**Hymnology**

**Chapter One**

**Zaima (hymn) in general**

In its broadest sense, Zaima (hymn) means sound making in the form of chanting or singing. In this particular context, however, Zaima means songs of praises, psalms and shouts of joy. When we say somebody has made a Zaima, we mean he has sung. However, Zaima may not be limited to songs of worship or praises. It also includes all sound making in times of joy, sorrow, melancholy, war songs and so on. What we generally understand by Zaima relates to chanting or singing that is devoted to worship services to glorify God especially in churches.

The founder or composer of the Ethiopian church music is the Ethiopian monk and scholar by the name of St. Yared. By his own testimony, St. Yared began singing after hearing songs sung in the heavens called Ariyam songs. It is generally believed that heavenly angels taught Yared the heavenly songs in his own language (Ge’ez).

This heavenly songs later on changed to songs in praise of Mary called Selam Laki and Wudasie Mariam. We don’t know when the change occurred. All we know is that practical lessons in Zaima or hymns began with Wudase Mariam and Selam Laki.

Ariyam heavenly Zaima is sung in Araray and Ge’ez. By Ge’ez Zaima is meant the first stage of which is loud and strong in kind. Ezil Zaima is the second stage to be sung together with the first which is gentler and more melodious voice. Araray Zaima is a sorrowful and plaintive song. It is believed that no musical tune is outside these three melodies.

So Ariyam Zaima is first composed in Araray and Ge’ez melodies beginning with Selam Laki. But Wudase Mariam that is sung from Monday to Saturday is composed in Araray alone. But Selam Laki can also be in Ge’ez and Ezil. For instance, Wudase Mariam sung on Sundays can be sung in Ezil. Other hymns apart from Wudase Mariam like Mewedis or Mi’iraf hymns can be sung in all three melodies Ge’ez, Ezil and Ararat according to the following order.

1. **Wudase Mariam**

The first lesson in Zaima is called Wudase Mariam. Beginner students are first trained in this and then promoted to other courses. They study Wudase Mariam by reading and memorizing the lessons. Then they first begin to recite same for purposes of prayer. Later on, they begin to put it in Zaima or song form. Secondly, they begin to compose a song to be sung on public holidays or religious festivals.

This is counted for them as a church service. The composers of Zaima, like for the others, is St. Yared but the text was provided by the Syrian priest called St. Ephraim.

1. **Mestegabi**

Literally, Mestegabi means collection. It is a hymn book collected from the 150 psalms of David and it is sung as befits the special occasions. The composer of this song is as usual St. Yared. Mestegabi begins with a call on God that says “Hear my cries, Oh Lord” which in Ge’ez reads, ‘Welebu Tsirahiye’. Church scholars teach this as the second lesson in Zaima. In other words, it is the second Zaima lesson taught to students. It is always sung every morning during Lent from Monday to Saturday. Early fathers in fact always sung this song or Zaima even during Filseta fasting season to show their respect for St. Mary. This is written in Ge’ez and Ezil. It is sung with the Araray song on Thursdays and Saturdays. The Thursday Araray Zaima reads, ‘Antes Egziyo Lelalem Tinebir Wezkirkeni Letiwulid Tiwulid”. The Saturday one reads, ‘Mengiste kesse mengiste zelekulu alem wemkunanikeni le tiwulida tiwalid.”

We said earlier that Mestegabi is a collection from the book of Psalms. But there is one special addition at the end of Mestegabi. This is not from Psalms and it is known ‘Adhane Hizbo Behaile Meskelu Isme Berhan Sereqe’. Mestegabi has 180 lessons and all of them are in praise of God. They are mostly derived from David’s Psalm of praises.

Recitation days and types of Zaima

Days Ezil No Ge’ez No

Monday 11 24

Tuesday 11 18

Wednesday 11 14

Thursday 11 16

Friday 12 15

Saturday 11 20

1. **Arba’it**

Arba’it means four or fourth. This is the song composed by St. Yared and which is sung after every fourth line of David’s Psalms. In Ge’ez, this reads, “Kaliye Atsmia Egziyo, walabu tsiraniye weitsmiani kale si’iletiye, niusiyani we’amlakiyone”. This is inserted after every fourth verse or fourth line. That is why it is called arbaitiye or fourth.

Arba’it also begins like this, ‘kaliye, keme yafekir, gosia, abbey, tessehaline’ and continues like this, ‘Kokeb Merhomu, Betelihem, Abtsidomu, Weqome Meliltehomu, wezenewomu, abiye zena zeykewun lomu negeromu.’

