Proverbs for Four at Fifty

Settings of Hebrew Texts from *Mishle* (Book of Proverbs)

For Unaccompanied Mixed Chorus (SATB)

By Mark Zuckerman

1998

Duration: ca. 9 minutes

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About the Music

This group of four pieces got started when my friend, Bill Gross, asked me to set a verse from *Mishle* (the Book of Proverbs) as a present to his wife, Cheryl, on her fiftieth birthday. As I worked on the piece, it struck me how very apt it was to pick a Biblical quotation for this kind of celebration, especially considering the Biblical exhortation – in *Vayyiqra* (Leviticus), Chapter 25 – to make a jubilee of the fiftieth year. I found other proverbs to commemorate other fiftieth birthdays that were meaningful to me; so *Oz V'Hadar L'Vushah,* Cheryl's proverb (1Chapter 31:Verse 25] "Strength and dignity are her clothing, and she smiles confidently at the future."), begat:

L'Khah Nirveh Dodim Ad HaBoker (17:18] "Come, let us take our fill of love until the morning: let us delight ourselves with love."), which I wrote to mark my own fiftieth birthday and my all-time best birthday present: my wedding, which occurred just the week before.

D'rakheyha Darkhey Noam (13:17] "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all of her paths are peace."), which was composed in honor of my wife Judith's fiftieth birthday, "with love and appreciation for her good counsel." That the text, which refers to the Torah, also appears in the liturgy is very appropriate for Judith, who is deeply interested in Jewish ritual and observance.

Reyshit Khakhmah (14:7] "The beginning of wisdom is, Get wisdom: therefore use all of your means to acquire understanding."), was written for the jubilee celebration of Town and Village Synagogue, where Bill, Cheryl, Judith and I are members. T & V is a special place for me, since it was through the synagogue that I met my wife, and we were married there. The congregation and clergy are down-to-earth and welcoming. This text captures succinctly what I feel is a prominent ideal shared by our synagogue community.

About the Language

These pieces are meant for general audiences. The texts carry a universal message.

The texts are all in Hebrew, since I wanted to convey their message in the language that would best convey their meaning to the people for whom these pieces were composed.

Hebrew is also authentic for these texts; perhaps this is why they sound so glorious in Hebrew.

Hebrew is remarkably compact: compare *Uvkhal kinyankha kineyh vinah* with "Therefore use all of your means to acquire understanding"; the English has half again as many syllables, more than twice the words, and four times as many letters. And the Sephardic pronunciation (the way Hebrew is spoken today in Israel and therefore the way Jewish liturgy is pronounced in houses of Jewish worship around the world) has an extraordinary rhythmic vitality, suggestive of syncopation, asymmetrical meters, and the like: stuff that energizes a composer.

About the Musical Materials

These pieces use the octatonic collection (e.g., C-D-Eb-F-F#-G#-A-B).

This collection sounds a lot like the familiar minor scale – you can build it by taking the first four notes of the minor scale and then transposing them by a tritone. These pieces exploit a harmony drawn from this collection where familiar-sounding chords (i.e., sounding like major and minor triads) function in ways different from what you might expect from tonal music – some of them resembling operations found in twelve-tone music.

Acknowledgements

I am very grateful to Bill Gross, whose commission began this project. I'd also like to thank Sara Ruderman and the singers she conducted when we presented *Oz V'Hadar* to the birthday girl, and Gregg Smith and his Singers, who read earlier versions of these pieces, and whose annual summer readings program has been a great learning experience as well as great fun. Most of all, I am indebted to my parents, Claire and Irving, and to my wife Judith for their unflagging faith and support.

About Mark Zuckerman

Mark Zuckerman holds a PhD in composition from Princeton University, and is a student of Milton Babbitt, David Epstein, J. K. Randall, and Elie Yarden. He has taught composition, tonal and atonal theory, orchestration, and computer music at Princeton and Columbia Universities, and published numerous scholarly articles and a book on listening to jazz, drawn from a popular jazz survey course he taught at Princeton and Columbia.

He founded *Di Goldene Keyt*, The Yiddish Chorale, and has written a bunch of choral music in English, Hebrew, and Yiddish, including some twenty arrangements for a cappella mixed chorus of Yiddish songs. His choral music has been performed and recorded by The Gregg Smith Singers, The *Goldene Keyt* Singers, The Workmen's Circle Chorus, *Di Goldene Keyt*/The Yiddish Chorale, and The New Yiddish Chorale and is published by Carl Fischer.

Performance Notes

The transliteration scheme is based on the system developed by the YIVO for transliterating Yiddish. The vowels are pronounced: "a" as in father, "e" as in feather, "i" or "y" between first and fierce, "o" as in forward, "u" as in foolish, and "'" (apostrophe) as a short "i" as in fit. Dipthongs are pronounced by sounding the two constituent vowels in sequence: "ay" as in fie, "ey" as in fey.

There are no capital letters in Hebrew. Since the sentences in these texts are short, the first letter of each word is capitalized to help singers unfamiliar with Hebrew identify the words and structure their breathing.

In *D'rakheyha Darkhey Noam*, the "ey" is decomposed into "e" and "y". As the dotted slur indicates, we should hear the "y" as an inflection of the "e" rather than a separate vowel.

commissioned by Bill Gross in honor of his wife Cheryl's 50th birthday

Duration: ca. 2'30"

I.

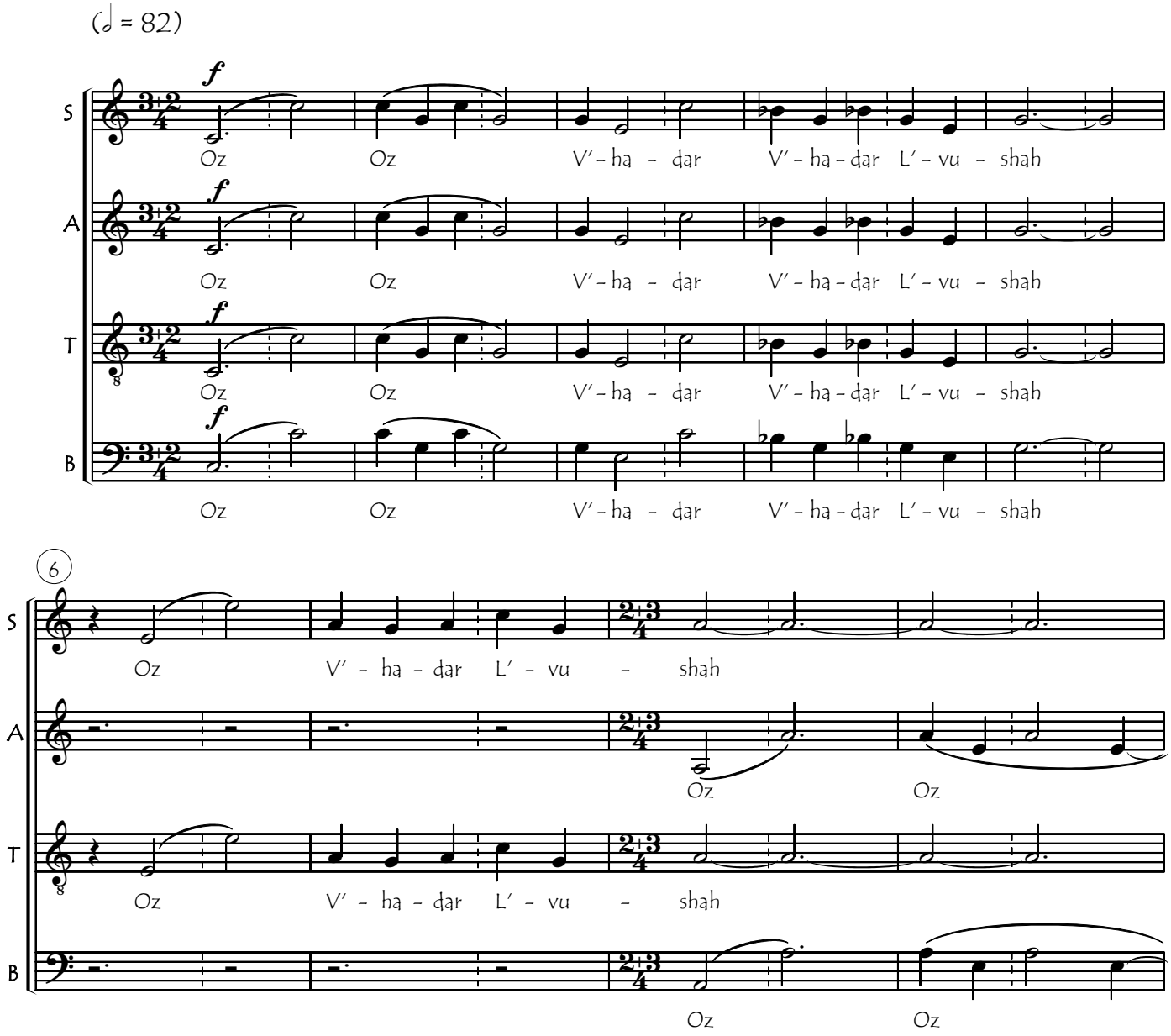
Oz V'Hadar L'Vushah
ïåøçà íåéì ÷çùzå äLåáì øãäå æåò

Mishle (Book of Proverbs) [31:25]

"Strength and dignity are her clothing, and she smiles confidently at the future."

