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ZEMIROT SHABBAT:
AN EXPLORATION OF SABBATH TABLE SONGS

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

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SUMMARY

This thesis is entitled "*Zemirot Shabbat:* An Exploration of Sabbath Table Songs." It contains four chapters in addition to the introduction and conclusion. The goal of this thesis was to examine *zemirot Shabbat* from historical, textual, and musical perspectives. It is divided as follows: introduction; history and development; textual analysis; musical heritage; *zemirot* today; and conclusion. The materials used include books, articles from encyclopedias and journals, and anthologies of music.

The term *zemirot Shabbat,* literally translated as songs or hymns of Shabbat, is used to refer to the songs that accompany the three meals traditionally eaten on Shabbat. The basis for the custom of singing *zemirot Shabbat* can be found in Rabbinic literature, Kabbalistic doctrines, and Hasidic beliefs. The texts of the *zemirot* were composed mainly between the ninth and eighteenth centuries. These texts reflect the cultural, literary, and theological trends that were prevalent in the societies in which the poets lived. An analysis of some of the texts provides insight into important Jewish concepts and beliefs.

There are many melodies for *zemirot Shabbat.* Jews in each community composed melodies for these *zemirot* that reflected their community as well as the non-Jewish community that surrounded them. Meant to be sung in the home at the Shabbat table, the melodies were (until relatively recently) passed down orally from generation to generation of Jews. In modern times, the custom of singing *zemirot* has undergone a great deal of change. The texts that are sung as well as the context in which they are sung has been altered or expanded. Many different texts, not just the "traditional" ones are sung as *zemirot Shabbat.* Also, *zemirot* are sung not only in home settings, but in synagogues as part of Shabbat services. In any case, a large number of Jews continue to enjoy singing *zemirot Shabbat* as part of their celebration of Shabbat. An exploration of *zemirot Shabbat* can offer valuable insight into the Jewish experience in terms of Jewish history, culture, and beliefs as they have evolved throughout the ages and as they are understood today.

INTRODUCTION

The term *zemirot Shabbat*, literally translated as songs or hymns of Shabbat, is used to refer to the songs that accompany the three meals traditionally eaten on Shabbat. The *Halakhah* (the entire body of Jewish law) contains no ordinance mandating the singing of *zemirot Shabbat;* nevertheless, it has become an integral part of the celebration of Shabbat and a widespread custom throughout the Jewish world. *Zemirot Shabbat* provide Jews with an avenue through which they can exalt God and enhance the observance of the Sabbath in their homes. Support for this custom can be found in a variety of Jewish sources throughout history, including Rabbinic literature, the doctrines of the *Kabbalah* (Jewish mysticism), and the beliefs of Hasidism.

Between the ninth and eighteenth centuries, the texts of the *zemirot* sprang forth from the creative minds of Jewish poets. These texts reflect the cultural, literary, and theological trends that were prevalent in the societies in which the poets lived; they thus give their readers or singers an opportunity to better understand Jewish history and beliefs. A close analysis of several of the *zemirot* texts provides additional insight into several important Jewish concepts; namely, the praising of God, the sanctity of Shabbat and its proper observance, and the Jews' desire for redemption.

Many of the Jewish communities of the world share the same *zemirot* texts; however, each community has certain *zemirot* that it favors over others, and some communities possess *zemirot* texts that are unique to them or to a small number of communities. The most variation, though, is in the melodic tradition of *zemirot Shabbat.* For the most part, melodies were transmitted orally. In each community, the *zemirot* melodies emerged out of the interaction of Jewish culture with that of the surrounding society. This melodic tradition has never been stagnant: while many *zemirot* melodies have been forgotten over the years, every generation of Jews has added new melodies to the

zemirot repertoire. This repertoire thus continues to grow and change to reflect the Jewish communities that sing *zemirot.*

In modern times, the custom of singing *zemirot* has undergone a great deal of change, both in terms of the content of the repertoire as well as the context in which the *zemirot* are sung. Even so, many Jews continue to enjoy singing *zemirot Shabbat* as part of their celebration of Shabbat. An exploration of *zemirot Shabbat* can offer valuable insight into the Jewish experience in terms of Jewish history, culture, and beliefs as they have evolved throughout the ages and as they are understood today.

I. HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT

Ideological Underpinnings

The concept of *zemirot Shabbat* is well-supported in Rabbinic literature. It is considered to be part of *'oneg Shabbat*, the enjoyment of and delight in the Sabbath. One way to take pleasure in Shabbat is to praise God through song. Sources such as *Masekhet Megillah*, *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah*, the *Zohar* and *Sefer ha-Ḥasidim* refer to and/or encourage the singing of God's praises during Shabbat meals.[i] In the introduction to his collection of *zemirot Shabbat*, Max Wohlberg quotes R. Ya'akov of Emdin (from his *Siddur Beit Ya'akov*, p.153), "[i]t is customary to sing during the Sabbath meal as indicated by our sages (*Sh. Hash. R.* #8, 12), for this is the manner of Israelites while they eat, drink and rejoice they indulge in songs and laudations, intoning *Z'mirot*. . . . Whoever chants these, bestows goodness upon creation."[ii] Rabbis such as Joseph Hahn of Frankfort (1568-1637) lauded the practice of singing *zemirot Shabbat* not only for adding to the joy of Shabbat but also for effectively reducing or eliminating frivolous conversations (i.e., those not connected to matters of Torah or Shabbat) and the inclination of some to sing purely secular songs at the Shabbat table.[iii] While some rabbis opposed certain aspects of *zemirot*-singing (most notably, the setting of *zemirot* texts to non-Jewish melodies), most rabbis agreed that the singing of *zemirot Shabbat* helped to create and maintain an atmosphere that was conducive to proper Shabbat observance.

For followers of the *Kabbalah*, the observance of Shabbat was not complete without the singing of *zemirot Shabbat*. The Kabbalists were spurred to take up this practice by the mystical ideas contained in the *Zohar*. The *Zohar* (which means "splendor") is a collection of books which offers mystical commentaries on the Torah and other books and encompasses a wide range of Judaic thought.[1] In the *Zohar*, the concepts of Shabbat

[1] The author of the *Zohar* is widely believed to be Moses de Leon, who lived from 1250 to 1305, although mystics insist that this Aramaic work is the creation of the second-century rabbi Shimon bar Yohai.

in the divine realm, the *neshamah yeterah* (additional soul), and the three Sabbath meals were the main inspiration for the Kabbalists' enthusiastic embrace of *zemirot Shabbat.* It is important to understand these concepts in order to comprehend better their connection to *zemirot Shabbat.*

Kabbalists believed that God exists in the form of ten different emanations, or *sefirot,* each of which corresponds to a different one of God's attributes (such as sovereignty or wisdom). The world of the Godhead, as the sefirotic realm is called, is closely linked to the Sabbath. In the *Zohar*, the two different Sabbath commandments, *zakhor* (remember) and *shamor* (protect), represent respectively the Sabbath day and the Sabbath night in the world of the Godhead. The male aspect of God, *Yesod,* is considered as the Sabbath day; the female aspect of God, the *Shekhinah* or *Malkhut,* is considered as the Sabbath night.[iv] In Kabbalistic doctrine, actions that occur in the lower world (in which humans live) stimulate corresponding actions in the upper world (that of the Godhead).[v] Thus, when Jews observe the Sabbath, and in so doing, uphold both commandments, remember and protect, they help to unite the male and female aspects of God. These actions result in what may be considered to be a divine marriage, "[b]y observing the Sabbath, Israel assist[s] the divine powers in their intercourse . . . Happy is the man who unites them on the Sabbath day . . . Consequently, whoever does not celebrate the Sabbath joyfully, as he should, causes a separation in the upper worlds, and is regarded as if he had taken the *Shekhinah* away from her husband."[vi] In this view, on Shabbat, Israel aids in the unification of the bride, *Shekhinah,* with Her groom, *Yesod.*

In the *Zohar,* Shabbat is also the time during which the *Shekhinah,* exiled from the Godhead during the rest of the week, is permitted to return to the divine realm to be reunited with the rest of the *sefirot.* The *Shekhinah* is the aspect of God that is most closely associated with the people Israel. Just as Israel is considered to be living in exile, so too is its divine counterpart. Only in the *'olam ha-ba,'* or world-to-come, will Israel be redeemed from its exile and brought back to the Land; in this Messianic age, the *Shekhinah*

will also be redeemed from her exile and be permanently reunited with the rest of the *sefirot,* creating a unified Godhead. Shabbat is believed to be a foretaste of this world-to-come. Therefore, on Shabbat, the *Shekhinah* is allowed a brief respite from her exile, "[t]he *Shekhinah* is freed from her bondage in exile among the husks, and rises from her dejected state, and when she is united with her spouse she gains the benefit of sanctity, blessing, and unification."[vii] Israel benefits from this unification of the Godhead, "[w]hen she is unified in the world above, she settles upon Israel and seeks to be united with them."[viii] Thus, on the Sabbath, God is with Israel in a way that is unique from that of all of the other days of the week.

During the week, each Jew is invested with a soul, the essence of his/her being; however, on Shabbat, the Jew receives a *neshamah yeterah,* an additional soul that remains with him/her only for the duration of the Sabbath. "The basic idea of the descent of an additional soul on the Sabbath, which occurs once in the Talmud [*Beiẓah* 16a] in a statement by Rabbi Simeon ben Lakish, . . . is given extensive mystical and mythical treatment in the *Zohar*. . . . The descent of the additional souls is described in the *Zohar* as a glorious journey from the upper world by way of the Garden of Eden, attended by chariots of angels."[ix] Such additional souls emanate from "*Yesod,* the source of all souls,"[x] and lend to the Sabbath an increased air of spirituality. They "settle upon Israel together with the *Shekhinah,*" and are considered to be real souls that "descen[d] in order to strengthen the normal soul." On Shabbat, Jews are not only blessed by the presence of the *Shekhinah* but also by a special Shabbat soul that recharges them at the end of each week and elevates them to the level of sanctity required to observe the Sabbath properly.

When it descends, the additional soul also "removes grief and sorrow, and spreads joy in Israel: 'Because of the additional soul they forget all pain and anger and there is nothing but joy in both the upper and the lower worlds.'"[xi] In order to appropriately welcome this *neshamah yeterah,* Jews are encouraged to create a joyous atmosphere even before its descent. Then, "[a]fter it has been welcomed correctly it should be involved in

the physical and the spiritual delights of the Sabbath. It takes pleasure in the food and drink of the three Sabbath meals."[xii] On the Sabbath, Jews are rewarded with an additional soul that brings them gladness; they must treat this soul as the honored guest that it is.

On Shabbat, Jews, replete with their additional souls, partake of three meals. While mentioned in the Talmud (*Shabbat* 118a),[xiii] the import and significance of these meals was greatly increased by the mystical interpretation given them in the *Zohar.* The *Zohar* (vol. II, fol. 88b) "explains that the purpose of the three meals is to attract *berakah,* i.e., the sense of being blessed, from the Sabbath to the week days."[xiv] The Sabbath, as the source of all blessing, must provide enough blessing not only for itself, but for the rest of the week as well (in order to sustain the weekdays until the next Sabbath); the three Shabbat meals facilitate this process. In addition, "[t]he observance of these meals brings 'satisfaction and delight to the world on this day [Shabbat]' and 'blessing to the days (i.e., the *sefirot*) of the upper world.'"[xv] In other words, by enjoying these three meals, Jews ensure that blessing flows not only from Shabbat to the weekdays, but throughout the sefirotic realm. Each meal is associated with a specific *sefirah,* "the meal on Sabbath night represents *Malkhut,* the second meal represents *Atika Kadisha* [*Keter*], and the third meal *Ze'ir Anpin* [*Tiferet*]."[xvi] In order to ensure that blessing flows through these *sefirot* in the proper manner, it is extremely important that the meals are adequately celebrated, "'if a man impairs just one meal he causes a defect to appear in the world above.'"[xvii] As Schleifer comments, "whoever desecrates the Sabbath meals is considered as if he would desecrate the divine *sefirot* and severe would his punishment be."[xviii] In the *Zohar,* these meals are elevated from their apparent significance (to sanctify Shabbat by sharing special meals with ones family and friends) and given divine import. Their proper observance is essential to the maintenance of order in the Godhead.

Followers of the *Kabbalah* viewed the singing of *zemirot Shabbat* as an ideal way to carry out the mystical ideas contained in the *Zohar.* These ideas, and *Kabbalah* in general, gained many adherents as a result of the work of Issac Luria, also known as the

Ari, who lived in Safed in the sixteenth century. After the expulsion of the Jews from Spain, many Jews eagerly accepted Luria's understanding of *Kabbalah* (his doctrines were recorded and expanded upon by his disciples, most notably R. Hayim Vital),[xix] which focused on the concept of and yearning for redemption. Every Jew could aid in bringing the Messiah through his/her dedication to God and the observance of the *mizvot,* as well as through careful attention to mystical doctrines.

The Kabbalists may have realized that even more than setting a beautiful Shabbat table and preparing delicious foods, singing joyful melodies which extol God's praises has the ability to create a holy Shabbat atmosphere. "The Cabalists of the sixteenth century stressed particularly the power of song to enhance the devotion and to arrive at some mystic union with the Creator."[xx] Through the singing of *zemirot Shabbat,* Jews prepare for and rejoice in the divine marriage. The Shabbat table thus becomes akin to a wedding banquet, the festive nature of which is usually created at least in part by joyous song. *Zemirot Shabbat* also help the Jew to celebrate the *Shekhinah's* return from exile. Jews realize, however, that this return is only temporary. While they are celebrating with praise and song, the *zemirot* allow Jews to express their longing for a permanent reunification of the Godhead and for their own redemption from exile. With regard to the *neshamah yeterah,* Kabbalists believed that the merriment of singing *zemirot Shabbat* created exactly the spirit required to receive and honor the additional Shabbat soul. "There was even a common belief that this 'additional soul' could only be attained through song."[xxi] Finally, each of the three Shabbat meals had certain *zemirot* assigned to them. Although most of the *zemirot* did not have inherent Kabbalistic meaning, the *zemirot* written by Luria that were recited at the beginning of each meal served to direct each meal toward its corresponding *sefirah* . Thus, by singing *zemirot,* the Kabbalists joyfully celebrated each meal as was required, and additionally remained focused on the meal's mystical significance. The Kabbalists espoused mystical ideas, which they then reinforced by singing *zemirot Shabbat.* This practice soon became popular not only among Kabbalists, but also in the

wider Jewish community. As is the case today, one does not have to adhere to or even understand *Kabbalah* to delight in singing *zemirot Shabbat.*

Another group whose beliefs supported the custom of singing *zemirot Shabbat* was the Hasidim. Hasidism as a movement emerged in Europe in the eighteenth century. Its leaders adopted and expanded upon many of the tenets of the *Kabbalah* and created a vibrant approach to Judaism that attracted many followers. Although *Kabbalah* formed the ideological basis for Hasidism, in its reinterpretation by Hasidic leaders, "[t]he *Kabbalah* lost most of its esoteric character and was reshaped to emphasize its psychological and social rather than its speculative character."[xxii] Hasidism did not require a Jew to be educated in order to be a good Hasid; he/she only had to be an observant Jew who was committed to worshipping God with joy. Hasidim looked to their leaders to guide them; these men, called *zadiqim* (meaning righteous men) were charismatic leaders who were revered for their knowledge and wisdom. They were thought to be intermediaries who could move between the divine and mundane worlds in their task of bringing divine wisdom to their followers.

Hasidim believed in the Kabbalistic doctrine of creation, that everything in the world emanated from God. They also held, like the Kabbalists, that human actions could have an effect on the divine realm. Hasidism therefore stressed the idea of *tiqun,* or repair. With every *mizvah* a Jew performed, he/she contributed to the unification of the Godhead; he/she thereby helped to repair the world and to bring it one step closer to ultimate redemption. In addition, Hasidim emphasized the notion of joy as essential in their worship of God, "[w]orship of the Deity in joy and ecstasy is the foundation-stone of Hasidism."[xxiii] "When a man rejoices that he has been called to serve God, he bestirs the divine joy above and blessing flows through all creation. A melancholy attitude of mind is anathema to Hasidism, serving only to create a barrier between man and his Maker."[xxiv] It

was only through ecstatic worship of God that a Hasid could reach his ultimate goal, to achieve a state of *devequt,* or union with the Divine.[2]

Hasidim believed in the power and efficacy of song to aid them in their quest for *devequt.* As the great Hasidic figure Rabbi Nachman of Breslov taught, "music brings a person nearer to serving the Almighty and to the joyful experience of aspiring to ecstatic fulfillment."[xxv] The Hasidim felt that music could aid in elevating a person's soul enough that it could actually cleave to God. One particular musical form the Hasidim frequently employed in this effort was the *niggun,* a melody often sung without words, "with its [the *niggun's*] help the Hasid rises from one level to the next until he reaches the highest peak of enthusiasm - ecstatic *devequt.*"[xxvi] The conviction that music had the ability to transport one's soul from the mundane to the divine realm led Hasidim to place tremendous importance on its performance and composition.

