Y'did Ne-fesh

Y’did ne-fesh, av ha-ra-chaman,
m’shoch av-dach el r’zo-nach.
Ya-rutz av-dach k’mo a-yal,
yish-ta-cha-veh mul ha-da-rach.
Ki ye’e-rav lo y’di-du-tach
mi-no-fet tzuf v’choh ta’am.

Ha-dur, Na-eh, Zv ha-O-lam,
naf-shi cho-lat a-ha va-tach.
Ana, El na, r’la na la
B’har ot lah no-am ziv-aech.
Az tit-cha zeik v’tit-ra pei
V’ha-yah lach shif-chat o-lam.

Va tik, ye-he-mu ra-cha me-cha.
v’choh na al bein o-ha-vach.
Ki zeh ka-mah nich sof nich-saf
li-r’tot b’tfe-re-et u-zach
Ana, Eli, machmad li-bi,
Chirshah na, v’al ti-ta-lam.

Hi-ga-leh na u-fo’sh cha-viv a-la-
et sukk-at sh’lo-mach.
Tai’r eretz mi-k’vo-dach
ra-gi-laah v’ni-s’chah bach.
Ma-heir, a-huv, ki va mo-eid.
V’cho-nei ni ki-me o-lam.

Soul-mate

Soul-mate, Merciful Parent,
draw Your servant to do Your will.
Your servant will run like a ram,
will bow down before Your splendor.
For Your love is tastier
than nectar or any imaginable delight.

You, pleasing in Splendor, Light of the World,
my soul is love-sick for You.
Please, God, heal her
with the pleasure of Your light.
Then she will be strengthened and healed
and will be Your hand-maiden forever.1

Ancient One, let Your mercies be aroused.
Have pity on Your beloved child,
who has so longed
to see the beauty of Your power.
Pray, my God, my heart’s desire,
hurry, please, and do not hide.2

Reveal Yourself, Beloved, spread over me
Your canopy of peace.
Let the land be lit up with Your glory,
let us rejoice and revel in You.
Come quickly, my Love, the time has come.
Show me Your grace as of old.

Many communities follow the Chasidic custom of beginning Kabbalat Shabbat with Y’did Ne-fesh, a love poem to God, written by Rabbi Eleazar Azikri, a sixteenth-century Kabbalist of Safed (Tzfat). The first letters of the four verses form an acrostic, spelling out the four-letter name of God.

The poet speaks of God as parent, master, and especially lover, expressing a profound desire for union with the Divine Presence and asking for healing, mercy, and protection. The fourth verse expresses the poet’s desire to be sheltered under God’s canopy of peace, a theme that resonates with the Hash-kivenu prayer in the Ma’ariv service.

The text given here is the original, based on the author’s autograph manuscript. In Chasidic communities, another equally popular version has evolved, which contains some significant variants. Several alternatives are given below.

1 Alternate version: v’ha-yah lah sim-chat o-lam (and she will rejoice in You forever).

2 Alternate version: Ei-lech cham-dah li-bi, chu-sah na v’al na ti-ta-lehin (These things my heart desires; have mercy and do not hide.)

Some communities also sing Sha lo’m a-lei chem (page 49) or Shab bat ha Mai kahl (page 47) at the start or conclusion of services.