano soloist who begins in a narrative mode: "Hannah prayed to God and poured out all her soul " (an adaptation of I Sam. 2:1). This first sentence (measure 3) is harmonized with an e minor chord and moves to a minor. However, on the word "God" Schiller has a G major 7 chord (minus the third), on top of an A chord (minus the third) which creates a kind of blurred boundary between the A and GM7 chords. It is the introduction of this chord on the word

[77] The piece was premiered in a revised and expanded form with the Rottenberg Chorale and Chamber Singers, June 6, 1995. Conducted by Elayne Robinson Grossman, Schiller collaborated with Robinson Grossman on the expansion of the piece that became the final form.

"God" which is significant as the complexity in the sound underscores the importance of God in the narrative.

A minor v chord supports the soprano as she continues explaining "a barren woman whose heart weighs heavy cries to God in pain." After the word "heart," Schiller writes a series of stacked fourths (F#, B, E) in conjunction with an implied A major chord. This sound term suggests a kind of blurred boundary between a strong A major (A C# E) and the stacked fourths which also utilize the E. Perhaps the complexity in this chord draws attention to Hannah's heart--the source of Hannah's devotional prayer. This underscores the importance of Hannah's heart both in the biblical narrative and also in Bat-Miriam's poem.

The soprano continues as the story intensifies, but the narrator switches to a first-person voice of Hannah saying "Take note of me oh God, for I am closed within." The phrase begins (measure 11) with a iv chord, but the word "God" again is emphasized with the same of kind stacked chord that Schiller used in measure 4 on the word "God." However, in this case, the chord is inverted with the a minor chord stacked on *top* of the G chord—reinforcing again God's complexity. At the end of the phrase, the word "within" is supported with an arpeggiated ii7. On the next phrase (measure 15), a bright major III 7 chord occurs on the word "joy" when Hannah exclaims "Let me bring forth life in joy!" The word "joy" is re-articulated and Schiller adds a major II 7 chord, which feels impressionistic and jazz-like in its use of the sevenths.

Section one continues as a tenor solo enters (measure 22) and tells the story of Elkanah, Hannah's husband. The harmonic structure is essentially the same as the beginning, providing a parallel sound to the opening words of each biblical character. The difference is that Elkanah's solo descends in measure 24 from an A to an E, while Hannah's solo (previously in measure 5), descends from A to D. As such, Schiller creates a kind of solo parallelism but varies the writing just enough to provide some contrast in musical character. While the two characters are both involved in the quest for a child, they are involved in different ways. As such, it is Hannah who prays, not her husband.

Elkanah's involvement, however, focuses on Hannah. He also speaks in the first person pleading with Hannah "Does not my love mean more to you than children of you own?" (adaptation of I Samuel 1:8) Hannah speaks through a narrator in measure 30: "Hannah rose at dawn to pray at the temple of God. Her lips would utter in a hushed small silence the prayer that weighed on her heart." Schiller writes a *rollantando* on the words "weighed on her heart" to add musical weight and intensity and to underscore the importance of Hannah's heart—the locus of her prayer.

Measure 38 marks the beginning of section two, which has two parts (a and b). In section 2a, the mood changes dramatically as Hannah's request itself is sung in a three-part treble arrangement, which draws attention to the fact that this is a "women's prayer"—a phenomena also seen the *tkhines*. The women plead: "Take note of me oh God..." The harmonic writing is rich and layered with dissonance (accomplished

musically through a rich use of 2nds) and provides emotional intensity. This harmonic writing drives toward the previously mentioned phrase "Let me bring forth life in joy!" with a suspension being resolved between the words "in" and "joy."

The treble voices continue in section 2b (measure 46): "Then she bowed her head and offered all her praise to God." Section 2b has a strong dissonant feel and creates a kind of tension that is resolved between measures 52-53 in anticipation of Hannah's actual prayer.

Section three (measure 53), now in E major, presents the kind of refrain that will appear subsequently in the piece. The refrain begins with soprano and alto and eventually includes all four voice parts, which intone the words of Hannah's prayer (adaptation of I Samuel 2:2). The first phrase "There is none as holy as God" (measure 53-56) begins with an E major chord and moves to the V chord on the word "God." The second phrase (measure 57), "There is none beside you" can be analyzed in the key of A major in which Schiller has used a IV/IV which moves to a I/IV. This temporary tonicization of A major highlights the importance of the text: God is like no other. At measure 61, the writing has shifted again to the key of G major as the choir sings "There is none as holy as God," again a shift in key to emphasize God's unique holiness. The section concludes (reasserting E major—measure 67) as the choir sings once again "There is none beside

you." Schiller explained that Hannah's prayer is a universal message for us all,[78] and therefore all the voices sing this phrase. The voices join together with Hannah, as it were, uttering the prayers that Hannah would have said as she prayed for a child.

Section four begins at measure 72 with the tenor narrator continuing the story. Picking up the melodic and harmonic writing of section one, a C natural appears on the word "woman" (reminiscent of the C natural on the word "prayer" in measure 36). Perhaps Schiller is highlighting "woman" with the C natural to emphasize the unique situation of a woman praying and having a certain agency with God—as demonstrated earlier in the Talmud (*Berachot* 31b and in Niditch's essay on women's agency with matters of conception). The soprano narrator responds to the tenor and explains that Hannah cries "as if a woman drunk in prayer." The word "woman" once again receives the C natural. The word "drunk" is emphasized with accented quarter note "duples" against a 9/8 time signature to convey drunkenness in the sound.

Section 5 (measure 91) is theologically the climax of the piece in the sense that Hannah's prayer is answered by God. In an exposed moment, the accompaniment falls out completely and the soprano narrator explains a cappella "Hannah's prayers were answered; She bore a son!" Schiller places a *tenutto* on each word of the aforementioned sentence to communicate the importance to each word. The word "son" is sustained a

[78] Benjie Ellen Schiller, interview by author, conversation, New York, New York, 12 November, 2001.

cappella for a whole measure, allowing the listener to dwell on the miracle of conception, until the accompaniment enters (gently) and carries the listener into the next section.

Section 6a continues and the chorus sings together in unconventional parallel fifths (measure 97). The chorus explains "Hannah and Elkanah called the boy *Shmuel*, together they went to the mountain of God." The chorus continues in section 6b (measure 105) with the phrase "There they bowed their heads and offered all their thanks to God." This musical phrase echoes the harmonic writing in measure 46 when Hannah first bows her head and prays by herself ("Then she bowed her head and offered all her praise to God") Thus, Schiller uses the same harmonic writing to parallel Hannah's prayer *before* she conceived, and Hannah and Elkanah's prayer of thanksgiving *after* the child is born. This musical device draws the listener's attention to the fact that it was only Hannah who prayed to conceive but both parents offered thanks in the form of prayer.

Section 7 (measure 116 to the end) is a repetition of the refrain (heard in section 3, measure 53), which is repeated several times, increasing in volume and intensity, by all four voice parts, and drives home the universal message of God's holiness and miraculous abilities.

Hannah is an innovator of prayer. Unlike Rachel, she does not weep, she prays from her heart. Schiller's music underscores this importance and also draws our attention to the idea that this is a woman praying. While Hannah's *akarut* makes her feel "closed within," she also prays from *deep* within. By opening her heart, she opens her body to

bring new life into the world. But never forgetting the pain of *akarut* (as Zornberg argues), she also gives thanks (along with her husband), remaining humble and thankful for the birth of her son.

V. Conclusion:

The Bible offers three different pictures of female *akarut*: Sarah laughs, Rachel weeps and Hannah prays. Using Zornberg's model of Sarah as both barren and joyous, Rachel and Hannah also incorporate barrenness into their identities along with various aspects of their own individual experience. Their identities are complex, non-linear and dualistic.

When Sarah is visited by the divine messengers and learns that she will conceive (Gen. 18:10), she laughs and ultimately experiences joy with motherhood as illustrated in Levin's "*Di Muter Sore*." However, the loneliness of her *akarut*, as Zornberg notes, remains a constant part of her identity. Never does the joy completely mitigate the pain; both remain constant parts of her complex self. Likewise, women who are fortunate to give birth after a struggle with infertility know that the pain of the struggle does not completely dissipate. Instead, the pain is subsumed into the sum total of the woman's experience, informing her identity.

Rachel, in contrast, weeps for her children. Rachel conceived according to the Talmud because God took note of her virtues (*Rosh Hashanah* 11a). However, the joy of the birth of Joseph, a birth which ultimately earns her the status of Mother of Israel or

"*em ha-em*" by Bluwstein, does not compensate for the pain of her children's exile—a pain certainly expressed in the pathos of Roitman's "*Rochel Mvakoh Al Boneho.*" Again, she is strong and exulted *and* she cries in pain. Perhaps Rachel teaches there is strength in crying. Moreover, with great abundance and love, there is also great pain. The crying names the pain and gives voice to Rachel's depth of love for her children.

While Rachel weeps, Hannah prays "without tear," as Bat-Miriam writes. Hannah takes the experience of *akarut* and first turns inward. Instead of crying out, she draws on her inner strength—her payer. But Hannah's prayer had a certain heaviness to it, as Schiller masterfully illustrates through a musical heaviness (with a *rollantando* on the words "weighed on her heart"). However, Hannah was also able to transform this heaviness into a unique kind of prayerful outlet. Even though she too conceives, she responds with prayer, ever humble and thankful. Hannah teaches that drawing on inner strengths in a time of pain can ultimately allow us to open ourselves up to new possibilities.

As demonstrated above, the dualities in Sarah, Rachel and Hannah's struggle for children are expressed in the Bible. In addition, a great deal of rabbinic material continues the discussion of these matriarchs and their barrenness. However, the texts on their own (rabbinic and otherwise) are not performed out loud; they are not orated or shared in any uniform public way. In addition, the *tkhines* were uttered in a personal, private setting. While, these texts mention and discuss *akarut*, they were never presented

(traditionally) in an organized public way for women to hear them. As such, there was no formal liturgy or communal expression for infertile women to pray or seek support of other women.

However, much of the music discussed in this thesis was and is intended for some kind of public performance and distribution. While the intended audiences may have been different sociologically or religiously, the music was all meant to be performed. It is the act of public performance that can raise consciousness for women as well as men with regard to barrenness and infertility. By sharing the compositions in a public performance venue or as part of a recording for mass production, both men and women hear the message of the *akarah*. While the music generally represents the inner pain felt by a given woman, the subject matter of the music can raise the consciousness of both men and women by normalizing the experience and allowing for empathy.

For example, Schiller's "Hannah" was intended for an interdenominational setting in the late 20th century, (in its use of English and functional harmony). Roitman's "*Rochel*," in contrast, was intended for a Jewish audience most likely familiar with cantorial music. Finally, "*Di Muter Sore,*" reminiscent of the Yiddish lullaby, is a kind of folksong based on a children's poem. In addition, as mentioned earlier, Achinoam Nini's "*Akarah*" was also intended for mass distribution to the Israeli audience and other audiences abroad. In sum, all of these compositions have been recorded for the public and

are available. However, when gathered together as a coherent collection of music, each song offers a unique opportunity for an empathic understanding.

Another contemporary song (sung by Adrienne Cooper) also accomplishes this task. "*Yosemame*" (Orphan Mother, 2000), a newly composed melody by Alicia Svigas (with words by Sarah Mina Gordon and Adrienne Cooper), is sung in English and Yiddish and deals with miscarriage. The text identifies the mother as an "orphaned mother" and suggests that a woman, even without the birth of her child, still senses herself to be a mother and thus feels a deep sense of loss at the miscarriage. The song likens the loss of life to a lost baby bird. Even by assigning an identity to the miscarried pregnancy, the song recognizes the emotional attachment a mother feels. While Jewish tradition offers little in terms of formalized practice or ritual for miscarriage, this piece may help create a kind of modern liberal para-liturgy to acknowledge the pain of miscarriage. By bringing the subject matter to the public domain, and performing it for listeners the music itself "names" the experience of miscarriage.

Because the pieces explored in this thesis were all meant to be sung in public, and were not written in the same musical style or cultural context, it is more useful to think about these songs as a body of music, and focus on what is gained by viewing these pieces in relation to each other. While it has not been anyone's initial stated intent to write within a category of "barrenness music," the musical pieces together create a composite picture of barrenness and the multiple faces it takes.

Viewed as a group, a picture of infertility emerges: Goldfaden's "*Shlaflied*" offers a way to give voice to a pain that is often invisible in contemporary society. Sarah's loneliness (even after the birth of a child) continues to cause her pain. Perhaps this pain is akin to those couples that experience "secondary infertility"—they were once fertile and can no longer conceive. "*Di Muter Sore*" speaks to the joy and love of motherhood in its tender treatment of Sarah and Isaac. "*Rochel*" reminds us that this "crying out," at God's absence is intensely painful, but also signifies to others that help is needed. In this regard, "*Rochel*" speaks to the strength that often emerges from a painful experience

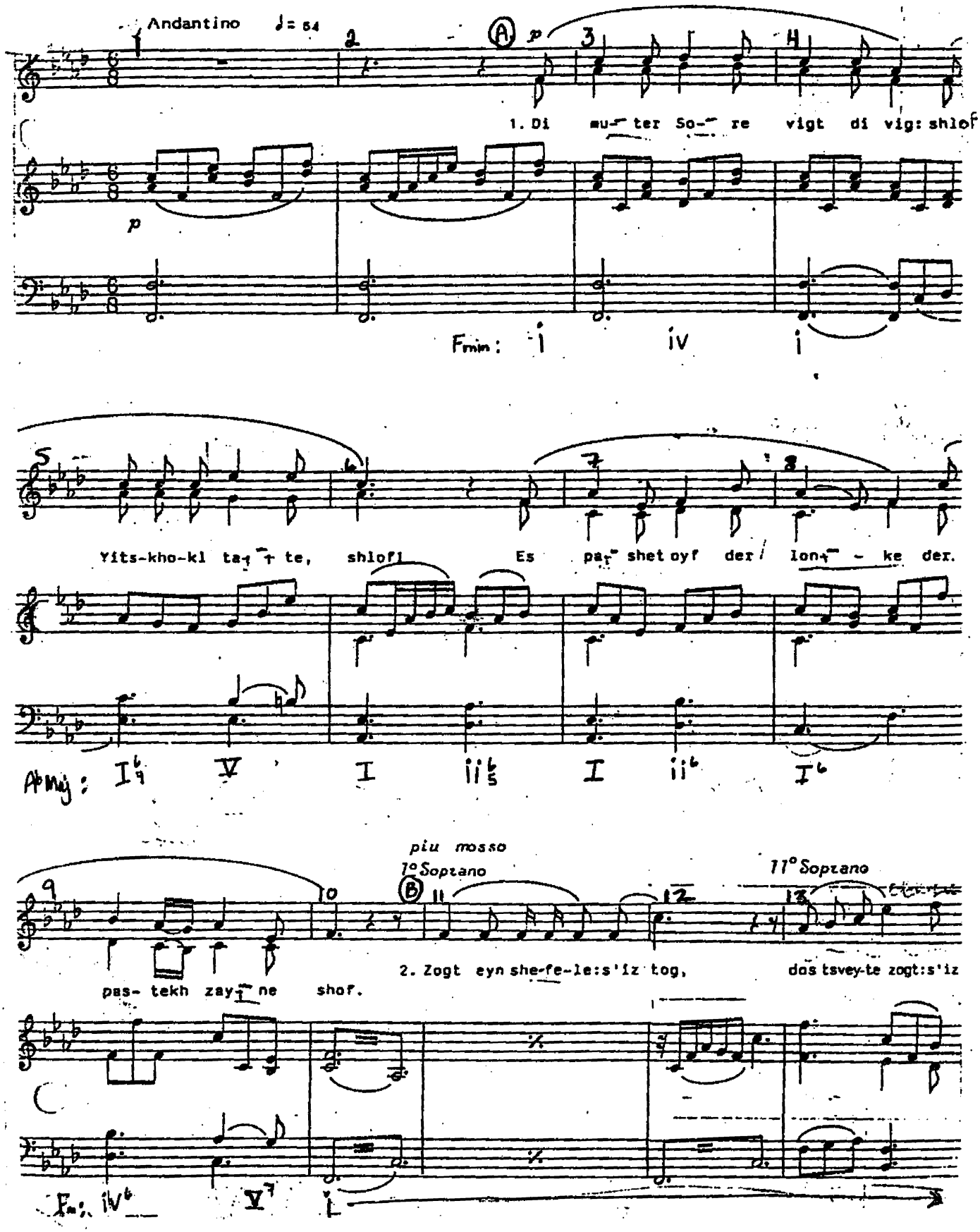
"Hannah" includes both images of pain and joy and reinforces the notion that *akarut* has multiple stages that are not necessarily successive or linear. In addition, while Schiller explained that the message of Hannah was universal for us all, the piece has special importance for those who have gone through or have experienced infertility, specifically women.

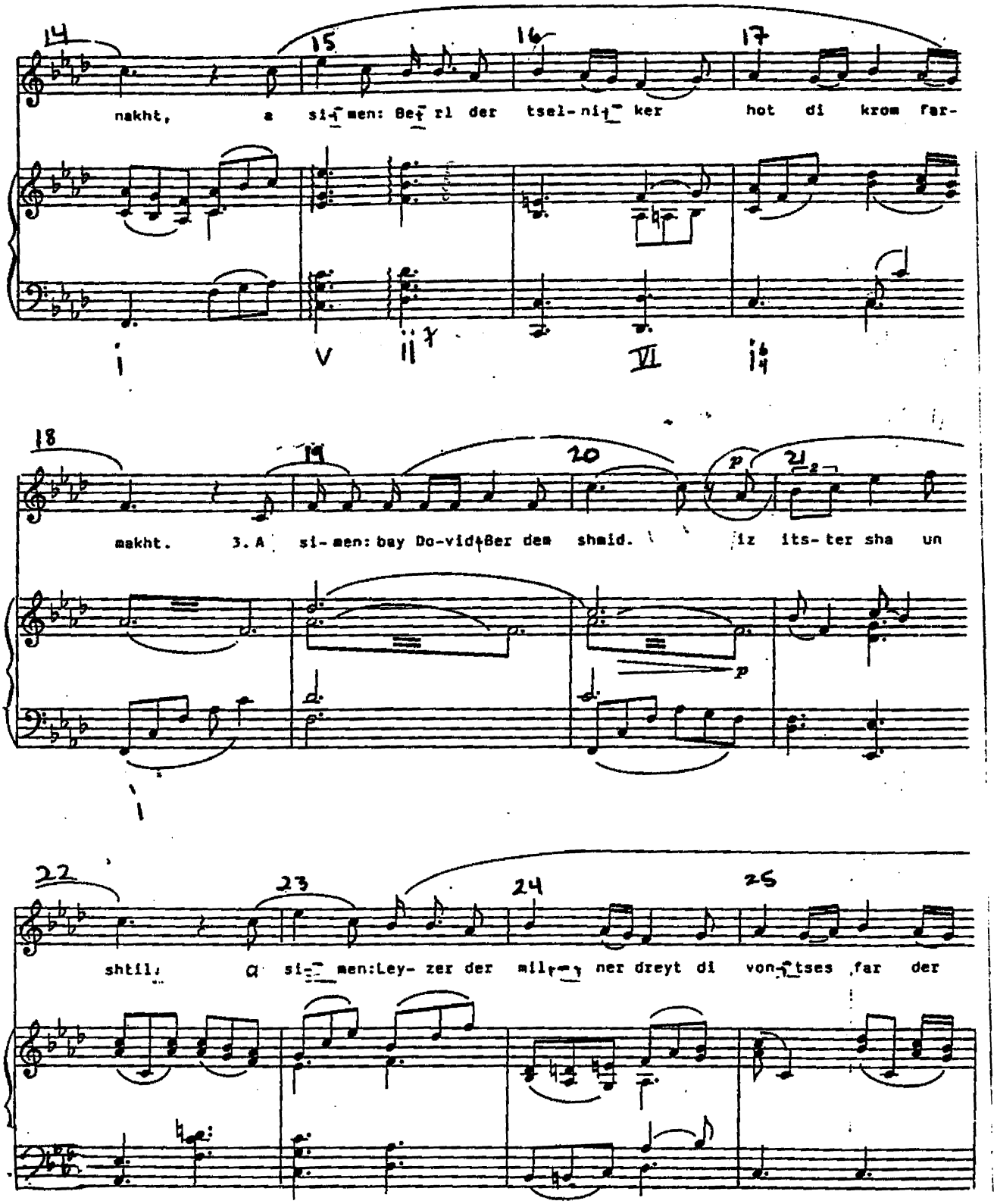
Ultimately, when viewed together as a body of barrenness music, the songs give voice to the multi-faceted experience of *akarut*. While individuals are bound to experience the pain of *akarut* in different ways and therefore find comfort in different texts, this music may be helpful or comforting for those who are experiencing the pain of infertility. Moreover, public performance of this music mitigates the feelings of isolation and stigma attached to barrenness. Like Sarah's joy, Rachel's tears, or Hannah's prayers, the music laughs, cries, and prays the stories of *akarut*.