The Hasidic belief in the importance of music and joyful worship contributed to its leaders' enthusiastic support for the custom of singing *zemirot Shabbat.* "The early Hasidic leaders, beginning with the *Baal Shem Tov,* brought to the masses a message of joyous affirmation of life - a message overtly contained in the *z'mirot,* and exemplified in the very act of family singing."[xxvii] By singing *zemirot Shabbat,* Jews praised God with gladness and delight (as a result of the combination of reverent texts and festive singing); in addition, they employed music to elevate their souls in the hopes of reaching *devequt.* One did not have to be a scholar to sing *zemirot Shabbat;* it is an activity in which all Jews could participate. The consonance of the custom of singing *zemirot Shabbat* with Hasidic beliefs allowed the custom to thrive in Hasidic circles.

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[2] This goal is one of the points that separated Hasidim from Kabbalists. While Hasidim desired to unite their souls with God, Kabbalists strove only to focus their concentration on God and to elevate themselves in order to be closer to God.

Evolution of the Custom and the Texts

Although their beliefs encouraged its spread, the custom of singing *zemirot Shabbat* did not originate with the Kabbalists nor with the Hasidim. This custom is hundreds and perhaps thousands of years old. While most of the texts of the *zemirot Shabbat* that are sung today date back only to the Middle Ages, some scholars assert that the custom of singing songs at the Shabbat table can be traced back much further than that. Abraham Lopez Cardozo noted, "The custom of singing table songs *(Zemirot)* on Shabbat and holidays is said to be more than two thousand years old. Philo, in describing the life led by the Essenes, mentions their custom of singing *Zemirot,* which add light and joy to the Jewish soul, together, at the table, in appreciation of God's goodness."[xxviii] Neil Levin looks to the Talmud (he refers to *Masekhet Sota* 48a) to bolster his claim that table songs were sung in ancient Israel, "[e]vidence can be found in the Talmudic references to the discontinuation of the practice as a sign of mourning after the destruction of the Second Temple and the dissolution of the *Sanhedrin.* . . . the very fact of the injunctions against their use indicates that such singing accompanied Sabbath meals (as well as other feasts) long before the Diaspora."[xxix] In attempting to date this custom to ancient Israel, scholars hope to prove the authenticity of the Jewish practice of singing *zemirot Shabbat.*

A.W. Binder proposes that the custom of singing Sabbath table songs is not the only aspect of *zemirot Shabbat* that can be traced to ancient times. He asserts that a few of the *zemirot* texts may have even been written then, "*Zemirot,* table songs, had begun to develop as far back as the days of the Second Temple. Thus it is believed that *Ẓur mi-Shelo,* one of the group of *Zemirot* for the Sabbath eve, whose author is unknown, belongs to the early tannaitic period, perhaps even before Jabne."[xxx] Idelsohn disagrees, however. He insists that "[n]o post-Biblical texts of folk-songs were retained from before the *paytanic* period. From that time on, some songs created in Babylonia and Palestine as early as the tenth century spread throughout the Diaspora and became the standard songs of the Jewish home."[xxxi]

Scholars may speculate that the custom and some of the texts of *zemirot* Shabbat originate in ancient Israel; yet, the first conclusive evidence of *zemirot Shabbat* as an established practice among the Jews does not appear until the eleventh century. During this time immediately preceding the Crusades, R. Simha ben Shmuel of Vitry, a student of Rashi, wrote a complete account of the liturgy then used in France. Called the *Maḥzor Vitry,* it provides "legal rulings on the entire cycle of liturgy as well as laws of Sabbath and other ritual and life-cycle matters,"[xxxii] and is the earliest known version of Ashkenazic liturgy. As one of the earliest known of all *siddurim,* it allows modern scholars to understand better the liturgical practices of the Jews of the Middle Ages. It is significant that several *zemirot Shabbat* are included in this *siddur.* Their inclusion in this important historic work testifies not only to the age of these particular *zemirot* texts, but to the prevalence of the custom among Jews of the time. Later, the publishing and widespread distribution of *zemirot Shabbat* and collections which include them such as Israel Najara's *Zemiroth Israel* (the first edition of which was published in 1587)[xxxiii] further serve to illustrate the popularity of Sabbath table songs; these volumes provide additional concrete evidence of the custom of singing *zemirot Shabbat* as well as the dating of certain texts.

Zemirot Shabbat would not have endeared themselves to Jewish families across the world had it not been for the gifted poets and scholars of several groups and time periods: the Jews living under Muslim rule during the "Golden Age" (the ninth through twelfth centuries); the Jews influenced by the study and practice of the *Kabbalah* (most specifically the understanding of the *Kabbalah* taught by Issac Luria of the sixteenth century); and the founders and followers of the Hasidic movement in Judaism in the eighteenth century.

In the *Dar 'al Islam* (the area of the world under Muslim control), Jews were given the status of "*dhimmi,*" a tolerated minority. As an autonomous group, they were permitted to control their own affairs provided they paid the required taxes and did not transgress certain rules, "the *dhimmi* (the technical term in Muslim law for 'dependent' peoples, i.e., Jews and Christians) were guaranteed religious toleration, judicial autonomy,

exemption from military service, and security of life and property. In turn, the *dhimmi* had to acknowledge the unquestioned political supremacy of the Islamic state."[xxxiv] Living under Muslim rule, Jews also had access to the flourishing Islamic secular culture that developed during the early Middle Ages. The accomplishments of Muslims in the areas of grammar, poetry and philosophy (among other areas) inspired Jews, who had previously been involved almost exclusively in Talmudic and other Jewish scholarship, to extend their areas of expertise into these areas as well.

With regard to poetry, Jews adopted elements of both the form and content of Arabic poetry to create secular as well as religious Hebrew poetry (including *zemirot Shabbat*). One such Jew was Dunash ben Labrat, a disciple of the great rabbinic figure Saadia Gaon in Baghdad and later "a protege of Hasdai Ibn Shaprut, the first important Jewish courtier in Muslim Spain."[xxxv] Dunash ben Labrat, who lived during the mid-tenth century, devised a way to adapt "to Hebrew poetry the pattern of the classical Arabic quantitative meter known as '*yetedot* and *tenuot*.' Essentially, this rhythmic system is built on distinguishing clearly between the short and long syllables that comprise a word."[xxxvi] The well-known *zemer* "*Deror Yiqra,*" attributed to Labrat, illustrates his use of this system. As Shiloah indicates, in every line of "*Deror Yiqra,*" there are two sets of the pattern of one *yated* (a short syllable followed by a long syllable) followed by one *tenu'ah* (two long syllables in a row). For example, the first line of the zemer is: "*Deror Yiqra leven 'im bat.*" The first set of the pattern is the *yated* comprised of the short syllable "*De*" and the long syllable "*ror*" (in the first word) and the *tenu'ah* of the two long syllables "*Yiq*" and "*ra*" (in the second word); the second set is the *yated* of the short syllable "*le*" and the long syllable "*ven*" (in the third word) followed by the *tenu'ah* of the long syllables "'*im,*" and "*bat*" (the fourth and fifth words). This kind of adoption of Arabic meter would have been popular among Jews who were familiar with Arabic poetry as well as Jews who may have simply had the sound of the Arabic language in their ears (as did many of the Jews living under Muslim rule during this time period).

Some of the other Jewish poets of this period adopted the system of syllabic meter. They favored this system over that of *yetedot* and *tenu'ot* because they considered it to be less rigid.[xxxvii] In syllabic meter, the verses are arranged according to the number of syllables per line rather than according to rhythm or accent. The poets who employed this system were thus freer to express their ideas without having to be as concerned with the cadence of the words. An example of a *zemer* that was written using syllabic meter is "*Ki Eshmera Shabbat,*" written by Abraham Ibn Ezra, which has nine syllables in each line.

"*Ki Eshmera Shabbat*" is also an example of a strophic poem. The art of strophic poetry developed during the eleventh and twelfth centuries in Spain. "From the beginning of the eleventh century, when this form developed in Spain, it dominated poetic creativity and greatly enriched the repertoire of songs."[xxxviii] Strophic poems, with metrically equal lines and often with repeating refrains, lend themselves to being sung; most of the *zemirot Shabbat* from this period and later follow this form.[xxxix] Two additional examples of such *zemirot* are the popular "*Zur Mishelo*" and "*Yah Ribbon.*" The *zemirot* tradition experienced a tremendous amount of growth as a result of the creative Jewish scholars and poets who flourished during the "Golden Age."

Followers of the *Kabbalah* in the sixteenth century were instrumental in the composition of the second major group of *zemirot Shabbat.* Both poetry and music had important roles in the world of the mystics:

> The kabbalists . . . believed in fostering poetic creativity, as it could raise the individual and help him overcome the drabness and mundane tribulations of life in this world. They believed that the heavenly gates opened to receive one who intoned a Psalm, a portion of the *Mishnah* or *Zohar,* and conscientiously sang hymns and supplications. He became a part, so to speak, of the wind that stirs the trees in paradise.[xl]

Also, "the *Zohar* . . . assigned great importance to music, indicating that God must be honored both by the beauty of one's soul and the beauty of one's voice."[xli] Kabbalists maintained that mystical ideas in the form of poetry and song could help the mystic to elevate his soul into the higher spheres of the Divine in order to come closer to God and experience a taste of the world to come.

The Kabbalists therefore composed a number of poems that were meant to be sung. These poems reinforced Kabbalistic ideas and enhanced the Kabbalists' observance of Shabbat. The poems of this genre that are still used today as *zemirot Shabbat* were written by Kabbalists such as Issac Luria. Luria wrote four *zemirot Shabbat,* each of which contains complex mystical ideas: the *zemer* "*'Atqinu Se'udata*" was intended to be sung as a prologue to each of the Shabbat meals; the other three *zemirot* were intended to follow this *zemer,* each one for a different one of the three meals: "*'Azamer Bishvaḥin*" for the first meal, "*'Asader Lise'udata*" for the second, and "*Bene Heḥala*" for the third. These *zemirot* functioned as "*kavanot*" for the Shabbat meals. In this significant Lurianic concept, a statement or poem, called a *"kavanah,"* was often included in the liturgy to be recited before a prayer. This *"kavanah"* was intended to direct (*l'kaven*) the worshippers, or to help them focus that particular prayer on a certain Kabbalistic idea or a specific *sefirah* of the Godhead. By reciting Luria's poems before each Shabbat meal, Kabbalists could ensure that they would have the proper intent while partaking of the meal. Consequently, for the Kabbalists, "[u]nlike other table songs for the eve of the Sabbath, which could be sung or not, as one pleased, it [in this case, specifically referring to "*'Azamer Bishvaḥin*"] was an indispensable part of the ritual."[xlii] In describing "*'Atkinu Se'udata,*" the renowned scholar of Jewish mysticism Gershom Scholem explains, "before the meal, as the *Zohar* prescribes, the master of the house 'explicitly utters the mystery of the meal,' that is, he introduces the sacred action in words which describes its [the meal's] sacred meaning and at the same time conjure the *Shekhinah* to partake of the meal with her Bridegroom . . . and the 'Holy Old One.'"[xliii] For Kabbalists, these *zemirot* were the key to unlocking the secret Kabbalistic meaning of the Shabbat meals.

The Kabbalists' *zemirot* were connected to mystic doctrines not only through their content but also through the language in which they were written. In their poetry, the mystics often employed Aramaic, the language of the main source of mystical ideology, the *Zohar*. All of Luria's *zemirot* are in Aramaic, as is a *zemer* attributed to one of his most

well-known students, the prolific poet and rabbi Israel ben Moshe of Najara. While Najara's *zemer*, "*Yah Ribbon*," has no apparent Kabbalistic meaning, Najara was undoubtedly influenced in his choice of language by his Kabbalistic studies.

Scholars and poets such as Luria and Najara recognized the educational potential of *zemirot*. They realized that the singing of Kabbalistic *zemirot* could aid in the spreading of mystical doctrines throughout the Jewish community, an important step in the preparation for the Messiah. "*Z'mirot* could be an effective and convenient vehicle for such dissemination, since they were sung weekly by entire families."[xliv] Although few modern Jews (with the exception of Hasidim) actively subscribe to Kabbalistic doctrines, the *zemirot* written by Kabbalists of the Lurianic school have endured to this day and a number of them remain popular among many Jews.

The third group which had a significant impact on the development of *zemirot Shabbat* was the Hasidim. The Hasidim embraced the Kabbalistic *zemirot* and added several *zemirot* of their own to the existing collection of *zemirot Shabbat*. One such *zemer* is "*Yah Ehsof*," "composed by Rabbi Aharon of Karlin, one of the greatest figures in the earliest period of Chassidim [the early eighteenth century]."[xlv] Although it is written in Hebrew and not Aramaic, "*Yah Ehsof*" follows the tradition of the Kabbalists in that it is rich in mystical imagery and symbolism. In general, in addition to expressing Kabbalistic ideas, Hasidic *zemirot* reinforced beliefs central to Hasidism such as: "the hallowing of all human passions; . . . delight in Divine commandments and legal precepts; . . . mystical ecstasy; . . . [and] *kavana* - an inward yearning for God."[xlvi]

Hasidism's textual contributions to the *zemirot* liturgy are dwarfed in number and arguably in importance by its musical contributions. "Some Hassidic courts, such as Sadgora or Boyan, expected their court composers to compose ever new tunes to favourite zemirot such as *yah ribbon 'alam* or to parts of *zemirot* such as *yeẓawweh ẓur hasdo* which is part of *baruḳ adonay yom yom*."[xlvii] In addition, the Hasidim borrowed many melodies from the surrounding culture and fit them to the *zemirot* texts. Hasidic leaders viewed

favorably this adoption and adaptation of foreign melodies because they believed that in so doing, they were "redeeming" the songs from an impure existence and elevating them to the sacred realm; in essence, they were performing acts of *tiqun*.[xlviii] Many of the currently popular melodies for *zemirot Shabbat* can be traced to various Hasidic courts.

The well-established practice of singing *zemirot Shabbat* has evolved and crystallized over the period of hundreds and perhaps thousands of years. Kabbalistic and Hasidic beliefs encouraged the spread of this practice in addition to the development of the *zemirot* texts. The culture and creativity of the poets during the "Golden Age" also contributed significantly to the textual repertoire. An understanding of the history behind the *zemirot* texts can provide one with a better context in which to examine the texts themselves.

II. TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

The singing of *zemirot Shabbat* often adds much joy and festivity to the celebration of Shabbat in the Jewish home. A Friday evening meal can last for hours, with countless melodies sung both between courses and after the actual meal is completed. Each family member may have a different favorite *zemer* which he or she looks forward to singing every week, and without which Shabbat would not be complete for him or her.

How often during the recitation of one's favorite *zemer,* however, does one pause to reflect on the origin and meaning of the texts which he/she is singing? These texts reinforce Jewish ideas and concepts that have existed for many centuries and are still relevant in modern times. The rich poetic *zemirot* texts are filled with praise of God, stress the holiness of the Sabbath and the importance of observing it properly (as described by the rabbis), and are replete with Messianic imagery and yearning for Zion. Steeped in Jewish tradition, they contain quotations from and references to Biblical, Talmudic, Midrashic, and Aggadic sources. These texts are timeless and are worthy of close examination.

The *zemer* "*Kol Meqadesh* " can be traced at least as far back as the eleventh century C.E., when it appeared in *Maḥzor Vitry* (for the full text of "*Kol Meqadesh,*" please refer to Appendix A-I). Its author is known only as "Moshe"(discerned from the acrostic formed by combining the first letter of the second word in each of the first three lines of the poem); however, some experts such as Dr. Leo Hirschfeld (considered to be an "authority on the literary aspects of the *zemirot* ") speculate that the author is actually Moses ben Kalonymos of tenth century Germany.[i] This poem is, for the most part, an alphabetical acrostic: the first word of each stanza starting with the second stanza follows the order of the *alelph-bet* through the letter *nun.* Within each stanza, the last word rhymes, but there is no meter. Customarily the first *zemer* recited after the Shabbat evening *Kiddush* (either during or after the actual meal), "*Kol Meqadesh* " focuses on the concept of the proper joyful observance of the holy day of Shabbat as well as the notion that those

who keep Shabbat in the prescribed manner will receive a reward (in this world or the next). Each stanza of the poem ends with a Biblical quotation.

