אודה לאל מחסי, Odé Le’el Maḥsi

**Introduction:**This poem for the Sabbath emphasizes the value of study and rest on the Sabbath day, with words of admonition against those who break the law. Everyone should enjoy the Sabbath delights, and loyal students will receive extra wisdom.

**Category:** Zemirot (Songs)  
  
**Genre:** Zemer for the Sabbath  
  
**Occasion:** Sabbath  
  
**Name:** אודה לאל מחסי, Odé Le’el Maḥsi  
  
**Composer**: Yitsḥaḳ ben Avraham  
  
**Location:** Troki, Lithuania

**Date:** 1533‒1594  
  
**Acrostic:** אני יצחק “I am Yitsḥaḳ”  
  
**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:** א 1573  
  
**Karaite origin:** Yes  
  
**About the Author:** Yitsḥaḳ ben Abraham was born in Troki, Lithuania in 1533. A beloved scholar in his community, he was well versed in Latin and debated Christian priests in Troki. Yitsḥaḳ is best known for his polemic work against Christianity, *Ḥizzuḳ Emuna* (“The Strengthening of Faith”). This treatise became a bestseller in early modern Jewish communities and eventually one of the most prominent Karaite works ever written. Its controversial subject attracted Christian attention, and in 1681, the German professor Johann Wagenseil (1633–1705) published a Latin translation provocatively titled “The Fiery Darts of Satan.” The work was later a source of inspiration for such eighteenth-century freethinkers as Voltaire.

Yitsḥaḳ also wrote several sermons, a work polemicizing against the Rabbanites, and several Hebrew poems that were included in Karaite prayerbooks. Shortly before his death in 1594, Yitsḥaḳ was the teacher of Zeraḥ ben Natan of Troki, the author of the poem *Essa Bechos Yesha‘*, for Havdala.

**Sources**: *Encyclopaedia Judaica*; Mann, *Texts and Studies*; Golda Akhiezer, *Historical Consciousness, Haskalah, and Nationalism among the Karaites of Eastern Europe*, (Leiden, 2018).