for unaccompanied SATB

Mark Zuckerman



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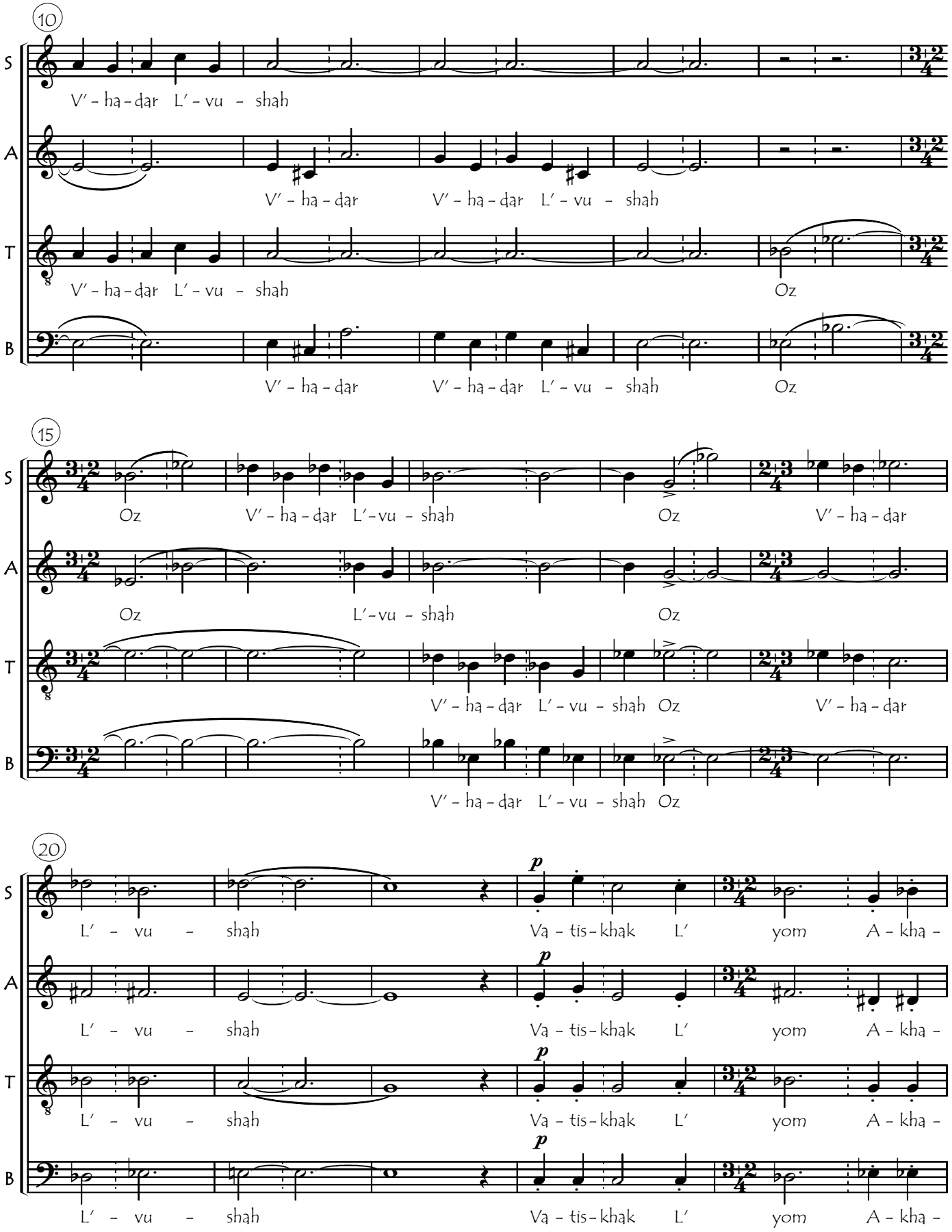
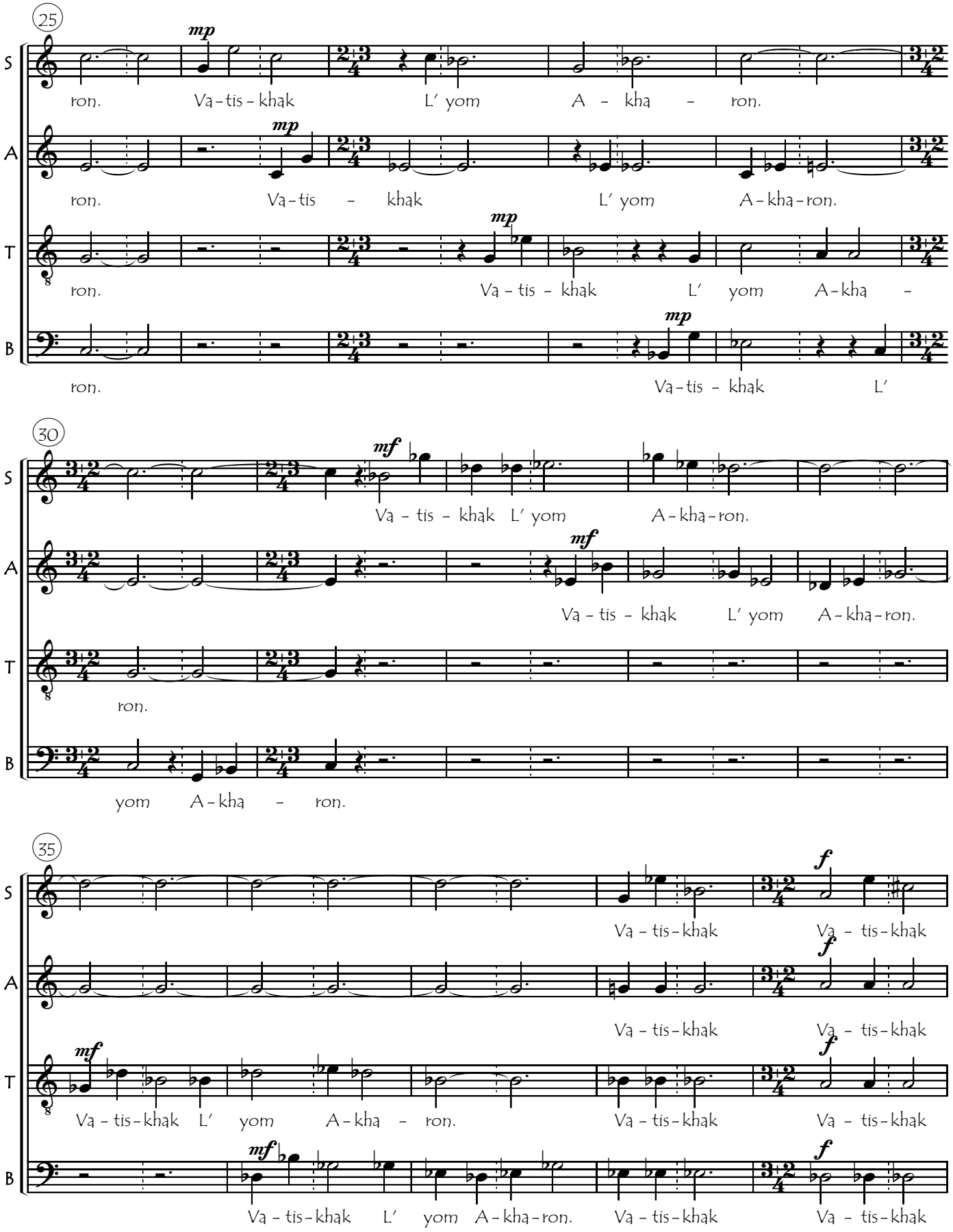
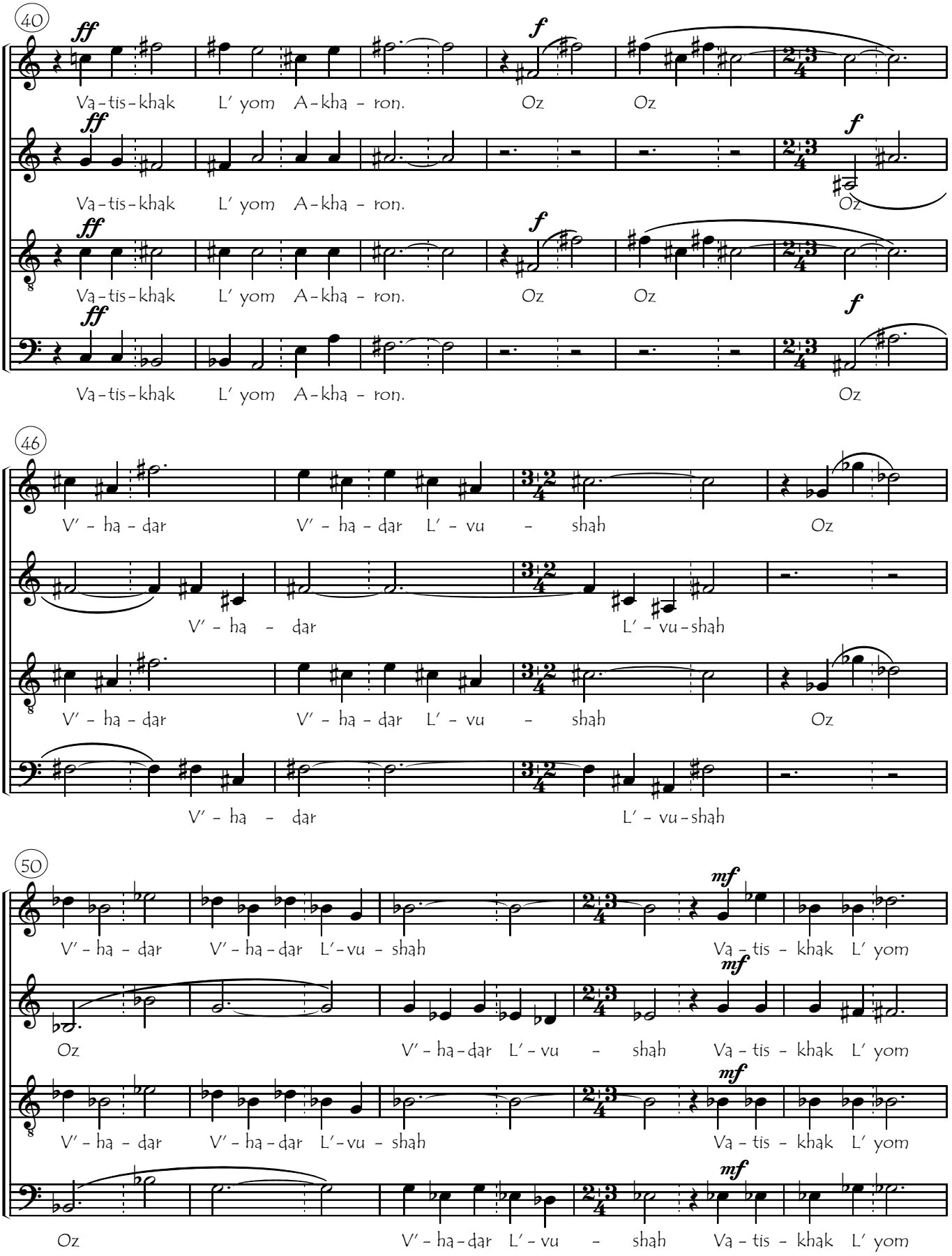
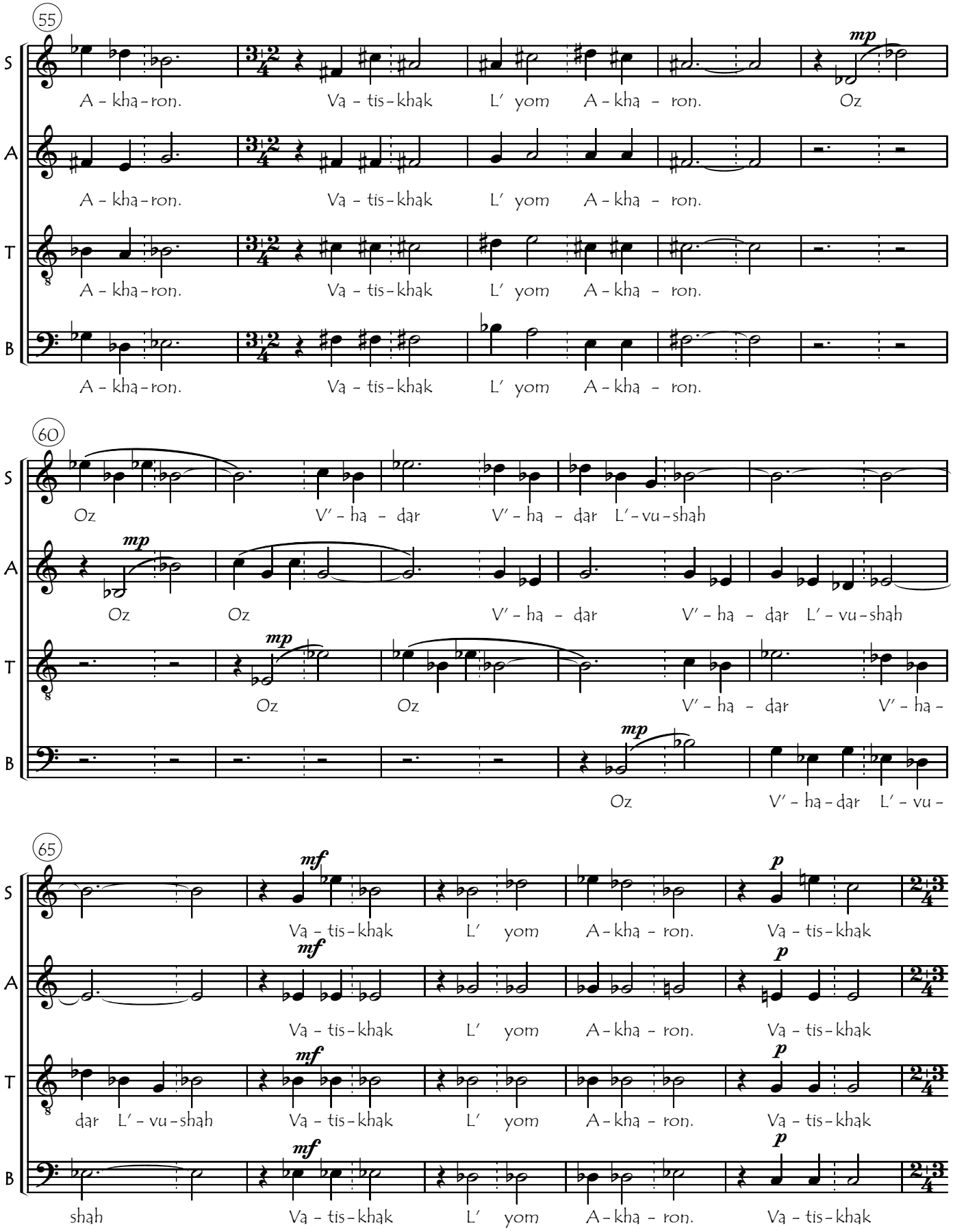
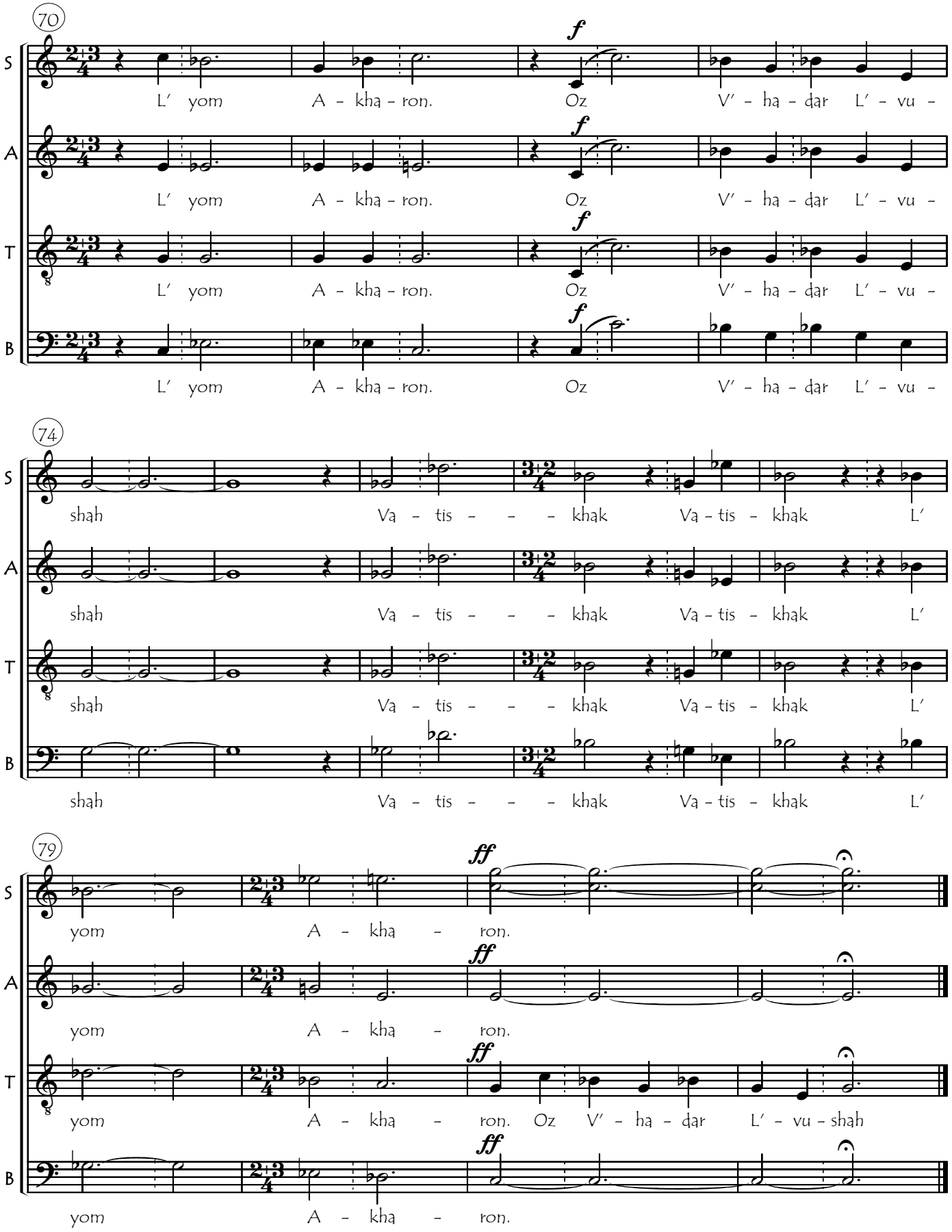