The main idea of the first stanza is that those who keep the Sabbath will be rewarded. Delving more deeply into the text, commentators have broadened the interpretation of this idea. The last word of the first line, "*lo,*" can either refer to "*shevi'i*" (the seventh day) or to "*kol meqadesh*" (whoever hallows [a person]). Meir Chovav, in his book of *zemirot* commentaries entitled *Zeh ha-Shulhan,* follows the first explanation: one should sanctify the Sabbath as it is proper to sanctify it, or in a manner that befits the Sabbath.[ii] The commentary *Bais Yaakov* attempts to further clarify this explanation by extending the meaning of "*lo*" in reference to "*shevi'i*" to mean God; in other words, one should hallow Shabbat as befits God, or in order to honor God.[iii] *Torat Shimon* follows the second explanation: each person should keep Shabbat according to his own level.[iv] A scholar or a wealthy person would observe Shabbat differently than would an unlearned person or a person of limited means. In both cases, it is clear that one should sanctify the Sabbath to the fullest extent that one can.

The first two lines, when read together in relation to the third line, seem to espouse the same idea: one who observes the Sabbath will receive a great reward. In a closer reading, however, one notices that the first line describes one who hallows the Sabbath while the second line describes one who merely protects it from desecration. Commentators remark upon this distinction with regard to the commandment to keep the Sabbath in the Ten Commandments. "The sages explain that the first verse - *zachor,* remember [from Exodus 20:8] - refers to positive commandments such as *Kiddush,* fine clothing and meals, making adequate preparations, and devoting the day to spiritual elevation. The second verse - *shamor,* protect [from Deuteronomy 5:12] refers to the negative commandments of avoiding forbidden activities on the Sabbath (*Mateh Yehudah; Bais Yaakov; Siach Yitzchak*)." [v] The poet later refers specifically to the importance of upholding both types of observance, both *zahor* and *shamor* (in stanza six). One can

alternatively view this distinction with regard to each individual's ability to keep the Sabbath. While some can exalt the Sabbath in many ways (for example, by concentrating on Torah study), others may only be able to uphold the basic laws of Shabbat observance. The third line of the *zemer* asserts, nevertheless, that both categories of people will receive a great reward, with the stipulation that the reward will be according to each person's deeds. The reward one receives is linked directly to one's level of observance. One need not engage in a competition with one's neighbor over Sabbath observance out of fear of missing out on a reward from God. According to the *Chofetz Chaim* , "in God's scheme, unlike the material world, no individual's accomplishment ever competes or conflicts with another's. God's rewards are ample enough to satisfy everyone *at his own camp* and *at his own banner* without encroaching upon the portion of another."[vi] From this interpretation, one can also see that the stanza's Biblical verse (from Numbers 1:52) is meant to reinforce the concept of the three preceding lines of the poem. Each person will be rewarded on his or her own merits in keeping the Sabbath.

This *zemer* gives its readers some instruction on how to appropriately sanctify the Sabbath. The second stanza encourages Israel to "rejoice and be glad." Chovav notes that this rejoicing is more than just being happy; one should rejoice on Shabbat as Israel rejoiced when they received the Torah.[vii] This connection to Torah, as Nosson Scherman points out, is a "poetic allusion . . . [from the words *naḥalat 'el*]," and comes from the Talmud (*Eruvin* 54a).[viii] The joy that Israel should experience "derives not from the physical pleasures of the Sabbath, but from its spiritual riches, for it brings with it a spiritual splendor equivalent to that perceived by our ancestors when they received the Torah at Mount Sinai (*Bais Yaakov*).[ix] While the food one eats on Shabbat may cause happiness on a physical level, the spirit of Shabbat itself is food for the soul and is the main cause for rejoicing.

Consequently, it is reasonable to believe that Israel would look forward to Shabbat each week. Although people have no control over the times at which Shabbat arrives and

departs, the third stanza praises those who prolong their own personal observance of Shabbat by welcoming it early and delaying their recognition of its departure (in the form of evening prayers and *Havdalah*).[x] The text actually reverses the order of these two times because, as explained in the commentary of *Beit Aharon,* when Israel was first given the Sabbath, they had not yet known the wonderful taste of Shabbat. Once they had experienced Shabbat, however, they had difficulty parting from it; they delayed its departure and then proceeded to hasten its arrival in the future.[xi] In describing Israel's eagerness to prolong the Sabbath and to pay close attention to the laws of the *eruv* [1] (the word meaning "to protect" is again used here in reference to avoiding a transgression of Shabbat), the poet likens Israel "to Abraham who was distinguished for his selfless love of God (*Siach Yitzchak*)."[xii] The quotation from Psalms (118:24) at the end of stanza three helps to emphasize the idea of Shabbat as a day that belongs to God in which Israel should rejoice.

One would not be able to understand how God expected Israel to observe Shabbat without the Oral Law.[xiii] The Oral Law (the Talmud) explains and clarifies many of the details pertaining to Sabbath observance that are not contained in the Written Law (the Torah). The poet emphasizes the importance of the Oral Law to the rabbis and to Jews throughout the ages in stanza four (specifically, with the reference to "*Torat Moshe,*" or "Moses' Torah"). As Chovav explains, "remember to carry out the commandment of Shabbat that is written in the written Torah, as it is studied in the Oral Torah."[xiv]

This *zemer* gives additional guidance for how to celebrate Shabbat. The fifth stanza reminds Israel that every minute of Shabbat is equally holy and should be recognized as such, and enjoins them to rest and "be glad with the pleasure of food and drink." Every Jew (as emphasized by the quotation from Exodus 12:47) should not only desist from work on the Sabbath but should make a point of enjoying special meals. The seventh

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[1] "the laws governing the distance beyond which one may not walk and the means to render it permissible to carry from the enclosed estate of one person directly into that of another (*Siach Yitzchak*)" (Scherman 55).

stanza furthers these same ideas. It specifically mentions two types of work which one should avoid on Shabbat (plowing and harvesting, as symbolic of the 39 different categories of labor forbidden on Shabbat) as well as the three meals Jews are required to eat on Shabbat (as mentioned in the Talmud, Shabbat 117b).[xv] Additionally, Jews should refrain from hurrying from place to place on Shabbat; as the second line indicates, they should take short (as opposed to long) strides. The reason one should observe all of these ordinances is clearly stated: in order to bless God. This stanza additionally implores God to help those who observe Shabbat in the prescribed manner and to bless them with righteousness.

Several references in this *zemer* illustrate Israel's desire for the messianic age. The poet expresses this desire through allusions to the Temple and to a rebuilt Jerusalem. In the second stanza, he mentions the longings of the people for the "*binyan 'ariel,*" or "leonine Temple" (so-named for the lion-like shape of the Temple, "it was wide at its entrance and it narrowed toward its back like a lion whose shoulders are broad and whose haunches are narrow (*Middos 4*)").[xvi] The sixth stanza appeals to God to gladden the people with a rebuilt Jerusalem, and employs the original name for Jerusalem found in Genesis 14:18, *Shalem.*[xvii] *Shalem* can also be interpreted to mean complete. In this sense, "*binyan shalem* " would refer to a complete Temple. As *Torat Avot* comments, the Temple can only be complete when God dwells in it in the world-to-come.[xviii] Another commentary in *Torat Avot* views "*binyan shalem* " as the world-to-come: Israel asks God to bring them happiness in the next world, expressing the idea that this world is just a corridor to the living room of the next world.[xix] In *Zeh ha-Shulhan,* Meir Chovav includes a final stanza of "*Kol Meqadesh* " [2] that emphasizes the role of Shabbat observance in bringing redemption, "the Shabbat that they observe will bring them to dwell in the Temple."[xx] This concept is present in the Midrash, which "comments that Sabbath observance brings nearer the day when the Temple and Jerusalem will be rebuilt (*Siach Yitzchak*).[xxi] In

[2] This stanza is omitted in most *siddurim,* although, as Chovav notes, it appears in *Mahzor Vitry* (29).

rabbinic literature, Shabbat is often considered to be a taste of the world-to-come. When given this taste, Jews cannot help but hunger for more, as evidenced by the references to the *'olam ha-ba* in this and other *zemirot* sung on Shabbat.

"*Menuḥah ve-Simḥah,*" like "*Kol Meqadesh,*" is a *zemer* that focuses on Shabbat and its observance (for the full text of "*Menuḥah ve-Simḥah,*" please refer to Appendix A-II). The similarity in theme of these two *zemirot* is perhaps the reason behind the Ashkenazic practice of singing "*Menuḥah ve-Simḥah* " immediately after "*Kol Meqadesh* ." Additionally, despite the fact that the *zemer* mentions several Shabbat morning prayers by name and refers to the *Kiddush* recited at the Shabbat afternoon meal, according to this practice, "*Menuḥah ve-Simḥah* " is sung at the Friday evening meal. The composer of "*Menuḥah ve-Simḥah* " is unknown except for his first name, Moshe, which is formed by the first letters of each of the first three stanzas. Moshe is thought to have lived "during, or prior to 1545, when the *zemer* first appeared in print."[xxii] Although this *zemer* has no refrain, it is metrical and the last word of each of the five four-line stanzas rhymes.

The first two stanzas emphasize the connection between observing Shabbat and creation. As in "*Kol Meqadesh,*" the third line of the first stanza refers to the two types of Shabbat observance implied by the use of the words for "to protect" and "to remember" (from the Ten Commandments). As the *zemer* suggests, those who uphold both negative and positive commandments of the Sabbath are witnesses to creation. When Jews keep Shabbat, according to the fourth line, they "demonstrate that they acknowledge the fact that God created the universe in six days. As the Talmud (*Shabbos* 119b) teaches, . . . 'Whoever recites *vayechulu* [the passage from Gen. 2:1-3 relating that God completed His creation of the universe] is considered as if he had become a partner of the Holy One, Blessed be He, in the creation.'"[xxiii] Therefore, Jews who observe Shabbat are viewed as participants in creation. The commentary of *Yismach Moshe* furthers this idea by interpreting "*le-shishah* " as "for six days" instead of "in six days" (if the poet had wanted to imply "in," he could have written "*be-shishah* "); in other words, the initial creation was

intended to last for only six days. There was not enough holiness in these days to allow creation to endure for a longer period of time. With the coming of the Sabbath (the seventh day), however, the universe received enough holiness to sustain it for another week, until the next Sabbath (and the same with every subsequent Sabbath). "[T]he Sabbath, by virtue of its unique holiness, is the very soul of creation . . . Without the Sabbath, creation in its mundane, weekday state could not have endured."[xxiv] Thus, as *Mateh Yehudah* notes, the Sabbath-observing Jew becomes God's partner in creation in a more real sense.[xxv] His/her observance helps to renew and sustain the creation of the universe for another week.

The second stanza is devoted to details of creation:

> The order of creatures in this verse follows the order in which they came into existence during the six days of creation. The heavens, earth, and seas were created and put in their permanent form during the first three days; the *host above,* referring to the heavenly bodies, was created on the fourth day; aquatic life on the fifth; and man and the land animals on the sixth (*Mateh Yehudah*).[xxvi]

The creatures listed in the third line (sea giant, man, and land beast) are mentioned not only as general categories of animals, but as Chovav suggests, as specific references to the greatest and most powerful animals in each of their realms (ocean, land, and [from an aggadic source] desert).[xxvii] Additionally, in the last line of this stanza, the poet refers to God as *Yah* (one of God's many names) in order to emphasize God in God's role as Creator. "[A]s the sages teach, heaven was created with the letter *yod* and earth with the letter *he.* Thus, the entire universe was created by means of those two letters which, in combination, form the Name, *Yah.*"[xxviii] The last line also asserts that God is "*Ẓur 'Olamim,*" the "Rock of the Universe." As Chovav notes, this phrase comes from Isaiah 26:4;[xxix] it is meant to evoke the image of God's strength and power. Continuing the first stanza's idea that observers of the Sabbath bear witness to God's creation, the second stanza implies that "all parts of the universe [as listed in the stanza] bear witness to His power."[xxx] God, as the Almighty Creator, is the stronghold of the universe, with whom Jews are connected in their observance of Shabbat.

The third stanza describes this link between Israel, the Sabbath, and creation. "Israel is God's treasure because He chose it from among all the nations and maintains a special interest in its destiny. The Sabbath [is] precious to God . . . because God completed creation on that day."[xxxi] God thus entrusted God's treasured people with the responsibility of protecting the sanctity of God's precious Sabbath.

The fourth and fifth stanzas allude to the positive effect that proper Shabbat observance has on Israel and provides examples of such observance. The first line states that God will strengthen you ("*yaḥalizakh* ") through the commandment of Shabbat. In other words, as a result of a Jew's faithful attention to the precepts of Shabbat, he/she is fortified by God ("most commentators [e.g. *Bais Yaakov, Mateh Yehudah, Es HaZamir*]agree that '*yaḥalizakh* ' refers to physical health and strength,"[xxxii]). With that knowledge, as the second line urges, you should hasten to arise and call out to God and, in response, God will rush to fortify you ("*yaḥish le-'amzakh* "). As Moshe Pinter comments, on Shabbat one is not permitted to beseech God with petitions. He further notes that the other days of the week are connected to Shabbat (even the names of the weekdays are tied to Shabbat: the first day of Shabbat, the second day of Shabbat, etc.); therefore, if one keeps Shabbat, he/she will be strengthened on all other days.[xxxiii] In other words, God will rush to answer a Jew's pleas when he/she petitions God during the rest of the week on account of his/her Shabbat observance. Other commentators argue that this line does indeed refer to calling out to God on Shabbat, in the form of Shabbat prayers.[xxxiv] Two Shabbat prayers are then listed in the third line: "*Nishmat Kol Ḥai* " from *shaḥarit* (the morning service) and "*Na-'arizakh* " from the "*qedushah* " prayer of *musaf* (the additional service). An alternate reading of the second line takes into account the fact that "early siddurim contained a prayer which began '*Yachish L'Amtzach.*' It was recited before '*Nishmas* ' as part of the Morning Service. If so, the *zemer* follows the call to prayer ["*qum qera 'elav* "] with a list of three prominent Sabbath prayers, rather than with an

assurance that God will rush to strengthen the supplicant (*Mateh Yehudah, Es HaZamir*)."[xxxv]

As the fourth line indicates, after the completion of one's Sabbath prayers, one should enjoy a Sabbath meal. Chovav comments that one can eat in gladness because of the knowledge that God had desired ("*ki khevar razakh* ") the previously-uttered prayers.[xxxvi] *Sidduro shel Shabbos* asserts instead that this phrase refers to the fact that God desires that the Jew enjoy a meal, "the observance of the Sabbath must include the physical satisfaction of food and drink (*Pesaḥim* 68b) . . . after having honored the Sabbath and prayed sincerely, one can be sure that even his physical indulgence will have won God's approval."[xxxvii]

From the fifth stanza, one learns that at one's Sabbath meal, one should have two loaves of bread ("*mishneh leḥem* ") and recite the Sabbath morning *Kiddush* ("*Kiddush rabbah* "), both as required by Jewish law. One should also dine on many different types of food and have a "generous spirit." Although poor Jews may not even be able to buy wine for *Kiddush* while wealthy Jews may partake of an extravagant banquet, *Divrei Yechezkel* notes that "all classes of Jews . . . are united in *ruaḥ nedivah,* the *generous spirit* of sincerity with which they dedicate themselves to serve God to the best of their ability."[xxxviii] The last two lines state that those who celebrate Shabbat in the prescribed manner will merit good in this world and will deserve to witness the coming of the Messiah and the world-to-come. The *zemer* thus ends with a reference to redemption and the belief that those who observe Shabbat will be rewarded in both this world and the next.

"*Yah Ribbon* " is one of the most universally well-known *zemirot* of Shabbat (for the full text of "*Yah Ribbon,*" please refer to Appendix A-III). Despite the fact that this *zemer* does not contain any reference to Shabbat, it has endeared itself to Jews all over the world as an artful and sincere hymn of praise to God. "*Yah Ribbon* " was written in the mid-sixteenth century C.E. by Rabbi Israel ben Moshe of Najara. Najara, who later became the rabbi of Gaza, lived primarily in Safed, where he was a student of the Kabbalist

Issac Luria. Najara was thus well-versed in the *Kabbalah,* and frequently wrote compositions (such as "*Yah Ribbon* ") in Aramaic, "the spoken language of the Jewish people for thousands of years,"[xxxix] as well as the language of the mystical doctrine of the *Zohar.* "*Yah Ribbon* " is only one of the over 400 poems with which Najara is credited.[xl] As R. Yehudah of Modina said of Najara, *"lo kam be-Yisrael ke-Yisrael,"*[xli] there is no one who has risen in Israel like Israel (Najara). The uniquely special quality of Najara's poetry, and "*Yah Ribbon* " in particular, is alluded to in the writings of the Ari: when Najara would sing the *zemer* ("*Yah Ribbon* "), angels would come down from the upper world to hear his *zemer.*[xlii]

This trimetered *zemer* has five stanzas, with the first half of the first stanza serving as a refrain. Within each stanza, the last word of each line rhymes. Additionally, the poet's first name, Israel, is formed by the first letter of the first word of each stanza.

