**Eḳra Le’el ‘Elyon**

**Introduction:** This poem for the Sabbath begins with a description of the divine act of creation. The refrain welcomes the Sabbath as a bride, Kabbalistic imagery popular in early modern Jewish poetry. Work is strictly prohibited on the Sabbath, and the seventh day is to be dedicated to study. The poet warns of dire punishments for those who break the commandment. The poem ends with the anticipation of redemption for each individual soul.

**Name:** אֶקְרָא לְאֵל עֶלְיוֹן / Eḳra Le’el ‘Elyon

**Category:** Zemirot (Songs)

**Genre:** Zemer for the Sabbath

**Occasion:** Sabbath

**Composer:** R. Abraham ben Mordochai

**Location:** Ponewież, Lithuania

**Date:** died c. 1805

**Acrostic:** אברהם חזק (Abraham, be strong)

**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.

**Source:** Vilna Siddur, Volume IV, p. 98

**Davidson No.:** א7398

**Karaite Origin**: Yes

**About the Author:** Abraham ben Mordochai was the son of Sara, the daughter of Yosef ben Yitsḥaḳ Itson. As a young man, he studied under Shelomo ben Aharon, the author of *Appiryon*. He had a brother, Yitsḥaḳ, and a sister, Raḥel, who was married to Yitsḥaḳ ben Abraham, the *rav* of Nowo Miasto in Lithuania. In 1749, Abraham married Shelomit (d. 1786/7), the daughter of the *shofet* (leading judge) Shemu’el ben Abraham Labanos of Troki. The couple settled in Ponewież, roughly one hundred miles north of Troki, and had a son, Yosef.

Like many Jews in Poland and Lithuania, Abraham earned his living by working as a leaseholder and a merchant. However, he suffered severe economic losses between 1750 and 1783 due to fires, plunderers, and creditors. Abraham corresponded with many Karaite scholars in Poland-Lithuania, the Crimea, and Turkey, and several of his letters survive in the Firkovich archives in Saint Petersburg. Abraham was deeply involved in Karaite legal thought and practice: in 1784, he debated Shelumi’el ben Shemu’el, the religious leader of the Karaite community in Troki, on setting the structure of the calendar.

Sources: Jacob Mann, *Texts and Studies*.