10
S
V′ - ha - dar L′ - vu - shah
A
V′ - ha - dar V′ - ha - dar L′ - vu - shah
T
V′ - ha - dar L′ - vu - shah Oz
B
V′ - ha - dar V′ - ha - dar L′ - vu - shah Oz
15
S
Oz V′ - ha - dar L′-vu - shah Oz V′ - ha - dar
A
Oz L′-vu - shah Oz
T
V′ - ha - dar L′ - vu - shah Oz V′ - ha - dar
B
V′ - ha - dar L′ - vu - shah Oz
20
S
L′ - vu - shah Va - tis - khak L′ yom A - kha -
A
L′ - vu - shah Va - tis - khak L′ yom A - kha -
T
L′ - vu - shah Va - tis - khak L′ yom A - kha -
B
L′ - vu - shah Va - tis - khak L′ yom A - kha -


25
S
A
T
B
mp
ron. Va-tis-khak L' yom A - kha - ron.
ron. Va-tis - khak L' yom A-kha-ron.
ron. Va - tis - khak L' yom A-kha -
ron. Va-tis - khak L'
30
mf
Va - tis - khak L' yom A-kha-ron.
Va - tis - khak L' yom A-kha-ron.
ron.
yom A-kha - ron.
35
f
Va - tis-khak Va - tis-khak
Va - tis-khak Va - tis-khak
Va - tis-khak L' yom A-kha - ron. Va - tis-khak Va - tis-khak
Va - tis-khak L' yom A-kha-ron. Va - tis-khak Va - tis-khak


40
ff
f
S
A
T
B
Va - tis - khak L' yom A - kha - ron. Oz Oz
46
V' - ha - dar V' - ha - dar L' - vu - shah Oz
V' - ha - dar L' - vu - shah
50
mf
Va - tis - khak L' yom


55
S
A
T
B
A - kha - ron. Va - tis - khak L' yom A - kha - ron. Oz
mp
60
Oz V' - ha - dar V' - ha - dar L' - vu - shah
65
mf
p
dar L' - vu - shah
shah


70
S
A
T
B
f
L′ yom A - kha - ron. Oz V′ - ha - dar L′ - vu -
74
shah Va - tis - - - khak Va - tis - khak L′
79
ff
yom A - kha - ron.
yom A - kha - ron. Oz V′ - ha - dar L′ - vu - shah

Duration: ca. 2'30"

II.

L'Khah Nirveh Dodim Ad HaBoker

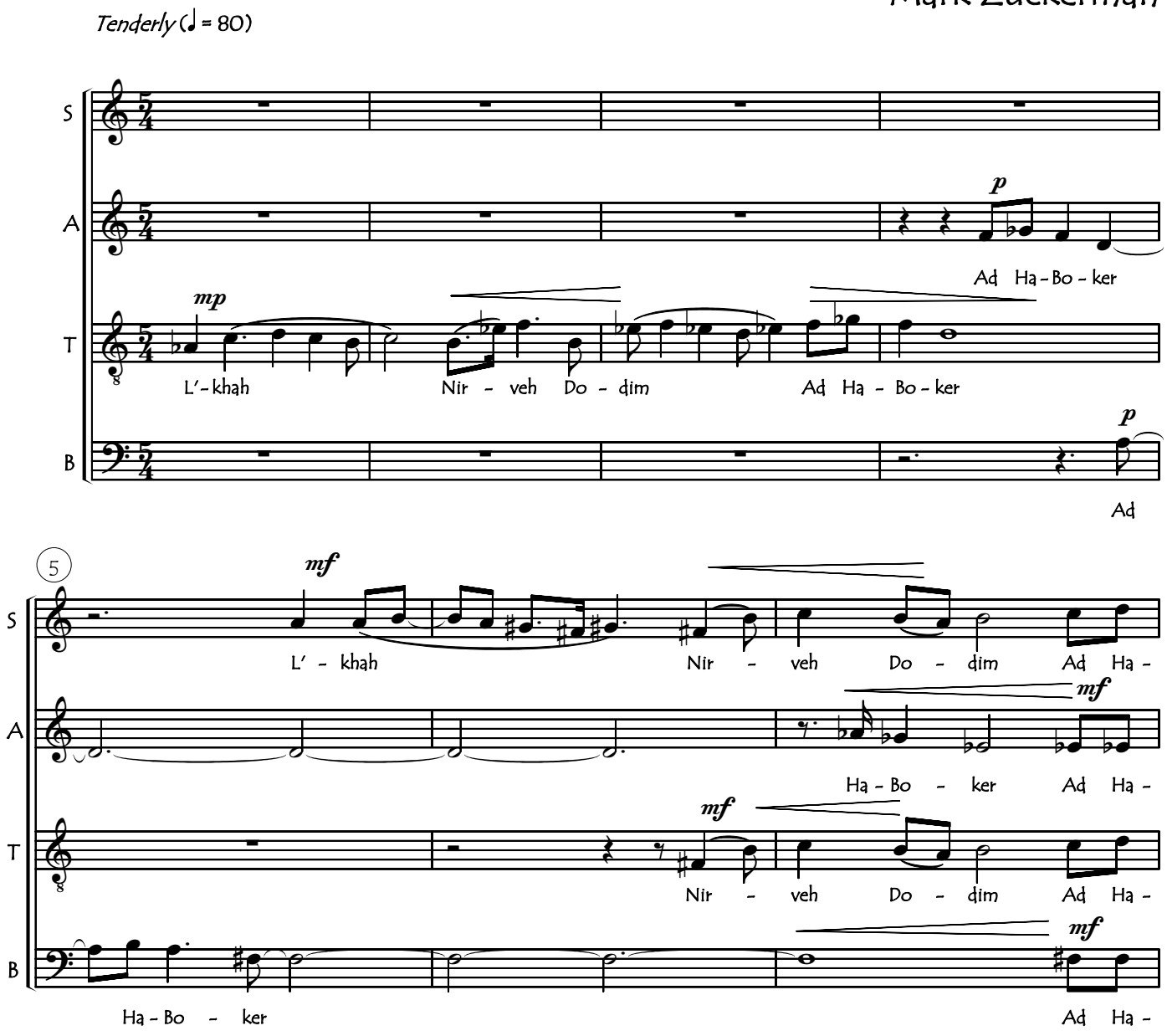
íéáäàa äćìòÐĆ ø÷aä ãò íéãã äåøĆ äāì

Mishle (Book of Proverbs) [7:18]

"Come, let us take our fill of love until the morning: let us delight ourselves with love."