In "*Yah Ribbon,*" Jews praise God as Creator and powerful Master of all and implore God to redeem them from exile. As in "*Menuḥah ve-Simḥah,*" the name of God employed in the first stanza (and as part of the refrain), "*Yah,*" in itself refers to the aspect of God that is Creator. The second stanza concentrates on the image of God as the Creator of all life, of things both spiritual and earthly: God created angels, man, beasts of the field, and birds of the sky.

God's unfathomable power and might are described in the first and third stanzas. The first stanza depicts God as the "*Ribon 'alam ve-'almaya,*" or "Master of this world and all worlds."[xliii] Several interpretations of this phrase are that God is the Master of: earth and the heavens; this world and the world-to-come; or this present world (as a time period in history) and all other time periods, both past and future.[xliv] Also in the first stanza, God is the "*Malka Melekh malkhaya,*" the King, the King of all kings. As the ultimate ruler, God reigns over both earthly and spiritual forces. As expressed in stanza three, God has the ability to humble or make poor the haughty ("*makhikh remaya*") and to straighten the bowed ("*ve-zakef kefifin* "). The second half of this phrase is also present in the liturgy of

the morning service. In one of the one-line blessings in the *birkhot ha-shaḥar* section, God is praised for straightening the bowed. God has the ability to cast down arrogant rich people and to raise up righteous poor people; one's position in life is never free from God's hand. Such an almighty Power is beyond human comprehension. No matter how long one lives, even "*shenin 'alfin*" (thousands of years), one can never fully understand the extent of God's might.

In the fourth and fifth stanzas, the poem calls upon God in all of God's greatness (which is described and praised in the first three stanzas) to bring Israel out of exile and to return to Jerusalem. Stanza four refers to the people Israel as sheep that are helpless against powerful lions; only God can save Israel from their terrible predicament of being cast into exile.[xliv] To strengthen Israel's plea for redemption, the poet here chooses to emphasizes God's special relationship with and therefore heightened responsibility toward Israel (Israel is the people that God chose from all of the nations). Stanza five expresses Israel's desire for God (and implied is for Israel also) to return to the Temple (referred to here as "*miqdashekh*" and "*qodesh qudshin*"). All beings, spiritual and physical beings as well as the spirit and body of each person ("*ruḥin ve-nafshin*"), would then rejoice with song and praise of God in Jerusalem.

"*Ẓur Mishelo*" is a popular *zemer* of unknown authorship and uncertain dating (for the full text of "*Ẓur Mishelo,*" please refer to Appendix A-IV). Like "*Yah Ribbon,*" it does not mention or allude to Shabbat at all. Rather, it parallels "*Birkat ha-Mazon*" (the blessing recited after meals) in both content and structure. As a result, it is customarily the last *zemer* sung before "*Birkat ha-Mazon*" and serves as an introduction to this prayer. The first two lines of "*Ẓur Mishelo*" roughly correspond to the *zimun* (the invitation to others to join in the prayer) of "*Birkat ha-Mazon,*" the first stanza to *birkat ha-zan* (the first blessing, about food), the second stanza to *birkat ha-'aretz* (the second blessing, about the land of Israel), and the third stanza to *birkat Yerushalayim* (the third blessing, about the rebuilding of Jerusalem).[xlvi] Most commentators agree that "*Ẓur Mishelo*" does not contain

any hint of a connection to *birkat ha-tov ve-hametiv* (the fourth blessing).[3] This lack of connection has made it difficult for scholars to agree on a date for this *zemer*. Some, such as Hirschfeld, date "*Ẓur Mishelo* " to the early Tannaitic period (the first to second centuries, C.E.), by explaining that it was composed before the fourth blessing was added to "*Birkat ha-Mazon.*"[4] [xlvii] Hazan also dates the *zemer* to this early period, proposing that it was written according to the example of "ancient poetic food blessings" which did not contain a reference to the fourth blessing (either the blessing had not yet been added or was not yet considered to be an integral enough part of "*Birkat ha-Mazon* " to warrant a parallel in these poetic blessings).[xlviii] Other scholars such as Herbert Loewe "observ[e] stylistic elements [in "*Ẓur Mishelo* "] that suggest the twelfth century."[xlix] The controversy over the date of composition of "*Ẓur Mishelo* " is only one of its many interesting aspects.

This *zemer* is metrical, with four four-line stanzas and a two-line introduction that serves as a repeating refrain. Each line is divided into two parts; in the first three lines of each stanza, the last word of each part rhymes with the corresponding word on the next line (for example, in the first stanza: "'*olamo* " with "*laḥmo* " and "*lishmo* "; "'*avinu* " with "*shatinu* " and "*be-finu* "). In the fourth line of each stanza, the last word of the first half of the line rhymes instead with the last words of the second halves of the preceding lines, while the last word of its second half(which in every stanza is God's name) rhymes with the last words of the second half of the refrain (again in the first stanza, "'*aninu* "with the preceding "*be-finu,*" "*shatinu,*" and "'*avinu* "; "*Adonai* " with "*Adonai* " and "'*emunai* "). As a result, this change in rhyming convention becomes a segue from each stanza to the

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[3] In attempting to draw parallels between every stanza of "*Ẓur Mishelo* " and "*Birkat ha-Mazon,*" however, some commentators assert that the subject of the fourth stanza is the glass of wine over which, according to some traditions, "*Birkat ha-Mazon* " is recited.

[4] It is generally recognized that this fourth blessing was composed much later than the other three. As Hazan explains, *Masekhet Berakhot* 48b attributes: the first blessing to Moses (at the time when the manna descended for the people of Israel), the second blessing to Joshua (after Israel had entered the land), the third blessing to David and Solomon, and the fourth to the sages at Yavneh (during Mishnaic times, as "an expression of gratitude to God for preserving the bodies of the victims of the Roman massacre at Betar, and for eventually allowing them to be brought to burial" (Scherman 109) (Hazan 51).

refrain. Finally, each stanza contains Biblical references, and as in "*Kol Meqadesh,*" ends with a Biblical quotation.

The central concept of "*Zur Mishelo,*" is the praising of God who is the provider for and redeemer of Israel. The introductory lines of the *zemer* invite Israel (referred to here as "*emunai,*" or my faithful friends, from Isaiah 26:2)[l] to join in this task of blessing God. God is the source of all that we enjoy in life, including the food that we eat, an idea alluded to by the words "*mishelo 'akhalnu.*" The same words appear in the *zimun* of "*Birkat ha-Mazon*" ("*barukh she-akhalnu mishelo*") and refer to a *midrash* in *Bereshit Rabbah* 49. In this *midrash,* Abraham receives guests who enjoy food and drink with him; "[w]hen the people thanked him . . . he replied that they should thank God from Whose largesse they had eaten ["*barukh el elyon she-akhalnu mishelo*"] (*Dover Sholom*)."[li] When Jews eat, they must acknowledge that their food comes ultimately from God.

This idea is also emphasized in the first stanza, which parallels the blessing for food in "*Birkat ha-Mazon.*" In this blessing, Jews praise God "*ha-zan et ha-'olam kulo be-tuvo",* who nourishes the whole world with God's goodness; in the first stanza, God *"ha-zan et 'olamo"*, nourishes God's world. In this stanza, God's role as provider is stressed by the usage of the possessive form in the words "*'olamo,*" "*laḥmo,*" and "*yeno.*"[lii] It is God's world, and it is God's bread and wine that we consume. Our Provider is viewed in this role as a loving caretaker, as evidenced by the words "*ro'enu*"(our shepherd) and "*'avinu*" (our father).

The second line of the introduction furthers the idea that God will always provide for Israel by employing a quotation from *Kings II* 4:42-43. In this section of the Bible, there is seemingly not enough food to feed a group of people; nevertheless, the amount suffices, and as God had assured, there is even food left over. In light of the hunger that exists in so much of the world today, the idea that God will always supply food for those in need may be troublesome. By continuing to sing this *zemer,* however, Jews affirm a

belief in God's goodness and pray that the day will come soon in which all people will be able to eat their fill and still have food remaining.

In the second stanza, as in the second blessing of "*Birkat ha-Mazon,*" Jews thank and bless God for the land of Israel. God gave the land to Israel's forefathers to be passed down from generation to generation as an eternal inheritance (indicated by the phrase "*she-hinḥil la-'avoteinu* "). Even if Israel is not physically occupying the land, it is still and will always be theirs. As Scherman comments, "[e]xile means only that God denied Israel access to the Land in punishment for the nation's sins, but not that the Land ceased to be Israel's."[liii] In addition to the expression of gratitude for the land, this stanza contains another reference to God's nourishing of Israel. Two different words are employed to give voice to this concept: "*mazon* " and "*zedah.*" Chovav interprets the words to mean that God is concerned that Israel be satiated both at home (*mazon*) and on the road (*zedah*).[liv] No matter where a Jew may be, he/she should not go hungry. *Zera Kodesh* interprets the words differently, by explaining that they refer to two distinct aspects of food: physical (*mazon*) and spiritual (*zedah*). When one eats, one's body benefits from the physical aspects of the food, while the soul enjoys the spiritual aspects.[lv] It is only through the attainment of both of these aspects that a person's whole being can be satisfied; and God is the one who is responsible for making such satisfaction possible ("*hisbi'a le-nafshenu* "). Scherman makes a similar observation in his interpretation of the difference between bread and wine in stanza one, "[b]read represents the absolute necessities of life. Wine is symbolic of the extra pleasures that add joy to spiritual and physical life . . . Thus the *zemer* thanks God for providing not only life itself, but also its extra dimensions."[lvi]

The third stanza of "*Zur Mishelo* " implores God to have compassion on Israel and bring the Messiah to redeem Israel. While it does not refer explicitly to the rebuilding of Jerusalem as does the third blessing of "*Birkat ha-Mazon,*" the words "*ẓion* " and "*bet tifartenu* " are intended to mean, respectively, Jerusalem and the Temple.[lvii] Many facets of Jewish tradition espouse the belief that Jerusalem will be rebuilt when, as hoped for in this

stanza, the Messiah comes. As the commentaries of both Chovav and Hazan explain, "*mashiaḥ Adonai*" (the Messiah) is the "*ruaḥ 'apenu*" (breath of our nostrils). We are dependent on him; he is like air that is necessary in order for us to breathe.[lviii] This phrase in the last line of the stanza is a quotation from, "*Ekhah* 4:20 where it refers to the tragic end of a king of Judah."[lix] Scherman views the phrase as "a poetic expression for the very essence of national hope and identity which is represented by a monarchy conducting itself with full allegiance to the Torah."[lx] In Scherman's opinion, the phrase does not allude to the Messiah, but to the Torah-observant monarchy that Israel hopes will soon be restored; in this case, the monarchy is the "*ruaḥ 'apeinu*," the life force of the nation of Israel.

In the fourth stanza, there is a specific plea for the Temple to be rebuilt and Jerusalem to be (literally) filled. Jerusalem should be filled with justice and righteousness, as is written in Isaiah 33:5,[lxi] or as interpreted by *Bais Yaakov,* with "throngs of Jews as it was in happier times." [lxii] Hazan views the references to Jerusalem in this stanza and the preceding one as an expansion of the theme of the third blessing of "*Birkat ha-Mazon.*" In linking these two stanzas with regard to *birkat Yerushalayim,* Hazan observes that Israel's yearning for redemption and the rebuilding of Jerusalem assumes a central place in this *zemer.*[lxiii] This yearning is extremely prominent in the Jewish consciousness, so it is not surprising that it receives a great deal of attention in this *zemer* . When Israel is redeemed, there will be much rejoicing and singing. As Chovav notes, the songs will be about redemption;[lxiv] *Bais Yaakov* comments that when the Messiah comes, Israel will be able to adequately express its joy only through newly-composed songs ("*shir ḥadash* ").[lxv] The last two lines reiterate the idea that God should be blessed, and further note that this blessing should be in the form of a blessing over a full cup of wine. As *Mateh Yehudah* explains, "[a] full cup is symbolic of the blessings of property which God gives His people."[lxvi] In connecting the lines about the cup of wine to the preceding lines about the Temple, Scherman asserts, "we pray that we be privileged to make the blessing amid the

greatest possible happiness - with a restored Jerusalem and rebuilt Temple."[lxvii] "*Ẓur Mishelo* " thus ends with joyous praise of God and the faith that God will redeem Israel.

These *zemirot* texts help to clarify some of the beliefs that Jews hold most dear: God is omnipotent and the Creator of everything in the universe, and is thus worthy and deserving of praise; God will cause the Messiah to come to redeem the Jews and to bring them to a rebuilt Jerusalem (Jews pray that this redemption will occur soon); and as the day that God rested from the work of Creation, the Sabbath is a holy day that must be observed and sanctified as commanded by God. When Jews sing these *zemirot* on Shabbat, they express and affirm these beliefs; in so doing, they strengthen their faith as well as their Jewish identities.

III. MUSICAL HERITAGE

Without their melodies, *zemirot Shabbat* would just be a collection of Jewish poetry. It was only through the combination of the texts and the melodies that the tradition of *zemirot Shabbat* was born and became popular throughtout the Jewish community. The *zemirot* tradition is primarily an oral one. While texts were written down from at least as far back as the eleventh century C.E., until relatively recently, melodies were passed from one generation to the next simply through their rendition at Sabbath tables and their retention in the minds and hearts of Jews. These melodies were either borrowed or newly composed. In both cases, the melodies were influenced by the cultures in which the Jews lived. Many of the world's Jewish communities have their own unique collection of *zemirot Shabbat.* Additionally, as is to be expected from an oral tradition, there are innumerable variants that exist of each melody. As a result, there are more melodies for *zemirot Shabbat* than one could possibly count.

Despite the enormous variety in this genre of music, there are observable common musical characteristics. Since the *zemirot* are meant to be sung by lay people and not by trained cantors, most melodies are not excessively complex or difficult to sing. There are typically not more than two or three sections in any one *zemer* (usually one melodic section for the verses and one for the refrain, when present). Also, in most *zemirot,* the pitch range is modest: the tendency is to avoid both extremely low and high notes in favor of remaining in a middle register that is comfortable for the majority of people. There are few embellishments, except for those optionally added by individual singers. In addition, in most traditions, there is a combination of recitative and metrical style-*zemirot.* Some *zemirot* such as "*Kol Meqadesh*" are always sung in a recitative manner due to the non-metrical nature of their poetry; others may be sung either way, and some have both styles present in different sections of the same *zemer.* Beyond these shared traits, the music of *zemirot Shabbat* differs greatly from community to community.

In many communities, musical styles and melodies from the outside culture often played a role in the development of *zemirot* melodies. Unlike synagogue song, which is based upon a specific system of prayer modes, *zemirot* do not have set musical guidelines to which they must adhere; as such, they are more open to outside influences. Elements from the musical world around Jews may be incorporated into *zemirot* melodies. As Levin notes, "motivic, tonal, melodic, cadential, rhythmic and structural [elements] . . . might be superimposed on existing or traditional tunes, or combined with motivic fragments from Jewish sources, such as leading motifs; or, they might be incorporated into 'new' or original melodies."[i] For example, the rhythm of a German march might be imposed on one *zemer,* while the Slavic Ukranian Dorian mode might be used to color another.[ii] In this way, elements from the outside culture are blended into the *zemirot.*

In addition to these stylistic elements, melodies were often borrowed outright from the surrounding culture and adapted to fit the *zemirot* texts. This method of acquiring new melodies, called contrafact, "is a universal folkloristic device, involving the use of a pre-existent tune for a new or different text (i.e., a text other than the original)."[iii] Contrafact even played a role in the generation of the *zemirot* texts, such as those written by Israel Najara (the sixteenth century-composer of "*Yah Ribbon*" and hundreds of other songs and poems). Najara noted that the Jews of his time were attracted to foreign melodies; however, he realized that the syllabic and rhythmic structure of the texts of these melodies was not readily compatible with Hebrew, the poetic language of the Jews. He tried to reconcile these two considerations by adapting his original Hebrew texts so that they would fit better with the foreign melodies. "He considered it almost a sacred task to make his poem and the foreign melody fit each other perfectly. . . . It was his hope that if he wrote in this fashion, the Jewish public would eschew the foreign songs in favor of his."[iv] Najara was successful in his efforts: "his book *Songs of Israel,* first printed in Safed in 1587, was very well received and widely distributed. During his own lifetime it was reprinted in three editions."[v] The fact that Najara was willing to change his original Hebrew poetry to fit the

foreign melodies demonstrates the extent to which these melodies had infiltrated Jewish culture.

After the *zemirot* texts were composed, Jews continued to employ contrafact. "Contrafact sources were secular, and usually politically neutral."[vi] Many of these sources were popular folk songs that Jews combined with the familiar *zemirot* texts and thus adopted as their own.

