## Ekkon Lemul Shabbat

**Introduction:** This poem was clearly intended by its author to be recited at the onset of the Sabbath, to greet the Sabbath (compare the Rabbanite practice of *ḳabbalat shabbat*, “greeting the Sabbath,” with psalms and hymns); nonetheless, it can be re-purposed as a song to sing at the table at any time over the course of the Sabbath. The poem states that knowledge and understanding are prerequisites for those preparing for the Sabbath. The refrain welcomes the Sabbath as a bride, a theme popular among early modern Jews, inspired by the Kabbalists of Safed. In addition, the poem discusses creation and the chosenness of the Jewish people. The congregation must worship God by sanctifying the Sabbath; God will destroy their enemies. The poem ends in the hope of salvation prepared in the Garden of Eden for both body and soul.

**Category:** Zemirot (Songs)  
  
**Genre:** Zemer for the Sabbath  
  
**Occasion:** Onset of the Sabbath  
  
**Name:** אכון למול שבת, Ekkon Lemul Shabbat  
  
**Composer**: Yosef ben Yitsḥaḳ Itson  
  
**Location:** Kronie, Troki, and Szaty, Lithuania  
  
**Date:** 17th–18th century  
  
**Acrostic:** אברהם “Avraham” (the name of the poet’s son)  
  
**Source:** Vilna Siddur, Volume 4, page 97  
  
**Visual Representation of Meter:** – – v – / – – v – / – –

**Description of Meter:** Each line consists of three segments: the first segment contains two full vowels, followed by a vocal sheva and another full vowel; the second segment consists of the same; and the third segment consists of two full vowels.  
  
**Davidson number:** א 3250  
  
**Karaite origin:** Yes  
  
**About the Author:** Yosef ben Yitsḥaḳ Itson was born in Kronie (Lith. Kruonis) in the district of Kowno (Lith. Kaunas). Some of his letters survive in the Firkovich archives in Saint Petersburg. In 1704, Itson’s daughter married Mordochai ben Abraham Kaplanowski, and a fragment of their *ketubba* mentions Yosef’s son, Abraham, among friends of the bridegroom*.* Abraham’s name is encoded in the acrostic of Yosef’s poem *Ekkon Lemul Shabbat.*

Like many Karaites and Rabbanites of the time in Lithuania, Itson worked as a leaseholder, but his livelihood became increasingly precarious during the Great Northern War (1700–1721). In autumn of 1705, Itson moved from Kronie to Troki, where Swedish soldiers extorted money from the local Karaites. Later, he relocated to Szaty (Lith. Šėta), fifty miles north of Kowno.

Several of Itson’s Hebrew poems were published in the Karaite Siddur. He was a religious authority in his community, and in 1709, he authored a *haskama* (approbation) for *Ma’amar Mordochai* by Mordochai ben Nisan (d. c. 1709), a supercommentary on Aharon ben Yosef’s *Sefer ha-mivḥar*.