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| Eḳra le’el ‘elyon : nezar gevura  Yasad beḥochmato : pilé yetsira  Hisgil bemitsvotav : ‘eda berura  Lishmor ḳedush-shat yom : shabbat behedra. | אֶ֒קְרָא לְאֵל עֶלְיוֹן : נֶאְזָר גְּבוּרָה  יָסַד בְּחָכְמָתוֹ : פִּלְאֵי יְצִירָה  הִסְגִּיל בְּמִצְוֹתָיו : עֵדָה בְּרוּרָה  לִשְׁמוֹר קְדֻשַּׁת יוֹם : שַׁבָּת בְּהֶדְרָה: |
| I call to God Most High, girded with might,  Who, in His wisdom, established the miracles of creation  And, with His commandments, chose the pure congregation  To observe the holy Sabbath day in splendor. | |
| Ḳumi leḳiddushin : kalla tehora  Ori demut hanner : nefesh yeḳara. | קוּמִי לְקִדּוּשִׁין : כַּלָּה טְהוֹרָה  אוֹרִי דְמוּת הַנֵּר : נֶפֶשׁ יְקָרָה: |
| Arise to the betrothal, O pure bride, Shine akin to a candle, O precious soul! | |
| Boḥen kelayot lev : hizmin revaḥa  Hiz-hir leval na‘sé : bo shum melacha  Kishné chevasim hen : aḳriv uminḥa  Rannen pené challa : hallel veshira. | בּ֒וֹחֵן כְּלָיוֹת לֵב : הִזְמִין רְוָחָה  הִזְהִיר לְבַל נַעְשֶֹה : בּוֹ שׁוּם מְלָאכָה  כִּשְׁנֵי כְבָשִֹים הֵן : אַקְרִיב וּמִנְחָה  רַנֵּן פְּנֵי כַלָּה : הַלֵּל וְשִׁירָה: |
| The One who reads hidden thoughts summoned relief  And cautioned us not to work on that day,  When I sacrifice two sheep, along with a meal-offering,  To sing joyfully to greet the bride with praises and songs! | |
| Ḳumi leḳiddushin : kalla tehora  Ori demut hanner : nefesh yeḳara. | קוּמִי לְקִדּוּשִׁין : כַּלָּה טְהוֹרָה  אוֹרִי דְמוּת הַנֵּר : נֶפֶשׁ יְקָרָה: |
| Arise to the betrothal, O pure bride, Shine akin to a candle, O precious soul! | |
| Rishon lemiḳra’é : ḳodesh mechubbad  Limtso ḥafatsim bo : asur lene‘vad  Ki chol meḥallel hu : nispé veyovad  Ulshomerav yanḥil : kavod tedira. | רִ֒אשׁוֹן לְמִקְרָאֵי : קֹדֶשׁ מְכֻבָּד  לִמְצוֹא חֲפָצִים בּוֹ : אָסוּר לְנֶעְבָד  כִּי כָל מְחַלֵּל הוּא : נִסְפֶּה וְיֹאבַד  וּלְשׁוֹמְרָיו יַנְחִיל : כָּבוֹד תְּדִירָה: |
| The first of the sacred occasions is esteemed.  It is forbidden to pursue any affairs of work!  For those who desecrate the Sabbath will perish and be gone,  But upon its keepers, He will bestow everlasting glory. | |
| Ḳumi leḳiddushin : kalla tehora  Ori demut hanner : nefesh yeḳara. | קוּמִי לְקִדּוּשִׁין : כַּלָּה טְהוֹרָה  אוֹרִי דְמוּת הַנֵּר : נֶפֶשׁ יְקָרָה: |
| Arise to the betrothal, O pure bride, Shine akin to a candle, O precious soul! | |
| Hedrat nevé ḳodesh : ḥemdat ḳedush-sha  Na‘vod leyotsrenu : mibbe‘od leshish-sha  Yom hash-shevi‘i zé : lanu yerush-sha  ‘Ayyen besod ‘amoḳ : behar amura. | הֶ֒דְרַת נְוֵה קֹדֶשׁ : חֶמְדַּת קְדֻשָּׁה  נַעְבוֹד לְיוֹצְרֵנוּ : מִבְּעוֹד לְשִׁשָּׁה  יוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי זֶה : לָנוּ יְרֻשָּׁה  עַיֵּן בְּסוֹד עָמוֹק : בְּהַר אֲמוּרָה: |
| The splendor of the holy abode; the delight of holiness!  We shall serve our Creator during those six days—  This seventh day is our inheritance!  Study this deep secret, which was stated on the mountain! | |
| Ḳumi leḳiddushin : kalla tehora  Ori demut hanner : nefesh yeḳara. | קוּמִי לְקִדּוּשִׁין : כַּלָּה טְהוֹרָה  אוֹרִי דְמוּת הַנֵּר : נֶפֶשׁ יְקָרָה: |
| Arise to the betrothal, O pure bride, Shine akin to a candle, O precious soul! | |
| Maz-hir vehanniz-har : yachpil secharo  Yachtir benitsḥiyyut : nafsho vetsuro  Ḳarno behod tarum : ‘odo behedro  Yintsor ve’ot ya‘sé : yesha‘ ve’ora. | מַ֒זְהִיר וְהַנִּזְהָר : יַכְפִּיל שְֹכָרוֹ  יַכְתִּיר בְּנִצְחִיּוּת : נַפְשׁוֹ בְצוּרוֹ  קַרְנוֹ בְּהוֹד תָּרוּם : עוֹדוֹ בְּהֶדְרוֹ  יִנְצוֹר וְאוֹת יַעְשֶֹה : יֶשַׁע וְאוֹרָה: |
| [God] will give a double reward to the admonisher and to the admonished,  Crowned with eternity, his soul [will be] with his Rock.  His horn will be exalted, yet abiding in His splendor.  He will keep [him] and give a sign: Salvation and light! | |
| Ḳumi leḳiddushin : kalla tehora  Ori demut hanner : nefesh yeḳara. | קוּמִי לְקִדּוּשִׁין : כַּלָּה טְהוֹרָה  אוֹרִי דְמוּת הַנֵּר : נֶפֶשׁ יְקָרָה: |
| Arise to the betrothal, O pure bride, Shine akin to a candle, O precious soul! | |
| Ḥoḳ zé ḳedosh ya‘aḳov : hinḥil beḥasdo  Ḳaddesh berit ‘olam : zera‘ yedido  Yidrosh letsiyyon ḥish : yaré chevodo  Yitten lenafshenu : pidyon gemura. | חֹ֒ק זֶ֒ה קְ֒דוֹשׁ יַעֲקֹב : הִנְחִיל בְּחַסְדּוֹ  קַדֵּשׁ בְּרִית עוֹלָם : זֶרַע יְדִידוֹ  יִדְרוֹשׁ לְצִיּוֹן חִישׁ : יַרְאֶה כְבוֹדוֹ  יִתֵּן לְנַפְשֵׁנוּ : פִּדְיוֹן גְּמוּרָה: |
| The Holy one of Jacob bequeathed this law in His mercy:  Hallow the eternal covenant, His beloved offspring!  He will soon take care of Zion and reveal His glory.  He will supply our souls with perfect redemption. | |
| Ḳumi leḳiddushin : kalla tehora  Ori demut hanner : nefesh yeḳara. | קוּמִי לְקִדּוּשִׁין : כַּלָּה טְהוֹרָה  אוֹרִי דְמוּת הַנֵּר : נֶפֶשׁ יְקָרָה: |
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| Kakkatuv: Ufduyé adonai yeshuvun uva’u tsiyyon berinna vesimḥat ‘olam ‘al rosham sason vesimḥa yassiḡun nasu yaḡon va’anaḥa. | כַּכָּתוּב: וּפְדוּיֵ֨י יְהֹוָ֜ה יְשׁוּב֗וּן וּבָ֤אוּ צִיּוֹן֙ בְּרִנָּ֔ה וְשִׂמְחַ֥ת עוֹלָ֖ עַל־רֹאשָׁ֑ם שָׂשׂ֤וֹן וְשִׂמְחָה֙ יַשִּׂיג֔וּן נָ֖סוּ יָג֥וֹן וַאֲנָחָֽה׃(ישעיהו נא,יא) |
| As it is written: So let the ransomed of Adonai return, and come with shouting to Zion, crowned with joy everlasting. Let them attain joy and gladness, while sorrow and sighing flee. (Is. 51:11). | |