אשמח בשיר חדש, Esmaḥ Beshir Ḥadash

**Introduction:** This poem, for the onset of the Sabbath, begins by juxtaposing the Sabbath and the act of creation, God having rested on the seventh day. The poem emphasizes joy, song, and rest on the Sabbath. It also offers didactic advice: work is forbidden and study recommended. The keepers of the Sabbath will see God’s glory, and all wounds will be healed.

**Category:** Zemirot (Songs)  
  
**Genre:** Zemer for the Sabbath  
  
**Occasion:** Onset of the Sabbath  
  
**Name:** אשמח בשיר חדש, Esmaḥ beshir ḥadash  
  
**Composer**: Ezra ben Nisan Ha-rofé  
  
**Location:** Troki, Lithuania  
  
**Date:** 1595–1666  
  
**Acrostic:** עזרא “Ezra”  
  
**Source:** Vilna Siddur, Volume 4, page 107  
  
**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 8096  
  
**Karaite origin:** Yes

**About the Author:** Ezra ben Nisan was born in Troki, Lithuania. In his early twenties, he was one the Karaite scholars that corresponded with the Rabbanite scholar Yosef Shelomo Delmedigo (known as Yashar of Candia). (Another Karaite scholar involved in such correspondence was Zeraḥ ben Natan, author of the poem *Essa Bechos Yesha‘* for Havdala, included in this volume.) Ezra was a physician by profession (Heb. *Ha-rofé*), and, according to some sources, he saved the life of the king’s daughter during his employment at the royal court. However, there are many legends about miracle-working Jewish physicians in Poland at that time, so the veracity of this relatively late story is dubious.

In addition to his work as a physician, Ezra held administrative offices in the Karaite community of Troki. In 1634, Ezra became a *dayyan* (judge), and by 1640, he had risen to the position of *shofet* (*chief judge*). His appointment, however, was brief due to his duties as a physician. Ezra was held in high esteem as a scholar, and he was well versed in the rabbinic commentaries of Rashi and Abraham ibn Ezra. He died in 1666 at the age of seventy-one.

**Sources**: *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (2nd ed., 2007), Jacob Mann, *Texts and studies in Jewish history and literature* (Cincinnati, 1931-5); Mikhail Kizilov, “Ezra ben Nisan ha-Rofe of Troki (1595‒1666)—A Karaite Physician in Legend and History,” in *Leipziger Beiträge zur jüdischen Geschichte und Kultur* 1 (2003), pp. 83‒103.

