אזכור למצות מלך, Ezkor Lemitsvat Melech

**Introduction:** This poem for the Sabbath begins with the divine decree for the chosen nation to keep the Sabbath. The refrain welcomes the Sabbath as a bride, Kabbalistic imagery popular in early modern Jewish poetry. Ceasing to work on the Sabbath, the individual may reach joy through rest. The poet devotes much space to the secrets of the Sabbath and the act of creation: God rested on the seventh day, and the world was created from nothingness into being. The poem ends in the anticipation of God’s promises and the ingathering of the exiles.

**Category:** Zemirot (Songs)  
  
**Genre:** Zemer for the Sabbath  
  
**Occasion:** Sabbath  
  
**Name:** אזכור למצות מלך, Ezkor Lemitsvat Melech  
  
**Composer**: Shelomo ben Aharon

**Location:** Troki, Lithuania

**Date:** 1670–1745  
  
**Acrostic:** שלמה חזק “Shelomo, be strong!”  
  
**Source:** Vilna Siddur, Volume 4, page 96  
  
**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 2217  
  
**Karaite origin:** Yes

**About the Author:** Shelomo ben Aharon (1670‒1745) was one of the most prominent literary Karaite figures of his time. He was born in Paswoł (Lithuanian: Pasvalys) in the northern Lithuanian district of Ponewież (Lith. Panėvežys). In the first decade of the eighteenth century, Shelomo moved to Troki. In 1710, his wife and two sons, Simḥa and Mordochai, died in a plague which ravaged northeastern Europe. He composed a lamentation for the memory of the dead, and the poem was incorporated into the mourning ritual of the Lithuanian Karaite synagogues between the ninth of Tammuz and the seventh of Av. After the tragedy, Shelomo moved to Vilna, where he was employed as the *rav* of the surviving Karaite community (i.e.,legal expert on religious matters, food, rituals, marriage, and calendar). In 1719, Shelomo moved back to Troki.

Shelomo was a prolific Hebrew poet and an author of several Hebrew works. His most famous work is *Appiryon ‘Asa Lo* (“A Palanquin He Made for Himself”), a treatise on Karaite faith and a discussion on the differences between rabbinic and Karaite Judaism. The work, available in several versions, contains twenty-four answers to the questions posed by Johann Uppendorff (1645–1698), a Swedish professor at the University of Riga. Shelomo also wrote polemic works, two Hebrew grammars, and several Hebrew poems that were included in the Karaite Siddurim.

The short version of *Appiryon ‘Asa Lo* has been published by The Karaite Press, under the name *The Palanquin*.

