מזמור ליום שבת, Mizmor Leyom Shabbat

**Introduction:** This poem discusses the various prohibitions of the Sabbath and the reward that Sabbath-observers can anticipate. It emphasizes that not only acts of labor are violations of the Sabbath, but even acts of speech: the Sabbath day should be devoted to recitation and discussion of Torah, not to discussion of business. Towards the end of the poem, it states that God “creates not with His hand but with speech”; this may be connected to the emphasis that on the Sabbath (which commemorates God’s resting from creation), we must refrain from weekday activities not only in our deeds, but also in our speech. The poem’s refrain is based on the opening lines of Psalm 92, the Psalm for the Sabbath.

**Category:** Zemirot (Songs)  
  
**Genre:** Zemer for the Sabbath  
  
**Occasion:** Sabbath  
  
**Name:** מזמור ליום שבת, Mizmor Leyom Shabbat  
  
**Composer**: Shelomo ben Aharon  
  
**Location:** Troki, Lithuania

**Date:** 1670–1745  
  
**Acrostic:** מרדכי בן שלמה “Mordochai son of Shelomo” (the name of the poet’s son)  
  
**Source:** Vilna Siddur, Volume 4, page 106  
  
**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:** מ 874  
  
**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*.

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| Mizmor leyom shabbat : ‘im shir azammer  Ki tov ki tov lehodot : tsur omer veḡomer. | מִ֒זְמוֹר לְיוֹם שַׁבָּת : עִם שִׁיר אֲזַמֵּר  כִּי טוֹב : כִּי טוֹב לְהוֹדוֹת צוּר : אוֹמֵר וְגוֹמֵר: |
| A psalm for the Sabbath day I shall sing with song,  For it is good / for it is good to praise the Rock who speaks decisively. | |
| Ki tov ki tov lehodot : tsur omer veḡomer. | כִּי טוֹב : כִּי טוֹב לְהוֹדוֹת צוּר : אוֹמֵר וְגוֹמֵר: |
| For it is good / for it is good to praise the Rock who speaks decisively. | |
| Rishon veaḥron hu : shochen gevohim  Tsivva betora ‘al : yad ish elohim  Ḳaddesh leyom shabbat : berach elohim  Aḥar kelot livro : tsura veḥomer. | רִ֒אשׁוֹן וְאַחְרוֹן הוּא : שֹׁכֵן גְּבוֹהִים  צִוָּה בְּתוֹרָה עַל : יַד אִישׁאֱלֹהִים  קַדֵּשׁ לְיוֹם שַׁבָּת : בֵּרַךְ אֱלֹהִים  אַחַר כְּלוֹת לִבְרוֹא : צוּרָה וְחוֹמֶר: |
| He is the First and the Last, the one who dwells on high,  Who commanded the Torah through the Man of God:  To hallow the Sabbath, blessed by Adonai,  After He finished creating form and matter. | |
| Ki tov ki tov lehodot : tsur omer veḡomer. | כִּי טוֹב : כִּי טוֹב לְהוֹדוֹת צוּר : אוֹמֵר וְגוֹמֵר: |
| For it is good / for it is good to praise the Rock who speaks decisively. | |
| Divrat bené adam : limtso ḥafatsim  Sippur ‘asaḳim hab- : ba’im veratsim  Kullam asurim maḥ- : shevet ḥarutsim  Zulat ḥashov mitsva : ben ḳal veḥomer. | דִּ֒בְרַת בְּנֵי אָדָם : לִמְצוֹא חֲפָצִים  סִפּוּר עֲסָקִים הַ- : בָּאִים וְרָצִים  כֻּלָּם אֲסוּרִים מַחְ- : שֶׁבֶת חֲרוּצִים  זוּלַת חֲשׁוֹב מִצְוָה : בֵּין קַל וְחוֹמֶר: |
| The concern of men is to pursue their business,  To discuss their affairs, coming and going.  All diligent crafts are forbidden,  Except to contemplate the commandments, between “heavy” and “light”! | |
| Ki tov ki tov lehodot : tsur omer veḡomer. | כִּי טוֹב : כִּי טוֹב לְהוֹדוֹת צוּר : אוֹמֵר וְגוֹמֵר: |
| For it is good / for it is good to praise the Rock who speaks decisively. | |
| Kishron pe‘ullot yo- : tse’ot baḥaḳira  Tohar neḳi chappav : malbush hadura  Hilluch betoch haggevul : ulvet beḥira  Machal umishté hen : mis‘ad leḥomer. | כִּ֒שְׁרוֹן פְּעֻלּוֹת יוֹצְ- : אוֹת בַּחֲקִירָה  טֹהַר נְקִי כַפָּיו : מַלְבּוּשׁ הֲדוּרָה  הִלּוּךְ בְּתוֹךְ הַגְּבוּל : וּלְבֵית בְּחִירָה  מַאְכָל וּמִשְׁתֶּה הֵן : מִסְעָד לְחוֹמֶר: |
| Fruitful acts [on the Sabbath] involve studying,  The purity of clean hands, fine clothes,  Walking inside the limit to the synagogue,  Food and drink that replenish the body! | |
| Ki tov ki tov lehodot : tsur omer veḡomer. | כִּי טוֹב : כִּי טוֹב לְהוֹדוֹת צוּר : אוֹמֵר וְגוֹמֵר: |
| For it is good / for it is good to praise the Rock who speaks decisively. | |