for unaccompanied SATB

Mark Zuckerman



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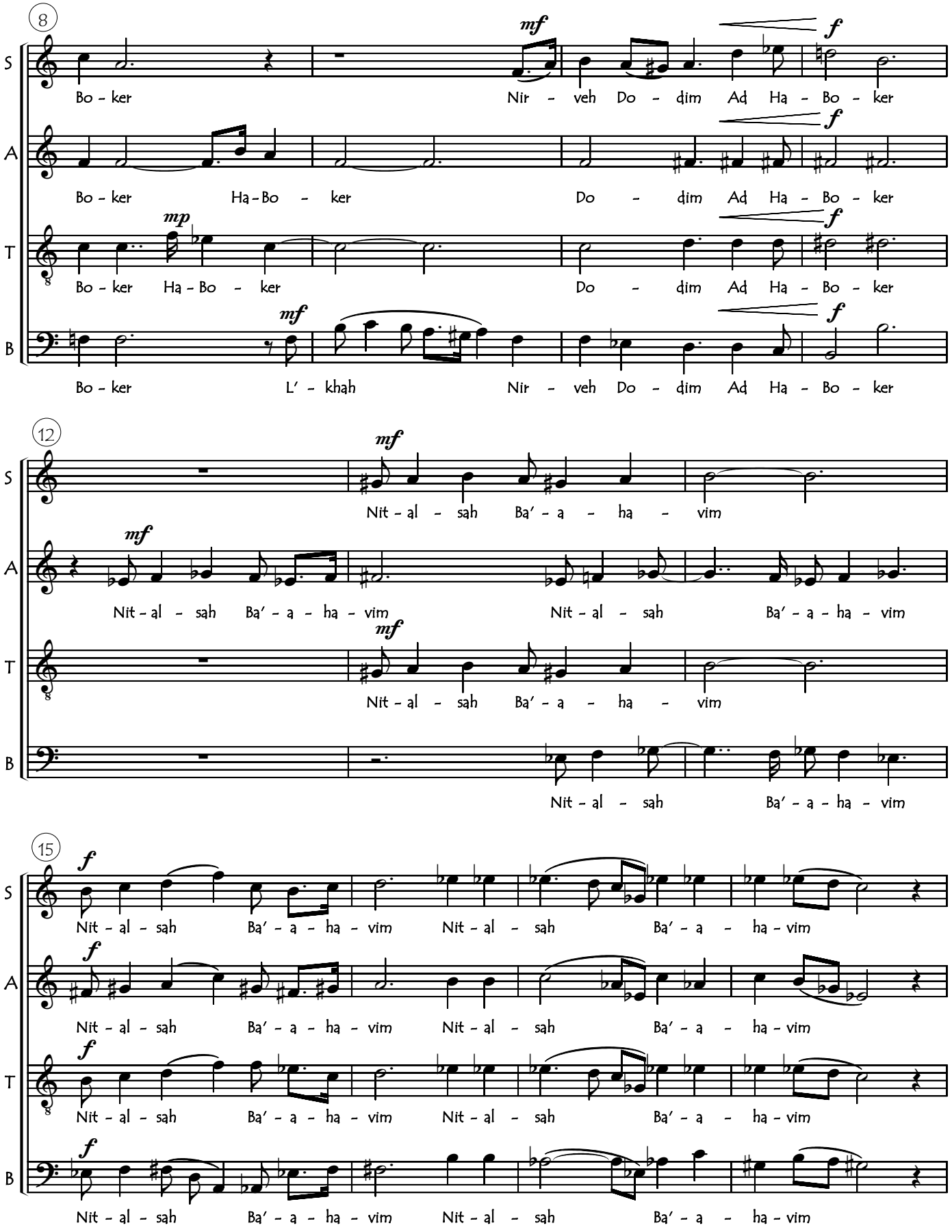
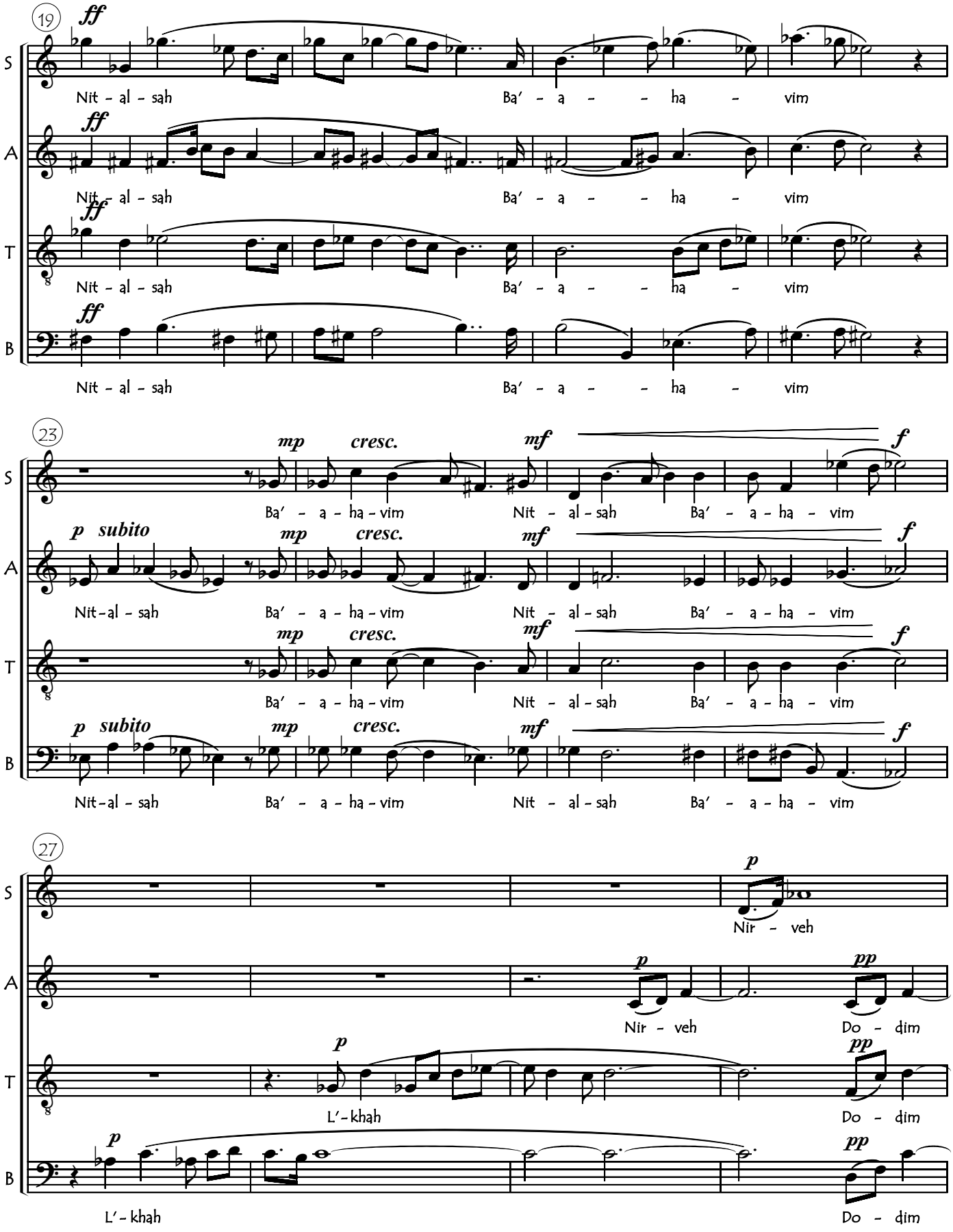
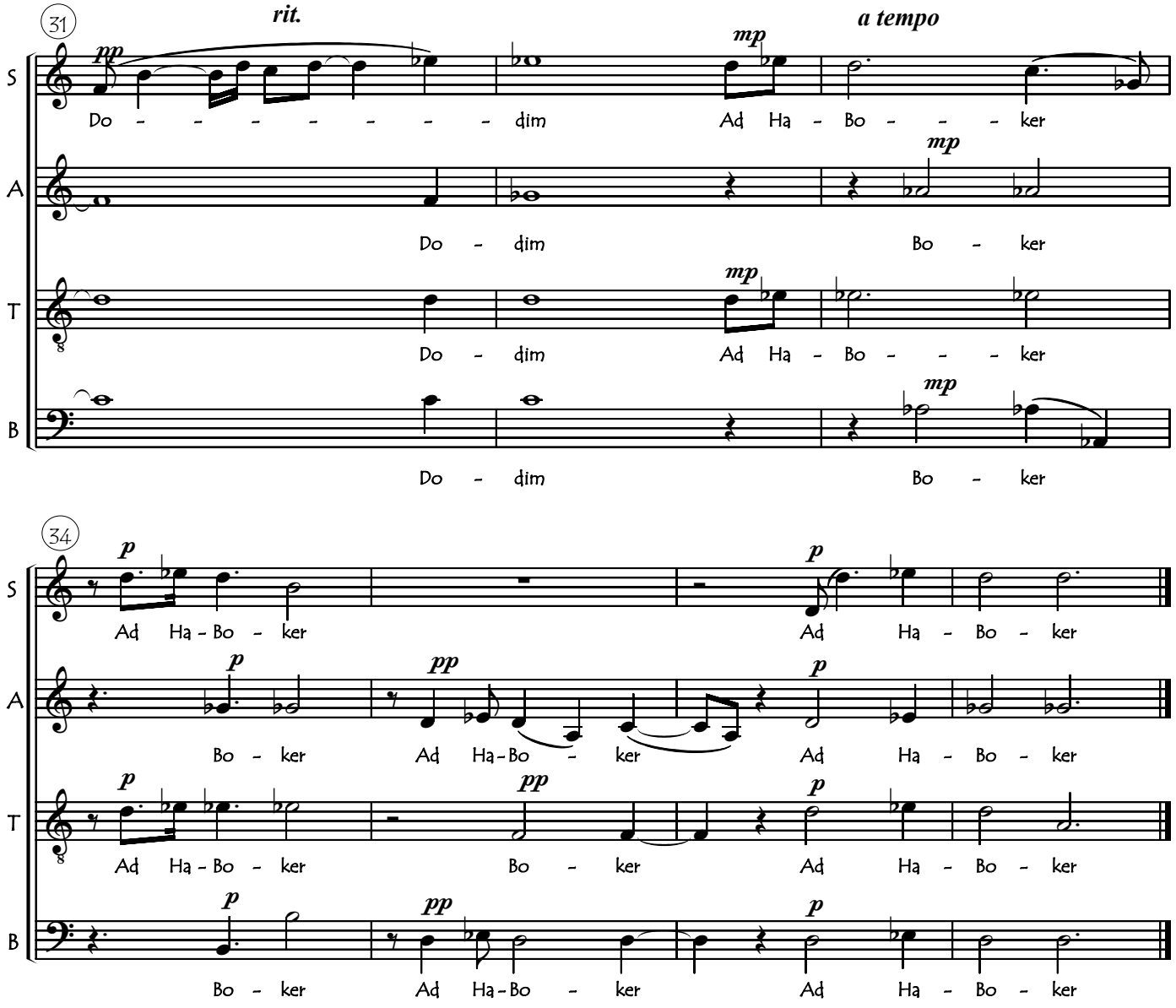

8
S
A
T
B
mf
f
mp
Bo - ker
Nir - veh Do - dim Ad Ha - Bo - ker
Bo - ker Ha - Bo - ker
Do - dim Ad Ha - Bo - ker
Bo - ker Ha - Bo - ker
Do - dim Ad Ha - Bo - ker
Bo - ker L' - khah
Nir - veh Do - dim Ad Ha - Bo - ker
12
Nit - al - sah Ba' - a - ha - vim
Nit - al - sah Ba' - a - ha - vim
15
Nit - al - sah Ba' - a - ha - vim


19
ff
S
Nit - al - sah
Ba' - a - - ha - vim
A
Nit - al - sah
Ba' - a - - ha - vim
T
Nit - al - sah
Ba' - a - - ha - vim
B
Nit - al - sah
Ba' - a - - ha - vim
23
mp
cresc.
mf
f
p subito
Ba' - a - ha - vim
Nit - al - sah
27
p
Nir - veh
pp
Do - dim
L'-khah


31
rit.
a tempo
pp
mp
mp
mp
mp
S
A
T
B
Do - - - - - - - - dim Ad Ha - Bo - - - - ker
Do - dim Bo - ker
Do - dim Ad Ha - Bo - - - - ker
Do - dim Bo - ker
34
p
pp
p
Ad Ha - Bo - ker
Ad Ha - Bo - ker
Bo - ker
Ad Ha - Bo - ker
Ad Ha - Bo - ker
Ad Ha - Bo - ker
Bo - ker
Bo - ker
Ad Ha - Bo - ker
Bo - ker
Ad Ha - Bo - ker
Ad Ha - Bo - ker

for Judith, in honor of her 50th birthday, with love and appreciation for her good counsel Duration: ca. 1'40"

III.