Arba’it is mostly composed in poetry form; it also appears in prose form. There is reason for inserting Arba’it after every fourth verse or line. The number four represents the four cherubs. It is inserted in psalms to show that it is a song of praise like those in Psalms. Arba’it is sung in Ge’ez, Ezil and Araray songs. Arba’it is sung on special days or holidays. It begins with David’s Psalms with St. Yared’s composition inserted here and there. It is composed in the form of poetry, for the most part. Its names and number are presented as follows.

**Monday:**

1. Atmeqe

2. Kokeb merhomu

3. Zerreseyo

4. Isme Ante Bahtitik Negus

5. Afkir Bezek

6. Arge Hamere

**Tuesday:**

1. Amlake Adam

2. Intimu wuyitu

3. Weybelomu Yohannes Le Hizb

4. Hatsebomu Igerihomu

5. Habu Sibhate

**Wednesday:**

1. Tensi’u Nihur

2. Nicodimus Amtsiha

3. Zemetsi’ha Imdihare

4. Bitsu Ante yohannes

5. Zemerah komu Lehizbike

6. Hayalan Sebei

**Thursday:**

1. Zaty Ilet

2. Senbet Ameha

3. Weysutsu Lotu Meswait Sibhat

4. Nilbes Welta Zebirhan

5. Zeygelebibo Lesemay Bedemena

6. Nahu Senay

**Friday**:

1. Abraha Lene

2. Bekeme Yibe

3. Leke Sibhat

4. Zebe Dawit Tenebeye

5. Nahu Birhanate

**Saturday:**

1. Birhan zeywetsi’i

2. Sera’a senbete

3. Atsabihu fihuqat

4. Zegese habeha

5. Lebete kiristian

The total number of Arba’it is 33. But there are seven extra ones which brings the overall number to 40. The extra ones are the following:

1. Hatse Bornu Igerihornu
2. Tefeshihi Tsion
3. Qine Debtera
4. A’itit Ikeye,
5. Sertse Isayas
6. Ararate Neberet Tabot
7. Bemesqelike Abrahike Lene.

Mewdis is also song on Sunday’s alongside Arba’it.

1. **Ariyam**

Ariyam means sovereign or most high. It is called Ariyam because it is first heard as it was sung in Ariyam or heaven. It is believed that St. Yared first heard this as it was being sung by heavenly angels in the form of “holy, holy, and holy in praise of our Most High God. It is also said that St. Yared sang this song when he was taken up in spirit to Ariyam. This song begins like this,” Haleluija for God the Father, Halelulja for God the Son, Halelulja for God the Holy Spirit.” It is sung in the form of poetry. This is in praise of the Eternal God known as Holy Trinity.

The song of Ariyam is composed with superb literary beauty. For example, it says, “Halafi nebret, keme tsilalot, wekeme libse hist, yomke sebi’i nege seme meret”. It also appears in the form of prose like in the following, ‘Be ininqo senper tithanets webemeregid, halelulja for the Father, Hatsour ye awda tiberih imkewakibt, Halelulja for God the Son, Halelulja for God the Holy Spirit, Tsion. Kidist Bete Kiristian Debtera Fitsimt.”

Ariyam is sung in all three Ge’ez, Izil and Araray melodies on certain occasions especially in fasting season. It is also sung on special holidays.

Names and number of Ariyam songs:

**Monday**

1. Kedami Zaima

2. Yigebru ge’ale

3. Kale Awadi,

4. Aklile Sema’it

5. Tekeste Afuhu,

6. Yohannes Simu,

7. Atimkomu Yohannes,

8. Degniwa Lefinote Hiywet,

9. Isme betihitina

10. Isme Waka Yai’it,

11. Le Kidist Bete Kiristian

12. Halafi Nibret

**Tuesday**

1. Kahin Wenebiy

2. Lezegabriel

3. Tesefiha Tifsihit

4. Keme Keste Demena

5. Gineyu Leamlak Amalikt

6. Tiguhan Ile Iyinewomu

7. Zelilul Imsemayat

8. Yitayen Melake Egziabher

9. Rekibomu Hitsane

**Wednesday**

1. Tebehalu Bebeynatihomu

2. Yibe Estifanos Anse Reiku

3. Leze’arge Wuste Semayat

4. Awalde Nigist

5. Aklilomu Lesemayit,

6. Hatsu Teqebelu Merawa

7. Wesenu Weseru Haymanot

8. Tsidk Wuyitu Simke

9. Izrani Ri’iya.

**Thursday**

1. Tsewenine Wehayiline

2. Yibeliho Hizbe Leyohannes

3. Aregawi Ingiha Geise

4. Meskelike Egziyo

5. Bemeskelu Atebene

6. Michael Bihil,

7. Bemedalwu Delewe Aleme

**Friday**

1. Lekahinat Asergewomu

2. Tseleye Azariya

3. Bareko Lehitsan

4. Hareye Aserte Wekilete

5. Hintsahe Wesurareha Adam

6. Adam Wesenayit

7. Hintseha Wesurareha

8. Sellasie Wahid 9. Be’inka Senper

**Saturday**

1. Nitsebih Wenzemir
2. Kessete Lene
3. Waka Webirhan
4. Imtsion Nebebe
5. Tezekerku Belelit
6. Meskel Moa, Mot Tema
7. Yimts’i Berhan
8. Hawaze Berhan
9. Berhan Tizazike

The total number of Ariyam songs is 56 with the extra four others. With the extra ones it comes to 60. The extra ones are the following.

1. Yohanis halo

2. Ni’u Nitfesah

3. Yohannes Imkerse Imu Aemere

4. Abiy Zaima Tesema’a Besemay.

**5. Selest**

Selest means the third one. This is because it is sung being inserted in the third line of the Psalms. Or, Selest means singing of three different songs at one time.

This Selest song begins with “Simani igziyo Tselotiye, Weybitsal kidmeke Ge’ariye, Weitmit Getsike Imneye” and it continues with other songs composed by St. Yared.

Selest always begins with Simani which means “Hear me, oh Lord”. It has several stanzas. It is mostly presented in the form of poetry. For example, it says, “Tewolde Iyesus beBethlehem Zeyihuda, Awalde Tiros Ameha Yisegda, Seba’a Segel Amtsuh Lotu Gada, woiti Haseya Awalde Yihuda”. It is also sung in the western style of poems.

For instance, it says Mer’awi Betsih Tekebelu. It also appears in a poetry form. For instance, it says “Tsigie Asteri’aye Bewuste midrine”. Selest is sung on WaZaima, Sebhat Negih, Ariyam, Tsome Deggua, Ariyam, Senbet and Fithat times.

The names and order of Selest are presented as follows.

**Monday:**

1. Isme Tehawur

2. Re’iyu Begi’a,

3. Sera’a Senbete

4. Sobe Yitnesay

5. Benenfes Yihawur,

6. Bekeme Simretu

7. Neya Hager Medhanit

8. Isma Albo Neger

9. Bareke Egziabhe

10. Rekebnaha Be’ome Gedam

11. Zintu Wu’itu Yohannes

12. LeKidist Bête Kiristian

**Tuesday:**

1. Mariam Tsirh Nitsihit

2. Betsihomu

3. Tsome Muse Arba Me’alti

4. Tewolde Yesus

5. We’antes Bi’ise Egziabher

6. Demtse Igerihu Lezinam

7. Yigeniyu Ahizab Lesimke Egziyo

8. Ide We’anist Wehitsanate

9. Meriawi betsih tekebelu

10. Tsigie Asteriaye Bewuste Midrine

11. Tsigie Asteriaye

12. Gize Gamid Betsih

**Wednesday**:

1. Ab Merhomu Wolde Megebomu

2. Sofia Nigist

3. Wegebire Negus Medkiha

4. Kinwate Indewihu Arayomu

5. We Michael Ahadu Imelaa’ikt

6. Mezrastiye wehaylihe

7. Atsewute si’ol adlew lotu

8. Nebeliwa lewolete tsion

9. Zintus bi’ise memhirine

10. Bekeme yibe egzine bewongel

11. Yonse weledet kidist dingil

12. Wetsewu’o like mirfak.

**Thursday:**

1. Wemehare Iske Ame Arge

2. Wetekebeliho Mela’kt

3. Sebhu Wezemiru

4. Bekeme Yibe Ezra Nebiy

5. Sefha Edewihu Kidnsate

6. Bemeskelu Wold Bezewane

7. Negerune Beinte Woldike

8. Ikebwa Lezati Kal

9. Itrihaku Imneha

10. Yi’izeni Nizenwekimu

11. Zati Ilet Abbay Fasika

12. Haberu Kalu

**Friday:**

1. Rigbiye Yibla

2. Mariamse Imuni

3. Netserene be Ayinte Mihretike

4. Hare Iyesus Imgelila

5. Johannes Simu Kidist wu’itu

6. Kahin Wenebiye Dingil Wesemaite

7.Kahin Wenebiye Wesemaite

8. Sofia Nigiste

9. Neya Debtera

**Saturday**

1. Hayil Kiristos

2. Beles Zeiybe Bête Israel

3. Gabriel Melakmetsa

4. Wof Tsedi’a Timesil

5. We’ame Sedus Nesomu

6. Weridomu Imdebir

7. Awalde Nigiste

*Selest* consists of 57 songs. It is 63 with the extra songs. The six extras are the followings:

1. Yitbedir sebia

2. Tinsaa’ehu aghade

3. Zemira

4. Be’ayite inke nirekeb

5. Kersu seleda keme kerne nege

6. Romay bi’isihu.

It is not known when the extra ones are added or who inserted them.

1. **Kistet**

The meaning of the word Kistet is not yet clearly known. However, scholars say this is a song sung at very special hours of the day. For example, according to church tradition, there are special songs devoted to fasting days or other holidays. Kistet is usually sung in place of Ariyam. Sometimes, Kistet is sung in place of Ariyam. For instance, it is sung as, “Belelit ansi’u idwikmu be bete mekdes, Nezehigo Yanebib me’alte welelit Lelite Tezawaiku miste libye we’ankahikwa lenefsiye.”

Two songs are sung always in Kistet. It is usually inserted in between the Psalms of David. However, it is usually composed of the songs of prophets. For example, it says, “Menu yimsileke imne Amalikt Egziyo, wemenu kemake sibuh bewuste kidusan megebomu wemerhomu—keme binte ayin.”

In addition to Psalms and the songs of the prophets, Kistet also has the songs of St. Yared. For example, there is what is called ‘isme kiyake yisebihu Kulu Haile Semayat Wemidir”. This is a song of praise and it is a heart moving song. It is therefore usually sung on major holidays.

Days of Kistet song Their number

Monday 72

Tuesday 15

Wednesday 15

Thursday 15

Friday 15

Saturday 30

Kistet is 162 altogether but there are also special Kistet for epiphany holiday numbering 52. Altogether they are 214.

**Chapter 2**

**Mewedis**

Mewedis means praise. It is derived from the Ge’ez word meaning praise. It is separate lesson given after Kistet. Up until Kistet, the lessons are only oral, not put in the form of songs. From this point up until Kistet Ariyam, the lessons are known as Mewedis. It is usually sung on the Sabbath. This is because the angels that are created on the Sabbath, were heard singing, “holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty”. Mewedis is a reflection of the song that the angles sang on the very day of their creation. St. Yared heard this song from the angles themselves and composed it in the form of angelic prose sung on the Sabbath. All worship services offered on the Sabbath are known as praise services. This is because Sabbath is the beginning of praise songs.

During Mewedis, praises are offered mainly in the form of kine and poems. The Psalms of David are sung in different melodies. There are 52 Mewedis songs of praises offered on the Sabbath. This is even confirmed in the song which says,” Hamsa Wekiletu kineyatiha Leilete Senbet”. The names and order of Mewedis are listed below:

1. Tselote Akotet
2. Yi’iti Mariyam
3. Igziyo Tsewene Konkine

4. Igziyo Kunenek

5. Gineyu Bilo Zaty Ilet

6. Mestebiqu’I iske Wegenu

7. Misbaku Ni’u Nitfesah

8. Mezmur Tekeneyu

9. Ze Amlakiye Isme Kemahu Yibe

10. Igziyo mibezihu

11.Kaliye Atsimiha Arba’it

12. Tsenih

13. Bitsuh Zeylebu

14. Keme yafekir

15. Fitah lite

16. Egziyo semayne

17. Gosia

18. Amlakines

19. Kulkiwu

20. Abiye

21. Simu Zinte

22. Amlake Amalikt

23. Tessahaline

24. Gineyu Zati Ilet

25. Yiheyis

26. Egziabher Nigise

27. Ezil

28. Nisebiha

29. Atsimse semay

30. Isme Isat Tinedid

31. Tseniya libiye

32. Anse Ibe

33. Egziyo Ahaze Kulu

34. Tserahiku Bemindabiye

35. Yitbarek Zedaniel

36. Yitbarek Zelestu Reqiq

37. Yibarikiwo

38. Egziyo Semaiku

39. Belelit Tigeyis

40. Te’abiyo Nefsiye

41. Yitbarek Ze Zekarias

42. Yihize Tisiro

43. Semhiwo le Egziabher Imsemaiat

44. Sebhiwo le Egziabher Sibhate Haddis

45. Sebhiwo Le Egziabher Bekidusan

46. Isme Le Alem

47. Abun

48. Selest

49. Selam

50. Kibir yiyiti

51. Zimare

52. Itane Moger.

That is why even the number of 52 is mentioned in the song itself. All this is sung on the Sabbath day. However, some scholars refer to the number as the 52 weeks of the year. There are 52 Sabbath days in one year (365 days divided by 7) and the remaining one day is the day that comes in each leap year.