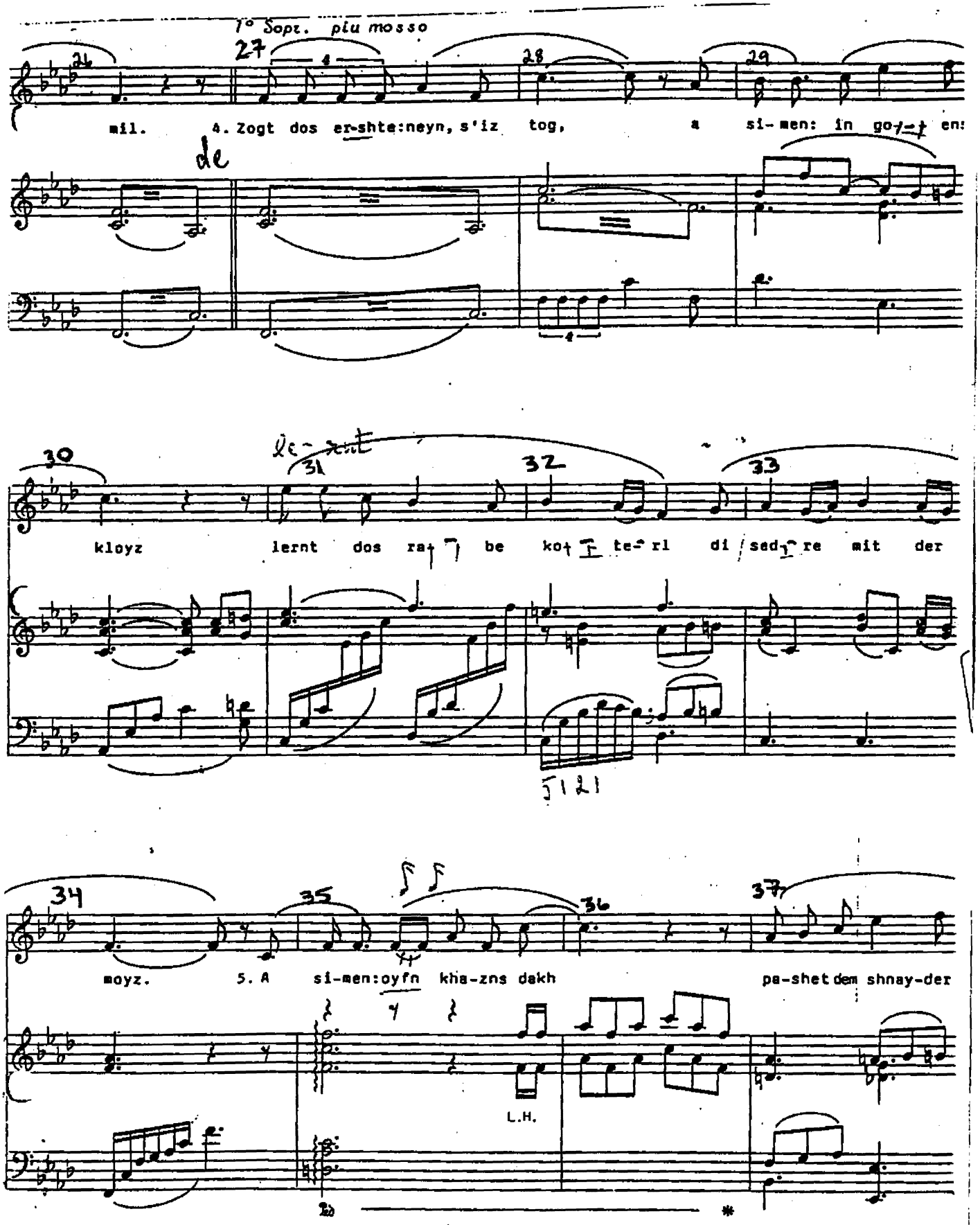
Appendix 1

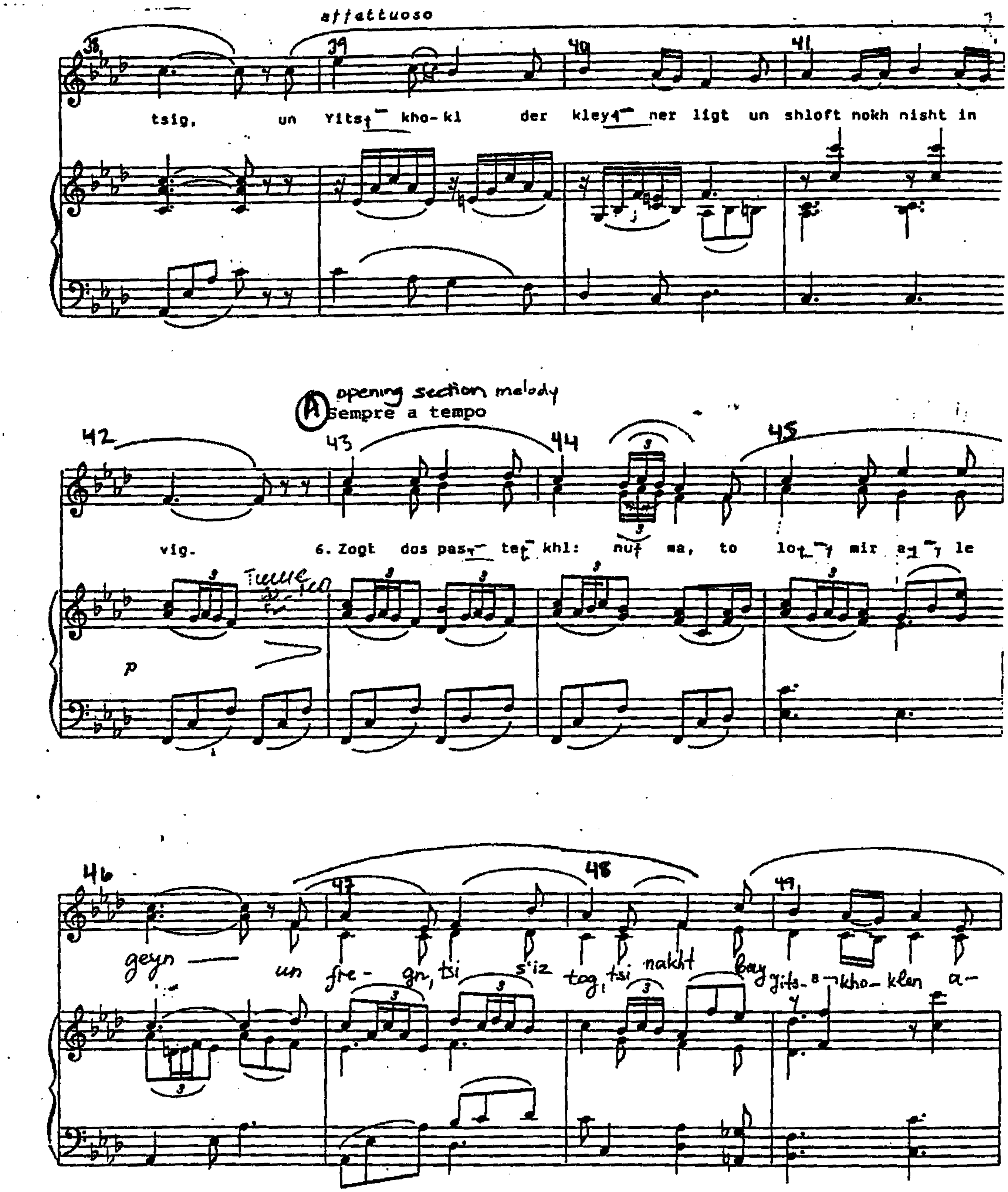
Words: Itsik Manger
Melody: Leybu Levin
Arranged: Abram Vindernitz

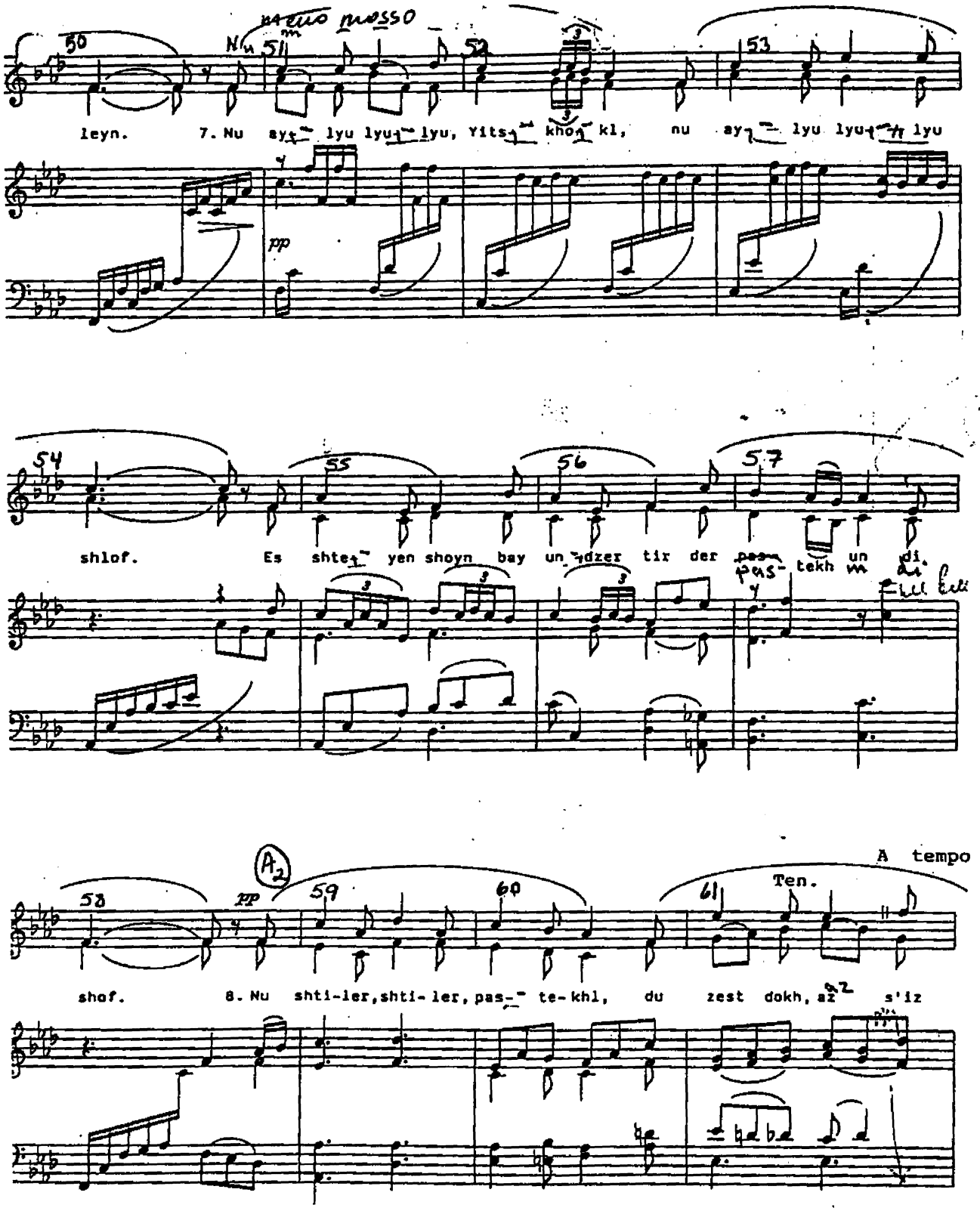
Di Muter Sore Zingt Yitskhakien A Shloflid

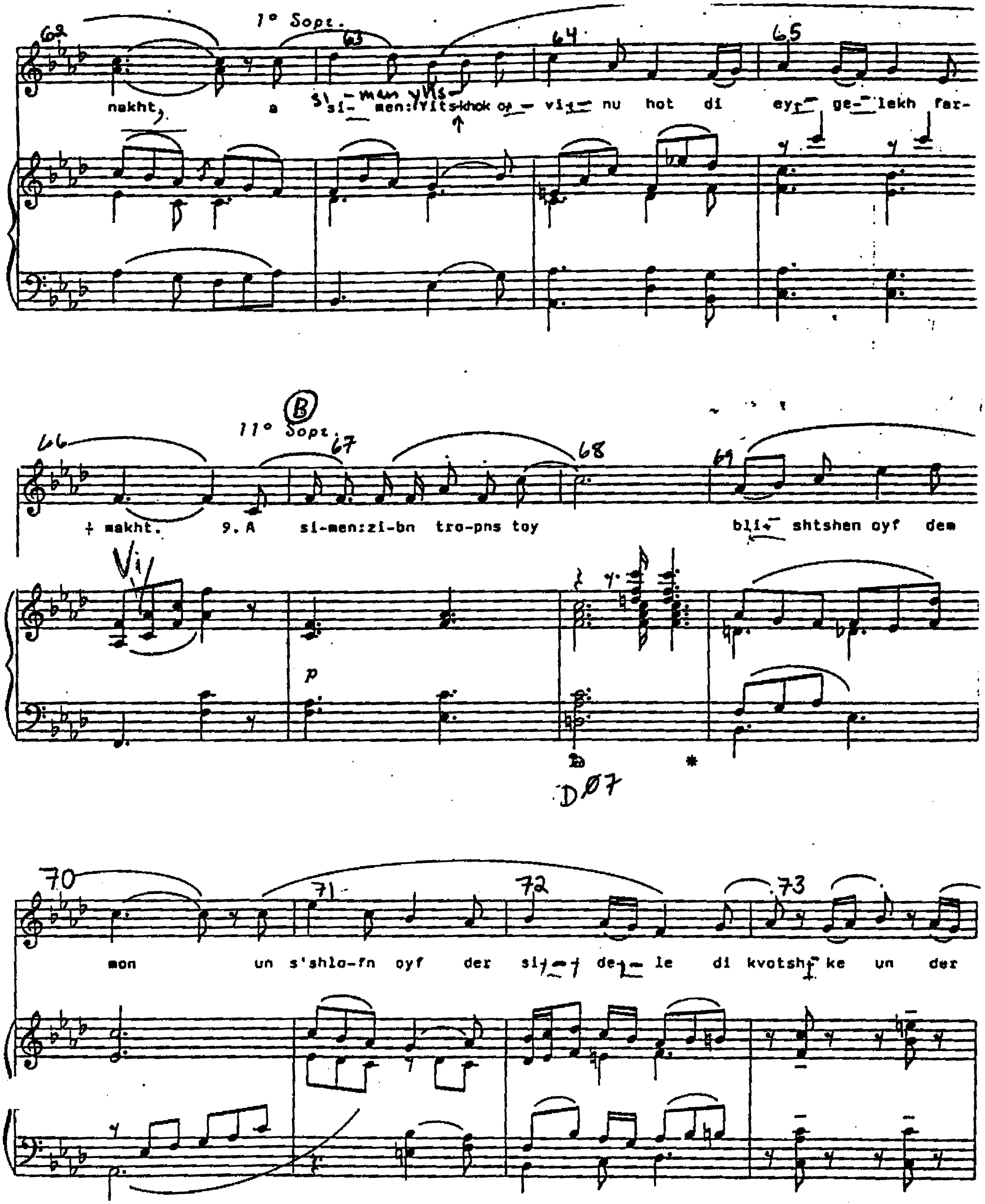


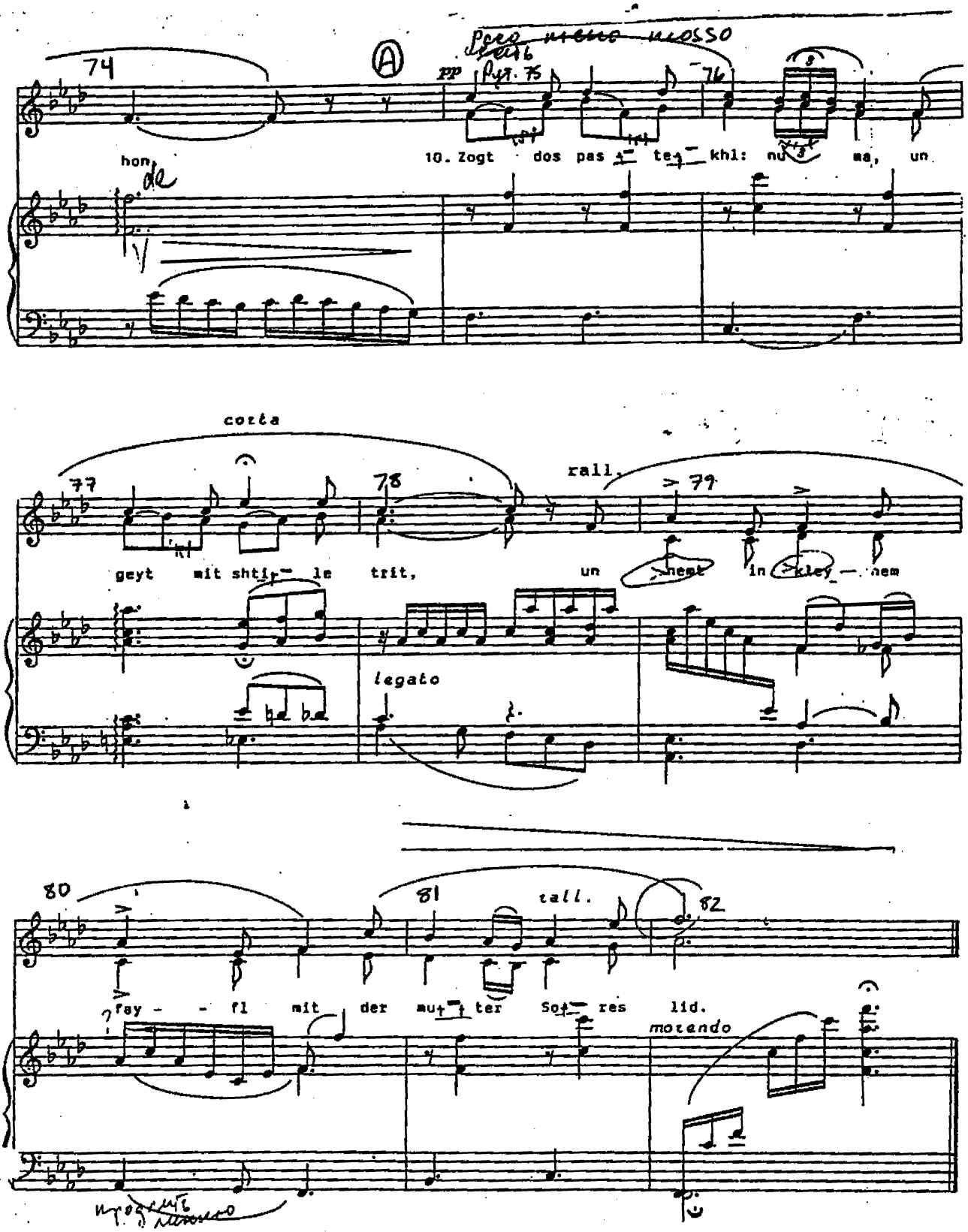

14
15
16
17
nakht, a si-men: Ber-zl der tsel-nik-ker hot di krom far-
i
V
ii7
VI
i6/4
18
19
20
21
p
makht. 3. A si-men: bay Do-vid-Ber dem shmid. iz its-ter sha un
p
i
22
23
24
25
shtil: a si-men: Ley-zer der mil-ner dreyt di von-tses far der


1° Sopr. più mosso
mil.
4. Zogt dos er-shte:neyn, s'iz tog, a si-men: in go-l en:
de
kloyz lernt dos ra- be ko- te- rl di sed- re mit der
5. A si-men:oyfn kha-zns dakh pa-shet dem shnay-der
moyz.
L.H.


affettuoso
tsig, un Yitsi- kho-kl der kleyi- ner ligt un shloft nokh nisht in
vig.
opening section melody
(A) Sempre a tempo
6. Zogt dos pasi- tel- khl: nut ma, to loti- mir ali- le
geyn un fre- gn, tsi s'iz tog, tsi nakht bay yits-kho-klen a-


50
51
52
53
leyn.
7. Nu ayt lyu lyu lyu, Yits kho kl, nu ay lyu lyu lyu
pp
54
55
56
57
shlof.
Es shtey yen shoyn bay un dzer tir der pas- tekh un di.
A2
58
pp
59
60
61
Ten.
A tempo
shof.
8. Nu shti-ler, shti-ler, pas- te-khl, du zest dokh, az s'iz


1° Sopr.
nakht, a si- men:Yits-khok oy - vi- nu hot di ey- ge- lekh far-
II° Sopr.
makht. 9. A si-men:zi-bn tro-pns toy bli- shtshen oyf dem
p
mon un s'shlo-fn oyf der si- de- le di kvotsh- ke un der


74
A
pp
Pyt. 75
76
10. Zogt dos pas te khi: nu ma, un
hon de
corta
77
78
rall.
79
geyt mit shtil le trit, un nemt in kley nem
legato
80
81
rall.
82
fay fl mit der mut ter So res lid.
morendo

"Di Muter Sore Zingt Yitskhoklen A Shloflid"
Itsik Manger

Di muter sore vigt di vig:
Shlof, yitskhokl tate, shlof!
Es pashet oyf der lonke
Der pastekh zayne shof.