The Hasidic community also adopted songs from the outside culture for their *zemirot Shabbat.* Unlike Najara, however, the Hasidim explained this practice in religious terms. They integrated contrafact into their ideology and world view, as part of the Kabbalistic doctrine of *tiqun.* Hasidim maintain that all melodies (as part of God's world) contain sparks of God's divine essence; however, in the case of melodies that are set to secular texts and employed for non-religious purposes, these divine sparks are trapped in profane shells (*kelipot*). It is incumbent upon the Hasid to act to free these sparks so that they can rejoin God's divine realm. The more of these sparks that are freed, the sooner the Messiah will be able to come to redeem the world. It is thus the duty of the learned *zadik* (the Hasidic leader) to identify the melodies that are most worthy of being lifted out of their profane contexts and employed in the service of God. "[I]t was a 'holy task' to 'redeem' a tune that had fallen into profane use and to restore it to its divine origin."[vii] [1] By using the melodies for a sacred purpose such as singing God's praises in *zemirot Shabbat*, the divine sparks in the melodies would be released from their shells, thereby bringing the world one step closer to redemption. Whether this connection with *tiqun* was the reason behind the Hasidims' use of foreign melodies or merely a rationalization for the existing practice, contrafact played a role in enlarging the Hasidic repertoire of melodies for *zemirot Shabbat.*

In Hasidic as well as in general Jewish practice, the process of adopting melodies often involved changing the melodies to some degree. In some cases, rhythms were

[1] Avenary notes that the Hasidic belief that melodies could be "redeemed" existed in the non-Jewish community as well, "[i]t was the general custom during the Middle Ages to transfer favorite melodies from a lower sphere to a nobler one, for moral or religious purposes"; he quotes Luther who said, "[t]he devil

adapted to accomodate the cadence of the Hebrew poetry; in others, words were repeated or nonsense syllables added. Other alterations that gave foreign melodies a more Jewish flavor were the addition of Jewish liturgical motifs or fragments, modal characteristics (for example, a melody could be transformed from natural minor to the Jewish prayer mode *Ahavah Rabah* by the lowering of the second degree of the scale and the raising of the third, either throughout or at cadences), and certain patterns of ornamentation. [viii] For Hasidim, "[t]he reassembling of the 'errant tones' [the adaptation of foreign melodies] floating about in the 'Universe of Song' (*olam hanigun*) was truly a 'rebirth,' releasing that 'divine spark' which is hidden in each tune."[ix] Once the melodies were adapted, they were no longer thought of as foreign; they were simply adopted as part of the diverse repertoire of Jewish music.

The melodies that Jews adopted for the purpose of singing *zemirot* did not come solely from the outside culture. A great deal of internal borrowing took place. Jews often set *zemirot* texts to Jewish folk melodies. A well-known example of this kind of contrafact is the *zemer* "*Zur Mishelo*" when it is sung to the melody of the Sephardic song "*La Rosa Enflorece* " (please refer to Appendix B-I). Jews also included liturgical melodies, or fragments thereof, in their *zemirot Shabbat.* In many versions of the *zemer* "*Kol Meqadesh,*" the mode and musical motifs are reminiscent of those present in prayers from the Shabbat liturgy. A comparison between a version of this *zemer* from page six of the *Mayerowitsch Anthology* (here taken from Neil Levin's *Zemirot Anthology*) and Adolph Katchko's setting of "*B'rochos V'hodoos* " (from the "*Shokhen 'Ad* " section of the *Shaharit,* or morning service of Shabbat, as taken from the first volume of his *Thesaurus of Cantorial Liturgy*) exemplifies the *zemer's* parallels with the liturgy (please refer to Appendix B-II). Both of these settings are in the "*Magen Avot* " mode, most similar to the Western minor mode (both settings also happen to be in the same key of D - "*Magen Avot,*" which makes comparisons even easier). Additionally, the musical phrases are

need not keep all the fine tunes for himself alone." (29)

strikingly similar. Starting with the last note of line two of "*B'rochos V'hodoos,*" the first phrase contains a repeated string of A's (the fifth scale degree), and pauses on this note (on the syllable "*chos* "). The first phrase of "*Kol Meqadesh* " is almost identical, and also pauses on A (on the word "*lo* "). The second phrase of both settings features an ascending fourth from A to D (the fifth to the first scale degrees) and then a quick descent to C (one major step lower), followed by a four-note descending run which pauses on F, the third scale degree: the syllable "*os* " in line four of "*B'rochos V'hodoos,*" and the word "*lo* " in the last measure of line two of "*Kol Meqadesh.*" The third phrase of both settings pauses on a G, the fourth scale degree: the syllable "*ro*" at the end of line four of "*B'rochos V'hodoos,*" and the syllable "*lo* " in the third measure of line three of "*Kol Meqadesh.*" The final cadence of both "*B'rochos V'hodoos* " and "*Kol Meqadesh* " contains the movement from F to G, followed by a descending fourth to the tonic, D. In addition to these musical parallels, the recitative nature of "*Kol Meqadesh* " further links it with the music of the synagogue.

It was not uncommon for such music from the synagogue to accompany the Jew home and be incorporated into *zemirot Shabbat.* Levin notes that favorite melodies from holidays other than Shabbat were also adopted for *zemirot.* In one version of "*Yom Shabbaton,*" "the sequential motif beginning at m. 14 is closely akin to a well-known Eastern European melody for the *Avot* section of the High Holiday liturgy (*M'chalkel Hayim*)." [x] This melody appears in E.J. Barkan's setting of "*M'chalkel Chayim,*" here taken from the third volume of *Zamru Lo* (please refer to Appendix B-III). In this setting, the sequence commences on the second line with the word "*somech,*" and ends on the third line with the word "*afar.*" It begins on the third scale degree, ascends a major third, and then descends with two major-second intervals. This sequence occurs twice, followed by four ascending notes from the tonic to the dominant. The sequence repeats and then ends on the tonic. In "*Yom Shabbaton,*" the sequence is almost identical. After an analysis of these two settings, it is probable to assume that the High Holiday motif influenced the

composition of the *zemer*. The melodies of "*Kol Meqadesh*" and "*Yom Shabbaton*" that are presented here are two of the many examples of *zemirot* that have adopted elements of synagogue and other Jewish music. *Zemirot Shabbat* thus reflect the rich musical culture of the Jews as well as musical elements from the surrounding culture.

Throughout the ages, as the surrounding cultures changed, Jews' lives changed accordingly. Jews composed new melodies for the *zemirot* that reflected their current situations. "Most of the melodies are by unknown authors. There were always musically gifted men in Jewish towns and villages who continued to compose new tunes for the *z'mirot*."[xi] The fact that there was a constantly increasing number of melodies that were transmitted orally meant that from one generation to the next, melodies were inevitably lost. In fact, as Werner observes, these melodies "have no continuity beyond two or, at the most, three generations."[xii] Levin agrees, "[m]ost of the melodies, as we know them, date from a period spanning the early 17th to the early 20th century. . . . Accomodations to changing trends, imposition of environmental influences and oral transmission itself have all combined to ensure a continual evolutionary process."[xiii]

This process continues even today, as modern composers carry on the process of re-interpreting the *zemirot*. In contemporary times, the majority of new *zemirot* melodies have emerged from the Hasidic community. "The Chassidic tradition, which has developed a philosophy of music ascribing to song a foremost place in religious life, has encouraged the continuing creation of new melodies for the traditional texts."[xiv] One well-known Hasidic composer of *zemirot* (and Jewish music in general) is Ben Zion Shenker. Born in 1925 and a member of the Modzitzer Hasidic community of Brooklyn, Shenker expresses his devotion to God and the joy of Sabbath observance in his lyrical renditions of the *zemirot* texts.[2] Among them, his settings of "*Eshet Ḥayil*" and "*Mizmor le-David*" (Psalm 23) have become especially popular throughout the American Jewish community and Israel. Outside of the Hasidic community, other modern composers such as Ben

[2] Thirteen of Shenker's *zemirot* melodies can be heard on his record *Joy of the Sabbath.*

Steinberg and Robert Solomon have written *zemirot* settings not only for voice, but for piano or organ, other instruments such as flute or mandoline, and multi-voice choir. While the settings involving instruments are not intended for use in the traditional context for *zemirot,* they enrich the *zemirot* repertoire nonetheless. These modern compositions demonstrate the timeless quality of the poetry of the *zemirot:* the texts continue to speak to Jews of varying backgrounds who then musically interpret them in many different ways. Despite their age, these texts are still relevant to modern Jews and inspire the creativity of Jewish musicians.

Traditionally, *zemirot* melodies are most at home at a family's Shabbat table (with the exception of those for the third meal, which in some cases takes place at the synagogue before the evening service). The people who give voice to these melodies are the members of the family, as well as any guests that may be present. The setting is thus rather intimate and relatively informal (as compared with the more formal setting for synagogue music). For each meal, there are numerous *zemirot* texts and an array of melodies from which to choose. The *zemirot* texts, in each community, have been compilied and arranged in a specified order in which they are intended to be sung. This order "has been more or less gradually established through common practice and through editorial choice in various *siddurim.*"[xv] From community to community, the choice and order of *zemirot* texts varies to a certain degree; yet, there is even more variation with regard to the melodies that may be chosen to go with these texts. Each community usually possesses several melodies for each of the many *zemirot* texts.

How then, does a family decide which *zemirot* to sing? In an article about the familial musical repertoire of *zemirot Shabbat,* Avigdor Herzog observes that few families attempt to sing all of the suggested *zemirot* at any given meal.[xvi] Families in the Breslov Hasidic community are exceptional in this regard, "Rebbe Nachman advised his followers to sing many Shabbos *z'miros,* . . . which accounts for the emphasis on completing the whole order of *z'miros* at most Breslover Shabbos tables."[xvii] In most cases, each family

chooses certain *zemirot* that it enjoys singing. These *zemirot* are selected out of the repertoire of *zemirot* that the family has developed. As Herzog notes, a family's repertoire (specifically referring to melodies) may be culled from a variety of sources, including: the parents' childhood homes; family members through marriage (sons or daughters-in-law); children (who may learn new melodies in youth movements or at summer camps); prominent members of the community (rabbis, Hasidic rebbes, or other leaders who introduce melodies); friends; invited guests; outside sources such as records, radio and television broadcasts, and sheet music; and family members who may compose their own *zemirot* melodies.[xviii] From this repertoire, certain *zemirot* that are favorites of individual members or of the family as a whole usually emerge. These *zemirot* often become family standards, *zemirot* that the family sings on a weekly basis. The family can add or subtract to this list of standards at will; for example, during the long Shabbat evenings of winter, families may sing more *zemirot,* while during the summer, they may choose to sing fewer.[xix] Also, at any time, someone may introduce a new melody (or re-introduce a melody from the larger family repertoire) that the family then decides to adopt as a new standard, whether in addition to or in place of an "old" standard*zemer.* In most families, flexibility with regard to their repertoire of *zemirot* is common practice.

The repertoire that evolves in any given family usually reflects the community in which the family lives as well as the talents and interests of the family's members. In families with especially musically-gifted members, original *zemirot* melodies may comprise the majority of the family's repertoire. One such family is that of Cantor Jacob Ben-Zion Mendelson, a native of the Boro Park section of Brooklyn who is currently the cantor at Temple Israel Center of White Plains, New York. As Cantor Mendelson recalls, "we came from a tradition of doing our own *zemirot.* They were sung by my grandfather . . . HaRav Ya'akov Ben-Zion Mendelson (he was from Riga). I was told he had a beautiful voice and some of them I'm led to believe that he actually invented."[xx] These melodies were passed down through the Mendelson family and were an integral part of the family's celebration of

Shabbat, "everyone in our family, on the Mendelson side, knows all of these *zemirot.* I have . . . memories of the entire family in my house singing them together."

This oral family tradition, passed down from one generation to the next, was influenced by the musical culture of the neighborhood in which the family lived. During the time in which Cantor Mendelson lived in Boro Park, there were many great *ḥazzanim* (such as Moshe Koussevitsky) who sang in the local synagogues; one could hear these and other *ḥazzanim* on radio broadcasts as well as on recordings. The Mendelson family's passion and ear for such *ḥazzanut* was apparent in their rendition of the family *zemirot,* "we would sing these *zemirot* and do our own rough harmonies, our own invented harmonies. . . . Certain *zemirot* had *ḥazzanut* in them . . . there would be improvisations." In looking at some of the Mendelson family's *zemirot* (which were recently transcribed by Cantor Noah Schall), one can discern cantorial touches such as: short segments of coloratura, opportunies for performance techniques such as "trap doors,"[3] as well as sections in which the singer is expected to improvise (please refer to Appendix B-IV). Cantor Mendelson notes that singing these *zemirot* that were infused with cantorial nuances undoubtedly influenced his development as a cantor, "it's a wonderful training ground to become a *ḥazzan,* because part of it was hearing the *zemirot* and because there were elements of *ḥazzanut* that I picked up just because everybody knew them (little moves, little curly-q's)." Singing *zemirot* originally helped Cantor Mendelson to learn some of the stylistic elements of *ḥazzanut;* as he embarked upon and later completed his studies to become a cantor, he applied his *ḥazzanic* abilities to the *zemirot,* adding even more cantorial "moves," "out of the zemirot came *ḥazzanut* for me . . . but learning the *ḥazzanut* certainly helped me to embellish the *zemirot* more, so it went both ways."

For those families that possess their own tradition of family *zemirot,* whether their members are cantors or not, singing "their" *zemirot* creates a special bond between family

[3] A so-called "trap door" is the practice of singing a written note and then immediately singing a note which is either a third or a fifth lower than the written note before returning to the written note. This kind of a device is usually implied by two successive briefly-held notes of the same pitch (for example, two G

members. Cantor Mendelson reminisced about spending Shabbat at his uncle's house in Montreal, "they started *zemiros* and right away I felt at home because they were my *zemiros* too." Nevertheless, even when the *zemirot* originate from one source (for example, Cantor Mendelson's grandfather), variants of the *zemirot* may develop as the family grows and branches off. Remembering the different ways in which his uncle's family sang the family's *zemirot,* Cantor Mendelson remarked, "I always wondered who got it right, I mean who was the real authentic one, I never really knew." As a result of the oral nature of the *zemirot* tradition, it is almost impossible to know which version of a *zemer* is the "right" or original version. Ultimately, this information is not important; the variants are of equal value as examples of the many ways in which different branches of a family can interpret the same songs.

Such variation occurs in the larger world of *zemirot* as well. A popular melody of "*Zur Mishelo,*" for example, may be sung a myriad of ways by different families and different communities worldwide; differences in word accentuation, ornamentation, and cadential phrases may be among the features that vary from one version to the next. In terms of the practice of singing *zemirot Shabbat,* all versions of a *zemer* can be considered to be valid if they aid in fulfilling the purpose of *zemirot Shabbat;* that is, to contribute to the joyful celebration of Shabbat.

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eighth-notes in a row, or a sixteenth note G followed by a dotted eighth note G).

IV. ZEMIROT TODAY

For many centuries, the singing of *zemirot Shabbat* has been a central part of the celebration of Shabbat in the home and a beloved tradition in the Jewish community. As the world nears the end of the twentieth century, it is interesting to examine the *zemirot* tradition as it is practiced today in the American Jewish community. While some Jews still enthusiastically embrace this tradition, other Jews do not sing *zemirot* on a regular basis or at all. In addition, in some parts of the Jewish community, the content and even the context of *zemirot Shabbat* have changed; nevertheless, *zemirot* are still a part of Jewish life.

In the Hasidic community, the tradition of singing *zemirot Shabbat* is quite vibrant. Given the Hasidic belief in the power of song (as an agent to help one achieve *devequt,* or union with God, as well as part of the doctrine of *tiqun* in the cases in which borrowed melodies are involved), and especially song on Shabbat (to make the observance of God's Sabbath even more joyful), this observation is not surprising. By their actions and words, Hasidic leaders such as Rebbe Nachman of Breslov encouraged the singing of *zemirot Shabbat,* "'[t]he only public things he [Rebbe Nachman] would do were chanting the *Kiddush,* singing *z'miros* at the Sabbath table, and revealing his lessons' (Rabbi Nachman's Wisdom, #210)"; also, "'[t]he Rebbe told us to sing many *z'miros* and other Shabbos songs. He said: Do not pay attention to any obstacles . . . strengthen yourself and sing with joy . . . the main thing is Sabbath joy (ibid, #155)."[i] Hasidim strive to emulate their leaders and thus continue to carry on this tradition. They follow an accepted order of *zemirot* texts for each meal (such as that found in the ArtScroll Mesorah publication *Zemiros and Bircas Hamazon*). For these texts, each group of Hasidim usually sings melodies that have been attributed to the rebbes of its community in addition to those that may be popular in the larger Hasidic community. Moreover, the Hasidic community is the source of many of the new *zemirot* melodies; Hasidim are not merely preserving, but

furthering this oral tradition. For Hasidim, the practice of singing traditional *zemirot* texts in the home on Shabbat is very much alive.

