מצות יסוד שבת, Mitsvat Yesod Shabbat

**Introduction:** This poem for the Sabbath discusses the creation of the world and its important lesson for the Karaites: God having rested on the seventh day is the origin of the Sabbath commandment, His sign for the people of Israel.

**Category:** Zemirot (Songs)  
  
**Genre:** Zemer for the Sabbath  
  
**Occasion:** Sabbath  
  
**Name:** מצות יסוד שבת, Mitsvat Yesod Shabbat  
  
**Composer**: Moshe Beghi  
  
**Location:** Constantinople, Ottoman Empire **Date:** 16th century  
**Acrostic:** משה בגי “Moshe Beghi”  
  
**Source:** Vilna Siddur, Volume 4, page 115  
  
**Visual Representation of Meter:** - - v - - - / - - v - - -  
  
**Description of Meter:** Each line consists of two half-lines, each of which contains two full vowels, followed by a vocal sheva and a full vowel, followed by two more full vowels.  
  
**Davidson number:** מ 2148  
  
**Karaite origin:** Yes  
  
**About the Author:** Moshe Beghi belonged to a family of active Karaite scholars living in Constantinople between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries. Two members of this family, Eliyahu Afeda Beghi (died c. 1641) and Yosef ben Moshe (15th–16th century), wrote several extant works on Karaite law and customs.   
  
According to the eighteenth-century Karaite biographer Simḥa Yitsḥaḳ Lutski, two prominent members of the Beghi family were named Moshe. (See Jacob Mann, *Texts and Studies*, pp. 1422, 1424–1425.) The elder Moshe authored a work on the festival of Sukkot (*Iggeret sukkot*). His great-grandson, Moshe ben Binyamin (the second half of the sixteenth century), was the author of a halakhic work *Mitsvat Moshe* (“The commandments of Moshe”). The work is divided into two parts: the first part on the Karaite calendar (*Ohel moshe*, “The Tent of Moshe”), and the second on the laws of the Sabbath (*Mas’at moshe*, “The Gift of Moshe”). The Vilna Siddur contains two other poems by Moshe Beghi: *Hinneh Na Adonay* and *Marom ve-Ḳadosh Shochen*.  
  
It is believed that the poem *Mitsvat Yesod Shabbat* was written by the younger Moshe Beghi.  
  
**Sources**: *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Mann, *Texts and Studies*; Israel Davidson, *Thesaurus of Medieval Hebrew Poetry* (New York, 1924–1933).

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| Mitsvat yesod shabbat : Ha’el asher shavat  Lihyot le’ot huvat : Beno levenenu. | מִ֒צְוַת יְסוֹד שַׁבָּת : הָאֵל אֲשֶׁר שָׁבַת  לִהְיוֹת לְאוֹת הוּבָאת : בֵּינוֹ לְבֵינֵינוּ: |
| The origin of the Sabbath commandment is God, who ceased working.  It was given as a sign between Him and us. | |
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| Sheshet yemé haḥol : Bara yesod hakkol  Mofet ve’ot lakkol : Bara elohenu. | שֵׁ֒שֶׁת יְמֵי הַחֹל : בָּרָא יְסוֹד הַכֹּל  מוֹפֵת וְאוֹת לַכֹּל : בָּרָא אֱלֹהֵינוּ: |
| On the six profane days, He created the foundation for everything.  A miracle and a sign for all our Lord created. | |
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| Hé ot asher himtsi : Millo leyesh hotsi  Moré lesod mamtsi : Mi tsur keyotserenu. | הֵ֒א אוֹת אֲשֶׁר הִמְצִיא : מִלֹּא לְיֵשׁ הוֹצִיא  מוֹרֶה לְסוֹד מַמְצִיא : מִי צוּר כְּיוֹצְרֵנוּ: |
| Behold the sign He produced. He drew being out of nothing.  A teacher of the Creator’s secret: who is truly a Rock, as our Maker is? | |
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| Baḥar le‘am eḥad : Yeḥud shemo sahad  Pirsem beli chaḥad : Ki hu adonenu. | בָּ֒חַר לְעַם אֶחָד : יֵחוּד שְׁמוֹ סַהַד  פִּרְסֵם בְּלִי כַחַד : כִּי הוּא אֲדֹנֵנוּ: |
| He chose one nation to bear witness to His unique name.  He made it public without concealment that He is our Lord. | |
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| Gavar me’od ḥasdo : Hora shevut ‘avdo  Le’ut leyeḥudo : Yi‘ed me‘odedenu. | גָּ֒בַר מְאֹד חַסְדּוֹ : הוֹרָה שְׁבוּת עַבְדּוֹ  לֵאוּט לְיֵחוּדוֹ : יִעֵד מְעוֹדְדֵנוּ: |
| His kindness overpowers: He ordered rest for His servant!  To ponder His oneness, He, the One who strengthens us, designated. | |
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| Yom zé yetur de’a‘ : Haskel veyado’a‘  Lihyot lemargo’a‘ : Nofesh lenafshenu. | י֒וֹם זֶה יְתוּר דֵּעַ : הַשְׂכֵּל וְיָדֹעַ  לִהְיוֹת לְמַרְגּוֹעַ : נֹפֶשׁ לְנַפְשֵׁנוּ: |
| It is a day of added knowledge, of understanding and awareness,  Dedicated for relaxation, a relief for our souls. | |
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