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| Esmaḥ beshir ḥadash : liḳrat menuḥa  Aḥar asher eshbot : mikkol melacha. | אֶשְֹמַח בְּשִׁיר חָדָשׁ : לִקְרַאת מְנוּחָה  אַחַר אֲשֶׁר אֶשְׁבּוֹת : מִכָּל מְלָאכָה: |
| I shall rejoice with a new song to greet the time of rest,  After which I will cease from all labor. | |
| Aḥar asher eshbot : mikkol melacha. | אַחַר אֲשֶׁר אֶשְׁבּוֹת : מִכָּל מְלָאכָה: |
| After which I will cease from all labor. | |
| ‘Inyan metsi’ut kol : binu nevonim  Yom hash-shevi‘i hu : lanu sesonim  Sod habberi’a gam : mitsvat emunim  Moré lechol doreshav : bakkol ‘arucha. | עִ֒נְיַן מְצִיאוּת כֹּל : בִּינוּ נְבוֹנִים  יוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי הוּא : לָנוּ שְֹשֹוֹנִים  סוֹד הַבְּרִיאָה גַּם : מִצְוַת אֱמוּנִים  מוֹרֶה לְכָל דּוֹרְשָׁיו : בַּכֹּל עֲרוּכָה: |
| Contemplate the meaning of all existence, O wise ones:  The seventh day is a joy for us!  The secret of the creation, the commandment to the faithful ones—  A guide for all who seek it, drawn up in full! | |
| Aḥar asher eshbot : mikkol melacha. | אַחַר אֲשֶׁר אֶשְׁבּוֹת : מִכָּל מְלָאכָה: |
| After which I will cease from all labor. | |
| Zecher ḳedush-shato : livro yetsurim  Gazar le‘am nivḥar : darché yesharim  Yashbit ‘avodato : ‘ani vesarim  Yassiḡ be‘en sichlo : simman beracha. | זֵ֒כֶר קְדֻשָּׁתוֹ : לִבְרֹא יְצוּרִים  גָּזַר לְעַם נִבְחָר : דַּרְכֵי יְשָׁרִים  יַשְׁבִּית עֲבוֹדָתוֹ : עָנִי וְשָֹרִים  יַשִֹּיג בְּעֵין שִֹכְלוֹ : סִמַּן בְּרָכָה: |
| A remembrance of His holiness when forming all the creatures—  He decreed righteous paths for the chosen people.  Poor and rich alike will cease labor.  With the eye of the mind, they will reach the blessed sign. | |
| Aḥar asher eshbot : mikkol melacha. | אַחַר אֲשֶׁר אֶשְׁבּוֹת : מִכָּל מְלָאכָה: |
| After which I will cease from all labor. | |
| Ribbuy pe‘ullotav : ‘edim ‘alé ze  Divré nevi’av af : ro’é veḥozé  Shefa‘ vetovot rav : el dal verazé  Yitten be‘et ḳor’o : mits-tsar revaḥa. | רִ֒בּוּי פְּעֻלּוֹתָיו : עֵדִים עֲלֵי זֶה  דִּבְרֵי נְבִיאָיו אַף : רֹאֶה וְחוֹזֶה  שֶׁפַע וְטוֹבוֹת רַב : אֶל דַּל וְרָזֶה  יִתֵּן בְּעֵת קָרְאוֹ : מִצַּר רְוָחָה: |
| The variety of His deeds bears witness to it all:  The words of His prophets, seers, and visionaries,  Abundance and great kindness for the poor and emaciated:  When they beseech Him, He will provide relief from despair. | |
| Aḥar asher eshbot : mikkol melacha. | אַחַר אֲשֶׁר אֶשְׁבּוֹת : מִכָּל מְלָאכָה: |
| After which I will cease from all labor. | |
| Achen beyom hazzé : asur ledabber  ‘Avar ve‘atid gam : ‘inyan leḥabber  Eḳra betorat el : ‘im rav veḥaver  Asis beḡil sason : anis anaḥa. | אָ֒כֵן בְּיוֹם הַזֶּה : אָסוּר לְדַבֵּר  עָבָר וְעָתִיד גַּם : עִנְיָן לְחַבֵּר  אֶקְרָא בְּתוֹרַת אֵל : עִם רַב וְחָבֵר  אָשִֹישֹ בְּגִיל שָֹשֹוֹן : אָנִיס אֲנָחָה: |
| Today, indeed, it is forbidden to talk  About fleeting things or business affairs.  I shall read the Torah of God with my teacher and my friend,  Rejoicing with gladness and joy; I shall banish sorrow. | |
| Aḥar asher eshbot : mikkol melacha. | אַחַר אֲשֶׁר אֶשְׁבּוֹת : מִכָּל מְלָאכָה: |
| After which I will cease from all labor. | |
| Ḥashim leḳaddesh et : shabbat berinna  Tizku ḥazot lichvod : shochen me‘ona  Tir’u ke’or shemesh : or hallevana  Yirpa leshivrenu : yitten arucha. | חָשִׁים לְקַדֵּשׁ אֶת : שַׁבָּת בְּרִנָּה  תִּזְכּוּ חֲזוֹת לִכְבוֹד : שֹׁכֵן מְעוֹנָה  תִּרְאוּ כְּאוֹר שֶׁמֶשׁ : אוֹר הַלְּבָנָה  יִרְפָּא לְשִׁבְרֵנו : יִתֵּן אֲרוּכָה: |
| You who rush to hallow the Sabbath with joy  Will be worthy of seeing the Glory of Him who dwells above.  You will see the light of the moon as the light of the sun.  He will heal our wounds and bring healing. | |
| Aḥar asher eshbot : mikkol melacha. | אַחַר אֲשֶׁר אֶשְׁבּוֹת : מִכָּל מְלָאכָה: |
| After which I will cease from all labor. | |
| Kakkatuv: Vehaya or hallevana ke’or haḥamma. | כַּכָּתוּב: וְהָיָ֤ה אוֹר־הַלְּבָנָה֙ כְּא֣וֹר הַֽחַמָּ֔ה (ישעיהו ל,כו) |
| As it is written: And the light of the moon shall become like the light of the sun… (Is. 30:26). | |