Zogt eyn shefele: s'iz tog,
Dos tsveyte zogt: s'iz nakht.
A simen: berl der tselniker
Hot di krom farmakht.

A simen: bay dovid-ber dem shmid
Iz itster sha un shtil.
A simen: leyzer der milner dreyt
Di vontses far der mil.

Zogt dos ershte: neyn, s'iz tog.
A simen: in goens kloyz
Lernt dos rabe koterl
Di sedre mit der moyz.

A simen: oyfn khazns dakh
Pashet dem shnayders tsig,
Un yitskhokl der kleyner ligt
Un shloft nokh nisht in vig.
Zogt dos pastekhl: nu ma,
To lomir ale geyn
Un fregn, tsi s'iz tog tsi nakht
Bay Yitskhoklen aleyn.

Nu ay-lyu lyu-lyu, yitskhokl,
Nu ay-lyu lyu-lyu shlof.
Es shteyen shoyn bay undzer tir
Der pastekh un di shof.

Nu shtiler, shtiler, pastekhl,
Du zest dokh, az s'iz nakht.
A simen: yitskhok ovinu hot
Di eygelekh farmakht.

A simen: zibn tropns toy
Blishtshen oyf dem mon,
Un s'shlofn oyf der sidele
Di kvotshke un der hon.

Zogt dos pastekhl: nu ma,
Un geyt mit shtile trit,
Un nemt in kleynem fayfl mit
Der muter sores lid.

„די מוטער שׂרה זינגט
יצחקלען אַ שלאָפֿליד"
איציק מאַנגער

די מוטער שׂרה ווינט די ווינ:
שלאָף, יצחקל טאַטע, שלאָף!
עס פּאַשעט אויף דער לאַנקע
דער פּאַסטעך זינע שאָף.

זאָגט איין שעפֿעלע: סיאיז טאָג,
דאָס צווייטע זאָגט: סיאיז נאַכט,
אַ סימן: בערל דער צעלניקער
האָט די קראָם פֿאַרמאַכט.

אַ סימן: בײַ דוד־בער דעם שמיד
איז איצטער שאַ און שטיל.
אַ סימן: לייזער דער מילנער דרייט
די וואָנצעס פֿאַר דער מיל.

זאָגט דאָס ערשטע: ניין, סיאיז טאָג,
אַ סימן: אין גאָנס קלויז
לערנט דאָס ראַבע קאָטערל
די סדרה מיט דער מויז.

אַ סימן: אויפֿן חזנס דאַך
פּאַשעט דעם שנײַדערס ציג,
און יצחקל דער קליינער ליגט
און שלאָפֿט נאָך נישט אין ווינ.
זאָגט דאָס פּאַסטעכל: נו מאָ,
טאָ לאָמיר אַלע גיין
און פֿרעגן, צי סיאיז טאָג צי נאַכט,
בײַ יצחקלען אַליין.

נו אַי־לי־לו לו־לו יצחקל,
נו אַי־לי־לו לו־לו שלאָף,
עס שטייען שוין בײַ אונדזער טיר
דער פּאַסטעך און די שאָף.

נו שטילער, שטילער, פּאַסטעכל,
דו זעסט דאָך, אַז סיאיז נאַכט.
אַ סימן: יצחק אָבֿינו האָט
די איינעלעך פֿאַרמאַכט.

אַ סימן: זיבן טראָפּנס טוי
בלישטשען אויף דעם מאָן,
און סישלאָפֿן אויף דער סידעלע
די קוואָטשקע און דער האָן.

זאָגט דאָס פּאַסטעכל: נו מאָ,
און נייט מיט שטילע טריט,
און נעמט אין קליינעם פֿעפֿל מיט
דער מוטער שׂרהס ליד.

Mother Sarah's Lullaby

As she croons and rocks little Isaac's cradle, the baby dozes off, resolving the dispute among the sheep whether it is night or day.

1 Mother Sarah rocks the cradle,
"Sleep, Isaac darling, sleep.
On the lawn there,
The shepherd tends his sheep.

2 One lamb says, "It's day."
A second says, "It's night.
Proof is that Berl, the dry goods man,
Has closed his shop.

3 Proof is that in Dovid Ber's smithy
Silence now reigns.
Proof is that Leyzer, the miller,
Twirls his mustache at the mill."

4 Says the first lamb, "No, it's day.
Proof is that at the sage's house
The calico tomcat studies
The lesson of the week with the mouse.

5 Proof is that on the Cantor's roof
The tailor's goat is grazing,
And Isaac, the little one,
Lies awakein his cradle."

6 The little shepherd says, "Well then.
Let's all of us go
And ask if it is day or night
Of little Isaac, himself."

7 "Now hushabye, little Isaac,
Ay-lyu-lyu-lyu, sleep.
Standing at our door
Is the shepherd and his sheep.

8 Now softly, softly little shepherd,
You see that it is night.
Proof is that Isaac, our forefather,
Has shut his little eyes.

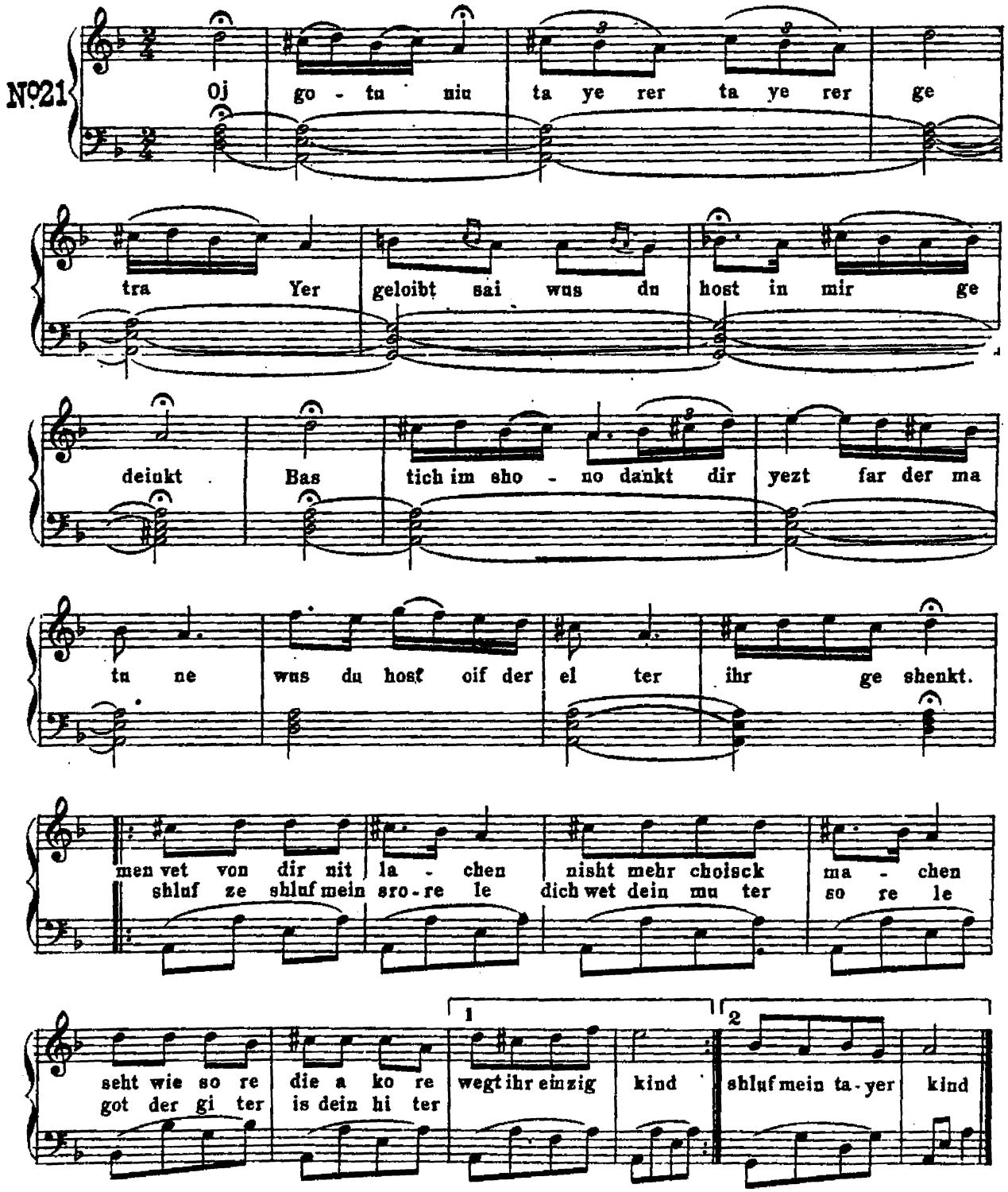
9 Proof is that seven drops of dew
Glisten on the poppy.
And on the roost, fast asleep
Are the hen and the cock."

10 Says the shepherd, "Well then."
And tip-toes away,
And takes with him in his little pipe
Mother Sarah's lullaby.

Appendix 2

Music: Abraham Goldfaden
Words: Abraham Goldfaden
Arranged: Henry A. Russotto

Shlaflied



. ***Shlaflied///Shloflid***
"Lullaby"
Selection from the biblical opera/operetta ***AKEIDAS IZCHOK/AKEYDAS YITSKHOK*** ("Sacrificial binding of Isaac").
Music: Abraham Goldfaden
Words: Abraham Goldfaden
Arr.: Henry A. Russotto

This lovely lullaby was sung by the mother Sarah to her baby, Isaac.

Synoptic Translation

Oh dear, true God,
Praise be Thou for remembering me.
Now I thank Thee for this gift,
Presented to such oldsters.
Oh, no one will laugh, nor make jest,
For see how lonely Sarah
Now rocks her only child.

Sleep, sleep my little treasure;
Your mother, Sarah, will ever praise God,
And pray He will ever be your Protector.

Transliteration

Oy Gottenyu, tayereh, tayereh getroyer,
Geloybt zay vos/vus du host in mir gedenkt.
Bas tishim shonoh dankt di yetst,
Far der matoneh vos/vus du host,
Oyf der elter geshenkt.
Men vet fun dir nisht lakhen,
Nisht mehr khoyzik makhen.
Zeyt vi Soreh di akoreh,
Vigt ihr eyntsig kind.
Shlofzhe, shlof mayn s'roreleh;
Dikh vigt dayn muter Soreleh.
Gott, der guter/giter iz dayn hiter/heeter;
Shlof mayn tayer kind.

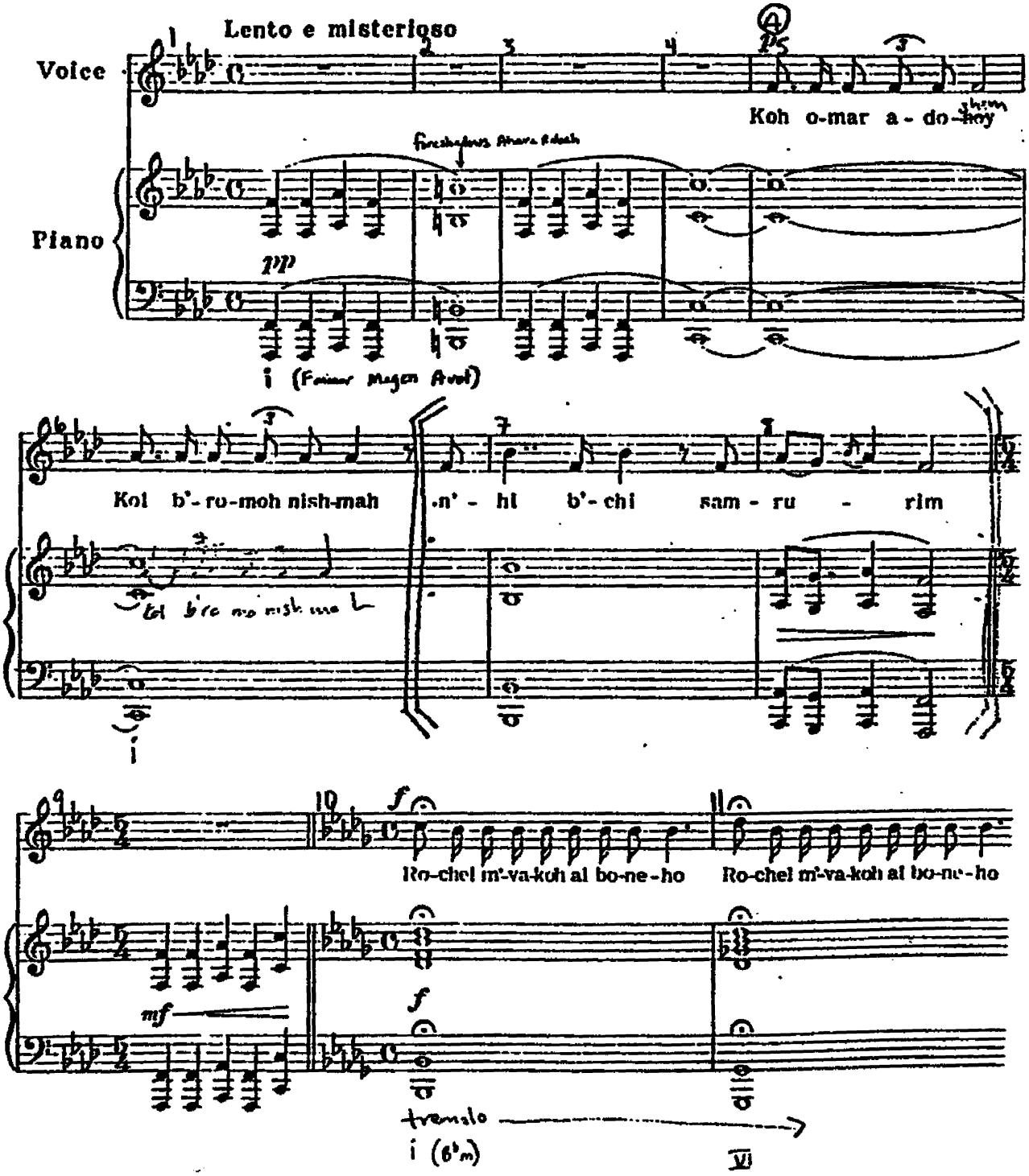
Oy Gottenyu, tayereh, tayereh getroyer,
Zay mir meykh'l/moykhel, guter/giter Gott, atsind.
Du host mir dokh tsugeshvoren,
Eyder ihr hob ihm geboren;

