

Going Up with Joy

by Rabbi Shefa Gold

וְשָׁם נִשְׁיֵר שִׁיר חֲדָשׁ וּבְרִנָּה נֵעֲלֶה

V'sham nashir shir chadash u'vir'nana na'aleh
(from Tzur Mishelo)

And there we will sing a new song; with joy we will go up.

These words are from the last stanza of Tzur Mishelo, a Shabbat hymn that was composed and compiled between the 11th and 16th centuries under the guidance of Rabbis Isaac Luria and Israel Najara. It is a reflection upon and praise of Shabbat and is thought to be an introduction to Birkat Hamazon (Grace after Meals) on which the first three stanzas are clearly based. Some believe this zemer to have originated with the Tannaim, the rabbinic sages whose views are recorded in the mishna, from approximately 70-200 CE.

This is a practice of letting the joy in our voices raise us up into sacred space.