In other parts of the American Jewish community, it is harder to generalize with respect to the practice of singing *zemirot Shabbat.* In my observations, in this regard, the modern Orthodox community is most similar to the Hasidic community. *Zemirot* are usually, if not always, a part of the Shabbat meals. A range of melodies are sung, including Hasidic, Israeli, and other melodies from the various communities of Jews around the world.

One custom that has become prevalent in some Orthodox households, and amongst the majority of Conservative and Reform (and other "liberal") Jews is that of singing songs other than those prescribed for the three Shabbat meals. Songs about Shabbat, or in some cases, almost any of the myriad of Jewish and Israeli folk songs, may be sung in addition to or in place of the established *zemirot.* While the singing of these other songs may aid in creating a spirited Shabbat atmosphere, it changes the content of what is known as *zemirot Shabbat.*

As noted earlier, the singing of *zemirot Shabbat* has never been required by Jewish law; therefore, the establishment of an order of *zemirot Shabbat* to be followed at each of the three Shabbat meals can only be viewed in terms of a recommendation. Just as Jews are instructed to keep their thoughts and conversations focused on Torah and matters pertaining to Shabbat, so too should be their songs. While the rabbis could not regulate thoughts and household conversations, they could and did recognize certain songs for their subject matter of praise of God and Shabbat (in addition to the literary merit of their poetry) and suggest (through the inclusion of such songs in *siddurim*) that these songs be sung at the Shabbat table. In so doing, they tried to ensure that at least the musical part of the Shabbat meals would be directed toward the appropriate topics. When Jews depart from the recommended *zemirot,* they take this responsibility into their own hands. Especially in

the case of Reform Jews, such reliance on personal responsibility and educated choice are important facets of their ideology and identity as modern Jews. It is not surprising then, that Reform Jews are devising their own lists of *zemirot Shabbat* that include not only established *zemirot* but many other types of songs including English songs (or songs that are written with a mixture of Hebrew and English, such as those composed by Debbie Friedman or Jeff Klepper) about Judaism and Shabbat. These modern *zemirot* compilations can be viewed as new additions to the varied tradition of *zemirot Shabbat.* Even among the older collections of *zemirot Shabbat,* it is recognized that although some of the *zemirot* spread to all corners of the Jewish world, there was never one standard for *zemirot Shabbat.* Each Jewish community had certain unique Shabbat songs and customs. It is probable that Jews throughout the ages would frequently add their own favorite songs to the list of songs recited by their community at the Shabbat table. If so, modern Jews are simply continuing this practice.

There is a danger, though, that in changing the content of *zemirot Shabbat* too much, modern Jews will no longer be familiar with the *zemirot* tradition that has been passed down to them and that this tradition will, in effect, be lost to them. I see this trend occurring in the Reform movement today. Most Reform Jews are not even familiar with the majority of the "traditional" *zemirot* texts or the melodies that accompany them. At many Reform Shabbat tables, Jewish folk songs such as "*Hine Mah Tov*" and "*Mah Yafeh ha-Yom*" have replaced *zemirot* such as "*Menuḥah ve-Simḥah*" and "*Ẓur Mishelo.*" In 1997, the Central Conference of American Rabbis (the Rabbinical association of the Reform movement) published a booklet entitled *Birkon le-Shabbat: Blessings for the Table,* in which there are seven songs listed as *zemirot* for all of Shabbat; out of these, only two ("*Ki 'Eshmerah Shabbat*" and "*Yom Zeh le-Yisrael*" [of which only the refrain is printed]) are what may be considered "traditional" *zemirot.* While I do not object to the addition of new songs to the *zemirot* repertoire, I feel that the Reform movement should be careful not

to deprive its adherents of the rich collection of *zemirot Shabbat* that has been sung by generations of Jews and is part of their heritage.

In addition to the content, the context of *zemirot* has changed in the non-Orthodox communities in America. Many families do not sing *zemirot Shabbat* at all. Some sing them only when the larger extended family is present or when they have many guests. The situations in which *zemirot* are most likely to be sung are at summer camps, in youth movements, at congregational dinners or retreats, and during other large group Shabbat experiences. In these types of situations, there are often spirited song sessions during and after each Shabbat meal (either "traditional" *zemirot* or other songs, as discussed above). While these sessions may be enjoyable and add to the festivity of Shabbat, Herzog does not consider them to be *zemirot Shabbat* in the true sense. In Herzog's understanding, the singing of *zemirot Shabbat* requires a limited number of people; when the number of participants becomes too large, the event that takes place is more akin to "singing in public" than to *zemirot Shabbat.*[ii] In addition, Herzog places importance on the location in which *zemirot* are sung. They should not be sung in a large public space (such as a camp's dining hall); such spaces usually have a somewhat formal atmosphere. In order to create the proper atmosphere for *zemirot Shabbat,* they should be sung in the home of a family, a more informal and intimate setting.[iii] While such a setting is not required, it helps the family members to develop a closer bond to each other through family singing, and to form individual family traditions that help to solidify a family's identity. As a result, each member's individual identity is also strengthened. While a group such as a youth movement can develop a collective identity, this identity does not usually affect the individual as strongly or as immediately as does the identification with one's family. As one would imagine, there is nothing ostensibly wrong with engaging in group singing on Shabbat; however, such a practice should not be a substitute for singing *zemirot* in the home with one's family (or, if one's circumstances do not allow, with a group of close

friends or extended family). Unfortunately for many modern Jewish families, this shift in the context of *zemirot Shabbat* is not a positive one.

In the Reform movement (in which the majority of families do not participate in singing *zemirot Shabbat* on a regular basis), the context of *zemirot* has also changed in a different way. Instead of singing *zemirot* in the home, Reform Jews are singing them in the synagogue, as part of a Shabbat service. For example, the *Gates of Prayer* (the prayerbook for Shabbat and weekdays used most widely in the Reform movement) includes "*Yah Ribbon* " and "*Yom Zeh le-Yisrael* " (both are *zemirot* for the Friday evening meal in the Ashkenazic tradition) as opening songs for two of its Shabbat evening services (services VII and VIII, respectively). "*Shalom 'Aleḥem,*" a song customarily recited upon returning home from the synagogue (before the Friday evening *Kiddush*) is presented as the opening song for service III. Additionally, a popular closing song in many Reform synagogues is "*Ki 'Eshmerah Shabbat,*" a *zemer* that is customarily reserved for the Shabbat afternoon meal (it is printed in the additional song section in the back of the *Gates of Prayer*). The recitation of *zemirot Shabbat* as part of Shabbat worship services may be viewed as part of the transference of home rituals to the synagogue that has occurred in the Reform movement. Other examples of such transference are the kindling of the Shabbat candles (even when Shabbat begins several hours before the start of the services) and the chanting of the *Kiddush* (and in some congregations, the recitation of the "*ha-moẓi* " over a loaf of *ḥallah*). One of the reasons behind this ritual shift is so that those people who do not observe these rituals in the home will still be exposed to them in the synagogue. Also, for those people who did not observe these rituals while growing up (or who do not remember how to do so), participating in them in a synagogue setting can serve as a means for exposure and as an educational tool for future home practice. This particular shift in the context of *zemirot Shabbat* can thus be explained in the larger context of the liturgical trends and ideology of the Reform movement.

Many of the modern musical settings of *zemirot Shabbat* were composed with this larger context in mind. For example, whereas Robert Solomon's setting of "*Yah Ribon Alam*" (for solo high voice, mixed choir, and piano) would not be suitable for performance at most families' Shabbat tables, it would certainly be appropriate in a Reform service. In fact, Solomon intends it to be performed in a synagogue setting: the solo line is marked "Cantor." While such musically complex arrangements and compositions of *zemirot Shabbat* could be reserved for concerts of Jewish music, their inclusion in Shabbat services has allowed Reform Jews another way in which to exalt God on the Sabbath; not only do they have the beautiful poetry of the *zemirot* as part of their Shabbat liturgy, but in addition, they have exciting new music and musical arrangements for this poetry. Whether the composers of such zemirot settings were inspired by the poetry of the *zemirot* or by the desire to preserve the *zemirot* from falling out of use by modern Jews is impossible to know. In either case, the transference of *zemirot Shabbat* to the synagogue has provided yet another avenue for the creativity of Jewish composers.

CONCLUSION

The widespread custom of singing *zemirot Shabbat* is a beloved one that over time has entrenched itself in the fabric of the Jewish people. Jews have found that their participation in Sabbath table songs has the ability to enhance and increase the pleasure of Shabbat observance. This contribution of *zemirot Shabbat* to *'oneg Shabbat* (the enjoyment of the Sabbath) gained the concept of *zemirot Shabbat* much support in Rabbinic Literature. Later in Jewish history, Jewish mystics considered this concept to be in consonance with Kabbalistic ideas about Shabbat (as described in the *Zohar*) such as the temporary unification of the Godhead, the acquisition of an additional soul, and the mystical understanding of the three Sabbath meals; they therefore embraced the custom of singing *zemirot Shabbat* (under the influence of Issac Luria and his disciples) in order to reinforce and spread these ideas. The leaders of the Hasidic movement determined that in addition to bolstering these Kabbalistic tenets to which they also adhered, the singing of *zemirot Shabbat* provided them with another avenue through which they and their disciples could carry out beliefs that Hasidim held strongly such as worshipping God with joy, participating in the act of *tiqun*, and elevating their souls so that they could cleave to the Divine (*devequt*). During its development, the custom of singing *zemirot Shabbat* received its grounding from these Rabbinic, Kabbalistic, and Hasidic sources.

Although the custom of singing songs at Shabbat meals may be quite old, the texts of the *zemirot Shabbat* that are sung today were composed mainly during the ninth through twelfth centuries in Spain and other lands under Islamic rule (commonly described as the "Golden Age"), the sixteenth century in Safed (in the circle of Issac Luria), and the eighteenth century and following in Europe (the time during which Hasidism spread and gained adherents). During these time periods, the Islamic culture and Arabic poetic styles as

well as the aforementioned Kabbalistic and Hasidic beliefs profoundly influenced the development and composition of the *zemirot* texts.

In examining some of the *zemirot* texts, one finds that several long-held Jewish concepts are stressed. For example, "*Kol Meqadesh*" emphasizes proper Shabbat observance and its reward; "*Menuḥah ve-Simḥah*" similarly focuses on Shabbat and its connection with creation; "*Yah Ribbon*" highlights the praising of God's aspects of Creator and all-powerful ruler and articulates the Jews' desire for redemption; and "*Zur Mishelo*" mirrors the structure and content of "*Birkat ha-Mazon*" (the blessing after meals). The ideas expressed in these texts are ones that have been important to Jews throughout the ages; it is thus fitting for these *zemirot* to be recited on Shabbat, the holiest day of the week.

The melodies to which the *zemirot* texts have been set help Jews to praise God not only with words but also with song. The singing of *zemirot Shabbat* is an activity in which all Jews are encouraged to participate; therefore, the majority of *zemirot* melodies are not overly complex. Most of them can be learned by the average Jew in a short amount of time. Even more than the texts, the melodies were influenced by the cultures in which Jews lived. Each Jewish community had its own musical traditions. Composers incorporated into their *zemirot* musical styles and motifs from the surrounding cultures. They also employed melodies, both Jewish and non-Jewish, that were popular in their cultures, and set the *zemirot* texts to them (a device called contrafact). When borrowed melodies were adopted, they were usually changed to some degree so that they would fit better with the *zemirot* texts or so that they would gain a more Jewish flavor (these changes were not always made consciously). The *zemirot* melodies were meant to be sung in Jewish homes, during the three Shabbat meals. Each family developed its own repertoire of favorite *zemirot* that were sung week after week. These *zemirot* melodies were

transmitted orally from one generation to the next. The *zemirot* tradition was thus subject to constant variation and change.

This tradition is still developing and changing in the present day. Among American Jews, the practice of singing *zemirot Shabbat* is most prevalent in the Hasidic and modern Orthodox communities. In these communities, *zemirot* are sung at Shabbat tables in many homes, and new melodies are composed for this purpose. In non-Orthodox communities, the content and context of *zemirot Shabbat* have largely changed. Often, Jewish folk and Israeli songs are added to, if not completely substituted for, the songs established as *zemirot Shabbat* (according to common practice and as included in *siddurim* over the years). In addition, *zemirot Shabbat* are increasingly sung with large groups in public settings such as summer camp dining halls, instead of with families in home settings. In the Reform movement, *zemirot Shabbat* have even moved into the synagogue, to be recited as part of the Shabbat liturgy. It is interesting to note that in these non-Orthodox communities, when the context of *zemirot Shabbat* is changed (for example, when *zemirot* are sung during Shabbat services), their content remains relatively unchanged (i.e., "traditional" *zemirot* texts are employed, even when they are set to musically complex arrangements); however, when the context remains the traditional home setting, the content of *zemirot Shabbat* is often changed (for example, the addition or substitution of folk songs).

As long as there are Jews who enjoy singing God's praises on Shabbat, the tradition of *zemirot Shabbat* will remain alive. The *zemirot* texts provide a window into Jewish history and beliefs, while the melodies represent the dynamic nature and diversity of Jewish culture. In singing these *zemirot* today, modern Jews link themselves with the Jews who began this tradition many centuries ago and with all of the Jews who have upheld it since. As their ancestors did before them, these Jews bring honor and joy to the Sabbath and exalt God by singing *zemirot Shabbat*.

ENDNOTES

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APPENDIX A: TEXTS

Example I: Kol Meqadesh

כָּל מְקַדֵּשׁ שְׁבִיעִי כָּרָאוּי לוֹ.
כָּל שׁוֹמֵר שַׁבָּת מֵחַלְּלוֹ.
שְׁכָרוֹ הַרְבֵּה מְאֹד עַל פִּי פָּעֳלוֹ.
אִישׁ עַל מַחֲנֵהוּ וְאִישׁ עַל דִּגְלוֹ:

אוֹהֲבֵי יהוה הַמְחַכִּים בְּבִנְיַן אֲרִיאֵל.
בְּיוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת (קֹדֶשׁ) שִׂישׂוּ וְשִׂמְחוּ
בְּמַקְבְּלֵי מַתַּן נַחֲלִיאֵל.
גַּם שְׂאוּ יְדֵיכֶם קֹדֶשׁ וְאִמְרוּ לָאֵל.
בָּרוּךְ יהוה אֲשֶׁר נָתַן מְנוּחָה לְעַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל:

דּוֹרְשֵׁי יהוה זֶרַע אַבְרָהָם אוֹהֲבוֹ.
הַמְאַחֲרִים לָצֵאת מִן הַשַּׁבָּת וּמְמַהֲרִים לָבוֹא.
וּשְׁמֵחִים לְשָׁמְרוֹ וּלְעָרֵב עֲרוּבוֹ.
זֶה הַיּוֹם עָשָׂה יהוה נָגִילָה וְנִשְׂמְחָה בוֹ:

זִכְרוּ תּוֹרַת מֹשֶׁה בְּמִצְוַת שַׁבָּת גְּרוּסָה.
חֲרוּתָה לַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי כְּבֵלָה בֵּין רֵעוֹתֶיהָ מְשֻׁבָּצָה.
טְהוֹרִים יִרָשׁוּהָ וִיקַדְּשׁוּהָ כְּמַאֲמַר כָּל אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה.
נִיכַל אֱלֹהִים בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה:

יוֹם קָדוֹשׁ הוּא מִבּוֹאוֹ וְעַד צֵאתוֹ.
כָּל זֶרַע יַעֲקֹב יְכַבְּדוּהוּ כִּדְבַר הַמֶּלֶךְ וְדָתוֹ.
לָנוּחַ בּוֹ וְלִשְׁמוֹחַ בְּתַעֲנוּג אָכוֹל וְשָׁתוֹ.
כָּל עֲרֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל יַעֲשׂוּ אֹתוֹ:

מְשׁוֹךְ חַסְדְּךָ לְיוֹדְעֶיךָ, אֵל קַנָּא וְנוֹקֵם.
נוֹטְרֵי לַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי זָכוֹר וְשָׁמוֹר לְהָקֵם.
שְׂמֵחֵם בְּבִנְיַן שָׁלֵם, בְּאוֹר פָּנֶיךָ תַּבְהִיקֵם.
יְרוּיִן מִדֶּשֶׁן בֵּיתֶךָ, וְנַחַל עֲדָנֶיךָ תַּשְׁקֵם:

עָזוֹר לַשּׁוֹבְתִים בַּשְּׁבִיעִי, בְּחָרִישׁ וּבַקָּצִיר עוֹלָמִים.
פּוֹסְעִים בּוֹ פְּסִיעָה קְטַנָּה, סוֹעֲדִים בּוֹ, לְבָרֵךְ שָׁלֹשׁ פְּעָמִים.
צִדְקָתָם תַּצְהִיר כְּאוֹר שִׁבְעַת הַיָּמִים.
יהוה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, הָבָה תָמִים:
(יהוה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אַהֲבַת תָּמִים:
יהוה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל תְּשׁוּעַת עוֹלָמִים):

[קַדְּשֵׁם בְּמִצְוֹתֶיךָ וְטַהֲרֵם כְּעֶצֶם הַשָּׁמַיִם לָטֹהַר,
רוֹחֵךְ תַּנִיחֵמוֹ כִּבְהֵמָה בַּבִּקְעָה תֵּרֵד מִן־הָהָר
שַׁבַּתָּם תְּשַׁכְּנֵם בְּנַחֲלַת הַסַּהַר
כִּנְחָלִים נִטָּיוּ כְּגַנּוֹת עֲלֵי נָהָר].