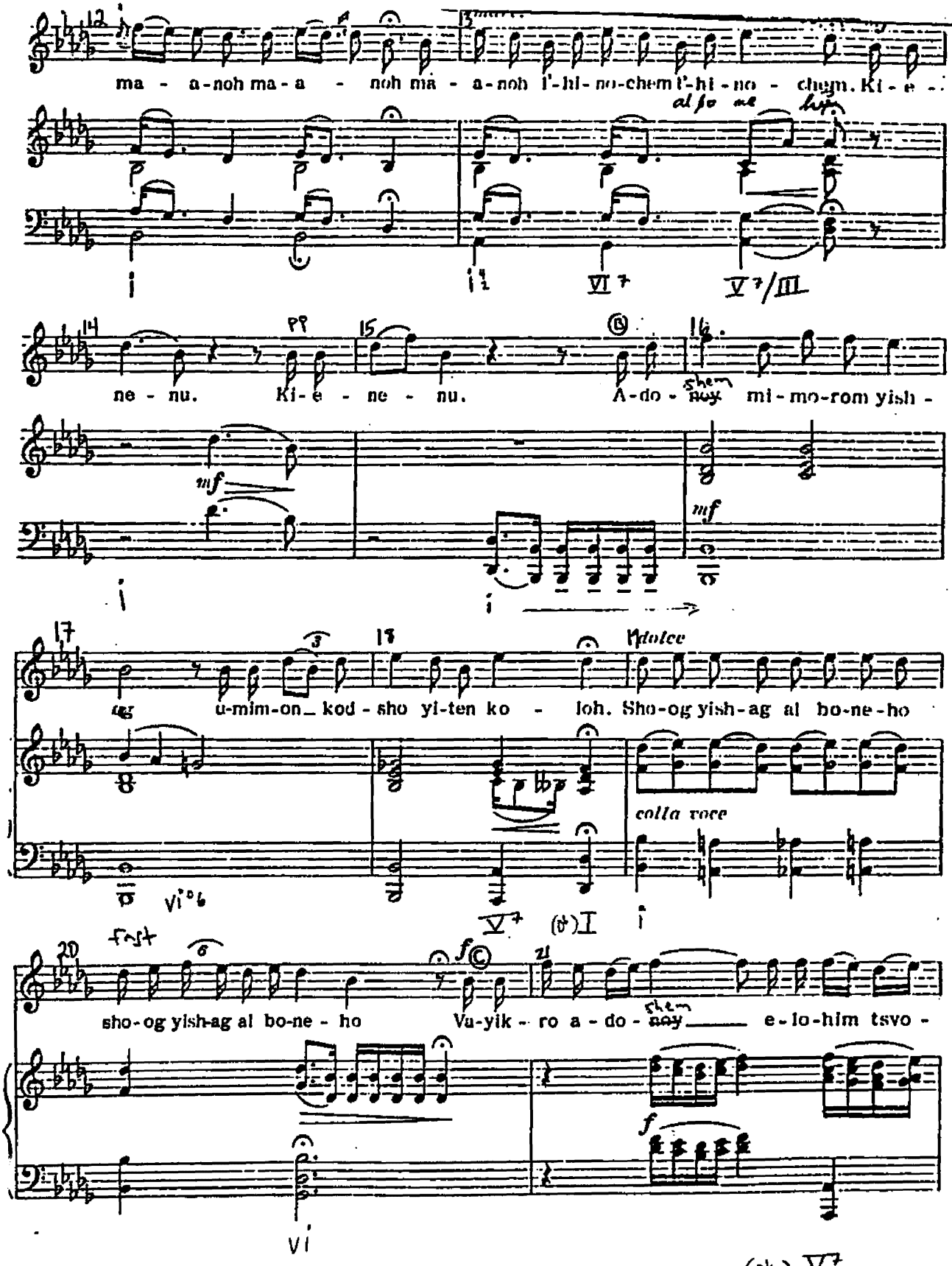
Appendix 3

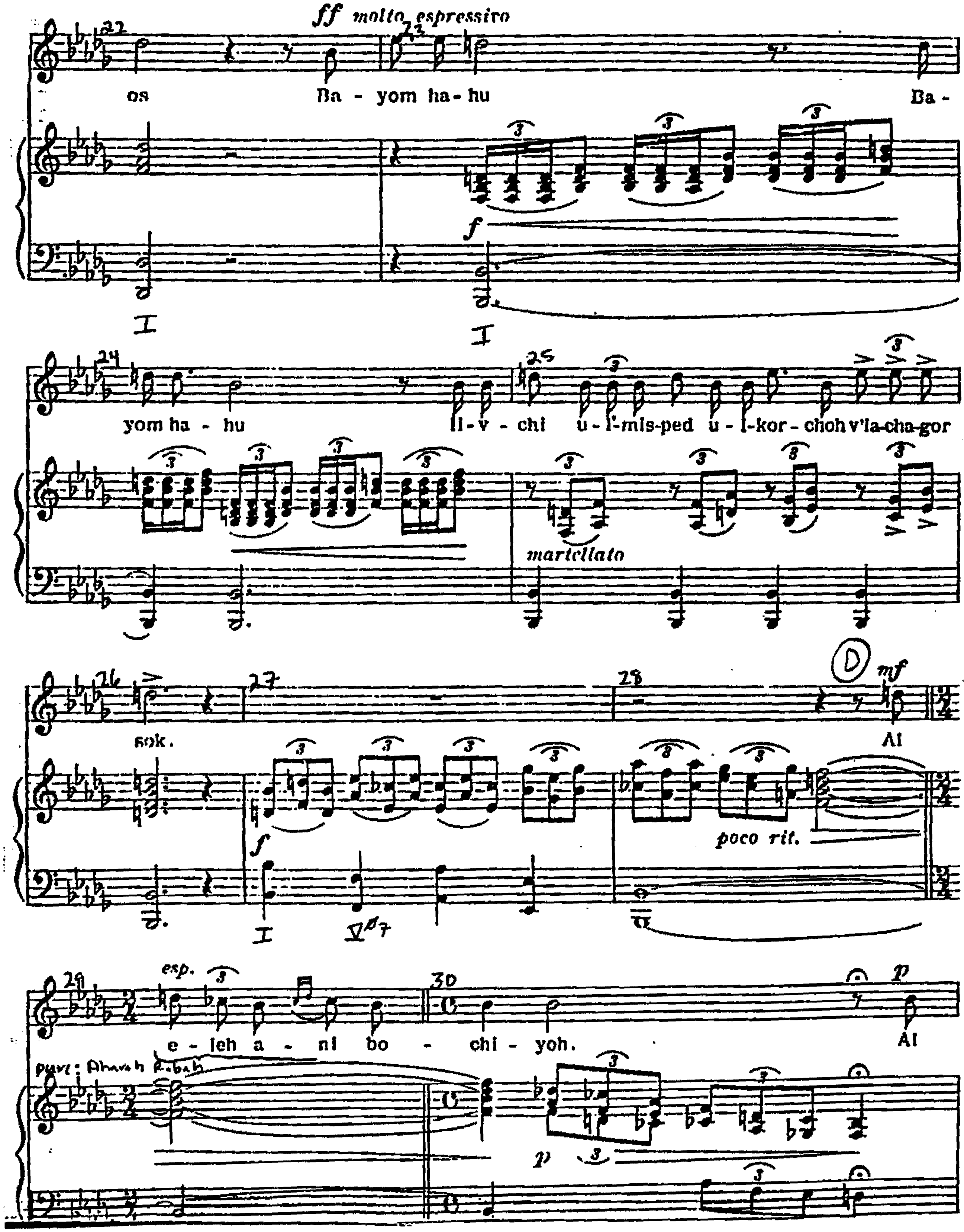
Rochel M'vakoh Al Boneho

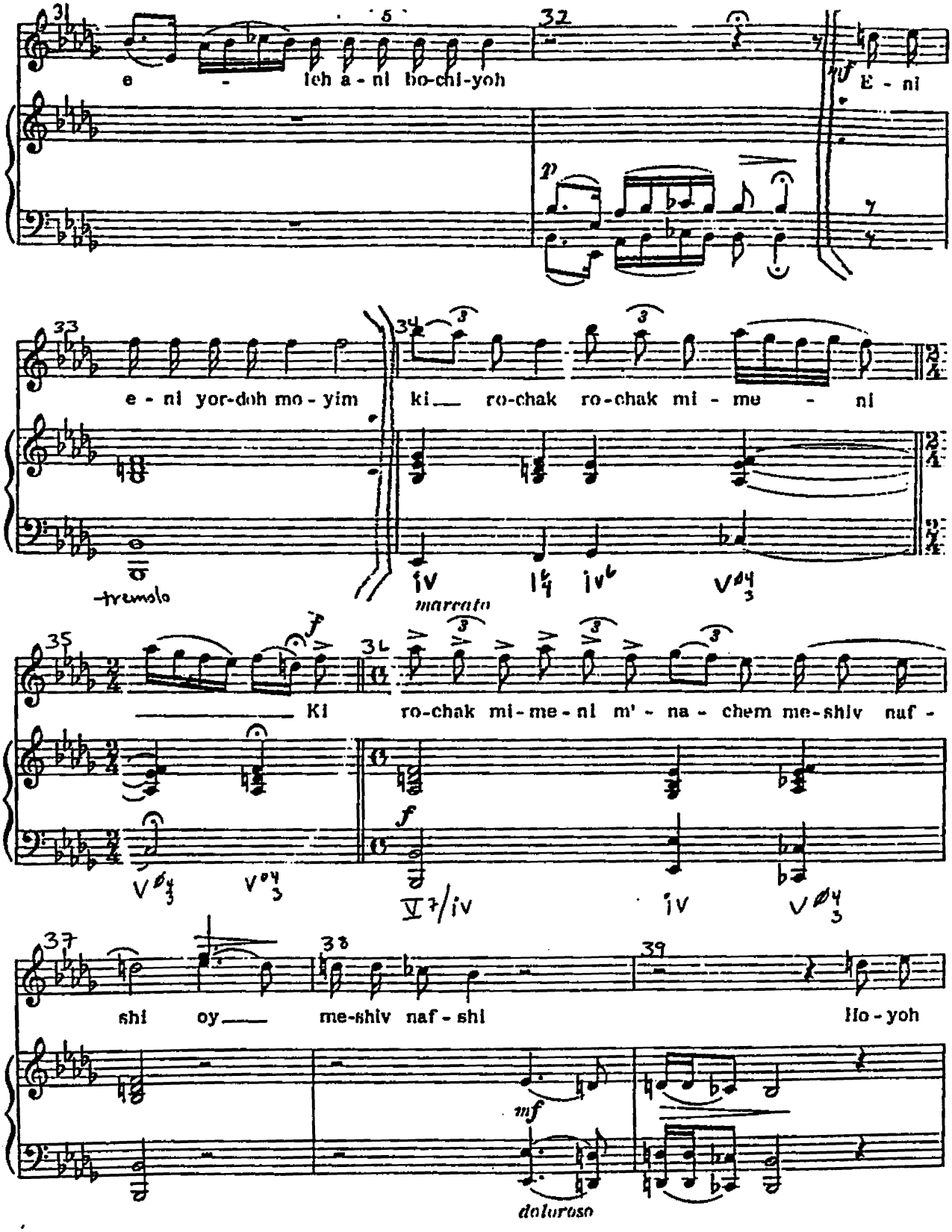
(Rachel Weeps For Her Children)

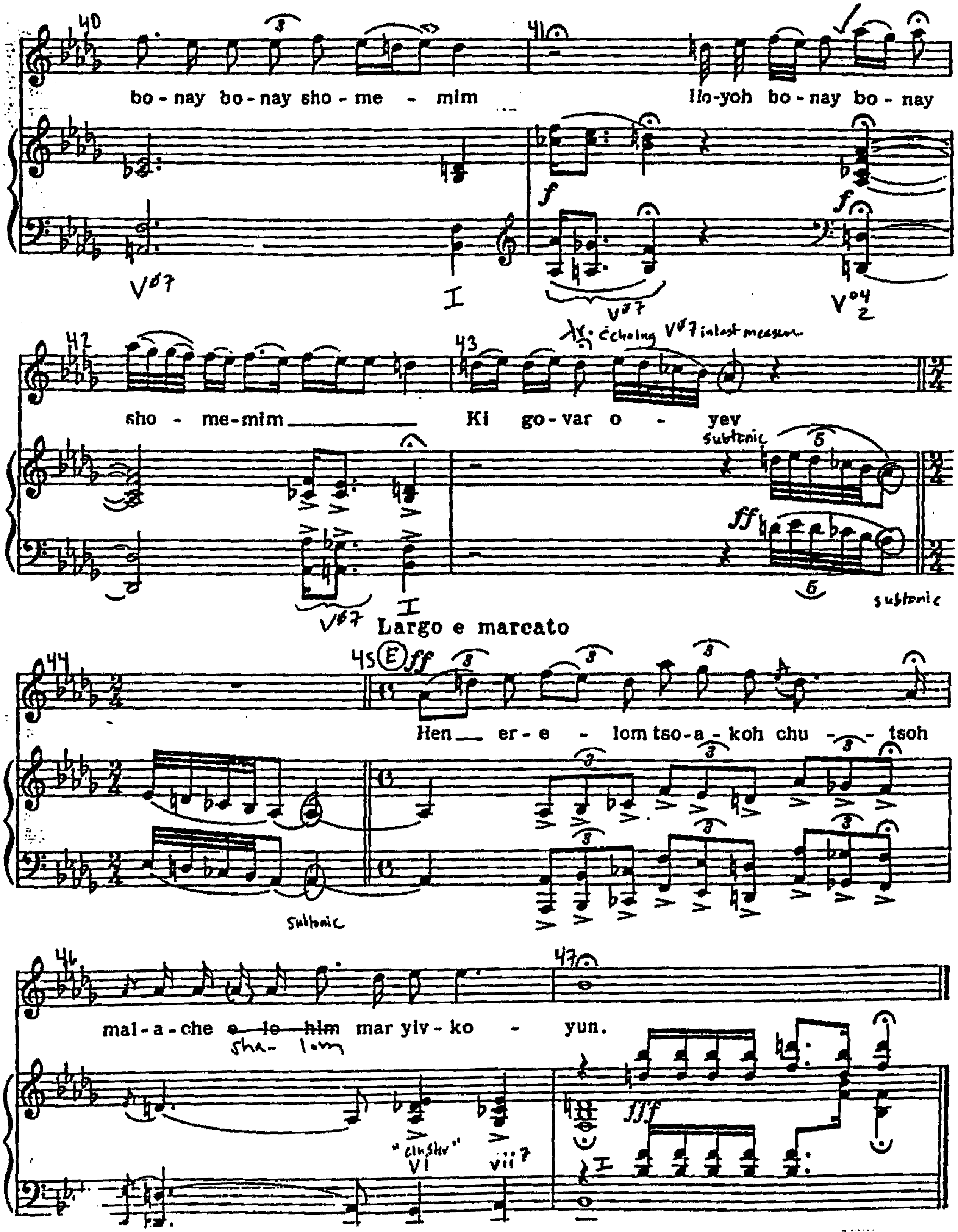
DAVID ROITMAN
Arr. by A. W. Binder




ma - a-noh ma-a - noh ma - a-noh l'-hi-no-chem l'-hi-no - chem. Ki-e -
also me
ne - nu. Ki-e - ne - nu.
A-do - shem nay mi-mo-rom yish -
u-mim-on_ kod - sho yi-ten ko - loh. Sho-og yish-ag al bo-ne-ho
dolce
colla voce
sho-og yish-ag al bo-ne - ho
Vu-yik - ro a - do - shem nay e-lo-him tsvo -


ff molto espressivo
os Ba - yom ha - hu Ba -
f
I
I
yom ha - hu li - v - chi u - l'-mis-ped u - l-kor - choh v'la-cha-gor
martellato
sok.
f
I
poco rit.
D
mf
Ai
esp.
e - leh a - ni bo - chi - yoh.
p
Ai
p


31
32
e - leh a - ni bo-chi-yoh
E - ni
33
34
e - ni yor-doh mo - yim
ki ro-chak ro-chak mi - me - ni
tremolo
marcato
35
36
Ki ro-chak mi-me-ni m' - na - chem me-shiv nuf -
37
38
39
shi oy
me-shiv naf - shi
Ho - yoh
mf
doloroso


bo - nay bo - nay sho - me - mim
llo-yoh bo - nay bo - nay
sho - me-mim
Ki go - var o - yev
Largo e marcato
Hen er - e - lom tso-a - koh chu - tsoh
mal - a - che e - lo - him mar yiv - ko - yun.

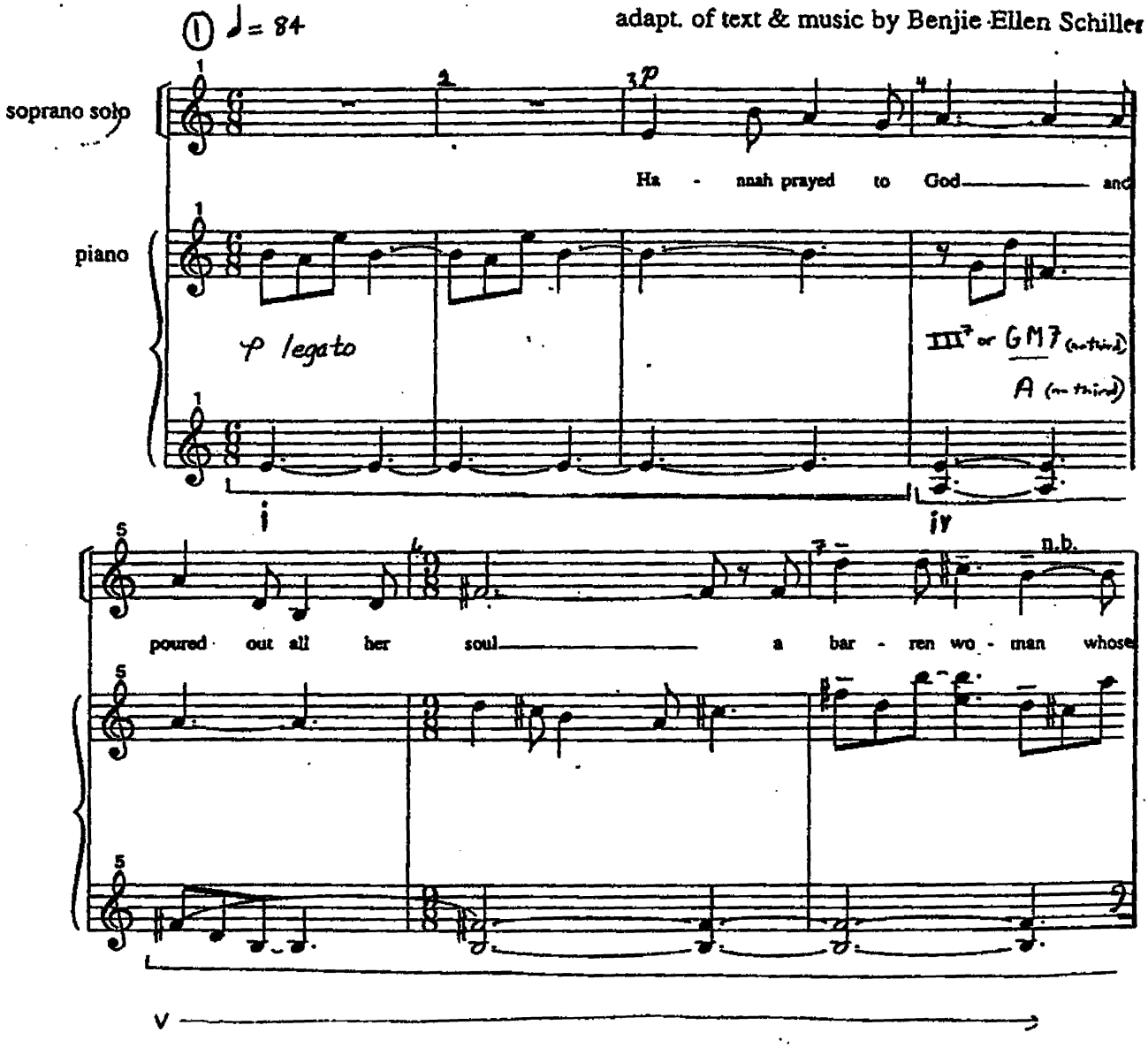
הַבֵּט מִשָּׁמַיִם וּרְאֵה מְזֻבּוּל קָדְשֶׁךָ וְתִפְאַרְתֶּךָ אַיֵּה קִנְאָתְךָ וּגְבוּרֹתֶיךָ הֲמוֹן מֵעֶיךָ וְרַחֲמֶיךָ אֵלַי
הִתְאַפָּקוּ : כִּי אַתָּה אָבִינוּ כִּי אַבְרָהָם לֹא יֵדָעֵנוּ וְיִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא יַכִּירֵנוּ : אַתָּה יהוה אָבִינוּ גֹּאֲלֵנוּ
מֵעוֹלָם שְׁמֶךָ : לָמָּה תַתְעֵנוּ יהוה מִדַּרְכֶּךָ תַּקְשִׁיחַ לִבֵּנוּ מִיִּרְאָתֶךָ : שׁוּב לְמַעַן עֲבָדֶיךָ שִׁבְטֵי
נַחֲלָתֶךָ : לַמָּה צָרֵינוּ יָרְשׁוּ עַם קָדְשֶׁךָ צָרֵינוּ בוֹסְסוּ מִקְדָּשֶׁךָ : וְאַתָּה יהוה אָבִינוּ אָתָּה • אֲנַחְנוּ הַחֹמֶר
וְאַתָּה יוֹצְרֵנוּ • וּמַעֲשֵׂה יָדְךָ כֻּלָּנוּ • אַל תִּקְצֹף יהוה עַד מְאֹד וְאַל לָעַד תִּזְכּוֹר עָוֹן הֵן הַבֶּט נָא
עַמְּךָ כֻּלָּנוּ : עָרֵי קָדְשְׁךָ הָיוּ מִדְבָּר צִיּוֹן מִדְבָּר הָיְתָה יְרוּשָׁלַיִם שְׁמָמָה : בֵּית קָדְשֵׁנוּ וְתִפְאַרְתֵּנוּ אֲשֶׁר
הִלְלוּךָ אֲבוֹתֵינוּ הָיָה לִשְׂרֵפַת אֵשׁ וְכָל מַחֲמַדֵּנוּ הָיָה לְחָרְבָּה : הַעַל אֵלֶּה תִתְאַפַּק יהוה תַּחֲשֶׁה
וּתְעַנֵּנוּ עַד מְאֹד : הָמְאוֹם מָאַסְתָּ אֶת יְהוּדָה אִם בְּצִיּוֹן גָּעֲלָה נַפְשֶׁךָ מַדּוּעַ הִכִּיתָנוּ וְאֵין לָנוּ מַרְפֵּא
קִוִּינוּ לְשָׁלוֹם וְאֵין טוֹב וּלְעֵת מַרְפֵּא וְהִנֵּה בְעָתָּה : יָדַעְנוּ יהוה רִשְׁעֵנוּ עֲוֹן אֲבוֹתֵינוּ כִּי חָטָאנוּ לָךְ :
אַל תִּנְאַץ לְמַעַן שִׁמְךָ • אַל תְּנַבֵּל כִּסֵּא כְבוֹדֶךָ זְכוֹר אַל תָּפֵר בְּרִיתְךָ אִתָּנוּ : כֹּה אָמַר יהוה • קוֹל
בְּרָמָה נִשְׁמָע נְהִי בְכִי תַמְרוּרִים רָחֵל מְבַכָּה עַל בָּנֶיהָ • מֵאֲנָה לְהִנָּחֵם עַל בָּנֶיהָ כִּי אֵינֶנּוּ : יהוה
מִמָּרוֹם יִשְׁאַג וּמִמְּעוֹן קָדְשׁוֹ יִתֵּן קוֹלוֹ שָׁאוֹג יִשְׁאַג עַל נָוֵהוּ : וַיִּקְרָא אֲרֹנָי אֱלֹהִים צְבָאוֹת בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא
לִבְכִי וּלְמִסְפֵּד וּלְקָרְחָה וְלַחֲגוֹר שָׂק : עַל אֵלֶּה אֲנִי בוֹכִיָּה עֵינִי עֵינִי יוֹרְדָה מַיִם כִּי רָחַק מְמֶנִּי מְנַחֵם
מֵשִׁיב נַפְשִׁי הָיוּ בָנַי שׁוֹמֵמִים כִּי גָבַר אוֹיֵב : הֵן אֶרְאֶלִּם צָעֲקוּ חוּצָה מַלְאֲכֵי שָׁלוֹם מַר יִבְכָיוּן :