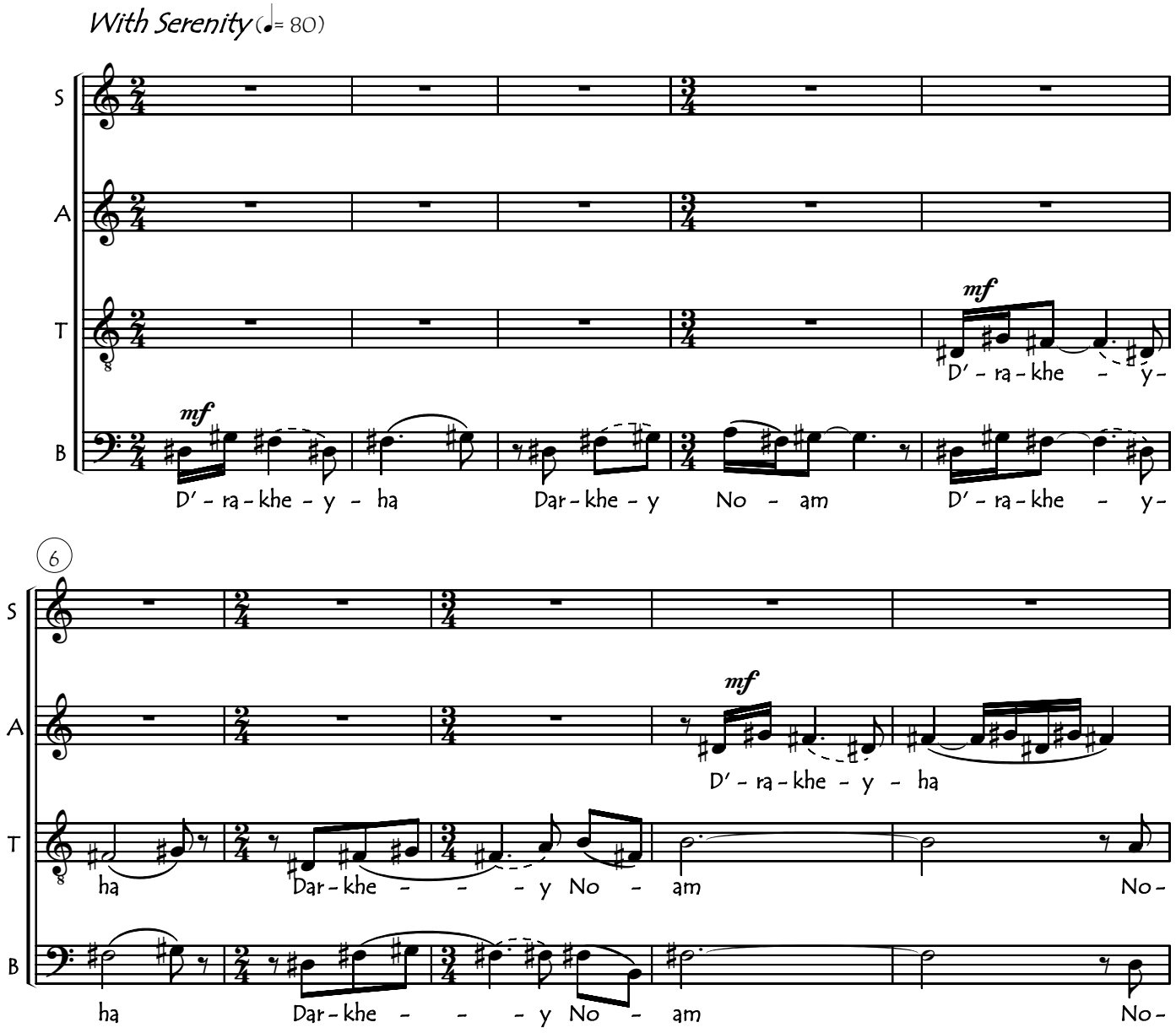
D'rakheyha Darkhey Noam
íåìL äéÐáéÐC ìāå íòC éāøã äéāøã

Mishle (Book of Proverbs) [3:17]

"Her (the Torah's) ways are ways of pleasantness, and all of her paths are peace."

for unaccompanied mixed chorus (SATB)

Mark Zuckerman



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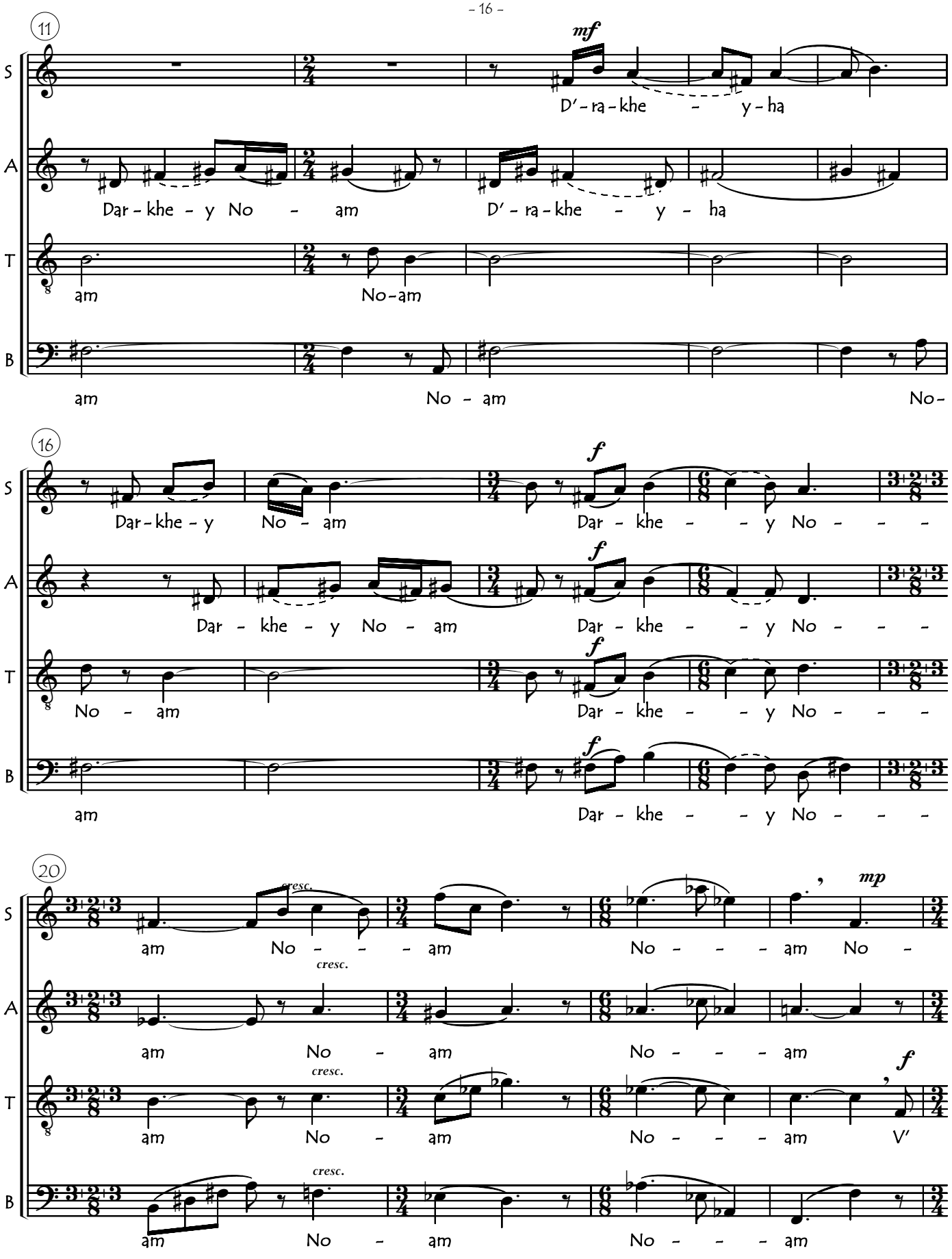
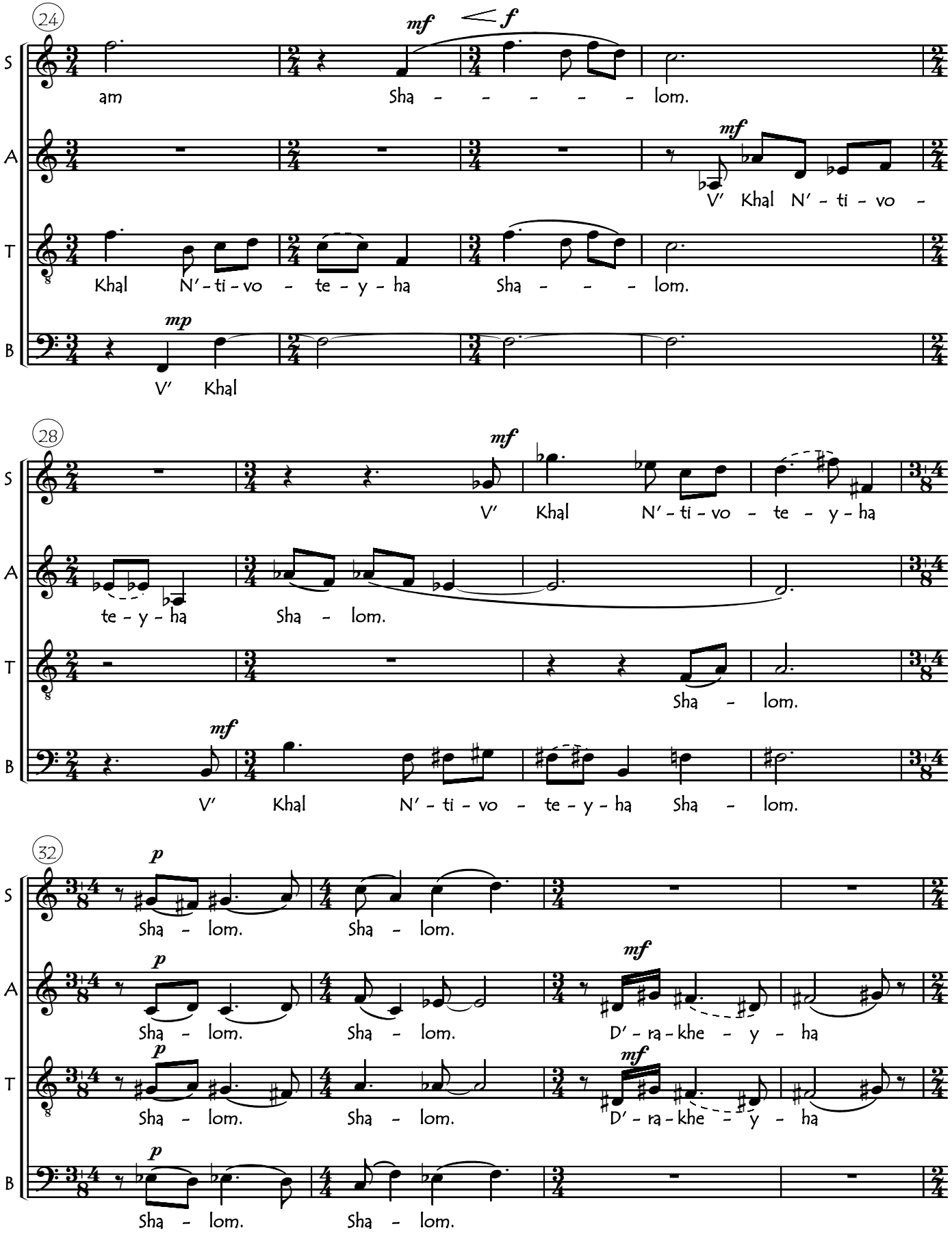
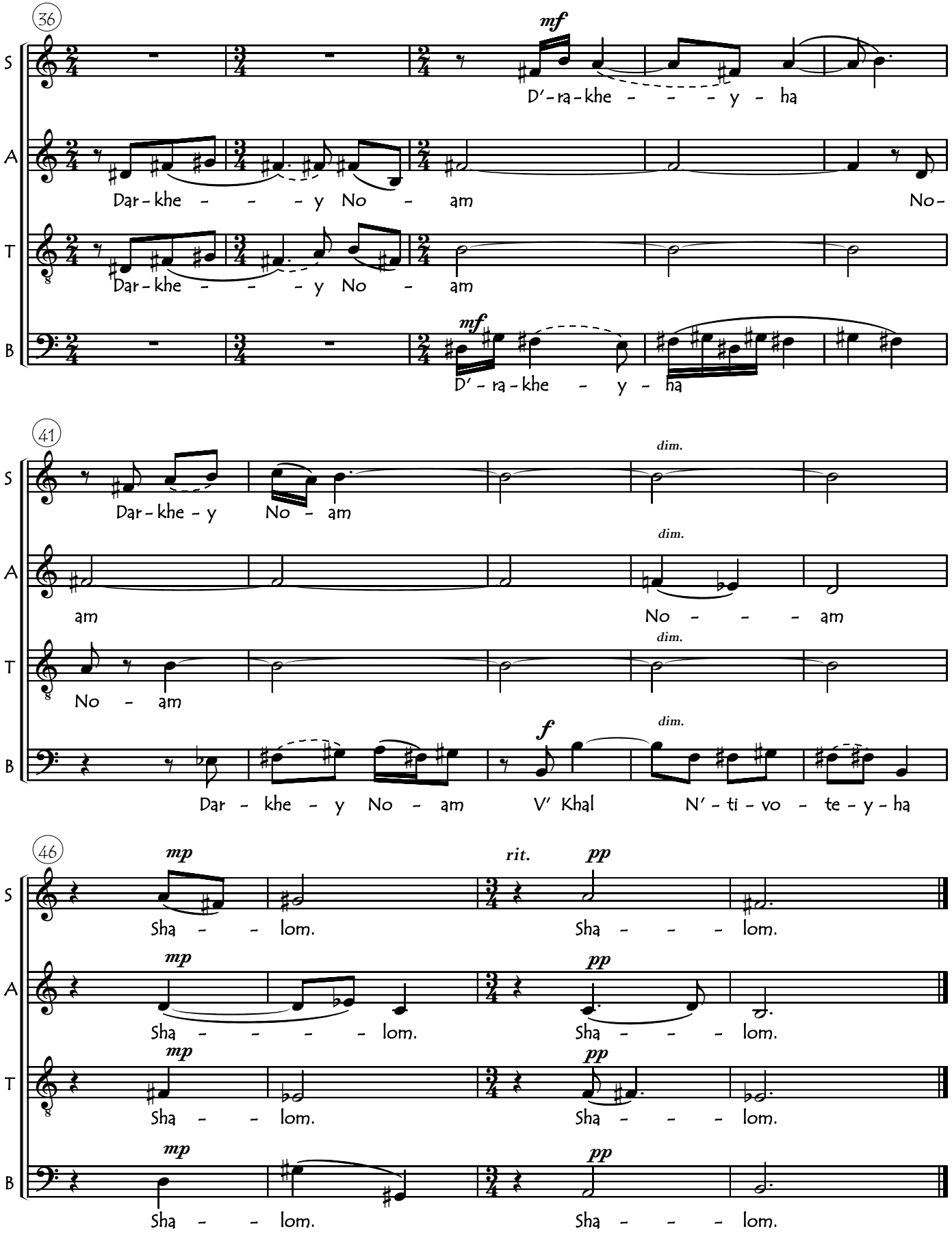