All texts and translations taken from *Zemiros and Bircas Hamazon*

Whoever hallows the Sabbath as befits it,
Whoever protects the Sabbath properly from desecration,
His reward is exceedingly great
in accordance with his deed —
'Every man at his own camp,
Every man at his own banner.'[1]

2 Lovers of HASHEM who long for the building
of His leonine Temple,

1. *Numbers* 1:52

On the Sabbath day rejoice and be glad!
— as if receiving the gift of God's inheritance.
Raise your hands in holiness and say to God —
'Blessed is HASHEM Who presented tranquility
to His people, Israel.'[2]

3 Seekers of HASHEM, seed of Abraham His beloved,
Who delay departing from the Sabbath
and rush to enter,
Glad to safeguard it and set its eruv —
'This is the day HASHEM has made:
let us rejoice and be glad with it.'[3]

4 Remember Moses' Torah
as its Sabbath precept is expounded,
Engraved with teachings for the Seventh Day,
like a bride bedecked among her companions;

2. *I Kings* 8:56 3. *Psalms* 118:24

Pure ones bequeath it and hallow it
with the statement — 'All that He had made . . . .
'On the Seventh Day God completed
His work which He had done.'[4]

5 It is a holy day
from beginning to end,
All Jacob's seed will honor it
according to the royal word and decree
To rest on it and be glad with the pleasure
of food and drink —
'The entire congregation of Israel
will observe it'[5]

6 Extend Your kindness to those who know You,
O jealous and vengeful God,
Those who await the Seventh day
to uphold 'Remember' and 'Safeguard'.

4. *Genesis* 1:31; 2:2 5. *Exodus* 12:47

Gladden them with rebuilt Jerusalem,
with the light of Your face make them radiant —
'Sate them from the abundance of Your house
and give them drink from the stream
of Your Eden.'[6]

7 Always help those who desist
from plow and harvest on the Seventh,
Who walk on it with short strides
and feast three times on it in order to bless You.
May their righteousness blaze forth
like the light of the Seven Days —
'HASHEM, God of Israel, grant completeness!'[7]

(HASHEM, God of Israel — a perfect love!
HASHEM, God of Israel — an eternal salvation!)

6. Psalms 36:9 7. I Samuel 14:41

Example II: Menuḥah ve-Simḥah

מְנוּחָה וְשִׂמְחָה אור לַיְהוּדִים.
יום שַׁבָּתוֹן יום מַחֲמַדִּים.
שומְרָיו וְזוכְרָיו הַמָּה מְעִידִים.
כִּי לְשִׂשָּׂה כָּל בְּרוּאִים וְעומְדִים:

שְׁמֵי שָׁמַיִם אֶרֶץ וַיַּמִּים.
כָּל צְבָא מָרום גְּבוהִים וְרָמִים.
תַּנִּין וְאָדָם וְחַיַּת רְאֵמִים.
כִּי בְיָהּ יהוה צוּר עולָמִים:

הוּא אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר לְעַם סְגֻלָּתו.

שָׁמור לְקַדְּשו מִבּואו וְעַד צֵאתו.
שַׁבַּת קֹדֶשׁ יום חֶמְדָּתו.
כִּי בו שָׁבַת אֵל מִכָּל מְלַאכְתּו:

בְּמִצְוַת שַׁבָּת אַל יַחֲלִיצֶךָּ.
קום קְרָא אֵלָיו יָחִישׁ לְאַמְּצֶךָּ.

נִשְׁמַת כָּל חַי וְגַם נַעֲרִיצֶךָּ.
אֱכול בְּשִׂמְחָה כִּי כְבָר רָצָךְ:

בְּמִשְׁנֶה לֶחֶם וְקִדּוּשׁ רַבָּה.
בְּרֹב מַטְעַמִּים וְרוּחַ נְדִיבָה.
יִזְכּוּ לְרֹב טוּב הַמִּתְעַנְּגִים בָּהּ.
בְּבִיאַת גּואֵל לְחַיֵּי הָעולָם הַבָּא:

Contentment and gladness and light – for the Jews
On this day of Sabbath, day of delights
Those who protect and those who remember it –
they bear witness
That in six days all was created
and still endures!

2 All layers of heaven, earth, and seas,
All the host above, high and exalted,
sea giant and man and mighty beasts –
That the Creator, HASHEM,
is the stronghold of the Universe.

3 It is He Who spoke
to His treasured nation:

Stand guard to hallow it
from arrival to departure –
The holy Sabbath, day of His delight –
For on it the Almighty rested from all His work

4 Through the Sabbath command
will the Almighty strengthen you
Arise! beseech Him,
that He may rush to fortify you,

Recite 'Soul of all living' and also
'We proclaim Your strength.'
Eat in gladness
for He has already shown you favor.

5 With double loaves and the Great Kiddush,
With abundant delicacies and a generous spirit,
They will merit much good,
those who take pleasure in it –
With the redeemer's coming,
for the life of the World to Come.

Example III: Yah Ribbon

יְהֹ רִבּוֹן עָלַם וְעָלְמַיָּא.
אַנְתְּ הוּא מַלְכָּא מָלֶךְ מַלְכַיָּא.
עוֹבַד גְּבוּרָתַךְ וְתֻמְהַיָּא.
שְׁפַר קֳדָמָךְ לְהַחֲנָיָא:
יְהֹ רִבּוֹן עָלַם וְעָלְמַיָּא, אַנְתְּ הוּא מַלְכָּא מָלֶךְ מַלְכַיָּא:

שְׁבָחִין אֲסַדַּר צַפְרָא וְרַמְשָׁא.
לָךְ אֱלָהָא קַדִּישָׁא דִּי בְרָא כָּל־נַפְשָׁא.
עִירִין קַדִּישִׁין וּבְנֵי אֱנָשָׁא.
חַיְנַת בְּרָא וְעוֹפֵי שְׁמַיָּא:
יְהֹ רִבּוֹן עָלַם וְעָלְמַיָּא, אַנְתְּ הוּא מַלְכָּא מָלֶךְ מַלְכַיָּא:

רַבְרְבִין עוֹבְדַיִךְ וְתַקִּיפִין.

מָכִיךְ רָמַיָּא וְזַקִּיף כְּפִיפִין.
לוּ יְחִיֶה גְּבַר שְׁנִין אַלְפִין.
לָא יֵעוֹל גְּבוּרְתֵּךְ בְּחֶשְׁבְּנָיָא:
יְהֹ רִבּוֹן עָלַם וְעָלְמַיָּא, אַנְתְּ הוּא מַלְכָּא מָלֶךְ מַלְכַיָּא:

אֱלָהָא דִּי לַהּ יְקַר וּרְבוּתָא.
פְּרוֹק יַת עֲנָךְ מִפּוּם אַרְיְוָתָא.
וְאַפֵּיק יַת עַמָּךְ מִגּוֹ גָלוּתָא.
עַמָּךְ דִּי בְחַרְתְּ מִכָּל־אַמְמַיָּא:
יְהֹ רִבּוֹן עָלַם וְעָלְמַיָּא, אַנְתְּ הוּא מַלְכָּא מָלֶךְ מַלְכַיָּא:

לְמִקְדְּשֵׁךְ תּוּב וּלְקֻדְשׁ קָרְשִׁין.
אֲתַר דִּי בֵהּ יְחֵדוּן רוּחִין וְנַפְשִׁין.
וְיַזְמְרוּן לָךְ שִׁירִין וְרַחֲשִׁין.
בִּירוּשְׁלֶם קַרְתָּא דְשַׁפְרַיָּא:
יְהֹ רִבּוֹן עָלַם וְעָלְמַיָּא, אַנְתְּ הוּא מַלְכָּא מָלֶךְ מַלְכַיָּא:

O Creator, Master of this world and all worlds,
You are the King who reigns over kings —
Your powerful and wondrous deeds
it is beautiful to declare before You.
O Creator, Master of this world and all worlds,
You are the King who reigns over kings.

2 Praises shall I prepare day and night
to You O Holy God Who created all life —
Holy angels and sons of man,
beasts of the field and birds of the sky.
O Creator, Master of this world and all worlds,
You are the King who reigns over kings.

3 Great are Your deeds and mighty,

humbling the haughty
and straightening the bowed
Even if man lived thousands of years
he could not fathom the extent
of Your powerful deeds.
O Creator, Master of this world and all worlds,
You are the King who reigns over kings.

4 God to Whom belongs honor and greatness
save Your sheep from the mouth of lions,
And bring Your People out from exile —
the People that You chose from all the nations.
O Creator, Master of this world and all worlds,
You are the King who reigns over kings.

5 To Your Sanctuary return
and to the Holy of Holies,
The place where spirits and souls will rejoice.
and utter songs and praises
In Jerusalem, city of beauty.
O Creator, Master of this world and all worlds,
You are the King who reigns over kings.

Example IV: Ẓur Mishelo

צוּר מִשֶּׁלּוֹ אָכַלְנוּ
שָׂבַעְנוּ וְהוֹתַרְנוּ

בָּרְכוּ אֱמוּנַי,
כִּדְבַר יהוה:

הַזָּן אֶת עוֹלָמוֹ
אָכַלְנוּ אֶת לַחְמוֹ

רוֹעֲנוּ אָבִינוּ.
וְיֵינוֹ שָׁתִינוּ.

עַל־כֵּן נוֹדֶה לִשְׁמוֹ

וּנְהַלְלוֹ בְּפִינוּ.
אָמַרְנוּ וְעָנִינוּ
אֵין קָדוֹשׁ כַּיהוה:

צוּר מִשֶּׁלּוֹ אָכַלְנוּ בָּרְכוּ אֱמוּנַי, שָׂבַעְנוּ וְהוֹתַרְנוּ כִּדְבַר יהוה:

בְּשִׁיר וְקוֹל תּוֹדָה
עַל אֶרֶץ חֶמְדָּה טוֹבָה
מָזוֹן וְצֵדָה

נְבָרֵךְ לֵאלֹהֵינוּ.
שֶׁהִנְחִיל לַאֲבוֹתֵינוּ
הִשְׁבִּיעַ לְנַפְשֵׁנוּ.
חַסְדּוֹ גָּבַר עָלֵינוּ
וֶאֱמֶת יהוה:

צוּר מִשֶּׁלּוֹ אָכַלְנוּ בָּרְכוּ אֱמוּנַי, שָׂבַעְנוּ וְהוֹתַרְנוּ כִּדְבַר יהוה:

רַחֵם בְּחַסְדֶּךָ
עַל צִיּוֹן מִשְׁכַּן כְּבוֹדֶךָ

עַל־עַמְּךָ צוּרֵנוּ.
וְבוּל בֵּית תִּפְאַרְתֵּנוּ.

בֶּן־דָּוִד עַבְדֶּךָ

יָבוֹא וְיִגְאָלֵנוּ.
רוּחַ אַפֵּינוּ
מְשִׁיחַ יהוה:

צוּר מִשֶּׁלּוֹ אָכַלְנוּ בָּרְכוּ אֱמוּנַי, שָׂבַעְנוּ וְהוֹתַרְנוּ כִּדְבַר יהוה:

יִבָּנֶה הַמִּקְדָּשׁ
וְשָׁם נָשִׁיר שִׁיר חָדָשׁ
הָרַחֲמָן הַנִּקְדָּשׁ

עִיר צִיּוֹן תִּמָּלֵא.
וּבִרְנָנָה נַעֲלֶה.
יִתְבָּרֵךְ וְיִתְעַלֶּה.
עַל כּוֹס יַיִן מָלֵא
כְּבִרְכַּת יהוה:

צוּר מִשֶּׁלּוֹ אָכַלְנוּ בָּרְכוּ אֱמוּנַי, שָׂבַעְנוּ וְהוֹתַרְנוּ כִּדְבַר יהוה:

The Rock from Whom we have eaten!
Bless Him, my faithful friends.
We have eaten our fill and left over —
According to HASHEM's word.

1 He nourishes His universe,
our Shepherd, our Father,
We have eaten His bread
and His wine we have drunk.

Therefore let us praise His Name
and praise Him with our mouths —
Let us sing out loudly,
'There is none as holy as HASHEM!'[1]

The Rock from Whom we have eaten!
Bless Him, my faithful friends.
We have eaten our fill and left over —
According to HASHEM's word.

2 With song and sound of thanksgiving
let us bless our God
for the land so desirable and good
that He gave our forefathers as a heritage.
With nourishment and sustenance
He sated our souls
His kindness was mighty over us
and HASHEM is truth![2]

The Rock from Whom we have eaten!
Bless Him, my faithful friends.
We have eaten our fill and left over —
According to HASHEM's word.

3 Be merciful in Your kindness
upon Your nation, our Rock,
Upon Zion resting place of Your Glory,
the shrine, home of our splendor.

1. *I Samuel* 2:2. 2. Based on *Psalms* 117:2.

May the son of David, Your servant,
come and redeem us —
Breath of our nostrils,
anointed of HASHEM.[3]

The Rock from Whom we have eaten!
Bless Him, my faithful friends.
We have eaten our fill and left over —
According to HASHEM's word.

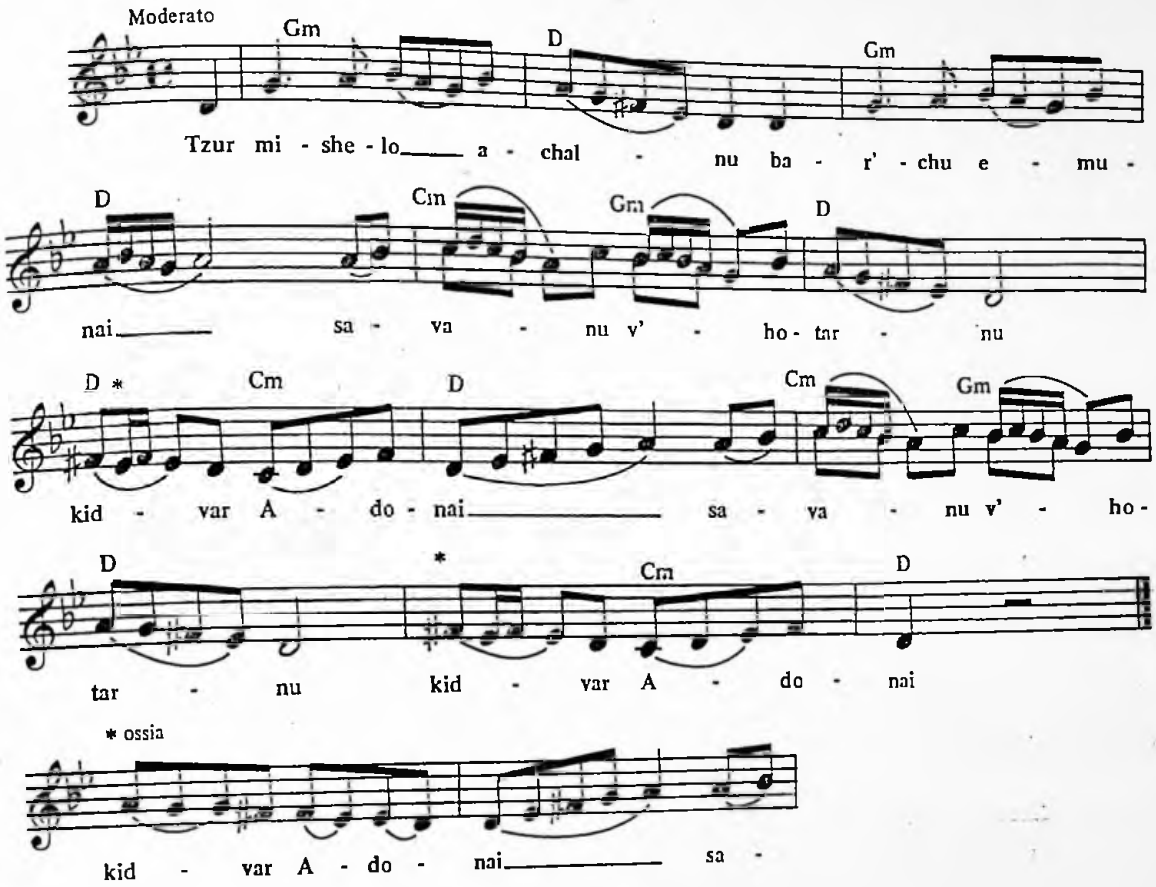
4 May the Temple be rebuilt;
the City of Zion replenished.
There shall we sing a new song,
with joyous singing ascend.
May the Merciful, the Sanctified,
be blessed and exalted
Over a full cup of wine
worthy of HASHEM's blessing.[4]

The Rock from Whom we have eaten!
Bless Him, my faithful friends.
We have eaten our fill and left over —
According to HASHEM's word.