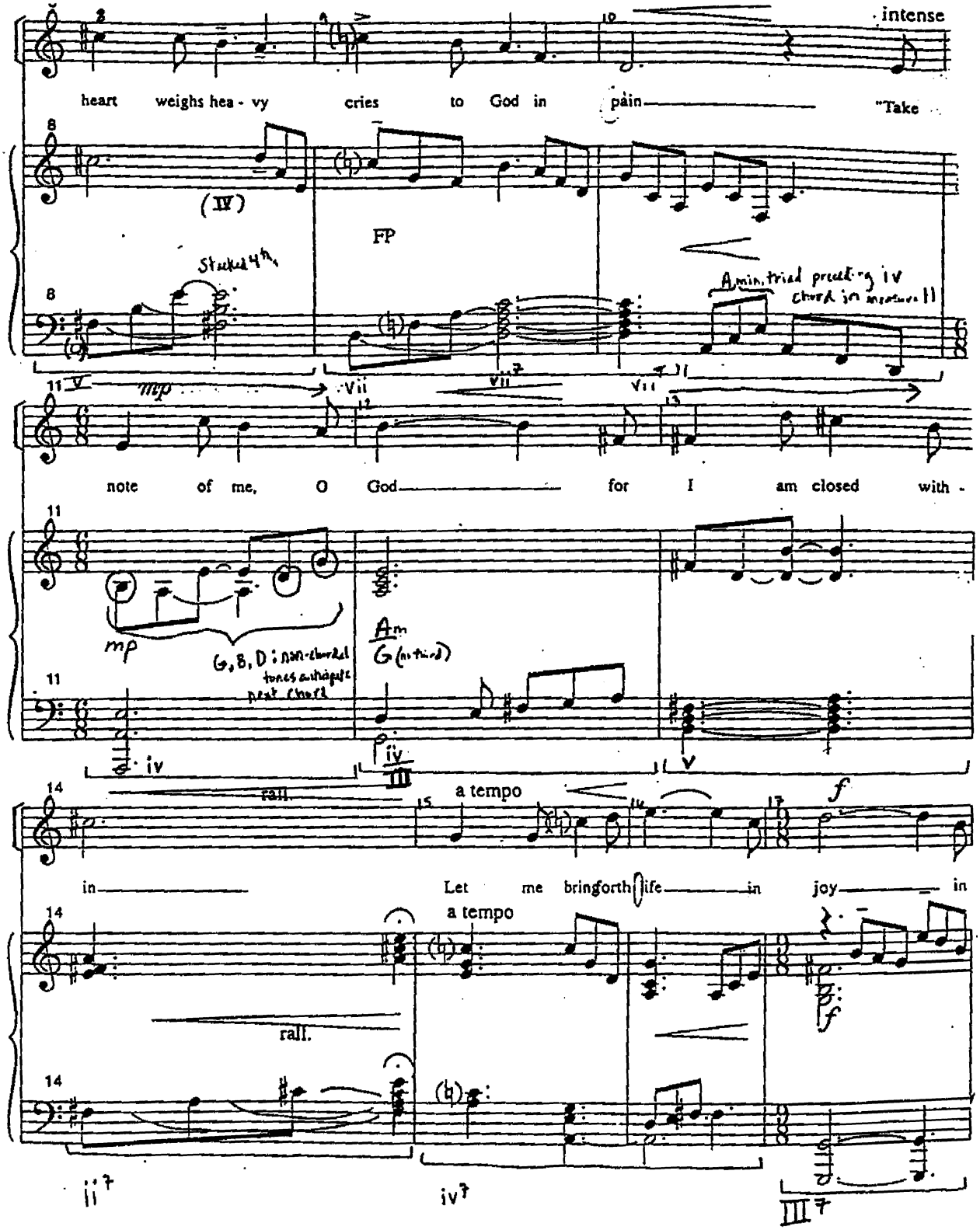
Thus said the Lord: A cry is heard in *Ramah*—wailing, bitter weeping—Rachel is weeping for her children. She refuses to be comforted for her children who are gone (Jer. 31: 15). The Lord roars from high. God makes his voice heard from his holy dwelling; God roars aloud over God's [earthly] abode (Jer. 25:30). My Lord God of Hosts summoned on that day to weeping and lamenting, to tonsuring and girding with sackcloth (Is. 22: 12). For these things do I weep, my eyes flow with tears: far from me is any comforter who might revive my spirit; my children are forlorn, for the enemy has prevailed (Lam. 1:16). Hark! The Arielites cry aloud; Shalom's messengers weep bitterly (Is. 33: 7).

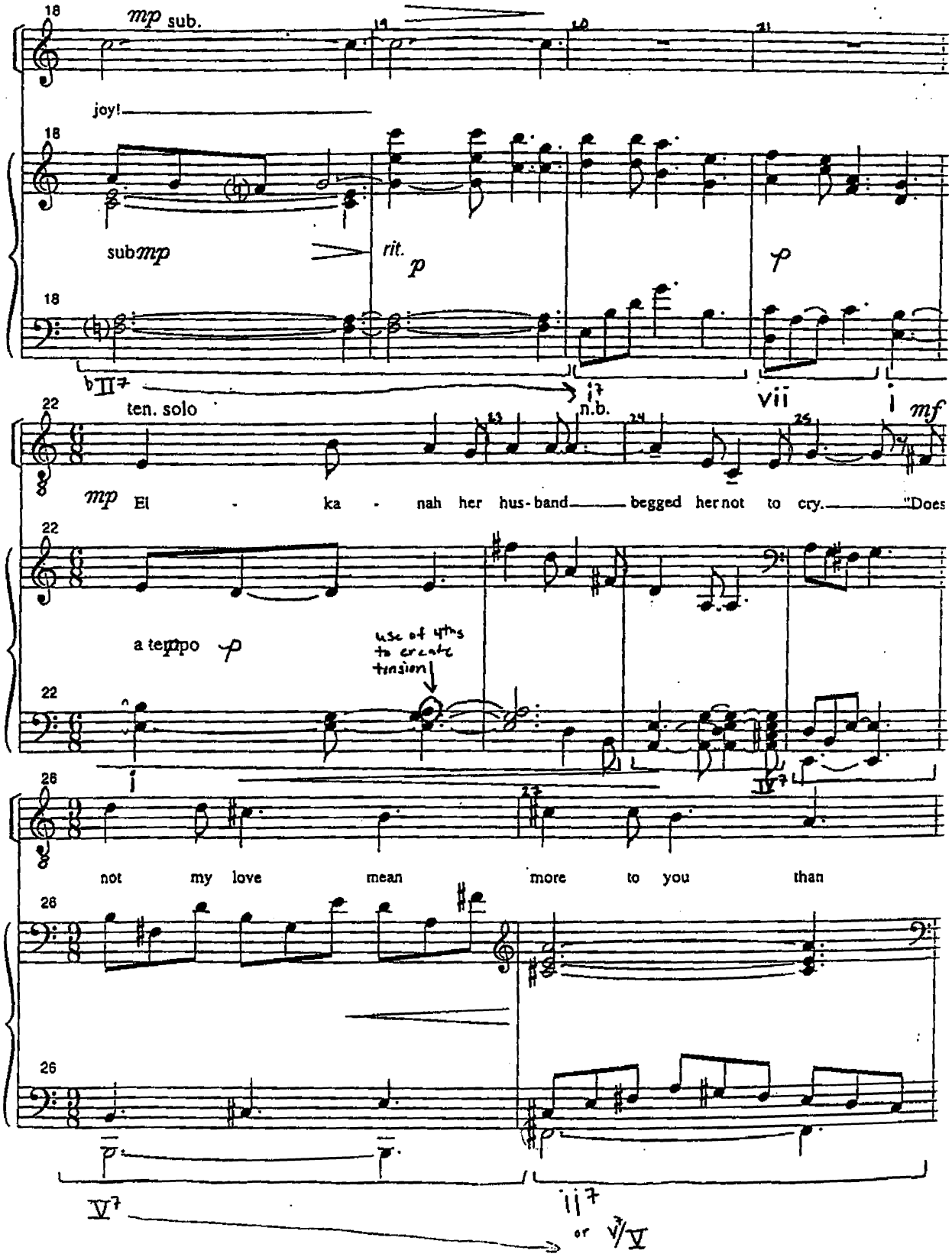
(Jewish Publication Society Translation)