11
S
A
T
B
mf
D'-ra-khe - y-ha
Dar-khe-y No - am
D'-ra-khe - y - ha
am
No-am
am
No - am
No-
16
f
Dar-khe-y
No - am
Dar - khe - - y No - - -
Dar - khe - y No - am
Dar - khe - - y No - - -
No - am
Dar - khe - - y No - - -
am
Dar - khe - - y No - - -
20
cresc.
am
No - - - am
No - - - am
No -
mp
am
No - am
No - - - am
cresc.
am
No - am
No - - - am
V'
f
am
No - am
No - - - am


24
S
am
mf
f
Sha - - - - - lom.
A
mf
V' Khal N' - ti - vo -
T
Khal N' - ti - vo - te - y - ha
Sha - - - lom.
B
mp
V' Khal
28
S
mf
V' Khal N' - ti - vo - te - y - ha
A
te - y - ha
Sha - lom.
T
Sha - lom.
B
mf
V' Khal N' - ti - vo - te - y - ha Sha - lom.
32
S
p
Sha - lom.
Sha - lom.
A
p
Sha - lom.
Sha - lom.
mf
D' - ra - khe - y - ha
T
p
Sha - lom.
Sha - lom.
mf
D' - ra - khe - y - ha
B
p
Sha - lom.
Sha - lom.


36
S
A
T
B
mf
D'-ra-khe - - - y - ha
Dar-khe - - - y No - am
No-
Dar-khe - - - y No - am
mf
D' - ra - khe - y - ha
41
dim.
Dar-khe-y No - am
am
No - - - am
No - am
f
Dar - khe - y No - am
V' Khal
N' - ti - vo - te - y - ha
46
mp
rit.
pp
Sha - - lom.
Sha - - - lom.
Sha - - - - lom.
Sha - - - lom.
Sha - - lom.
Sha - - - lom.
Sha - - lom.
Sha - - - lom.

Duration: ca. 2′

IV.

Reyshit Khakhmah

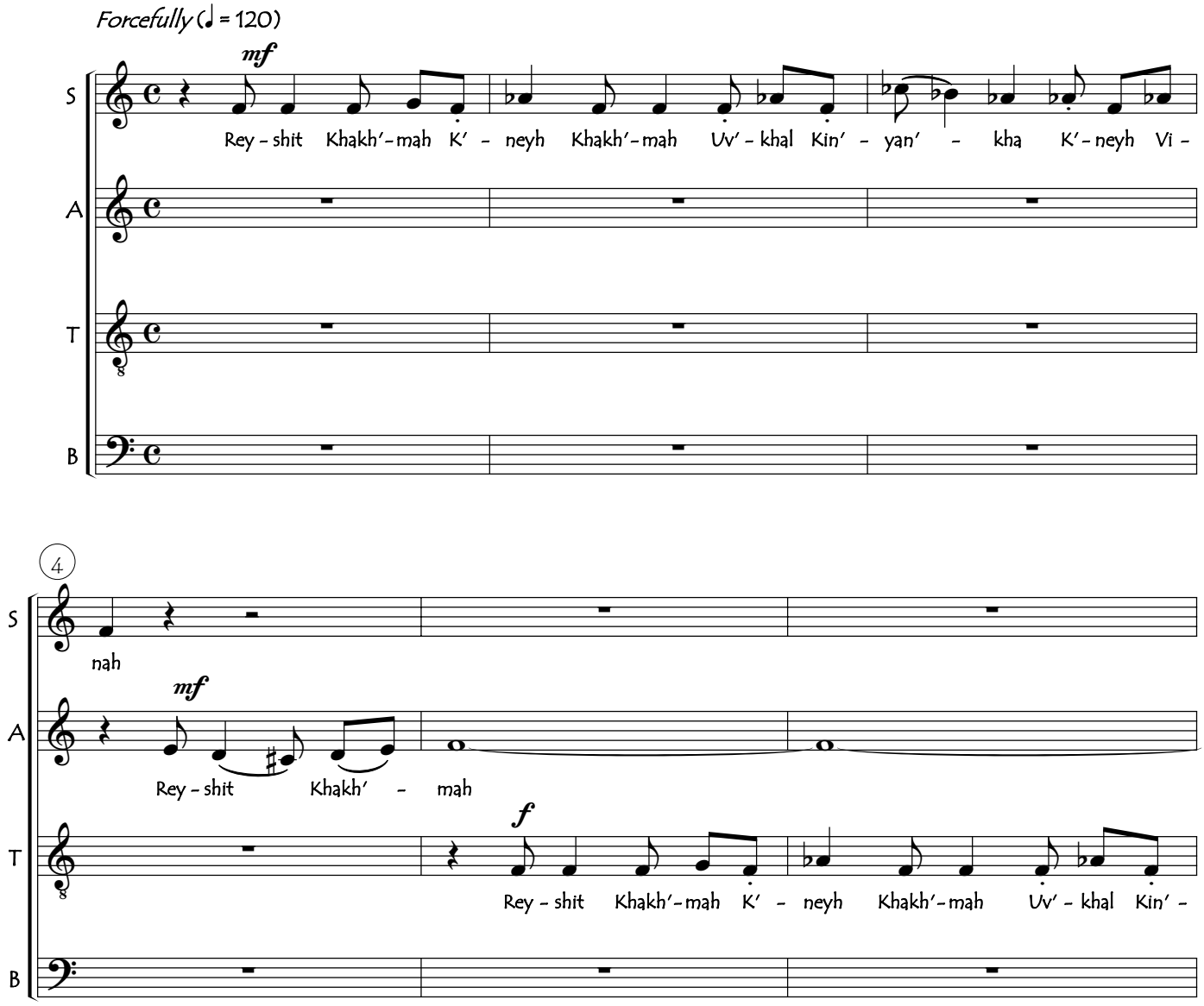
äðéá äð÷ êðéð÷ ìëáå äîëç äð÷ äîëç úéLàø

Mishle (Book of Proverbs) [4:7]

"The beginning of wisdom is, Get wisdom: therefore use all of your means to acquire understanding."