3. *Lamentations* 4:20. 4. *Deuteronomy* 16:17.

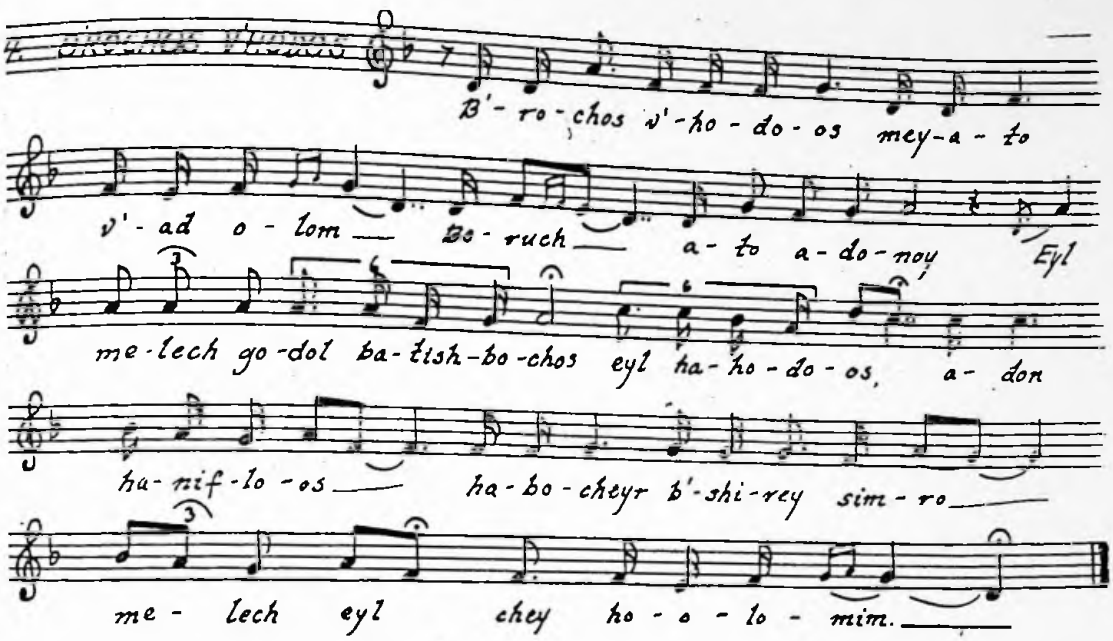
APPENDIX B: MUSIC

Example I: Tzur Mishelo

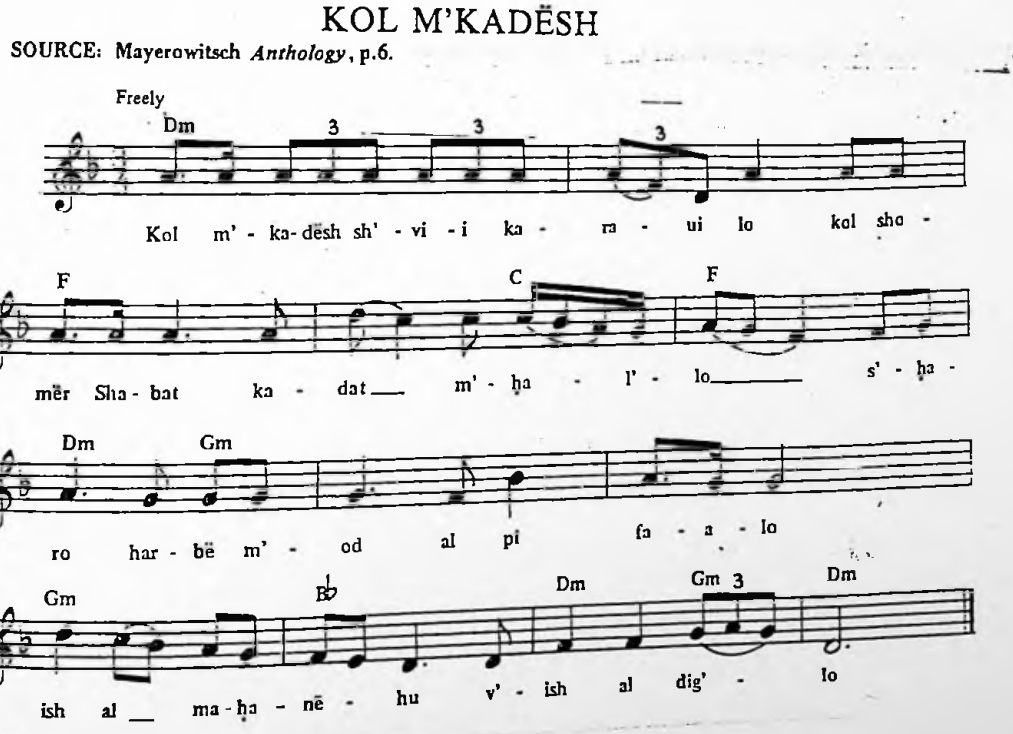


Source: *Z'mirot Anthology: Traditional Sabbath Songs for the Home*

Example II: B'rochos V'Hodoos and Kol M'kadesh

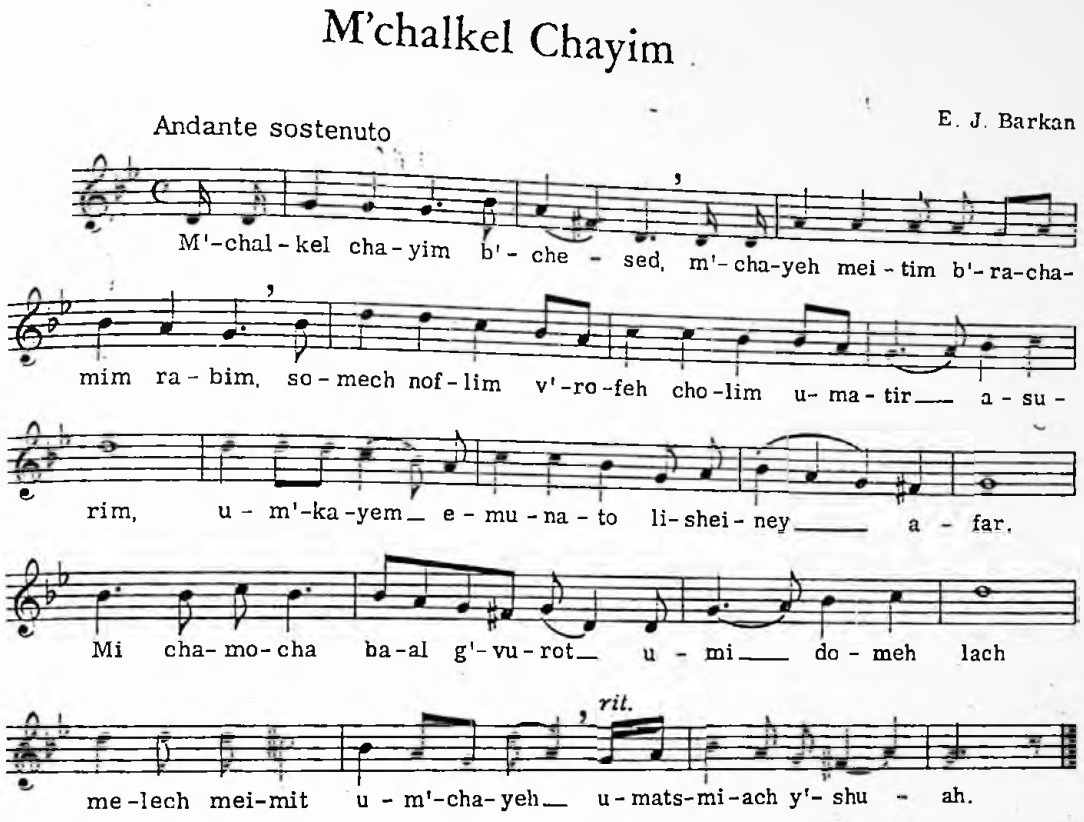


Source: *A Thesaurus of Cantorial Liturgy*, vol. 1



Source: *Z'mirot Anthology: Traditional Sabbath Songs for the Home*

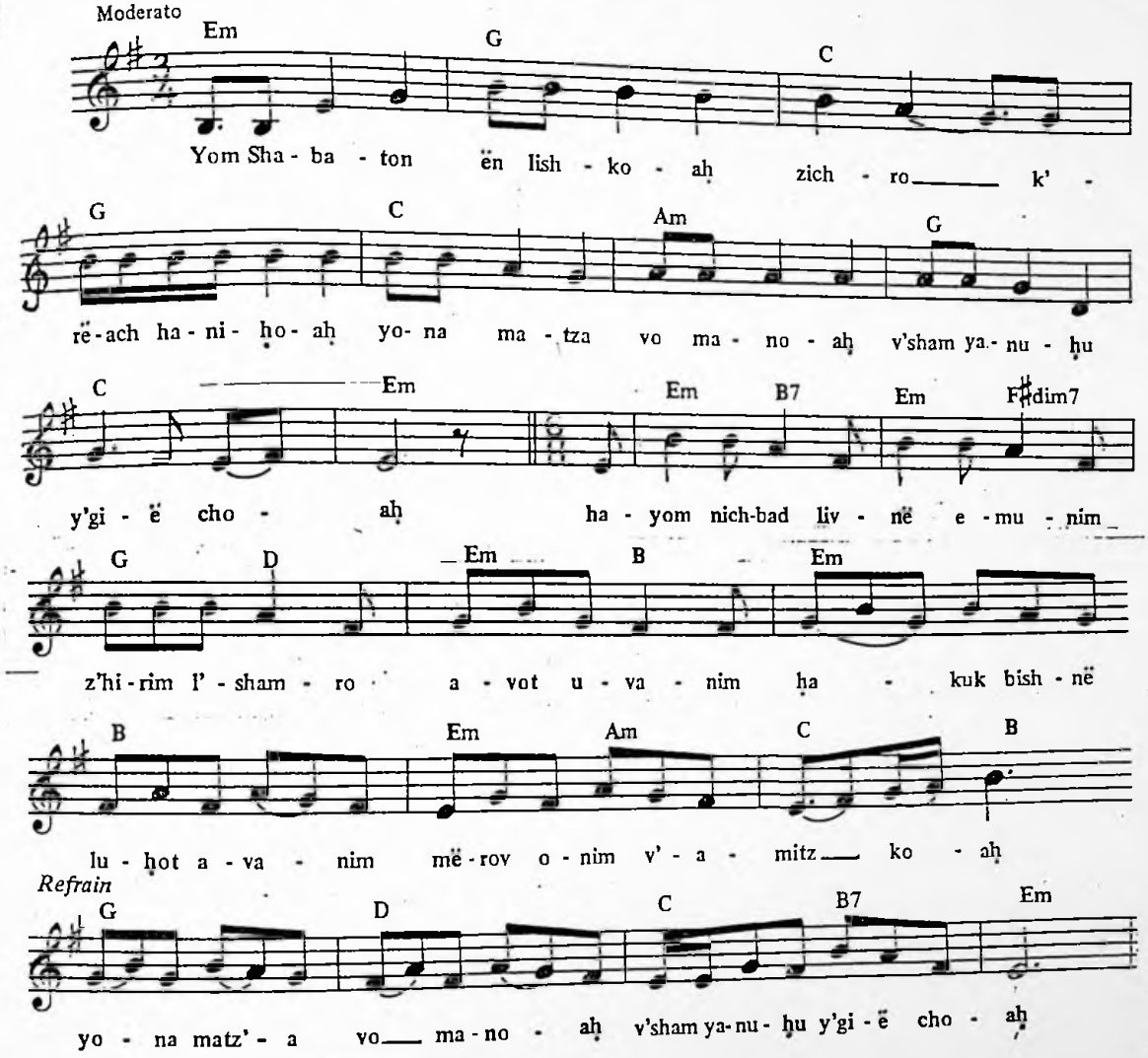
Example III: M'chalkel Chayim and Yom Shabbaton



Source: *Zamru Lo: Congregational Melodies for the Shalosh R'galim and the High Holidays,* vol. 3

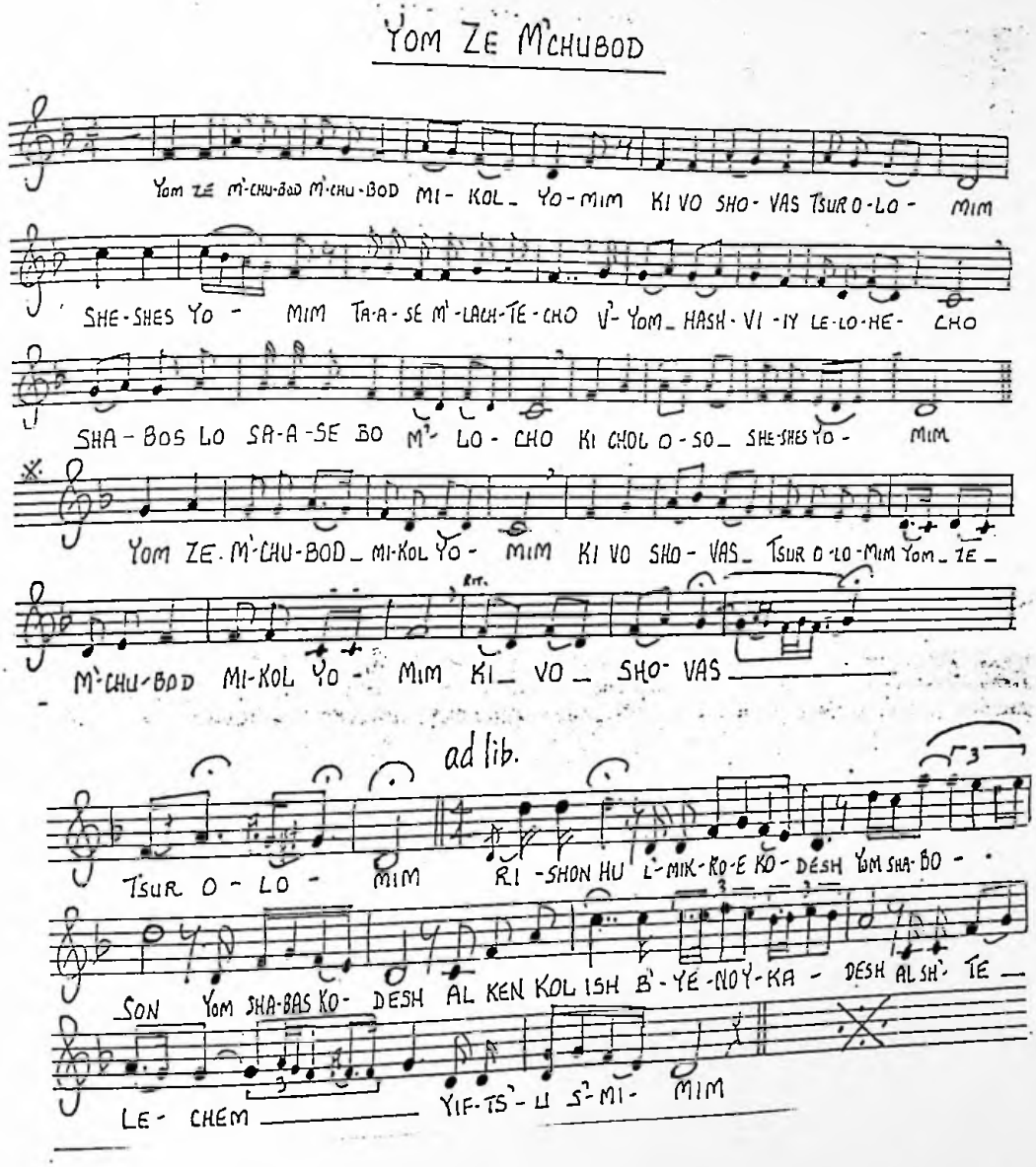
YOM SHABBATON

SOURCE: *Musikalisher Pinkes* , no.97; Bernstein identifies his source as Finkel, of Vilna.



Source: *Z'mirot Anthology: Traditional Sabbath Songs for the Home*

Example IV: Yom Ze M'chubod



Source: *Zemirot le-Lel Shabbat*