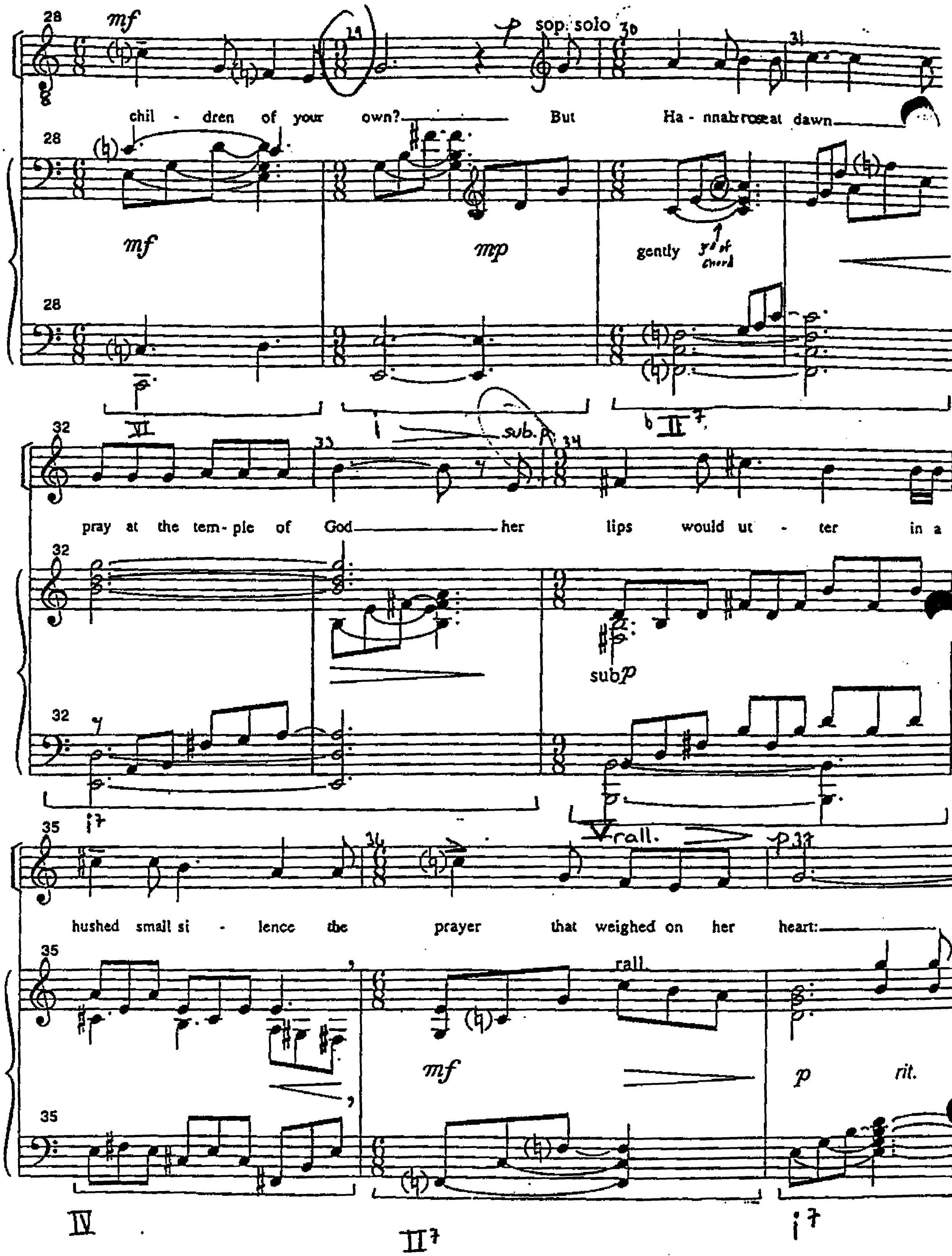
Appendix 4

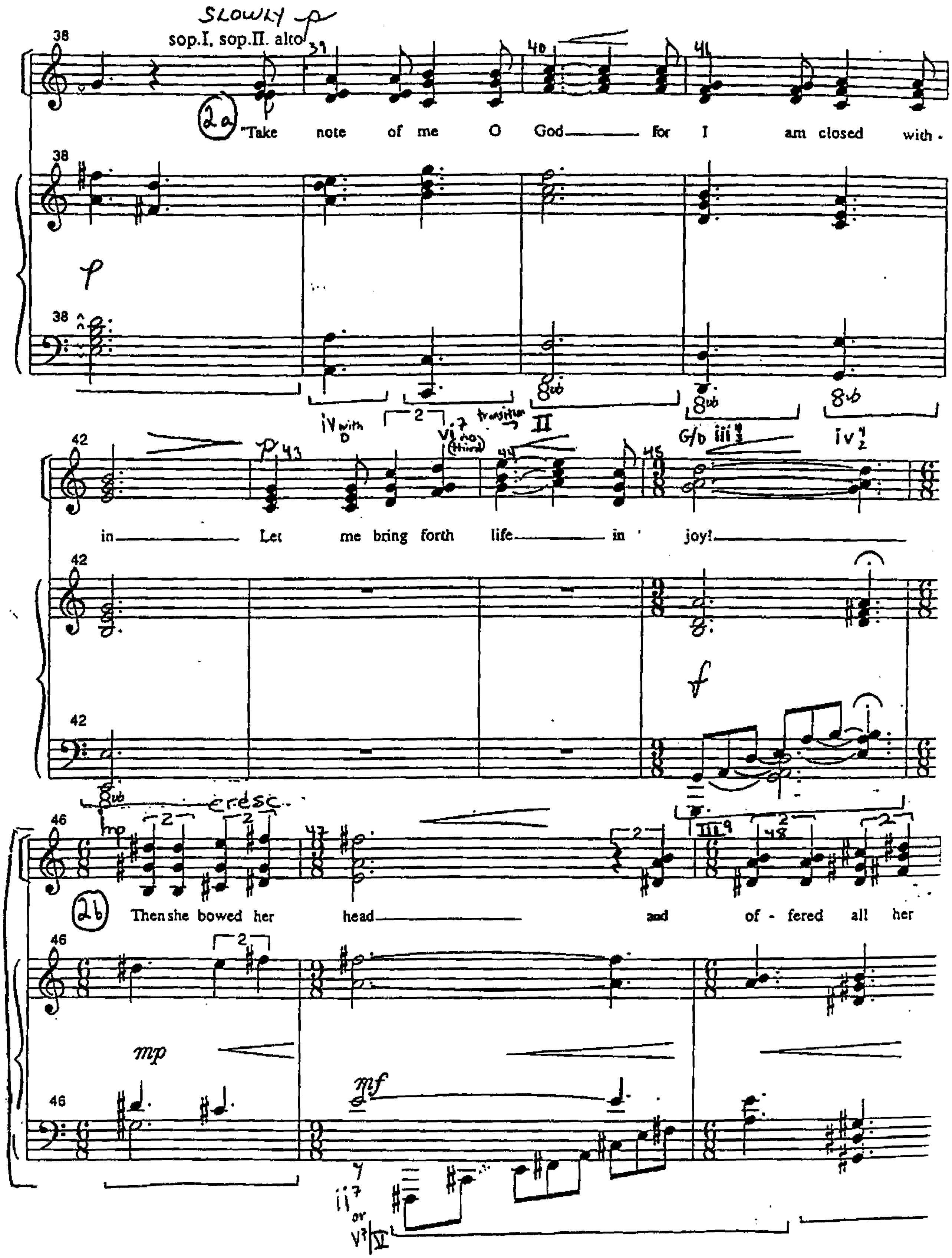
HANNAH

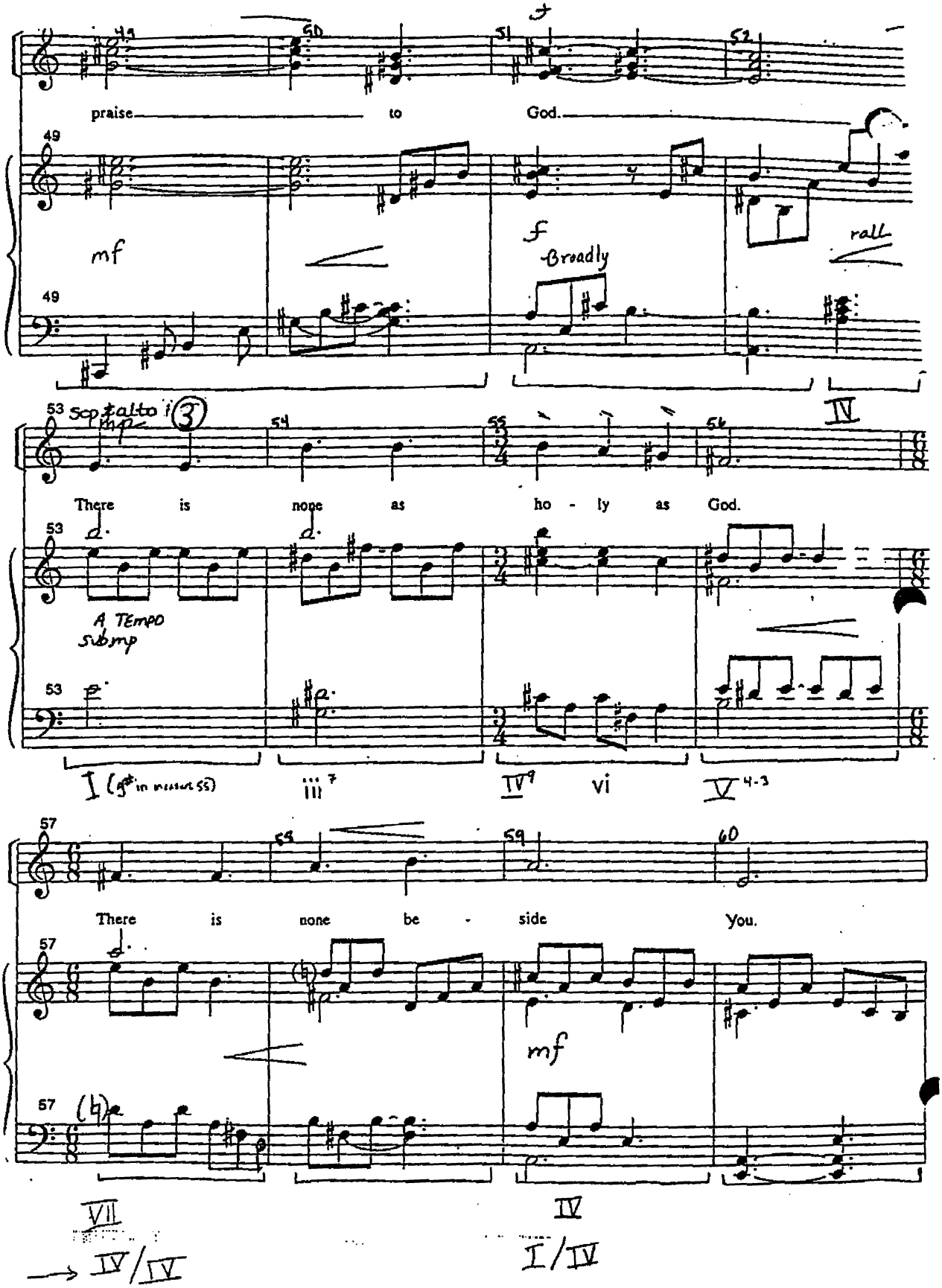


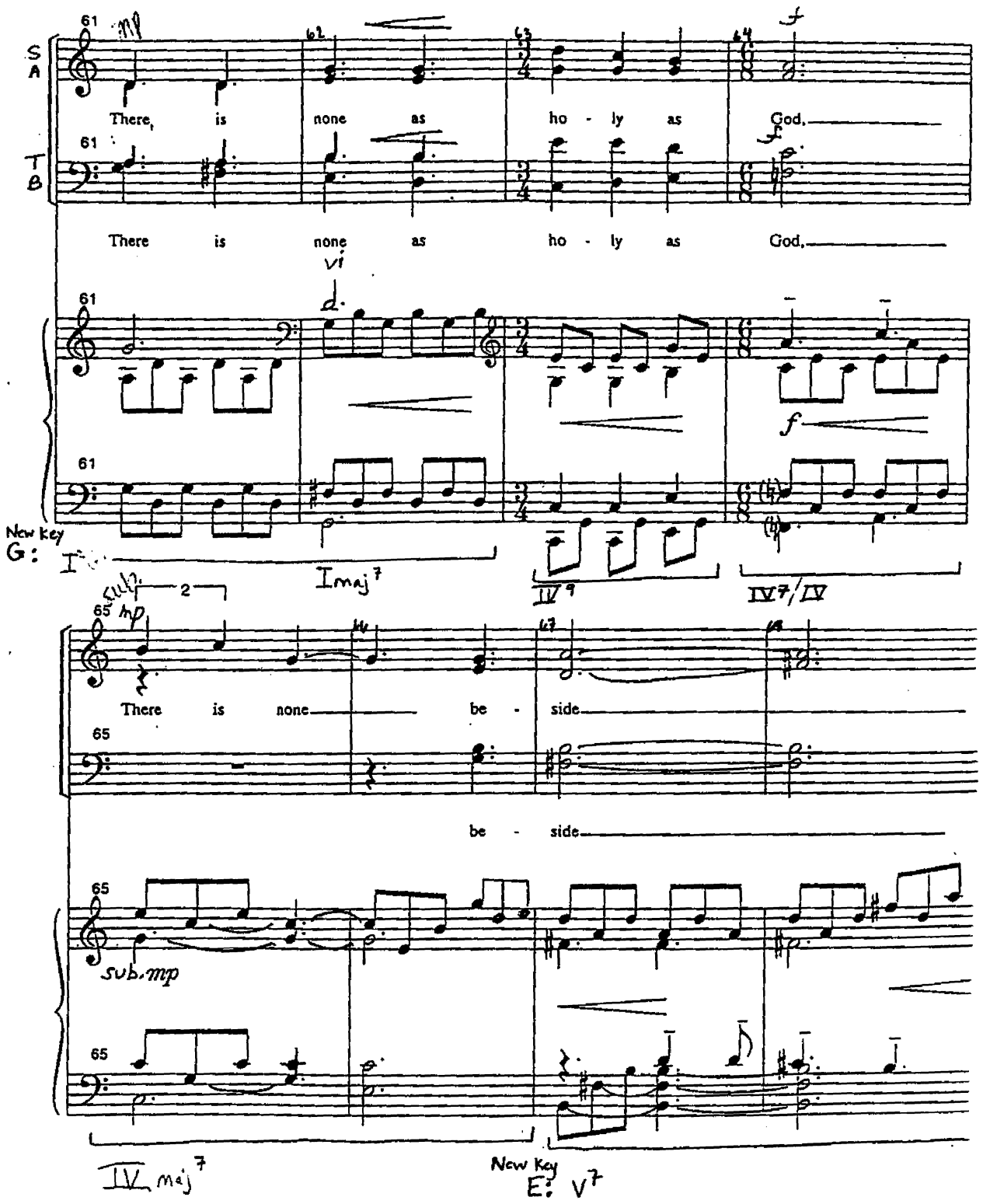

intense
heart weighs hea - vy cries to God in pain "Take
(IV)
FP
Stacked 4ths
A min. triad preceding iv chord in measure 11
mp
note of me, O God for I am closed with -
mp
G, B, D: non-chordal tones anticipate next chord
Am
G (no third)
iv
iv
V
rall.
a tempo
f
in Let me bringforth life in joy in
a tempo
rall.
f
ii7
iv7
III7

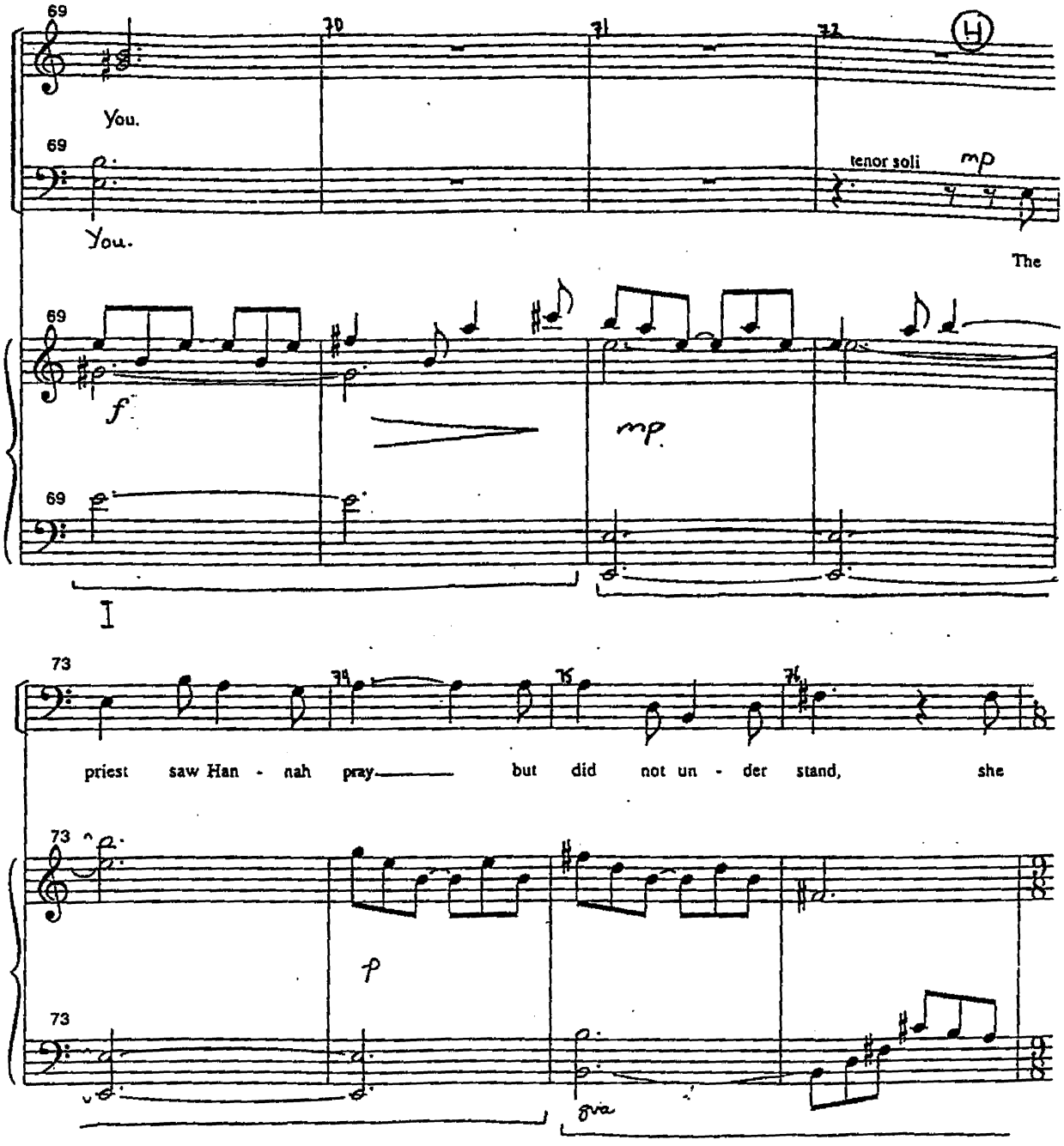

joy!
sub mp
rit.
p
p
♭III7
i7
n.b.
vii
i
mf
ten. solo
mp
El - ka - nah her hus-band begged her not to cry. "Does
a tempo
p
use of 4ths to create tension
i
IV7
not my love mean more to you than
V7
ii7
or V7/V

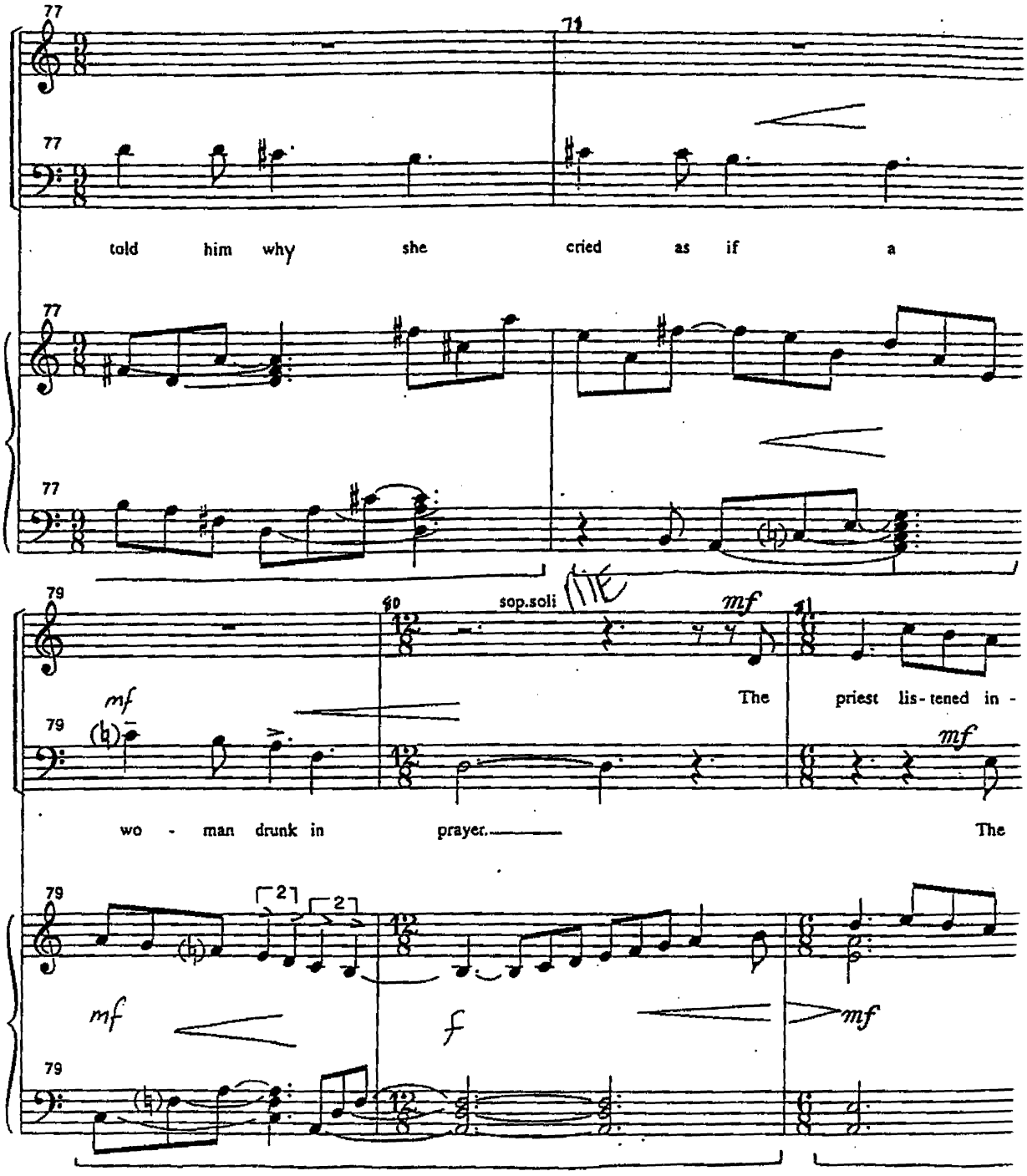

sop. solo
chil - dren of your own? But Ha - nnah rose at dawn
gently
pray at the tem - ple of God her lips would ut - ter in a
sub p
hushed small si - lence the prayer that weighed on her heart:
rall.
rit.

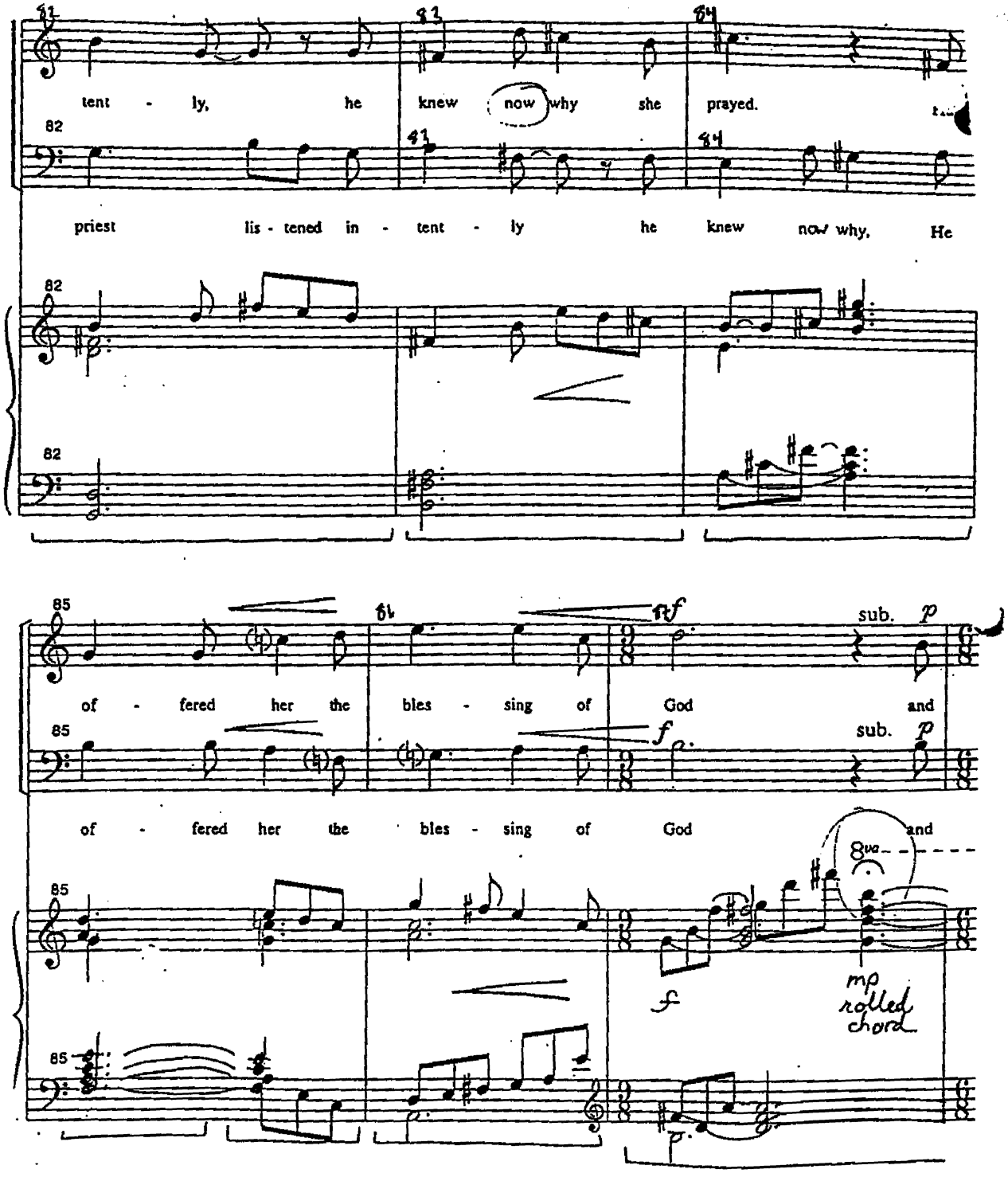

SLOWLY
sop.I, sop.II. alto
2a
"Take note of me O God for I am closed with-
in Let me bring forth life in joy!
2b
Then she bowed her head and of-fered all her
cresc.
8vb