for unaccompanied SATB

Mark Zuckerman



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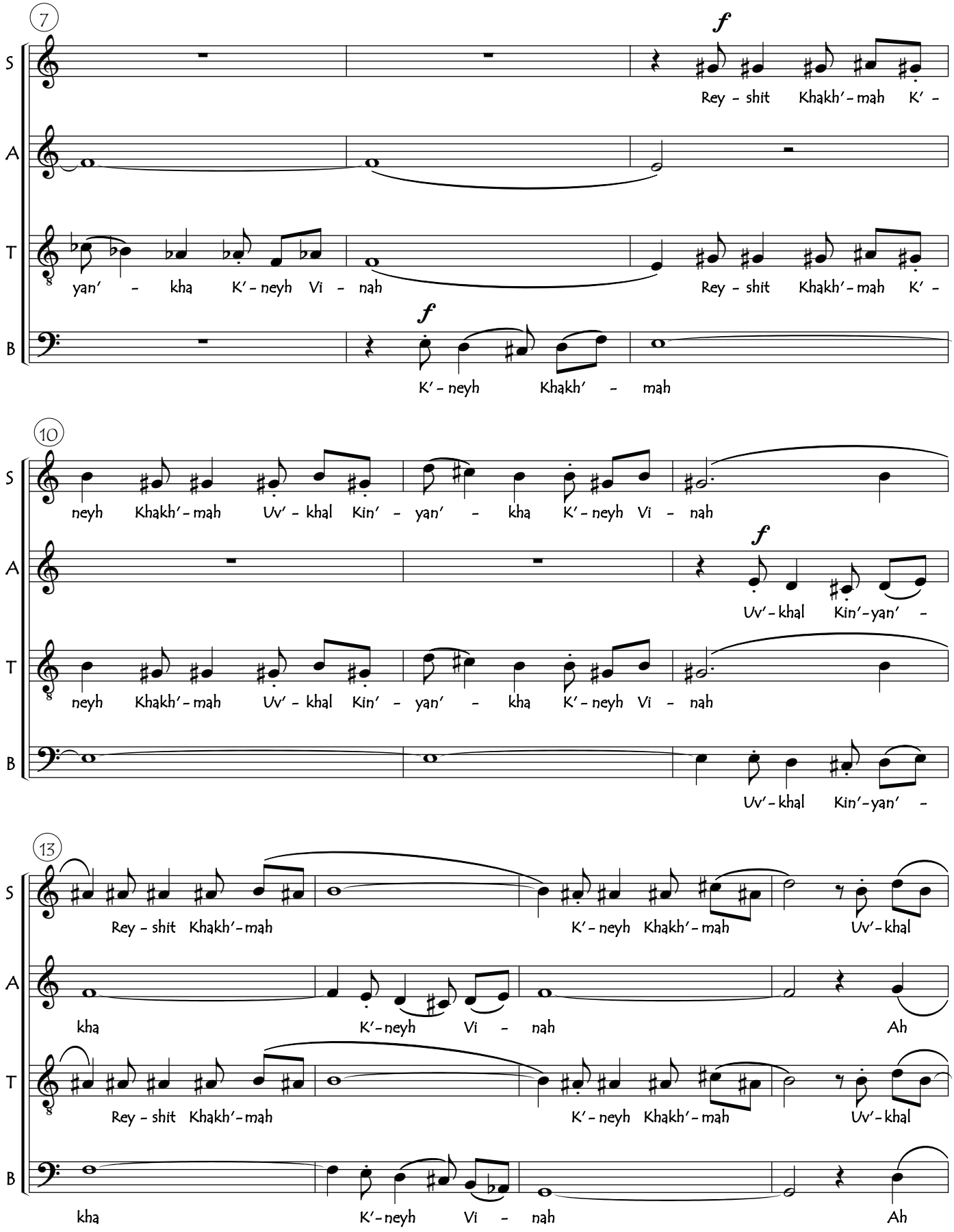
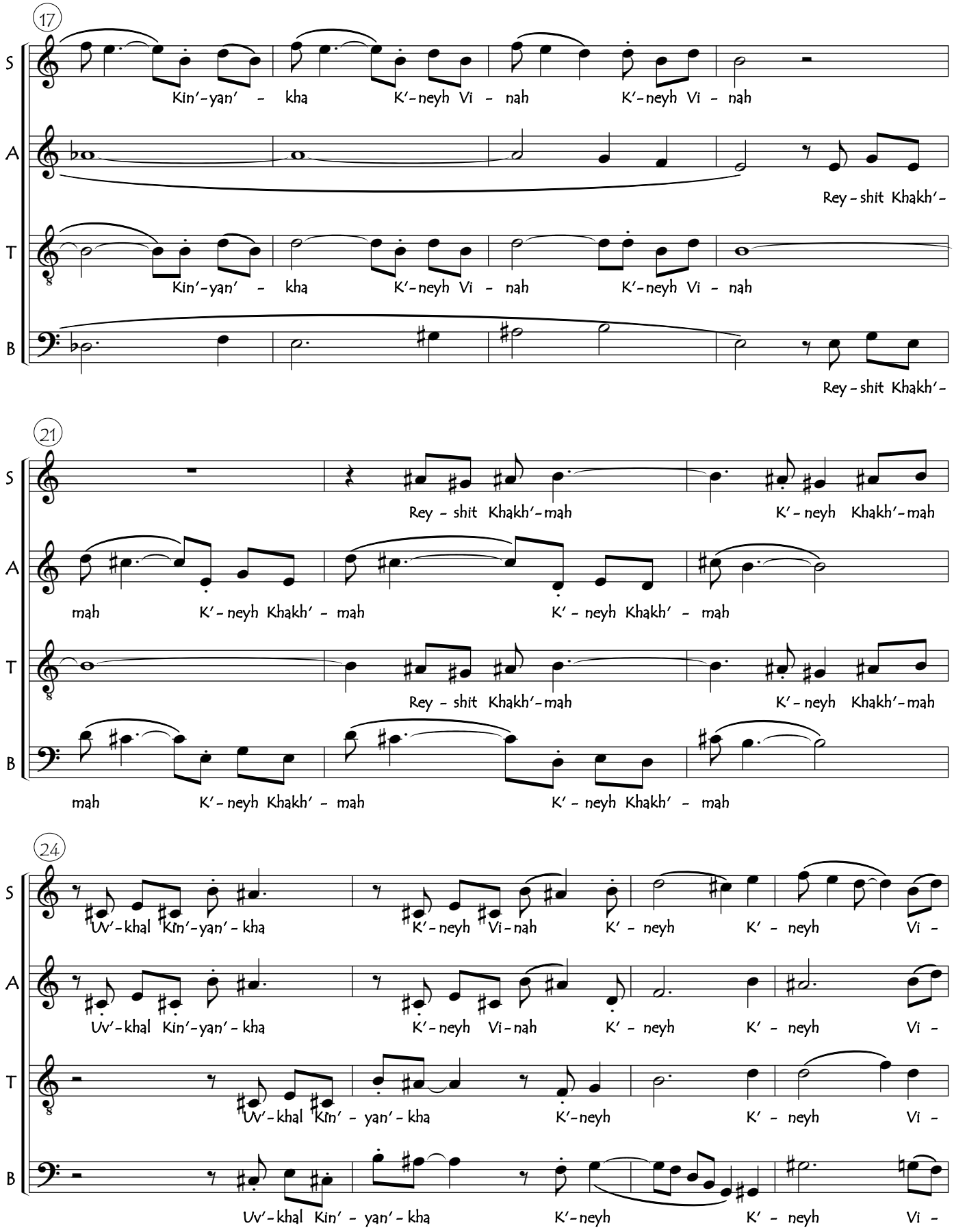
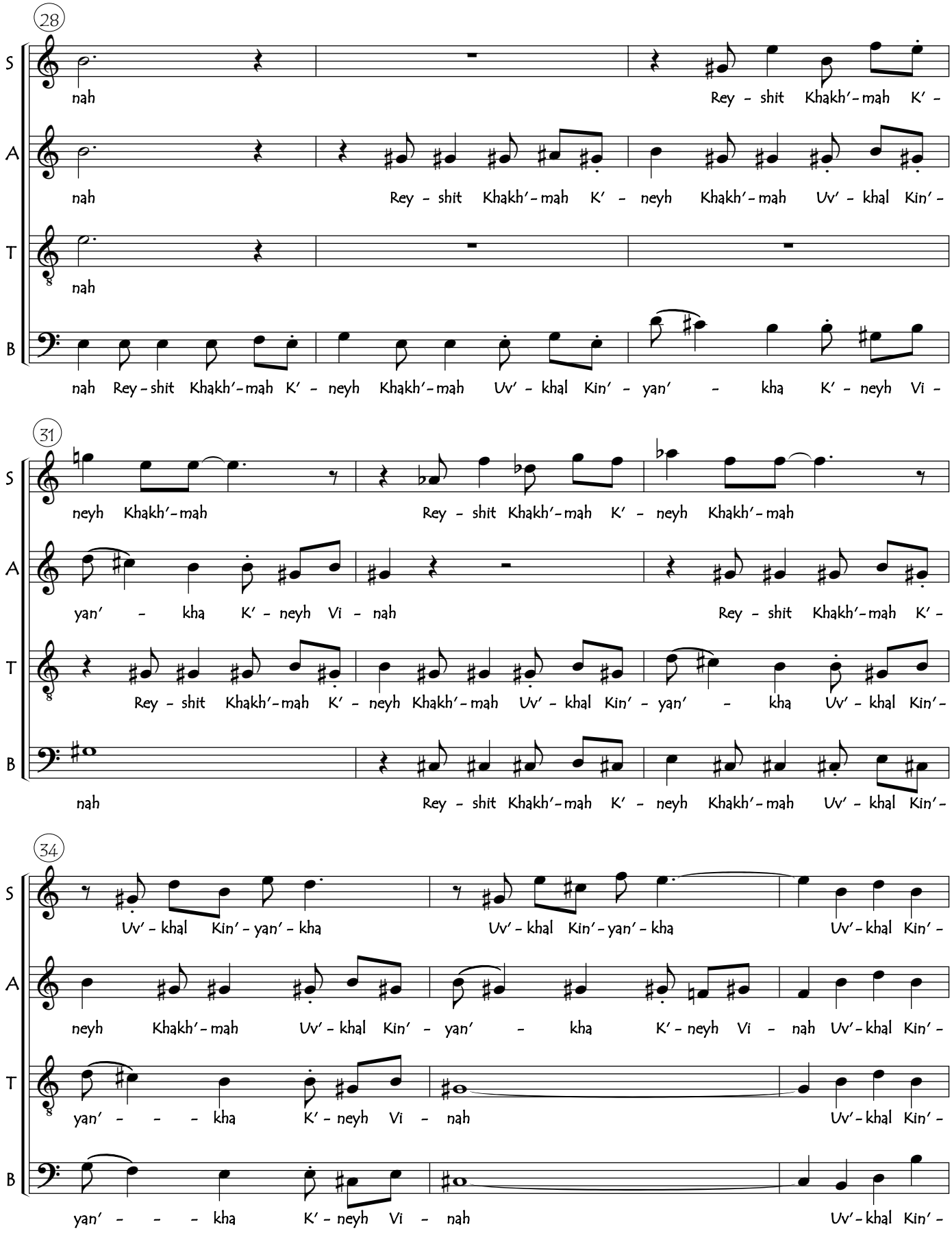
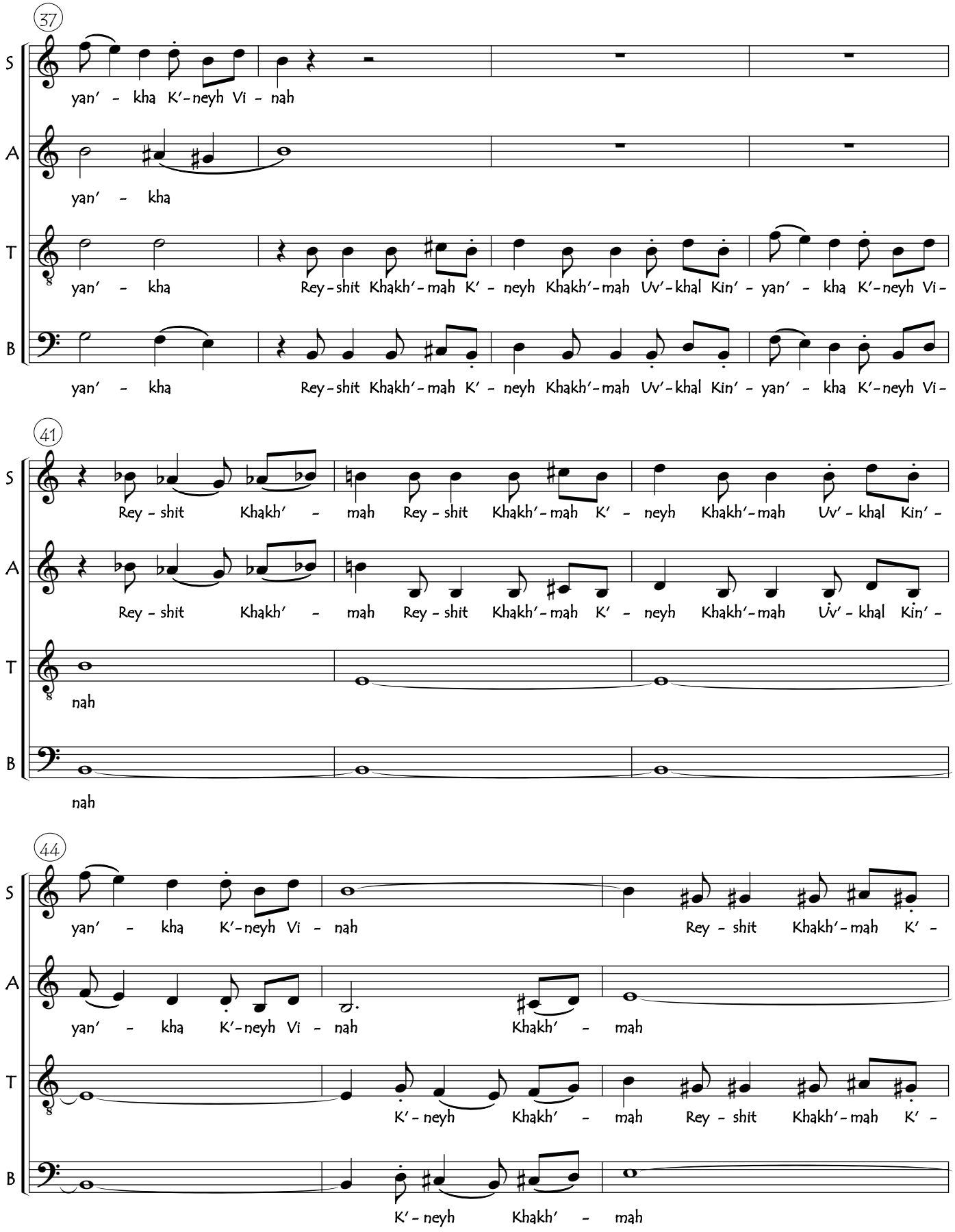
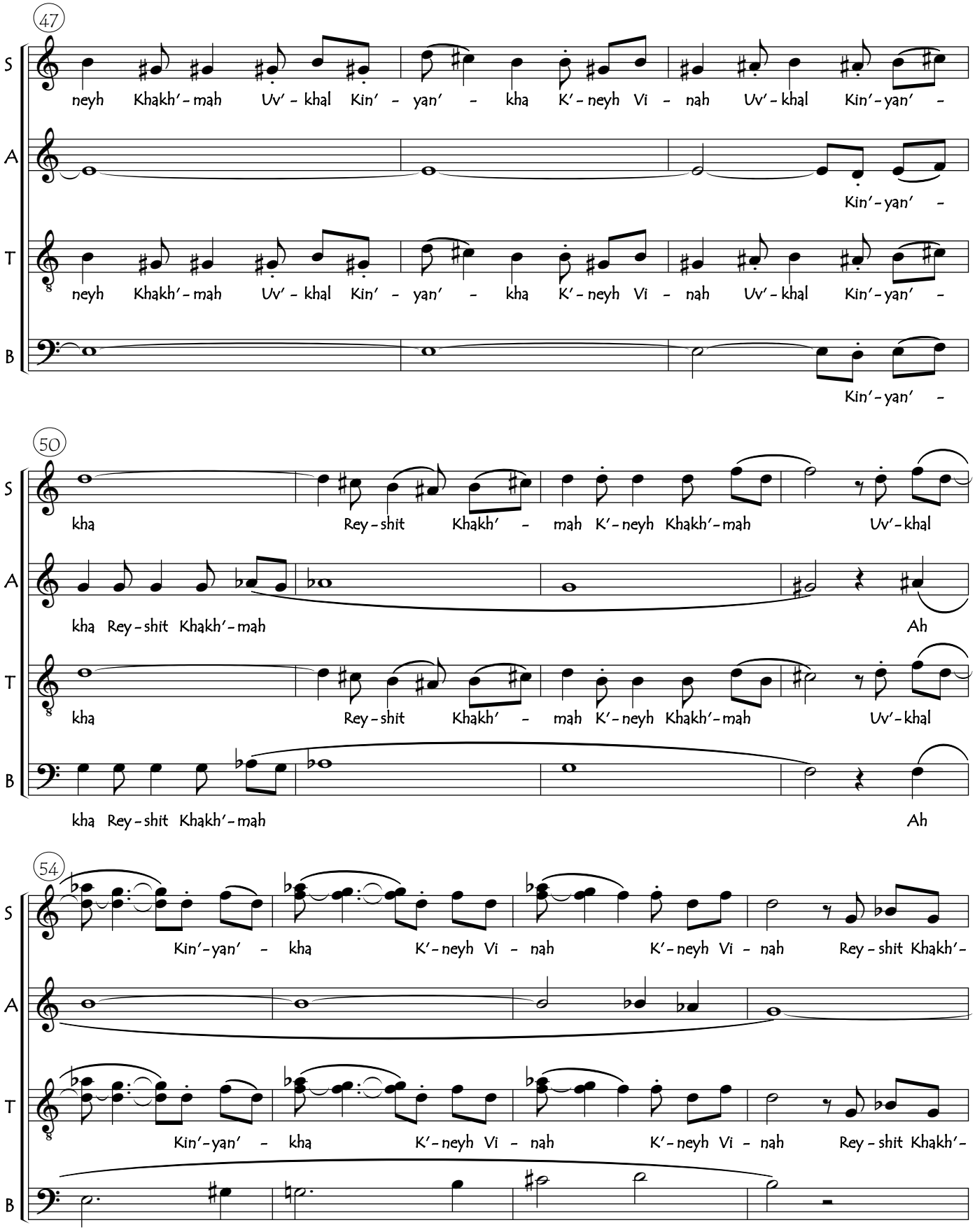
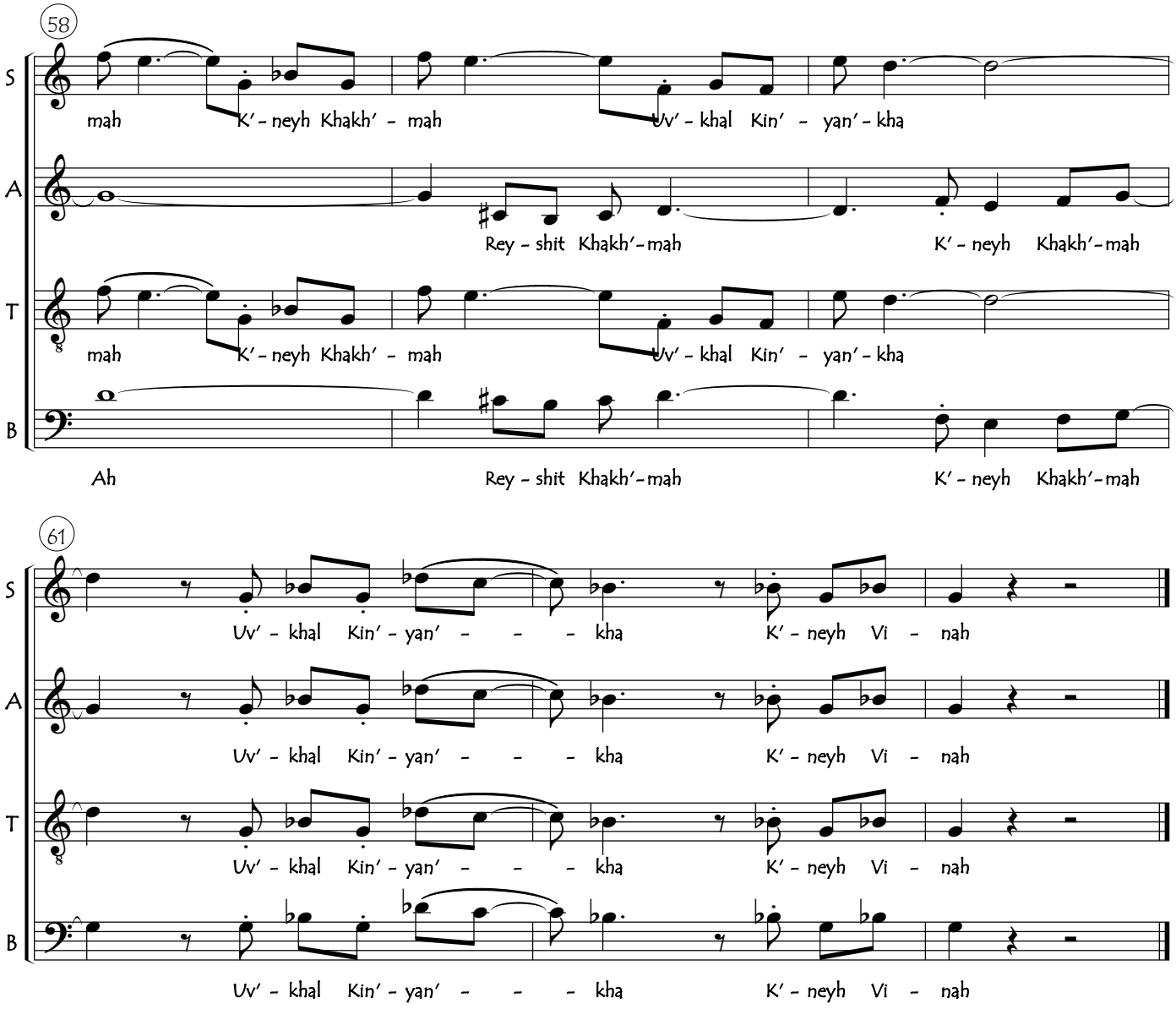