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| Odé le’el maḥsi : ‘im taḥanunai  ‘Al tet, ‘al tet menuḥa yom : shabbat adonai. | א֒וֹדֶה לְאֵל מַחְסִי : עִם תַּחֲנוּנָי:  עַל תֵּת : עַל תֵּת מְנוּחָה יוֹם : שַׁבַּת יְהֹוָה: |
| I give thanks to God, my Refuge, with my pleas,  For the giving / for the giving of rest, the Sabbath day of Adonai. | |
| ‘Al tet, ‘al tet menuḥa yom : shabbat adonai. | עַל תֵּת : עַל תֵּת מְנוּחָה יוֹם : שַׁבַּת יְהֹוָה: |
| For the giving / for the giving of rest, the Sabbath day of Adonai. | |
| Ne’sar lehotsi bo : masat me’uma  Mibbet meloni ‘im : karet ‘atsuma  Gam millemallel bo : siḥé shemema  Ki im betorat el : divré adonai. | נֶ֒אְסַר לְהוֹצִיא בּוֹ : מַשְׂאַת מְאוּמָה  מִבֵּית מְלוֹנִי עִם : כָּרֵת עֲצוּמָה  גַּם מִלְּמַלֵּל בּוֹ : שִׂיחֵי שְׁמֵמָה  כִּי אִם בְּתוֹרַת אֵל : דִּבְרֵי יְהֹוָה: |
| It is forbidden to carry anything on that day  From my home at risk of a severe penalty,  Or to conduct idle chatter,  Apart from the Torah of God, the words of Adonai. | |
| ‘Al tet, ‘al tet menuḥa yom : shabbat adonai. | עַל תֵּת : עַל תֵּת מְנוּחָה יוֹם : שַׁבַּת יְהֹוָה: |
| For the giving / for the giving of rest, the Sabbath day of Adonai. | |
| Ya‘an beyom shabbat : sechel ve’ora  Lim‘ayyenim yosif : ḥochma yetera  Limḥallelim otah : tavo me’era  ‘Al ken lehizzaher : tsivva adonai. | יַ֒עַן בְּיוֹם שַׁבָּת : שֵׂכֶל וְאוֹרָה  לִמְעַיְּנִים יוֹסִיף : חָכְמָה יְתֵרָה  לִמְחַלְּלִים אוֹתָהּ : תָּבוֹא מְאֵרָה  עַל כֵּן לְהִזָּהֵר : צִוָּה יְהֹוָה: |
| Because the Sabbath is a day of intellect and light,  He will supply contemplative people with extra wisdom!  Those who profane it will be cursed:  Hence, Adonai has commanded to be cautious. | |
| ‘Al tet, ‘al tet menuḥa yom : shabbat adonai. | עַל תֵּת : עַל תֵּת מְנוּחָה יוֹם : שַׁבַּת יְהֹוָה: |
| For the giving / for the giving of rest, the Sabbath day of Adonai. | |
| Yotse’im leḳaddesh shab- : bat ‘im beracha  Yit‘addenu mittuv : ‘eden ‘arucha  Yir’u yesod tsiyyon : mezaḥ melucha  Tachin vetivné na : tsuri adonai. | י֒וֹצְאִים לְקַדֵּשׁ שַׁ־ : בָּת עִם בְּרָכָה  יִתְעַדְּנוּ מִטּוּב : עֵדֶן עֲרוּכָה  יִרְאוּ יְסוֹד צִיּוֹן : מֵזַח מְלוּכָה  תָּכִין וְתִבְנֶה נָא : צוּרִי יְהֹוָה: |
| Those who go and hallow the Sabbath with blessings  Will enjoy the beauty of the prepared Eden,  And see the foundation of Zion, the royal harbor,  Please, prepare and build [it], my Rock, Adonai! | |
| ‘Al tet, ‘al tet menuḥa yom : shabbat adonai. | עַל תֵּת : עַל תֵּת מְנוּחָה יוֹם  : שַׁבַּת יְהֹוָה: |
| For the giving / for the giving of rest, the Sabbath day of Adonai. | |
| Tsivva be‘od hayyom : ḳaddesh shevi‘i  Lishbot beyom shabbat : mikkol yeḡi‘i  Le’echol velishtot ya- : yin ‘im gevi‘i  Nismaḥ veḡam naḡil : lifné adonai. | צִ֒וָּה בְּעוֹד הַיּוֹם : קַדֵּשׁ שְׁבִיעִי  לִשְׁבּוֹת בְּיוֹם שַׁבָּת : מִכָּל יְגִיעִי  לֶאֱכוֹל וְלִשְׁתּוֹת יַ־ : יִן עִם גְּבִיעִי  נִשְֹמַח וְגַם נָגִיל : לִפְנֵי יְהֹוָה: |
| He commanded [us]: While it is still day, hallow the Seventh!  And to cease all my labor on the Sabbath day,  To eat and drink wine from my goblet!  We shall rejoice and celebrate before Adonai. | |
| ‘Al tet, ‘al tet menuḥa yom : shabbat adonai. | עַל תֵּת : עַל תֵּת מְנוּחָה יוֹם : שַׁבַּת יְהֹוָה: |
| For the giving / for the giving of rest, the Sabbath day of Adonai. | |
| Ḥosav tenu la’el : hodot shevaḥot  Shiru verutsu lo : ‘im kol semaḥot  ‘Al ki veshabbat bo : natan menuḥot  Sal‘i ve‘ezri hu : ha’el adonai. | ח֒וֹסָיו תְּנוּ לָאֵל : הוֹדוֹת שְׁבָחוֹת  שִׁירוּ וְרוּצוּ לוֹ : עִם כָּל שְׂמָחוֹת  עַל כִּי בְשַׁבָּת בּוֹ : נָתַן מְנוּחוֹת  סַלְעִי וְעֶזְרִי הוּא : הָאֵל יְהֹוָה: |
| You who seek refuge in Him, praise and thank God,  Sing and run joyously towards Him!  For He has granted us rest on the Sabbath day!  My Rock and help, Adonai, my God. | |
| ‘Al tet, ‘al tet menuḥa yom : shabbat adonai. | עַל תֵּת : עַל תֵּת מְנוּחָה יוֹם : שַׁבַּת יְהֹוָה: |
| For the giving / for the giving of rest, the Sabbath day of Adonai. | |
| Ḳore’im leyom shabbat : ‘oneḡ leḡufim  Yitabbelu gam ken : yihyu deḥufim  Yaḥad bené ‘avla : shoresh ḥanefim  Va’ani lecha odé : tamid adonai. | ק֒וֹרְאִים לְיוֹם שַׁבָּת : עֹנֶג לְגוּפִים  יִתְאַבְּלוּ גַּם כֵּן : יִהְיוּ דְחוּפִים  יַחַד בְּנֵי עַוְלָה : שֹׁרֶשׁ חֲנֵפִים  וַאֲנִי לְךָ אוֹדֶה : תָּמִיד יְהֹוָה: |
| Those who call the Sabbath a day of physical delight  Shall mourn and be turned away;  They are evil, the root of sycophants.  And I shall always thank You, Adonai. | |
| ‘Al tet, ‘al tet menuḥa yom : shabbat adonai. | עַל תֵּת : עַל תֵּת מְנוּחָה יוֹם : שַׁבַּת יְהֹוָה: |
| For the giving / for the giving of rest, the Sabbath day of Adonai. | |
| Kakkatuv: Re’u ki adonai natan lachem hash-shabbat ‘al ken hu noten lachem bayyom hash-shish-shi leḥem yomayim. | כַּכָּתוּב: רְא֗וּ כִּֽי־יְהֹוָה֘ נָתַ֣ן לָכֶ֣ם הַשַּׁבָּת֒ עַל־כֵּ֠ן ה֣וּא נֹתֵ֥ן לָכֶ֛ם בַּיּ֥וֹם הַשִּׁשִּׁ֖י לֶ֣חֶם יוֹמָ֑יִם (שמות טז,כט) |
| As it is written: Mark that Adonai has given you the Sabbath; therefore He gives you two days’ food on the sixth day (Ex. 16:29). | |