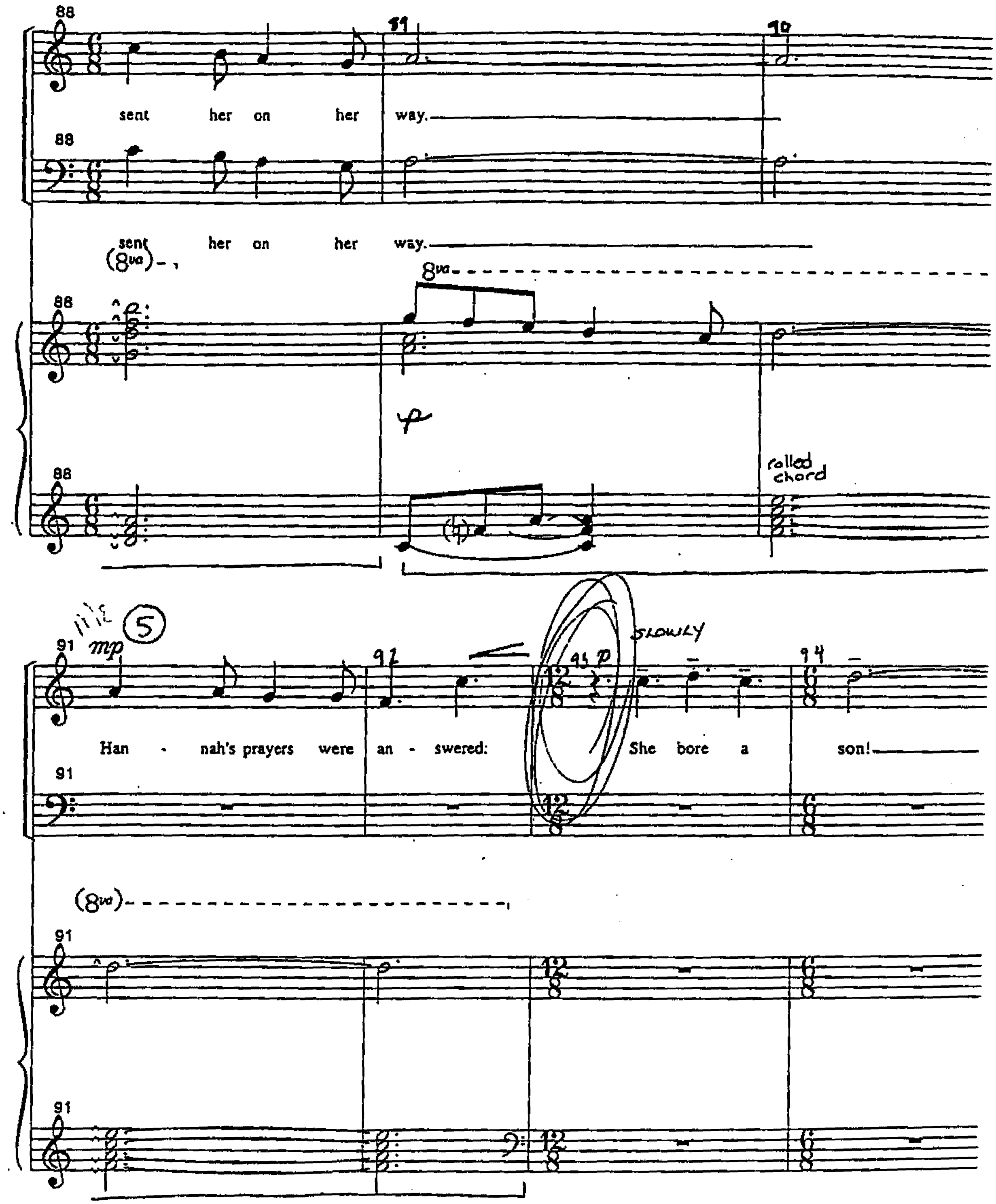

praise to God.
mf
f
Broadly
rall
Sop/alto
mp
There is none as ho - ly as God.
A TEMPO
submp
I (g# in measure 55)
iii7
IV9
vi
V4-3
There is none be - side You.
mf
VII
IV/IV
IV
I/IV

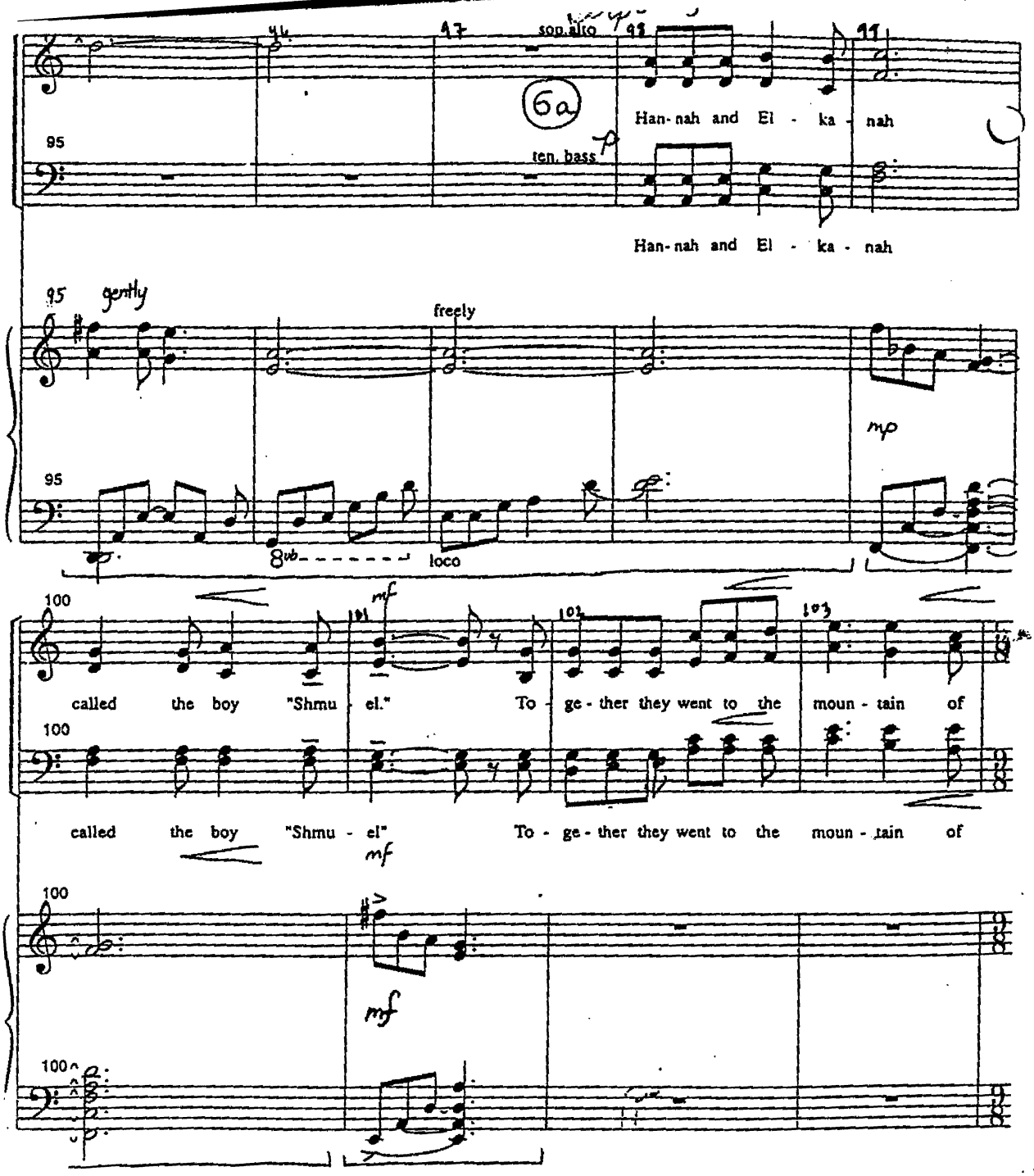

S
A
T
B
There is none as ho - ly as God,
There is none as ho - ly as God,
vi
New key
G: I
Imaj7
IV9
IV7/IV
sub. mp
There is none be - side
be - side
sub. mp
IVmaj7
New Key
E: V7

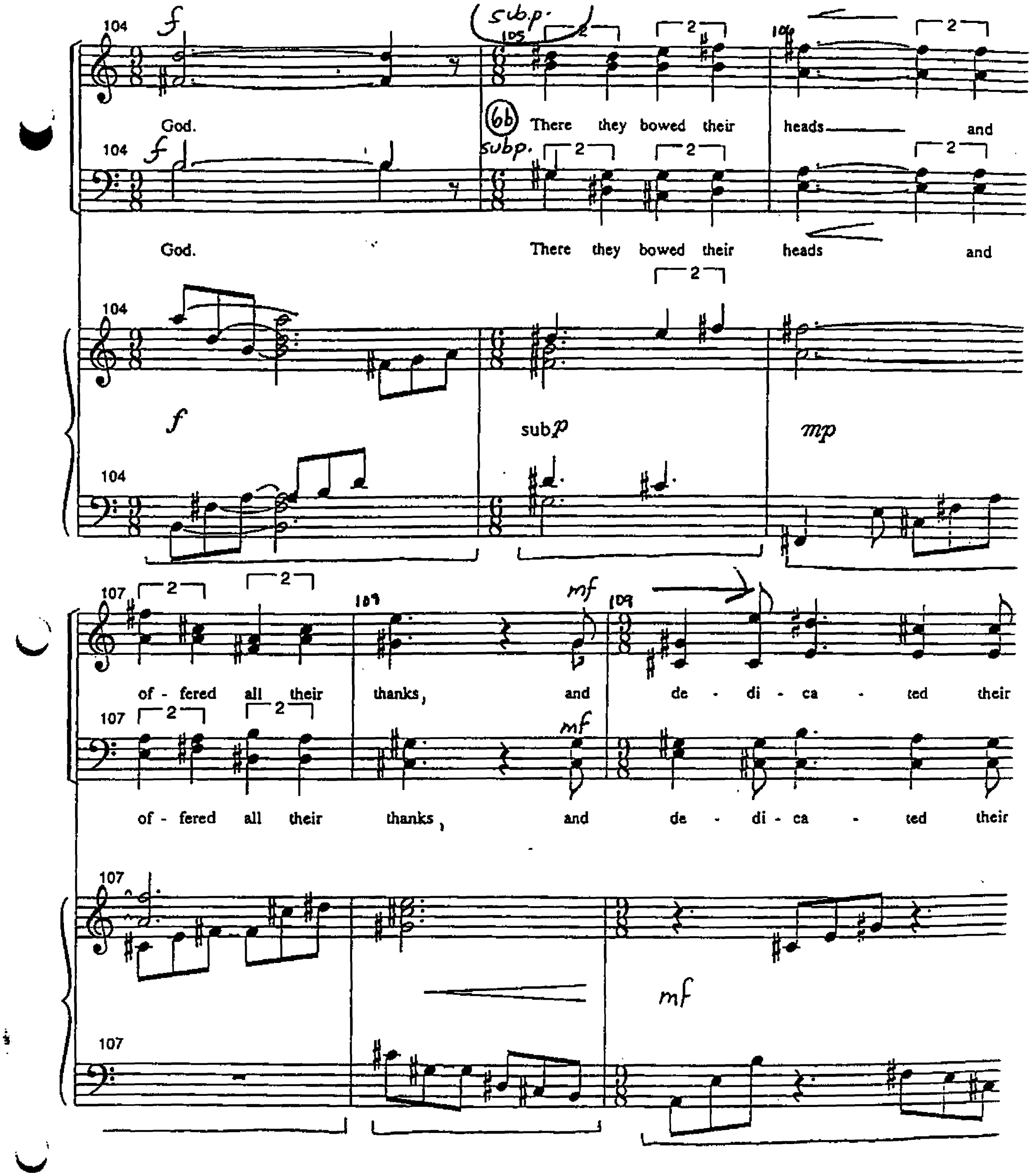

69
70
71
72
4
You.
69
You.
tenor soli
mp
The
69
f
mp
69
I
73
74
75
76
priest saw Han - nah pray—— but did not un - der stand, she
73
p
73
8va

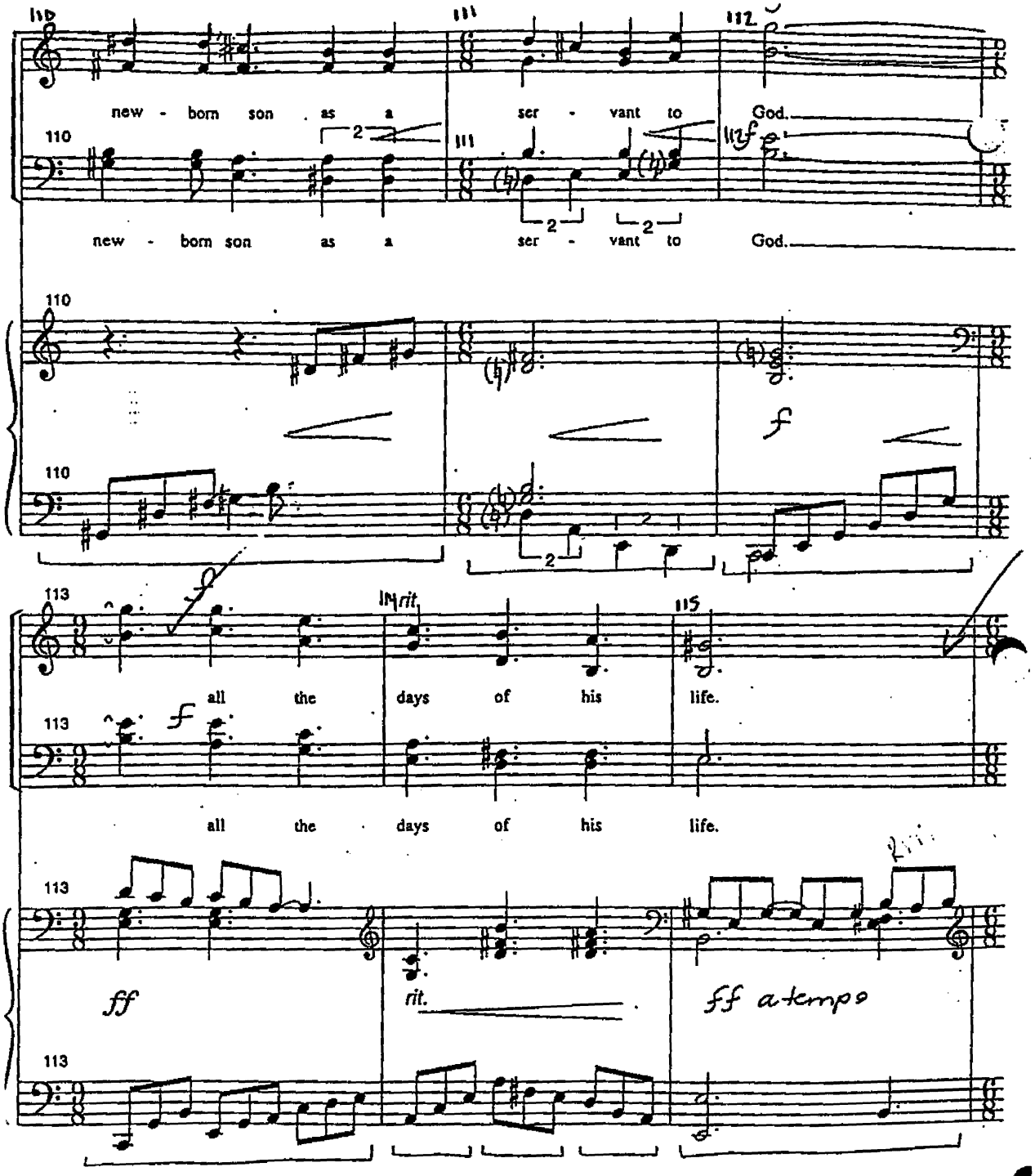

77
77
told him why she cried as if a
77
77
79
79
sop.soli
mf
mf
The priest lis-tened in -
wo - man drunk in prayer.
mf
The
79
2
2
mf
f
mf
79

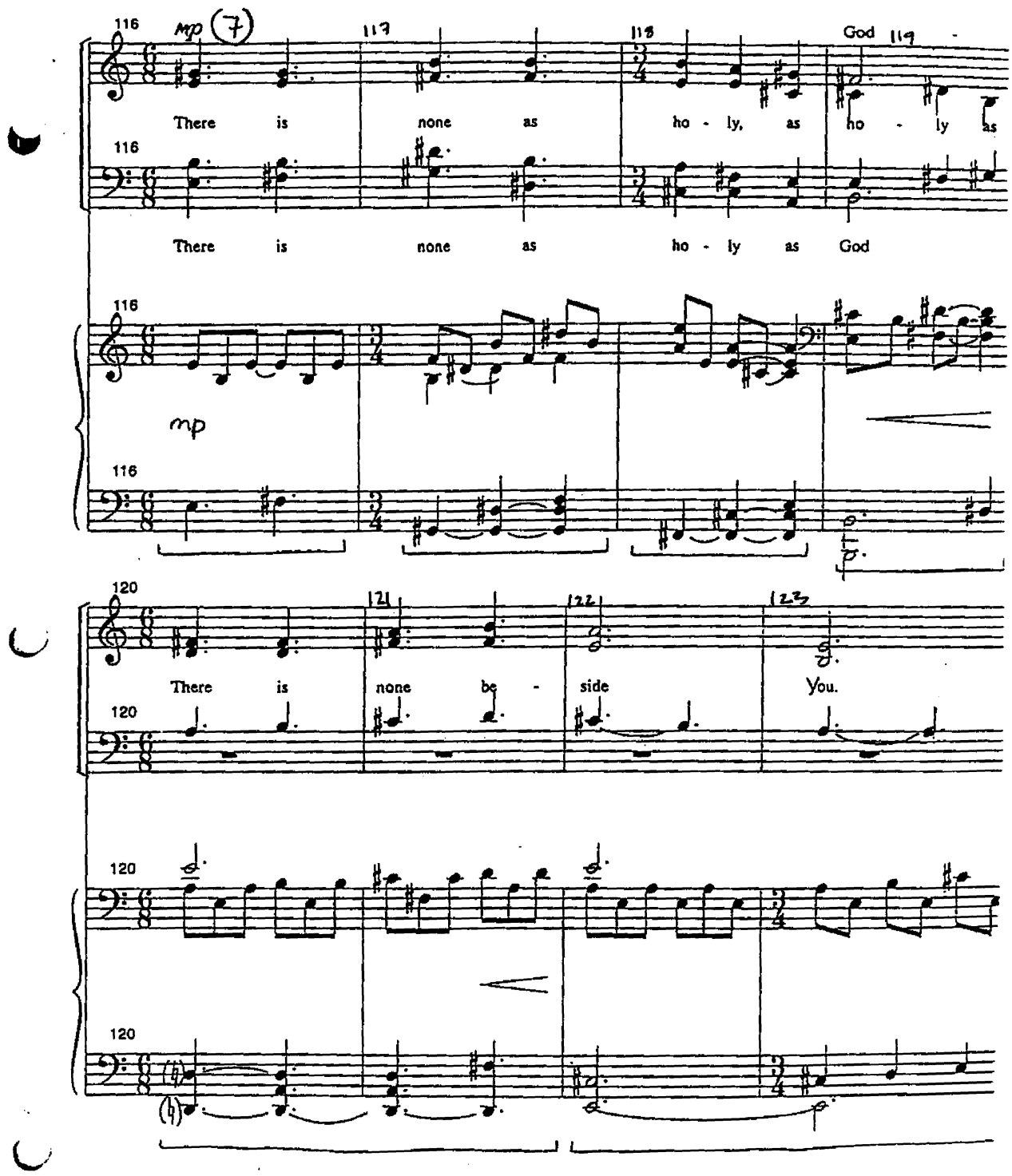

tent - ly, he knew now why she prayed.
priest lis - tened in - tent - ly he knew now why. He
of - fered her the bles - sing of God and
sub. p
of - fered her the bles - sing of God and
sub. p
8va
mp
rolled
chord