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| Ekkon lemul shabbat : haskel vede‘a  Or habberacha va : ‘et hayyeshu‘a  ‘Et niḡmera ma‘sé : yusar yeḡi‘a  Liḳrat pené shabbat : essa beshav‘a. | אֶ֒כּוֹן לְמוּל שַׁבָּת : הַשְֹכֵּל וְדֵעָה  אוֹר הַבְּרָכָה בָא : עֵת הַיְּשׁוּעָה  עֵת נִגְמְרָה מַעְשֶׂה : יוּסַר יְגִיעָה  לִקְרַאת פְּנֵי שַׁבָּת : אֶשָּׂא בְּשַׁוְעָה: |
| I shall prepare for the Sabbath with reason and knowledge!  The blessed light has arrived, the time of salvation.  As labors cease, our weariness disperses,  Greeting the Sabbath, I shall raise a shout: | |
| Bo’i beḥen kavod : kalla tsenu‘a  Hinné aḳaddem lach : ‘im ḳol teru‘a. | בּוֹאִי בְּחֵן כָּבוֹד : כַּלָּה צְנוּעָה  הִנֵּה אֲקַדֵּם לָךְ : עִם קוֹל תְּרוּעָה: |
| Come in the glorious beauty, O Modest Bride,  I shall greet you with a loud voice! | |
| Boré sheḥaḳim tsur : baḥar le‘ammo  Mikkol yetsurim hen : ḳaddesh leyomo  Shabbat shevi‘i hu : nofesh letsalmo  Ot hi leḥiddush kol : reshit tevu’a. | בּ֒וֹרֵא שְׁחָקִים צוּר : בָּחַר לְעַמּוֹ  מִכָּל יְצוּרִים הֵן : קַדֵּשׁ לְיוֹמוֹ  שַׁבָּת שְׁבִיעִי הוּא : נוֹפֶשׁ לְצַלְמוֹ  אוֹת הִיא לְחִדּוּשׁ כֹּל : רֵאשִׁית תְּבוּאָה: |
| The Creator of the heavens is the Rock, who chose His nation,  Out of all creatures, to hallow His day.  The seventh day, the Sabbath, is rest in His image,  It is a sign of all creation, the first fruit. | |
| Bo’i beḥen kavod : kalla tsenu‘a  Hinné aḳaddem lach : ‘im ḳol teru‘a. | בּוֹאִי בְּחֵן כָּבוֹד : כַּלָּה צְנוּעָה  הִנֵּה אֲקַדֵּם לָךְ : עִם קוֹל תְּרוּעָה: |
| Come in the glorious beauty, O Modest Bride,  I shall greet you with a loud voice! | |
| Rutsi chenesiyya : la‘avod leḳonech  Ḳaddeshi be‘od hayyom : shich-ḥi yeḡonech  Dirshi le‘oz malkech : yach-ḥid lemonech  Yaz-hir shechinato : lassiḡ bede‘a. | ר֒וּצִי כְנֵסִיָּה : לַעֲבוֹד לְקוֹנֵךְ  קַדְּשִׁי בְּעוֹד הַיּוֹם : שִׁכְחִי יְגוֹנֵךְ  דִּרְשִׁי לְעוֹז מַלְכֵּךְ : יַכְחִיד לְמוֹנֵךְ  יַזְהִיר שְׁכִינָתוֹ : לַשִֹּיג בְּדֵעָה: |
| Run, congregation, to worship your Creator!  Hallow it while it is still day; forget your grief!  Seek the strength of your King: He will destroy your oppressors.  He will illuminate His Presence for us to attain knowledge. | |
| Bo’i beḥen kavod : kalla tsenu‘a  Hinné aḳaddem lach : ‘im ḳol teru‘a. | בּוֹאִי בְּחֵן כָּבוֹד : כַּלָּה צְנוּעָה  הִנֵּה אֲקַדֵּם לָךְ : עִם קוֹל תְּרוּעָה: |
| Come in the glorious beauty, O Modest Bride,  I shall greet you with a loud voice! | |
| Ha’el be‘oz hodo : yarbé fela’ot  Yaḥos ‘alé ‘ammo : sovel tela’ot  Yimḥats leḳamehem : yislaḥ ḥatta’ot  Yesof leniddaḥim : hallel beyira. | הָ֒אֵל בְּעוֹז הוֹדוֹ : יַרְבֶּה פְלָאוֹת:  יָחוֹס עֲלֵי עַמּוֹ : סוֹבֵל תְּלָאוֹת:  יִמְחַץ לְקָמֵיהֶם : יִסְלַח חַטָּאוֹת:  יֶאְסוֹף לְנִדָּחִים : הַלֵּל בְּיִרְאָה: |
| God, in His majestic might, will make many miracles.  He will have mercy on His nation, which is suffering travails.  He will smite their enemies; He will forgive sins.  He will gather the dispersed to praise in awe. | |
| Bo’i beḥen kavod : kalla tsenu‘a  Hinné aḳaddem lach : ‘im ḳol teru‘a. | בּוֹאִי בְּחֵן כָּבוֹד : כַּלָּה צְנוּעָה  הִנֵּה אֲקַדֵּם לָךְ : עִם קוֹל תְּרוּעָה: |
| Come in the glorious beauty, O Modest Bride,  I shall greet you with a loud voice! | |
| Ma na‘ama ḥelḳi : ḥakkot meshiḥi  Tsidḳi vetsur ḥeshḳi : ḳabbel lesiḥi  Ḥazzeḳ leneḥshalim : hashev leruḥi  Nizké velev shalem : liḳro ḳeri’a. | מַ֒ה נָּעֲמָה חֶלְקִי : חַכּוֹת מְשִׁיחִי  צִדְקִי וְצוּר חֶשְׁקִי : קַבֵּל לְשִֹיחִי  חַזֵּק לְנֶחְשָׁלִים : הָשֵׁב לְרוּחִי  נִזְכֶּה בְלֵב שָׁלֵם : לִקְרוֹא קְרִיאָה: |
| How sweet is my portion, awaiting my Messiah! :  My Righteous one, Rock of desire, receive my appeal:  Brace the weak ones; revive my spirit.  With whole hearts, we shall be worthy of reading Scripture. | |
| Bo’i beḥen kavod : kalla tsenu‘a  Hinné aḳaddem lach : ‘im ḳol teru‘a. | בּוֹאִי בְּחֵן כָּבוֹד : כַּלָּה צְנוּעָה  הִנֵּה אֲקַדֵּם לָךְ : עִם קוֹל תְּרוּעָה: |
| Come in the glorious beauty, O Modest Bride,  I shall greet you with a loud voice! | |
| Amen yehi ratson : yitten menuḥa  Gufiyyi venafshiyyi : baggan ‘arucha  Baruch asher hiḳdish : ‘eda verucha  Lishmor leyom shabbat : lirot yeshu‘a. | אָמֵן יְהִי רָצוֹן : יִתֵּן מְנוּחָה  גּוּפִיִּי וְנַפְשִׁיִּי : בַּגַּן עֲרוּכָה  בָּרוּךְ אֲשֶׁר הִקְדִּישׁ : עֵדָה בְרוּכָה  לִשְׁמוֹר לְיוֹם שַׁבָּת : לִרְאוֹת יְשׁוּעָה: |
| Amen! May it be His will; may He supply rest,  Both physical and spiritual, in the Garden.  Praised be the one who hallowed the blessed nation  To observe the Sabbath day, to see the redemption. | |
| Bo’i beḥen kavod : kalla tsenu‘a  Hinné aḳaddem lach : ‘im ḳol teru‘a. | בּוֹאִי בְּחֵן כָּבוֹד : כַּלָּה צְנוּעָה  הִנֵּה אֲקַדֵּם לָךְ : עִם קוֹל תְּרוּעָה: |
| Come in the glorious beauty, O Modest Bride,  I shall greet you with a loud voice! | |
| Kakkatuv: Ladonai hayshu‘a ‘al ‘ammecha virchatecha sela. | כַּכָּתוּב: לַֽיהֹוָ֥ה הַיְשׁוּעָ֑ה עַֽל־עַמְּךָ֖ בִרְכָתֶ֣ךָ סֶּֽלָה׃  (תהלים פרק ג,ט) |
| As it is written: Deliverance is Adonai’s; Your blessing be upon Your people! Selah (Ps. 3:9). | |