7
S
A
T
B
f
Rey - shit Khakh'-mah K' -
yan' - kha K'-neyh Vi - nah
Rey - shit Khakh'-mah K' -
f
K'-neyh Khakh' - mah
10
neyh Khakh'-mah Uv'-khal Kin' - yan' - kha K'-neyh Vi - nah
f
Uv'-khal Kin'-yan' -
13
Rey - shit Khakh'-mah
K'-neyh Khakh'-mah
Uv'-khal
kha
K'-neyh Vi - nah
Ah


17
S
Kin'-yan' - kha K'-neyh Vi - nah K'-neyh Vi - nah
A
Rey - shit Khakh'-
T
Kin'-yan' - kha K'-neyh Vi - nah K'-neyh Vi - nah
B
Rey - shit Khakh'-
21
S
Rey - shit Khakh'-mah K'-neyh Khakh'-mah
A
mah K'-neyh Khakh' - mah K'-neyh Khakh' - mah
T
Rey - shit Khakh'-mah K'-neyh Khakh'-mah
B
mah K'-neyh Khakh' - mah K'-neyh Khakh' - mah
24
S
Uv'-khal Kin'-yan'-kha K'-neyh Vi-nah K'-neyh K'-neyh Vi -
A
Uv'-khal Kin'-yan'-kha K'-neyh Vi-nah K'-neyh K'-neyh Vi -
T
Uv'-khal Kin'-yan'-kha K'-neyh K'-neyh Vi -
B
Uv'-khal Kin'-yan'-kha K'-neyh K'-neyh Vi -


28
S
nah
Rey - shit Khakh'-mah K' -
A
nah
Rey - shit Khakh'-mah K' - neyh Khakh'-mah Uv' - khal Kin' -
T
nah
B
nah Rey-shit Khakh'-mah K' - neyh Khakh'-mah Uv' - khal Kin' - yan' - kha K' - neyh Vi -
31
S
neyh Khakh'-mah
Rey - shit Khakh'-mah K' - neyh Khakh'-mah
A
yan' - kha K' - neyh Vi - nah
Rey - shit Khakh'-mah K' -
T
Rey - shit Khakh'-mah K' - neyh Khakh'-mah Uv' - khal Kin' - yan' - kha Uv' - khal Kin' -
B
nah
Rey - shit Khakh'-mah K' - neyh Khakh'-mah Uv' - khal Kin' -
34
S
Uv' - khal Kin' - yan' - kha
Uv' - khal Kin' - yan' - kha
Uv' - khal Kin' -
A
neyh Khakh'-mah Uv' - khal Kin' - yan' - kha K' - neyh Vi - nah Uv' - khal Kin' -
T
yan' - - - kha K' - neyh Vi - nah
Uv' - khal Kin' -
B
yan' - - - kha K' - neyh Vi - nah
Uv' - khal Kin' -


37
S
yan′ - kha K′-neyh Vi - nah
A
yan′ - kha
T
yan′ - kha Rey-shit Khakh′-mah K′ - neyh Khakh′-mah Uv′-khal Kin′ - yan′ - kha K′-neyh Vi-
B
yan′ - kha Rey-shit Khakh′-mah K′ - neyh Khakh′-mah Uv′-khal Kin′ - yan′ - kha K′-neyh Vi-
41
S
Rey - shit Khakh′ - mah Rey - shit Khakh′-mah K′ - neyh Khakh′-mah Uv′ - khal Kin′ -
A
Rey - shit Khakh′ - mah Rey - shit Khakh′-mah K′ - neyh Khakh′-mah Uv′ - khal Kin′ -
T
nah
B
nah
44
S
yan′ - kha K′-neyh Vi - nah Rey - shit Khakh′-mah K′ -
A
yan′ - kha K′-neyh Vi - nah Khakh′ - mah
T
K′ - neyh Khakh′ - mah Rey - shit Khakh′-mah K′ -
B
K′ - neyh Khakh′ - mah


47
S
neyh Khakh'-mah Uv'-khal Kin'-yan'-kha K'-neyh Vi-nah Uv'-khal Kin'-yan'-
A
Kin'-yan'-
T
neyh Khakh'-mah Uv'-khal Kin'-yan'-kha K'-neyh Vi-nah Uv'-khal Kin'-yan'-
B
Kin'-yan'-
50
S
kha Rey-shit Khakh'-mah K'-neyh Khakh'-mah Uv'-khal
A
kha Rey-shit Khakh'-mah Ah
T
kha Rey-shit Khakh'-mah K'-neyh Khakh'-mah Uv'-khal
B
kha Rey-shit Khakh'-mah Ah
54
S
Kin'-yan'-kha K'-neyh Vi-nah K'-neyh Vi-nah Rey-shit Khakh'-
A
T
Kin'-yan'-kha K'-neyh Vi-nah K'-neyh Vi-nah Rey-shit Khakh'-
B


58
S
mah K'-neyh Khakh'-mah Uv'-khal Kin'-yan'-kha
A
Rey-shit Khakh'-mah K'-neyh Khakh'-mah
T
mah K'-neyh Khakh'-mah Uv'-khal Kin'-yan'-kha
B
Ah Rey-shit Khakh'-mah K'-neyh Khakh'-mah
61
S
Uv'-khal Kin'-yan'---kha K'-neyh Vi-nah
A
Uv'-khal Kin'-yan'---kha K'-neyh Vi-nah
T
Uv'-khal Kin'-yan'---kha K'-neyh Vi-nah
B
Uv'-khal Kin'-yan'---kha K'-neyh Vi-nah