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| Yode‘é yesod miḳra : ḥachmé ḥarashim  Ḥaḳeru bevinatam : da‘at ḳedoshim  Ki yom menuḥot zé : ‘oneg nefashim  La‘asoḳ bedivré el : rannen vezammer. | י֒וֹדְעֵי יְסוֹד מִקְרָא : חַכְמֵי חֲרָשִׁים  חָקְרוּ בְּבִינָתָם : דַּעַת קְדוֹשִׁים  כִּי יוֹם מְנוּחוֹת זֶה : עוֹנֶג נְפָשִׁים  לַעֲסוֹק בְּדִבְרֵי אֵל : רַנֵּן וְזַמֵּר: |
| Those who know the foundation of the Scriptures, the skilled sages,  Have wisely studied the holy knowledge:  That the day of rest is delight for the souls:  As you learn the words of God, rejoice and sing! | |
| Ki tov ki tov lehodot : tsur omer veḡomer. | כִּי טוֹב : כִּי טוֹב לְהוֹדוֹת צוּר : אוֹמֵר וְגוֹמֵר: |
| For it is good / for it is good to praise the Rock who speaks decisively. | |
| Bintiv emet horu : livné ‘adatam  Mikkol melacha hiz- : zaher bevetam  Bal ya‘arimu tsav- : vot et mesharetam  Ḥallel beremez kol : shekken be’omer. | בִּ֒נְ֒תִיב אֱמֶת הוֹרוּ : לִבְנֵי עֲדָתָם  מִכָּל מְלָאכָה הִ- : זָּהֵר בְּבֵיתָם  בַּל יַעֲרִימוּ צַוּ- : וֹת אֶת מְשָׁרְתָם  חַלֵּל בְּרֶמֶז כֹּל : שֶׁכֵּן בְּאֹמֶר: |
| On the path of truth, they advised their congregants  To be wary of doing any labor at home,  So that they will not scheme to command their servants:  To suggest any desecration—all the more so with words! | |
| Ki tov ki tov lehodot : tsur omer veḡomer. | כִּי טוֹב : כִּי טוֹב לְהוֹדוֹת צוּר : אוֹמֵר וְגוֹמֵר: |
| For it is good / for it is good to praise the Rock who speaks decisively. | |
| Shif‘o verav tuvo : yishlaḥ le‘ammo  Gam mimme‘on ḳodsho : yashḳif verumo  Hachin letsorcham bid- : var yom beyomo  Mishné leshabbat el : zocher veshomer. | שִׁ֒פְעוֹ וְרַב טוּבוֹ : יִשְׁלַח לְעַמּוֹ  גַּם מִמְּעוֹן קָדְשׁוֹ : יַשְׁקִיף וְרוּמוֹ  הָכִין לְצָרְכָם בִּדְ- : בַר יוֹם בְּיוֹמוֹ  מִשְׁנֶה לְשַׁבָּת אֵל : זֹכֵר וְשֹׁמֵר: |
| He will supply His people with prosperity and abundant kindness,  He will look down from His holy and high abode,  Preparing for their needs each day:  Double portion for the Sabbath; God remembers and keeps. | |
| Ki tov ki tov lehodot : tsur omer veḡomer. | כִּי טוֹב : כִּי טוֹב לְהוֹדוֹת צוּר : אוֹמֵר וְגוֹמֵר: |
| For it is good / for it is good to praise the Rock who speaks decisively. | |
| Leḳaḥ vetuv ta‘am : yosif lelomdim  Mippiv halo da‘at : divré neḡidim  Havin gedullato : ma‘sav me‘idim  Ki lo veyad ‘osé : achen be’omer. | לֶ֒קַח וְטוּב טַעַם : יוֹסִיף לְלוֹמְדִים  מִ֒פִּיו הֲלֹא דַעַת : דִּבְרֵי נְגִידִים  הָ֒בִין גְּדֻלָּתוֹ : מַעְשָֹיו מְעִידִים  כִּי לֹא בְיָד עֹשֶׂה : אָכֵן בְּאֹמֶר: |
| He will supply the students with learning and acumen:  Surely, the superb words of knowledge are from His mouth!  His deeds bear witness how to understand His magnitude  For He creates not with His hand but with speech. | |
| Ki tov ki tov lehodot : tsur omer veḡomer. | כִּי טוֹב : כִּי טוֹב לְהוֹדוֹת צוּר : אוֹמֵר וְגוֹמֵר: |
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| Ḥizḳu veyamets ha- : el et levavchem  Hameyaḥalim ḥasdo : ki yesh secharchem  Im tishmeru shabbat : azai nishmatchem  Tizké lehit‘adden : mizziv beḡomer. | חִ֒זְ֒ק֒וּ וְ֒יַאְ֒מֵ֒ץ֒ הָ- : אֵל אֶת לְבַבְכֶם  הַמְיַחֲלִים חַסְדּוֹ : כִּי יֵשׁ שְֹכַרְכֶם  אִם תִּשְׁמְרוּ שַׁבָּת : אֲזַי נִשְׁמַתְכֶם  תִּזְכֶּה לְהִתְעַדֵּן : מִזִּיו בְּגֹמֶר: |
| Be strong and God will raise your spirits!  Those who wait for His mercy—here is your reward:  If you observe the Sabbath, your souls  Will be worthy of enjoying the splendor in the Afterlife. | |
| Ki tov ki tov lehodot : tsur omer veḡomer. | כִּי טוֹב : כִּי טוֹב לְהוֹדוֹת צוּר : אוֹמֵר וְגוֹמֵר: |
| For it is good / for it is good to praise the Rock who speaks decisively. | |
| Kakkatuv: Az tit‘annaḡ ‘al adonai vehirkavticha ‘al bamoté arets. | כַּכָּתוּב: אָ֗ז תִּתְעַנַּג֙ עַל־יְהוָ֔ה וְהִרְכַּבְתִּ֖יךָ עַל־בָּ֣מֳתֵי אָ֑רֶץ |
| As it is written: Then you can seek the favor of Adonai. I will set you astride the heights of the earth… (Is. 58:14). | |