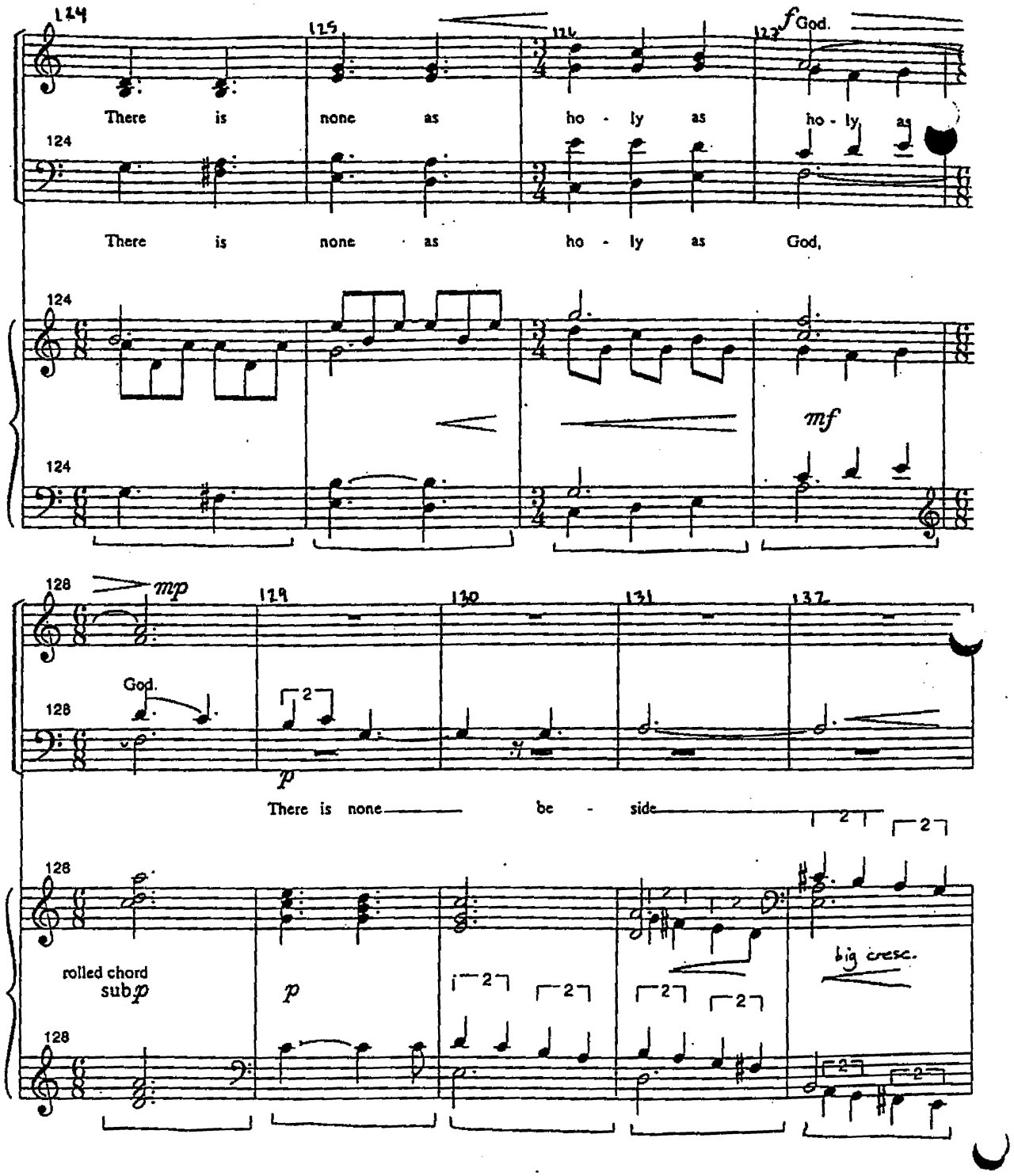

sent her on her way.
sent her on her way.
(8va)
8va
rolled chord
mp
5
Han - nah's prayers were an - swered: She bore a son!
SLOWLY
p
(8va)

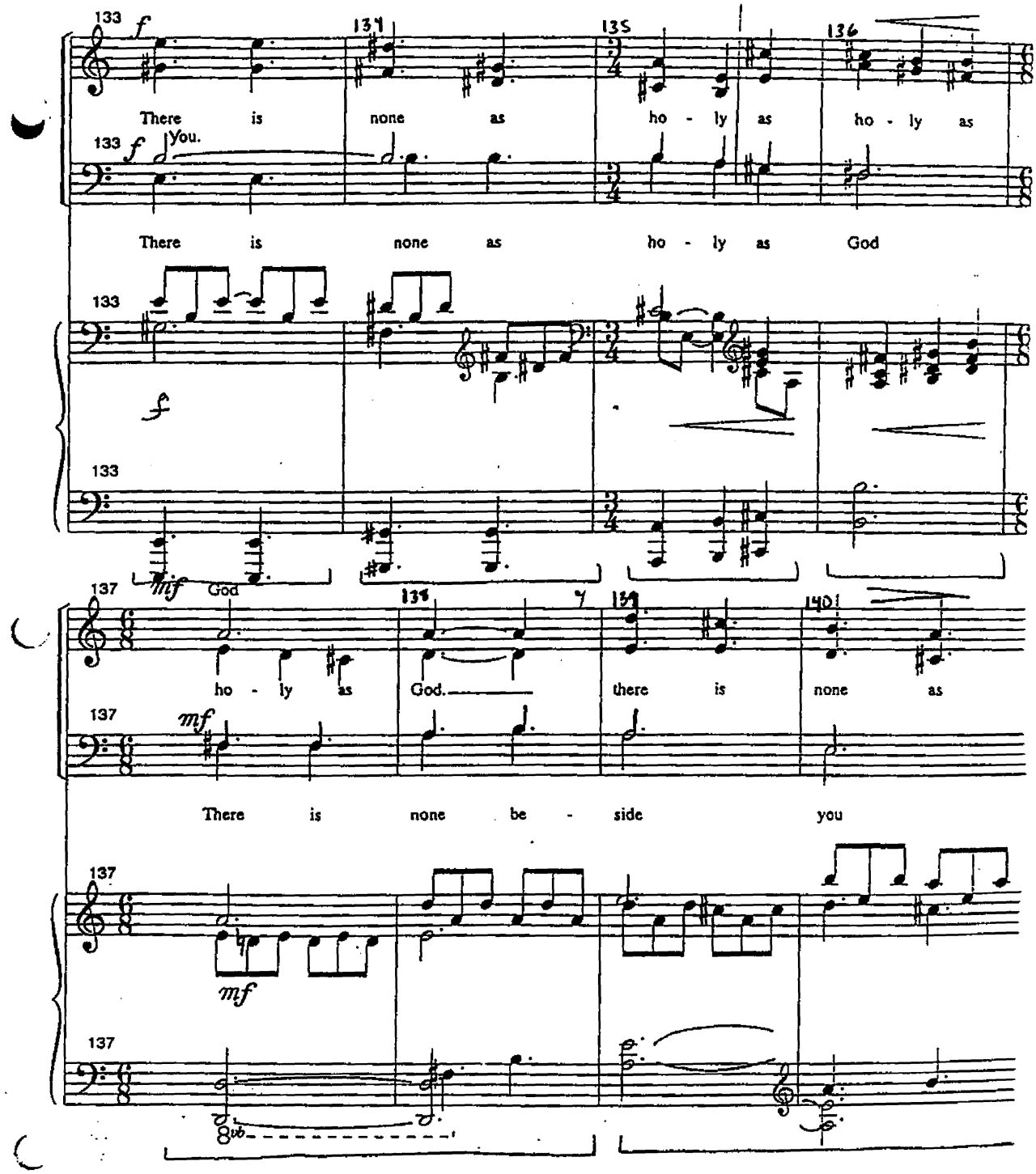

sop. alto
6a
ten. bass
Han-nah and El - ka - nah
Han-nah and El - ka - nah
gently
freely
mp
8vb
loco
called the boy "Shmu - el." To - ge - ther they went to the moun - tain of
called the boy "Shmu - el" To - ge - ther they went to the moun - tain of
mf
mf

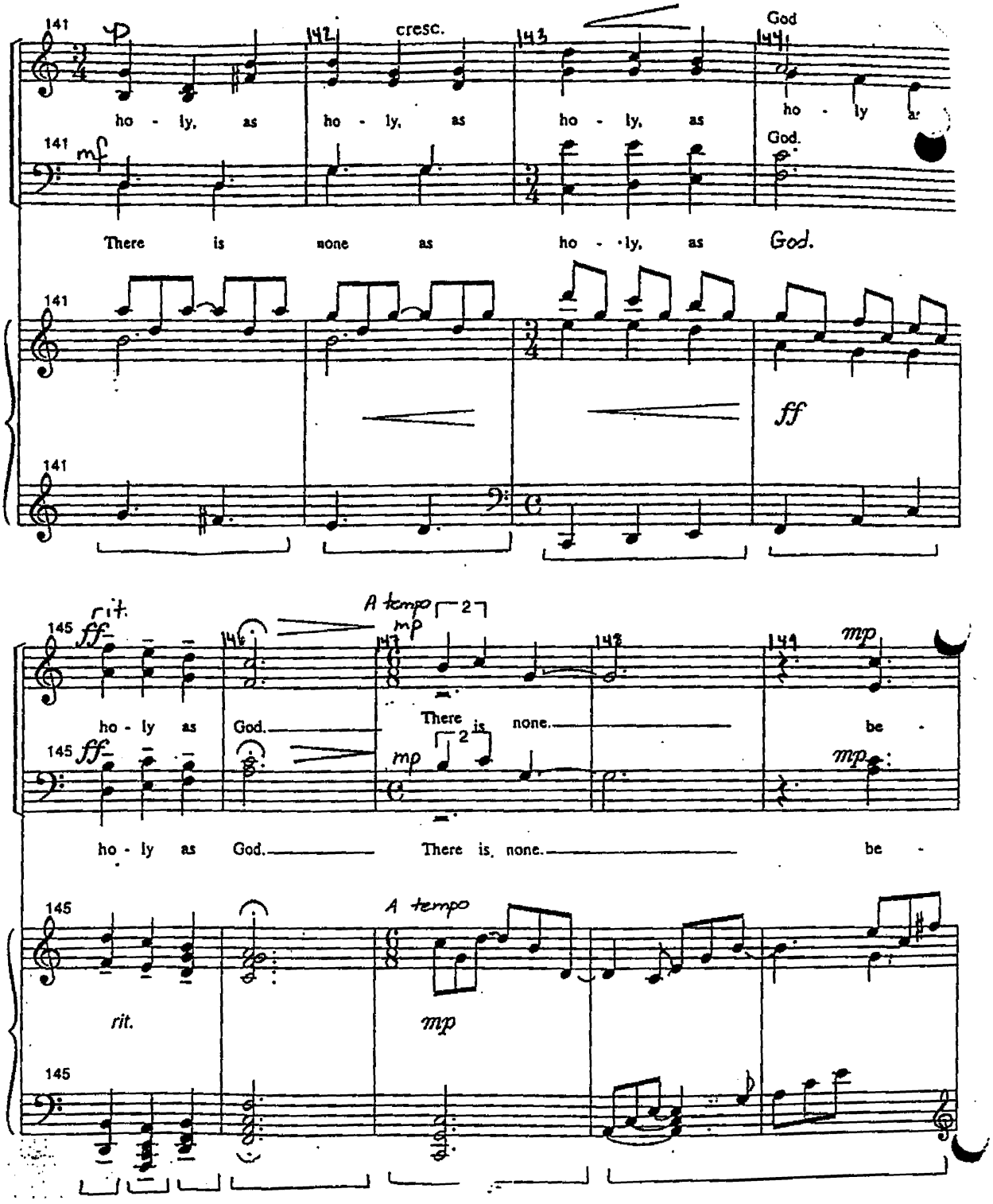

104
f
(sub.p.)
105
106
66 God. There they bowed their heads and
subp.
God. There they bowed their heads and
f
subp
mp
107
109
mf
of - fered all their thanks, and de - di - ca - ted their
of - fered all their thanks, and de - di - ca - ted their
mf

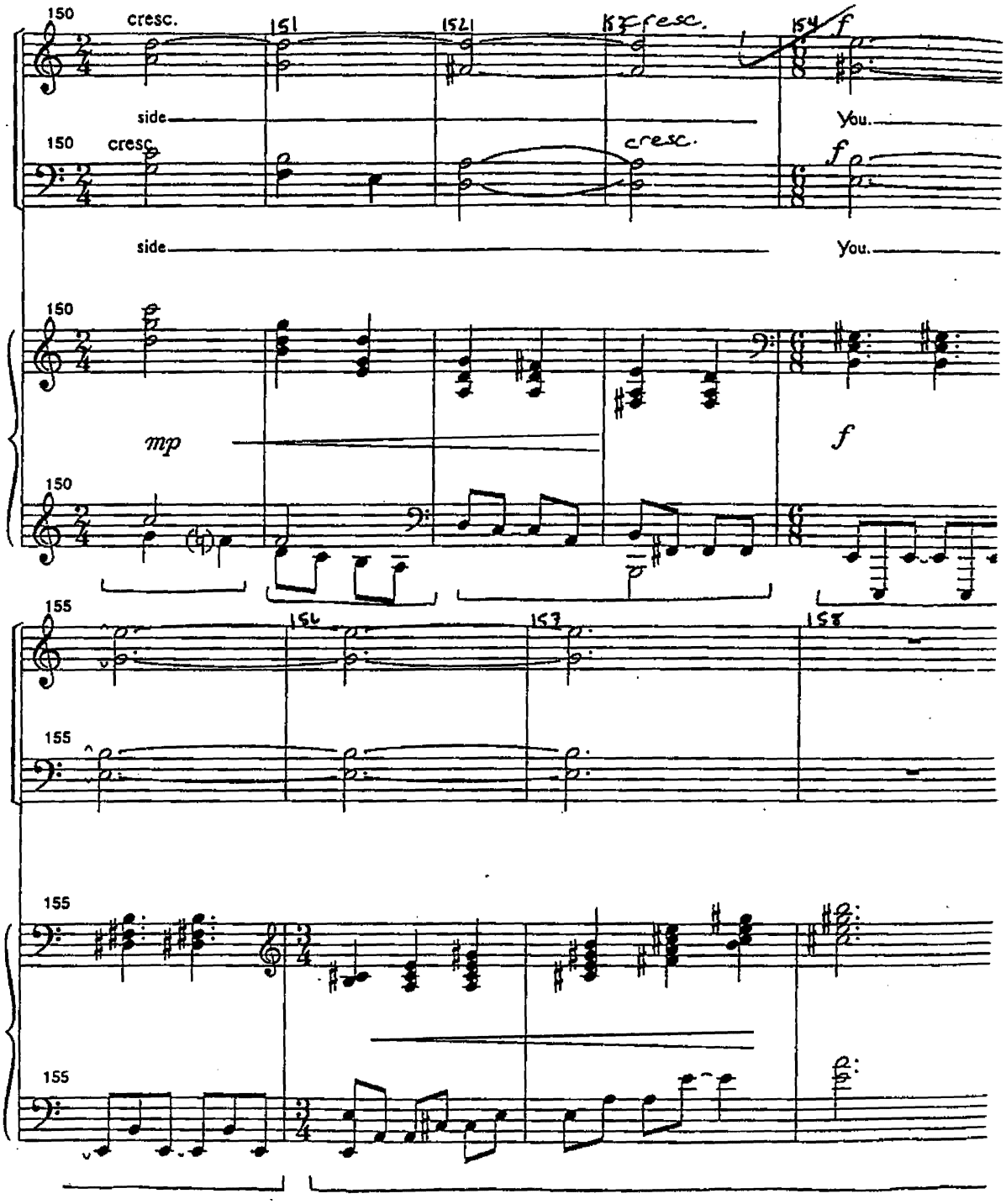

new - born son as a ser - vant to God.
new - born son as a ser - vant to God.
all the days of his life.
all the days of his life.
rit.
ff a tempo

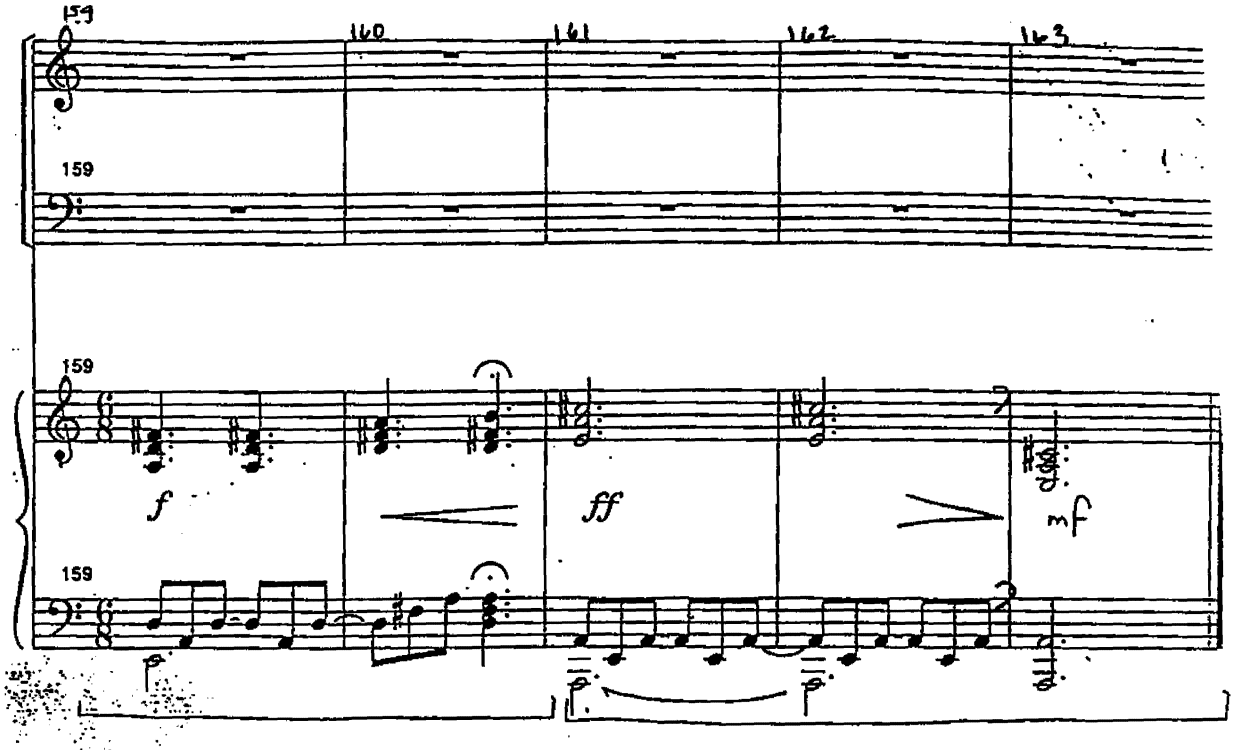

116
mp (7)
117
118
God 119
There is none as ho - ly, as ho - ly as
116
There is none as ho - ly as God
116
mp
116
120
121
122
123
There is none be - side You.
120
120
120


There is none as ho - ly as ho - ly, as
f God.
There is none as ho - ly as God,
mf
mp
God.
There is none be - side
p
rolled chord
sub p
p
big cresc.


133
f
There is none as ho - ly as ho - ly as
133
f
You.
There is none as ho - ly as God
133
f
133
mf
God
137
ho - ly as God. there is none as
137
mf
There is none be - side you
137
mf
137
8vb


141
142
143
144
cresc.
God
ho - ly, as ho - ly, as ho - ly, as ho - ly as
mf
God.
There is none as ho - ly, as God.
ff
rit.
A tempo
145
146
147
148
149
ff
mp
ho - ly as God. There is none. be -
2
ho - ly as God. There is none. be -
rit.
mp
A tempo


150
cresc.
151
152
153 cresc.
154
f
side
You.
150
cresc.
cresc.
f
side
You.
150
mp
f
150
155
156
157
158
155
155
155


159
160
161
162
163
159
159
f
ff
mf
159

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