**I. Sebhat Negih**

Sebhat Negih means the praise song of tomorrow. This refers to praises for what the future holds. This is divided into seven parts. These are:

1. Sebhat Negih of the regular days
2. Ezil
3. . Mestebiquh Inze Ne’akuto
4. . Amlakiye Amlakiye
5. . Yiheyis
6. . Leke yidela
7. . Yenersa Miqnayoch (11)
8. . Neinte Duyan
9. . Te’abiyu Nefsiye inde be’alu
10. . Be inte Ile Yinegidu
11. . Yitba rek Ezziabher
12. . Yibarikwo Le’ Egziabher
13. . Sebhiwo Le Egziabher Im semaiat
14. . Sebtiwo KLe Egziabher Sebhate Haddis
15. . Sebhiwo Le Egziabher Se Kidusanu
16. . Be Inte Negus
17. . Isme Le Alem Hulet
18. . Abun ane
19. . Wudase Mariam
20. . Wengel
21. . Selest
22. . Selam
23. . Yesebhet Nigih Morgef
24. . Selamta
25. . Sebhate Le Egziabher Kiyane Zefetere keme Namilko

B. Sabbath Day Sebhat Negih

(See Page 69 for this)

C. Sebhat Negih of major holidays

This is the same of the regular days but kine is inserted at the end of every Psalm. (See page 119 for details).

1. Solomon Sebhat Negih of the Tisigie are:
2. Mihila Sanita Songs of Tsigie Solomon era
3. Songs song in the week before Easters
4. Sebhat Negih song on the night leading to Sunday

This one is also sung on the regular days as well as on the Sabbath. Sebhat Negih begins with Amlakiye, Amlakiye. This is because St. Yared’s song begins with Amlakiye, meaning my God. Teachers always teach their students to sing Sebhat Negih in the mornings. They warn their students not to spend any day in without hearing the life history of Jesus, not baptizing themselves in the water of Jordan River, and not reading or understanding the works of the holy fathers. By the waters of Jordan is meant the water brought from Jordan River and kept in a vessel called Maye Hebo; the history of the holy fathers is written in the book called Sinkisar. The teachers refer to churches as a symbol of Jerusalem. They tell their students to read Sinkisar in the churches every day.

**Chapte 3**

**Mi’iraf**

Mi’iraf means rest. It also means the beginning of a new idea in a book or passage. In the case of Zaima or song, Mi’iraf means a sub-division which always starts with Selam Laki. There is also a book entitled “Mi’iraf”. This is also sung on special occasions. In any case, this book in divided into many parts. The song that in entitled, “Mi’iraf” is also divided into many parts and continues until Kistet. See pages 57-73 in the original.

The part of the song that includes Mewdis and Miknayuyu until Misrak Tsehay is called Mewedis the second. (See pages 67-69.) The next one is called Kistet Ariyam. This begins with Tissehaleni and ends with Egziabher Negise. (See pages 119-123.) The next one is called WaZaima. This begins with kidus and continues with kidanu. The lesson on WaZaima has 22 titles. These are the following

1. WaZaima

2. Beamist

3. Egziabher Negise

4. Yitbarek

5. Selest

6. Selam

7. Mezmur

8. Ze’amlakiye

9. Arbait

10. Mibezihu

11. Bifsui Zeylebu

12. Mewedis

13. Kulkimu

14. Ezil

15. Mahlet

16. Zeyize

17. Sebhat Neigh

18. Isme Le’alem

19. Abun

20. Kibir Yi’iti

21. Zimare

22. Itane Moger.

So these are the titles of Zaimas or songs. The one called Beamist is the song that is inserted in between the fifth line of the Psalms.

These are:

1. Le Ggziabher Midir Bemila’a
2. Alemni Wekelonu Ile Yinebru Wusteta
3. We Wuita Bebahir Sarera
4. Webe’aflagni Wu’itu Atsinya
5. Menu Ye Arg Wuste Debre Egziabher

Mi’iraf comes before these. These five are symbols of the fire spiritual mysteries. All these are known by the name of Mi’iraf. The two classification of Mi’iraf is for the regular as well as the Lent season.