**Sources**: *Encyclopaedia Judaica*; Mann, *Texts and Studies*.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Ezkor lemitsvat me- : lech ram vena‘la  Gazar le‘am baḥar : im ḳol hamulla  Ḳaddesh leshabbat ‘im : ḥefets me‘ulla  Lachen meḳora’im : ‘eda seḡulla. | אֶזְכּוֹר לְמִצְוַת מֶ־ : לֶךְ רָם וְנַעְלָה  גָּזַר לְעַם בָּחַר : עִם קוֹל הֲמוּלָּה  קַדֵּשׁ לְשַׁבָּת עִם : חֵפֶץ מְעֻלָּה  לָכֵן מְקוֹרָאִים : עֵדָה סְגֻלָּה: |
| I shall recall the commandment of the high and exalted King!  He ordained it for the people He chose, with a tumultuous voice:  “Hallow the Sabbath most willingly!”  Hence, they are called the treasured congregation. | |
| Bo’u venaḳbila : kalla kelula  Netsé lemulah ‘im : ḳol shir veḡila. | בּוֹאוּ וְנַקְבִּילָה : כַּלָּה כְּלוּלָה  נֵצֵא לְמוּלָהּ עִם : קוֹל שִׁיר וְגִילָה: |
| Let us receive the perfect bride!  Let us go towards her with calls of song and joy! | |
| Eshmor bevo ha‘et : la‘zov melacha  Ki va zeman ḳodesh : naḡil besimḥa  Me‘et ‘arivat she- : mesh kahalacha  Eḥdal ve’anu’aḥ : ka‘et betsillah. | אֶשְׁ֒מוֹר בְּבוֹא הָעֵת : לַעְזוֹב מְלָאכָה  כִּי בָא זְמַן קֹדֶשׁ : נָגִיל בְּשִֹמְחָה  מֵעֵת עֲרִיבַת שֶׁ־ : מֶשׁ כַּהֲלָכָה  אֶחְדַּל וְאָנוּחַ : כָּעֵת בְּצִלָּהּ: |
| I shall keep the proper time and cease work:  For the sacred time has arrived—let us rejoice.  From the setting of the sun, as ordained,  I shall promptly cease and rest in its shade. | |
| Bo’u venaḳbila : kalla kelula  Netsé lemulah ‘im : ḳol shir veḡila. | בּוֹאוּ וְנַקְבִּילָה : כַּלָּה כְּלוּלָה  נֵצֵא לְמוּלָהּ עִם : קוֹל שִׁיר וְגִילָה: |
| Let us receive the perfect bride!  Let us go towards her with calls of song and joy! | |
| Elmad lesod hayyom : mippi tehorim  Ḳava‘ adon ‘olam : zecher ledorim  Ulsod beri’at yesh : mimmaḥasorim  Himtsi metsi’ut kol : rav ha‘alila. | אֶלְ֒מַד לְסוֹד הַיּוֹם : מִפִּי טְהוֹרִים  קָבַע אֲדוֹן עוֹלָם : זֵכֶר לְדוֹרִים  וּלְסוֹד בְּרִיאַת יֵשׁ : מִמַּחֲסוֹרִים  הִמְצִיא מְצִיאוּת כֹּל : רַב הָעֲלִילָה: |
| I shall learn from the mouths of the pure people the secret of the day,  Which the Lord of the Universe decreed an eternal remembrance,  And the secret of creation out of nothing:  The One mighty in deed created all existence. | |
| Bo’u venaḳbila : kalla kelula  Netsé lemulah ‘im : ḳol shir veḡila. | בּוֹאוּ וְנַקְבִּילָה : כַּלָּה כְּלוּלָה  נֵצֵא לְמוּלָהּ עִם : קוֹל שִׁיר וְגִילָה: |
| Let us receive the perfect bride!  Let us go towards her with calls of song and joy! | |
| Emtsa lenafshi no- : fesh umnuḥa  Dat el behaskili : yitron bechoḥah  Aḥar yemé ma‘asé : lagguf revaḥa  Mits-tsad shevitati : simḥa vetsahola. | אֶמְ֒צָא לְנַפְשִׁי נוֹ־ : פֶשׁ וּמְנוּחָה  דָּת אֵל בְּהַשְֹכִּילִי : יִתְרוֹן בְּכֹחָהּ  אַחַר יְמֵי מַעֲשֶׂה : לַגּוּף רְוָחָה  מִצַּד שְׁבִיתָתִי : שִֹמְחָה וְצָהֳלָה: |
| I shall find for my soul rest and repose,  Contemplating the divine law and the benefit of its command:  After the days of labor, a relief to the body,  Because of my rest, gladness and joyous cries! | |
| Bo’u venaḳbila : kalla kelula  Netsé lemulah ‘im : ḳol shir veḡila. | בּוֹאוּ וְנַקְבִּילָה : כַּלָּה כְּלוּלָה  נֵצֵא לְמוּלָהּ עִם : קוֹל שִׁיר וְגִילָה: |
| Let us receive the perfect bride!  Let us go towards her with calls of song and joy! | |
| Ehgé lesod sheni : dimmu ḥachamim  Ḳiddush shevi‘i a- : ḥar shesh beyamim  Dimyon lenishmat ish : ben haḥatumim  Shesh hen befe’otav : ‘ola lema‘la. | אֶהְ֒גֶּה לְסוֹד שֵׁנִי : דִּמּוּ חֲכָמִים  קִדּוּשׁ שְׁבִיעִי אַ־ : חַר שֵׁשׁ בְּיָמִים  דִּמְיוֹן לְנִשְׁמַת אִישׁ : בֵּין הַחֲתוּמִים  שֵׁשׁ הֵן בְּפֵאוֹתָיו : עוֹלָה לְמַעְלָה: |
| I shall study the second secret the wise ones devised:  The sanctification of the seventh day after six days,  As is the human soul, it is also sealed knowledge—  Six on its sides; rising upward from them. | |
| Bo’u venaḳbila : kalla kelula  Netsé lemulah ‘im : ḳol shir veḡila. | בּוֹאוּ וְנַקְבִּילָה : כַּלָּה כְּלוּלָה  נֵצֵא לְמוּלָהּ עִם : קוֹל שִׁיר וְגִילָה: |
| Let us receive the perfect bride!  Let us go towards her with calls of song and joy! | |
| Aḥziḳ bedat ha’el : etten shevaḥa  ‘Al mattenat yom zé : yom habberacha  Amen yeḳayyem tsur : kol havtaḥa  Kannes leniddaḥai : limsos tehilla. | אַחְ֒זִ֒יק֒ בְּדָת הָאֵל : אֶתֵּן שְׁבָחָה  עַל מַתְּנַת יוֹם זֶה : יוֹם הַבְּרָכָה  אָמֵן יְקַיֵּם צוּר : כָּל הַבְטָחָה  כַּנֵּס לְנִדָּחַי : לִמְשֹוֹשֹ תִּהִלָּה: |
| I shall hold fast to God’s law and give praise  For the gift of this day, a day of blessing.  Amen, may the Rock fulfill all the promises:  Gather my exiles to the joy of splendor! | |
| Bo’u venaḳbila : kalla kelula  Netsé lemulah ‘im : ḳol shir veḡila. | בּוֹאוּ וְנַקְבִּילָה : כַּלָּה כְּלוּלָה  נֵצֵא לְמוּלָהּ עִם : קוֹל שִׁיר וְגִילָה: |
| Let us receive the perfect bride!  Let us go towards her with calls of song and joy! | |
| Kakkatuv: Boné yerushalayim adonai nidḥé yisra’el yechannes. | כַּכָּתוּב: בּוֹנֵ֣ה יְרֽוּשָׁלִַ֣ם יְהֹוָ֑ה נִדְחֵ֖י יִשְׂרָאֵ֣ל יְכַנֵּֽס׃ (תהלים פרק קמז,ב) |
| As it is written: Adonai rebuilds Jerusalem; He gathers in the exiles of Israel (Ps. 147:2). | |