אשיר בשירה אל נורא תהלות, Ashir Beshira El Nora Tehillot

**Introduction:** This poem for the Sabbath discusses God as the Creator of the Universe, who chose Israel. The Sabbath must be hallowed with joy; studying is ideal on the Sabbath; the keepers of the Sabbath will be released from the darkness of exile. The poem ends with the hope for God’s promise to restore His nation to its rightful place.  
  
**Category:** Zemirot (Songs)  
  
**Genre:** Zemer for the Sabbath  
  
**Occasion:** Sabbath  
  
**Name:** אשיר בשירה אל נורא תהלות, Ashir Beshira El Nora Tehillot   
  
**Composer**: Avraham ben Yoshiyahu Ha-rofé  
  
**Location:** Troki, Lithuania

**Date:** 1636–1687  
  
**Acrostic:** אברהם חזק “Avraham, be strong!!”  
  
**Source:** Vilna Siddur, Volume 4, page 102  
  
**Visual Representation of Meter:** – – v – – – / – – v – –  **Description of Meter:** Each line consists of two half-lines: the first half-line contains two full vowels, followed by a vocal sheva and a full vowel, followed by two more full vowels. The second half-line consists of two full vowels, followed by a vocal sheva and a full vowel, followed by one more full vowel. **Davidson number:** א 7934  
  
**Karaite origin:** Yes  
  
**About the author:** Abraham ben Yoshiyahu was the son of Yoshiyahu ben Yehuda and the grandson of Yehuda ben Aharon. All three members of this family were prominent Karaite scholars in Troki. Like Zeraḥ ben Natan and Ezra ben Nisan, Abraham’s father, Yoshiyahu, had been one of the correspondents of Yosef Shelomo Delmedigo, and his question about the nature of the human soul was published in Delmedigo’s *Sefer* *Elim*.

Abraham was born in 1636, and he was a physician (*rofé*). He composed several literary works, his favorite topic being medicine and mysticism. Abraham was interested in the Kabbalistic teachings widespread among early modern Jewry. Many of his works survive in manuscripts in East European archives. Abraham was fluent in Latin, and parts of his medical works contain Latin texts. He had at least two sons, Yitsḥaḳ and Yehuda. Abraham died in 1687 at the age of fifty-two.

