

SONGS: TRADITIONAL AND MODERN

MAOZ TZUR

THE ROCK OF MY RESCUE

מַעוֹז צוּר

1. The Rock of my Rescue

My God, You are the Rock of my Rescue⁴
and it is lovely to praise You.
Restore my House of Prayer,
where I will offer you thanks.
When you prepare the destruction of the enemy
who threatens us (like a barking dog),
then I will sing a song for the
Hanukkah (Rededication) of the Altar.

Maoz tzur y'shu-ah-ti,
L'cha na-eh l'shabei-ach
Tikkon beit t'filati
V'sham todah n'zabei-ach
Leit tachin mat'bei-ach
Mi-tzar ha-m'nabei-ach
Az egmor b'shir mizmor
Hanukkat ha-miz'bei-ach

מַעוֹז צוּר יְשׁוּעָתִי
לְךָ נָאֵה לְשַׁבַּח.
תִּכְוֶן בֵּית תְּפִלָּתִי
וְשָׁם תִּזְדָּה נִזְבֵּי־אֲכִי.
לֵעֵת תִּכְוֶן מִטְבֵּחַ
מִצֵּר הַמִּנְבֵּי־אֲכִי.
אֲזִי אֶגְמֹר בְּשִׁיר מִזְמוֹר
חֲנֻכַּת הַמִּזְבֵּחַ.

4. Psalms 31:3

2. The Rescue from Pharaoh (1200 BCE)

Oh, my soul is sated with trouble⁵
Reducing my strength to nothing, consumed with grief.⁶
My life was embittered with hard labor
enslaved by Egypt's Empire.⁷
But with God's great (outstretched) arm,
God took out his treasured people.⁸
Then Pharaoh's army
sank in the depths of the Red Sea like a stone.⁹



רְעוֹת שְׂבָעָה נַפְשִׁי
בְּגִגּוֹן כַּחֲסִי כֶּלֶה
חַיִּי מָרְרוּ בְּקִשִּׁי
בְּשַׁעְבּוֹד מַלְכוּת עֲגָלָה.
וּבִידּוֹ הַגְּדוֹלָה
הוֹצִיא אֶת הַסִּגְלָה,
חֵיל פָּרְעֹה וְכָל זֶרְעוֹ
יָרְדוּ כְּאֶבֶן בַּמַּצּוּלָה.

5. Psalms 8:4 6. Psalms 31:11 7. Exodus 1:14 8. Exodus 19:5 9. Exodus 15:5

3. The Rescue from Babylonia (539 BCE)

Despite the fact that God brought me to his Holy Place,
Even there I found no peace.
Along came a persecutor who exiled me,
for I sinned by worshipping foreign gods.
I drank poisoned wine¹⁰
and almost passed from this world.
Then came the end of Babylonia and the rise of Zerubabel¹¹
and at the end of 70 years of exile¹² I was rescued.



דְּבִיר קִדְשׁוֹ הֵבִיאֲנִי
וְגַם שָׁם לֹא שָׁקֵטִי
וּבֹא נֹגֵשׁ וְהִגְלֵנִי
כִּי זָרִים עֲבַדְתִּי
וַיִּין רַעַל מִסִּכְתִּי
כַּמַּעַט שְׁעִבְרֵתִי
קֶץ בָּבֶל זָרְבָּבֶל
לְקֶץ שְׁבַעִים נוֹשַׁעְתִּי.

10. Psalms 60:5 11. the leader of the return to Zion, 538 BCE
12. as prophesied by Jeremiah 25:12-13

The most popular (Ashkenazi) song for Hanukkah is *Maoz Tzur*, written by MORDECHAI whose name is spelled out in the initial letter of each stanza (an acrostic). Each stanza refers to a different rescue in Israel's history.

**THE
HANUKKAH
CEREMONY**

Brachot

Songs

Maccabees
Megillah

Profiles

Spiritual
Meditations

4. The Rescue from Haman (5th C. BCE)

Cutting down a tree to hang Mordechai is what Haman, descendant of King Agag of Amalek, requested from King Ahashverosh of Persia.

However it became his snare and stumbling block,
so Haman was hung and his arrogance was stilled.
You raised up Mordechai
while wiping away his enemy's name.
Haman's many sons
were hung on that tree.



כָּרוֹת קוֹמַת בְּרוֹשׁ
בְּקֶשׁ אֲגָגִי בֶן הַמִּדְּתָא
וְנִהְיְתָה לוֹ לִפְח וּלְמוֹקֶשׁ
וְגִאֲוָתוֹ נִשְׁבָּתָה.
רֹאשׁ יְמִינִי נִשְׁאֲתָ
וְאוֹיֵב שְׁמוֹ מְחִיתָ;
רַב בָּנָיו וְקִנְיָנָיו
עַל הָעֵץ תָּלִיתָ.

5. The Rescue from Antiochus (164 BCE)

Against me the Greeks gathered,
back in the days of the Hasmoneans.

Into my walls they broke
and polluted all my oils.
Yet from the remaining cruses
a miracle was made for the people of the roses.¹³
The Rabbis established eight days
of song and Hallel.



לְיוֹנִים נִקְבְּצוּ עָלַי
אֲזִי בְיָמֵי חֲשֹׁמְנִים.
וּפָרְצוּ חוֹמוֹת מְגִדְלִי
וְטָמְאוּ כָּל הַשְּׁמָנִים;
וּמְנוֹתָר קִנְקֵנִים
נַעֲשֶׂה נֵס לְשׁוֹשָׁנִים.
בָּנִי בִּינָה יָמֵי שְׁמוֹנָה
קָבְעוּ שִׁיר וִרְנָנִים.

13. Song of Songs 2:2

6. The Messianic Redemption

Bare Your holy arm (ready for war)¹⁴
and hasten the Millenium, Time of Redemption.¹⁵
Avenge your servant's blood (spilled in Crusade and pogrom)
by the wicked nation (Christian Europe),
for the rescue is too long delayed for us.
There seems no end to the days of evil's rule.
Repel the Red One¹⁶ in the shadow of the cross
and raise up for us the seven shepherds.¹⁷



חֲשׂוֹף זְרוּעַ קְדֻשָּׁךְ
וְקָרַב קֶץ הַיְּשׁוּעָה
נָקוּם נִקְמַת דָּם עֲבָדֶיךָ
מֵאִמָּה הָרָשָׁעָה
כִּי אָרְכָה לָנוּ הַשָּׁעָה
וְאִין קֶץ לְיָמֵי הָרָעָה
דַּחַה אֲדַמּוֹן בְּצֶל צֶלְמוֹן
הִקָּם לָנוּ רוּעִים שִׁבְעָה.

14. Isaiah 52:10 15. Daniel 8:19

16. The Red One, Esau's descendants, may refer to the German Crusader Barbarosa who was the Holy Roman Emperor in the 12th C. who, like his colleague Richard the Lion Heart, was red haired.

17. Our messianic redeemers are the seven shepherds referred to in *Micah* 5:4 who will defeat the enemies of Israel. They include David in the center, Adam, Seth, and Metushelach to the left and Abraham, Jacob and Moses to the right (see *Talmud Barli Sukkah* 52b).