**Sources**: *Encyclopaedia Judaica*; Mann, *Texts and Studies*; Samuel Fuenn, *Keneset Yisra’el* (Warsaw, 1886).

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| Ashir beshira el : nora tehillot  El ḥai, el ḥai vehaḳḳayyam :‘osé ḡedolot. | אָ֒שִׁיר בְּשִׁירָה אֶל : נוֹרָא תְהִלּוֹת אֵל חַי : אֵל חַי וְהַקַּיָּם : עוֹשֶֹה גְדוֹלוֹת: |
| I shall sing to the One awesome in praises,  The Living God / the Living and Abiding God who performs great deeds! | |
| El ḥai, el ḥai vehaḳḳayyam :‘osé ḡedolot. | אֵל חַי : אֵל חַי וְהַקַּיָּם : עוֹשֶֹה גְדוֹלוֹת: |
| The Living God / the Living and Abiding God who performs great deeds! | |
| Boré ve‘olamav : tsurot meshunnot  Baḥar leyisra’el : mikkol leshonot  Lachen hachi nashir : shiré renanot  Elav vena‘ira : ‘im kol tehillot. | בּ֒וֹרֵא בְעוֹלָמָיו : צוּרוֹת מְשֻׁנּוֹת  בָּחַר לְיִשְֹרָאֵל : מִכָּל לְשׁוֹנוֹת  לָכֵן הֲכִי נָשִׁיר : שִׁירֵי רְנָנוֹת  אֵלָיו וְנָעִירָה : עִם כָּל תְּהִלּוֹת: |
| The one who created varied forms in His universe  Chose Israel among all the others.  Therefore, we shall sing joyous songs  For Him; we shall awaken with our praise. | |
| El ḥai, el ḥai vehaḳḳayyam :‘osé ḡedolot. | אֵל חַי : אֵל חַי וְהַקַּיָּם : עוֹשֶֹה גְדוֹלוֹת: |
| The Living God / the Living and Abiding God who performs great deeds! | |
| Ratsa veḳiddesh lo : yom hash-shevi‘i  Shabbat ḳera’ahu : malki vero‘i  Bo yom ani eshkaḥ : nodi veno‘i  Aḳdish besimḥa rav : toch kol ḳehillot. | רָ֒צָה וְקִדֵּשׁ לוֹ : יוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי  שַׁבָּת קְרָאָהוּ : מַלְכִּי וְרוֹעִי  בּוֹ יוֹם אֲנִי אֶשְׁכַּח : נוֹדִי וְנוֹעִי  אַקְדִּישׁ בְּשִֹמְחָה רַב : תּוֹךְ כָּל קְהִלּוֹת: |
| He desired and sanctified the seventh day for Himself.  He called it “the Sabbath,” my King and my Shepherd.  On that day, I shall forget all my wanderings  And joyously hallow the One great among all congregations. | |
| El ḥai, el ḥai vehaḳḳayyam :‘osé ḡedolot. | אֵל חַי : אֵל חַי וְהַקַּיָּם : עוֹשֶֹה גְדוֹלוֹת: |
| The Living God / the Living and Abiding God who performs great deeds! | |
| Hitḳaddeshu hayyom : zera‘ yesharim  Ḳaton veḡadol gam : banim vehorim  Tuḡot vehammehumot :zakkim uvarim  ‘Izvu veshabbeḥu tsur : ‘im ḳol hamullot. | הִ֒תְקַדְּשׁוּ הַיּוֹם : זֶרַע יְשָׁרִים  קָטוֹן וְגָדוֹל גַּם : בָּנִים וְהוֹרִים  תּוּגוֹת וְהַמְּהוּמוֹת : זַכִּים וּבָרִים  עִזְבוּ וְשַׁבְּחוּ צוּר : עִם קוֹל הֲמוּלּוֹת: |
| Sanctify yourselves today, O descendants of the righteous!  Small and great alike, children and parents!  All your sorrows and confusions, O pure and untainted ones—  Leave them behind and praise the Rock with festive sound! | |
| El ḥai, el ḥai vehaḳḳayyam :‘osé ḡedolot. | אֵל חַי : אֵל חַי וְהַקַּיָּם : עוֹשֶֹה גְדוֹלוֹת: |
| The Living God / the Living and Abiding God who performs great deeds! | |
| Mitta‘anuḡé ḡuf : suru uvirḥu  Ach ta‘anuḡ sichli : ridfu vedirchu  Hayyom bené el ḥai : ḥushu vehilchu  Bet el lehitpallel : ‘im rov tefillot. | מִ֒תַּעֲנוּגֵי גוּף : סוּרוּ וּבִרְחוּ  אַךְ תַּעֲנוּג שִֹכְלִי : רִדְפוּ וְדִרְכוּ  הַיּוֹם בְּנֵי אֵל חַי : חוּשׁוּ וְהִלְכוּ  בֵּית אֵל לְהִתְפַּלֵּל : עִם רוֹב תְּפִלּוֹת: |
| Turn away and flee from the delights of the body,  Instead, go and chase after intellectual delights!  Today, O children of the living God, go in haste  To God’s house and pray a host of prayers. | |
| El ḥai, el ḥai vehaḳḳayyam :‘osé ḡedolot. | אֵל חַי : אֵל חַי וְהַקַּיָּם : עוֹשֶֹה גְדוֹלוֹת: |
| The Living God / the Living and Abiding God who performs great deeds! | |
| Ḥomesim vehattorefim : yashmid mehera  Yavi ‘alehem tsur : za‘am ve‘evra  Im tishmeru shabbat : bilti ‘avera  Az tetse’u maher : mittoch afelot. | חֹ֒מְסִים וְהַטֹּרְפִים : יַשְׁמִיד מְהֵרָה  יָבִיא עֲלֵיהֶם צוּר : זַעַם וְעֶבְרָה  אִם תִּשְׁמְרוּ שַׁבָּת : בִּלְתִּי עֲבֵרָה  אָז תֵּצְאוּ מַהֵר : מִתּוֹךְ אֲפֵלוֹת: |
| He will soon destroy the plunderers and thugs,  The Rock will bring upon them indignation and wrath.  If you observe the Sabbath without transgression,  You will soon be released from darkness. | |
| El ḥai, el ḥai vehaḳḳayyam :‘osé ḡedolot. | אֵל חַי : אֵל חַי וְהַקַּיָּם : עוֹשֶֹה גְדוֹלוֹת: |
| The Living God / the Living and Abiding God who performs great deeds! | |
| Zocher umoshi’a‘ : yizkor berito  Yashiv ‘alé tillam : ‘am naḥalato  Ḳayyem yeḳayyem : tsur et imerato  Ashuv veyibbané : bet hazzevulot. | זֹ֒כֵר וּמוֹשִׁיעַ : יִזְכּוֹר בְּרִיתוֹ  יָשִׁיב עֲלֵי תִלָּם : עַם נַחֲלָתוֹ  קַ֒יֵּם יְקַיֵּם צוּר : אֶת אִ־מְרָתוֹ  אָשׁוּב וְיִבָּנֶה : בֵּית הַזְּבוּלוֹת: |
| The one who remembers and redeems will remember His covenant  And restore the people of His inheritance upon their mound.  The Rock will truly fulfill His word:  I shall return, and the House of Habitation will be rebuilt! | |
| El ḥai, el ḥai vehaḳḳayyam :‘osé ḡedolot. | אֵל חַי : אֵל חַי וְהַקַּיָּם : עוֹשֶֹה גְדוֹלוֹת: |
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