

"I/We Shall Not Be Moved"
for Tzedek Chicago Torah Study, June 1, 2024 — V.Spatz

This are really three songs from the same root: a Gospel and then blues song; a Labor song; and a Civil Rights song.

(1) The Gospel song is based on Jeremiah, rather than Psalm 1, according to music historians:

Blessed is he who trusts in the LORD, Whose trust is the LORD alone.

He shall be like a tree planted by waters, Sending forth its roots by a stream: It does not sense the coming of heat, Its leaves are ever fresh; It has no care in a year of drought, It does not cease to yield fruit. -- Jer 17:7-8

An old version began:

Like a tree planted by the water, my Savior planted me
All my fruit shall be in season, I shall live eternally
Though the tempest rage around me, thru the storm, my Lord I see
Pointing upward to that heaven, where my family waits for me

Originally prepared, 2019; updated 2024
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1929 recordings include Blind Roosevelt [Graves](#)' "on my way to heaven..." and "going to see my mother..." and Charles [Patton](#)'s "on my way to glory..." as well as lines like "oh, brother, I shall not..." Other older lyrics: "glory hallelujah...", "anchored in the spirit...", and some Jesus-centered verses. Mississippi [John Hurt](#)'s popular 1960s version had "On my way to heaven...", "Oh, preacher...", and "Sanctified and holy..." Johnny Cash used "On this rock of ages" (see also Million Dollar [Quartet](#), 1956) [Memphis](#) Southern Male Chorus sticks with the chorus really focusing on the tree.

(2) Joe Glazer (*Labor's Troubadour*) dates the song's plural version to a 1931 West Virginia coal miner's strike. Labor lyrics included "the union is behind us" and "we're not afraid of gun thugs." Woody Guthrie (*Bound for Glory*) wrote about using the song to help prevent 1941 lynching of Japanese Americans. Pete Seeger sang a labor version, adding other verses for decades, including lines like "Black and White together..." and, much later, "gay and straight..." ([Glazer](#) ; [Seeger](#) ; recent elementary [school](#) performance, with hand gestures).

(3) Civil rights verses included time-specific -- like "all the state troupers..." and "Tell Governor Wallace..." -- and timeless, like "Black and White together..." The [Freedom](#) Singers opened their medley at the 1963 March on Washington with the song. [Mavis](#) Staples recorded an adapted version in her 2007 album of movement songs.

Hybrids: Minneapolis-based Sounds of [Blackness](#) (since 1969), includes hip hop additions in 2015 version. Rhiannon Giddens and Franceso Turrisi [just released](#) (4/21) a version with "I" lyrics, heaven (but no God or Jesus) and justice verses.

Here's one version of **Civil Rights lyrics:**

CHORUS: We shall not, we shall not be moved
We shall not, we shall not be moved
Just like a tree that's planted by the water,
We shall not be moved.

We're fighting for our rights (and)
We shall not be moved

We're fighting for our rights (and)
We shall not be moved

Just like a tree that's planted by the water,
We shall not be moved. -- CHORUS

We shall all be free (and)

We shall not be moved

We shall all be free (and)

We shall not be moved

Just like a tree that's planted by the water,

We shall not be moved -- CHORUS

God is on our side (and)

We shall not be moved.... -- CHORUS

Black and White together

We shall not be moved.... -- CHORUS

Music links

"I Shall Not Be Moved" Gospel/Blues

Charley Patton 1929 (guitar) -- <https://tinyurl.com/xwxp4hpm> -- [Patton](#)

Blind Roosevelt Graves and Brother 1929 (band) -- <https://tinyurl.com/537cvtme> -- [Graves](#)

Million Dollar Quartet Jerry Lee Lewis, Carl Perkins, Elvis Presley, Johnny Cash, 1956 --
<https://tinyurl.com/up6yzxpf> -- [Quartet](#)

Mississippi John Hurt 1960 -- http://bit.ly/MissJHurt_Moved -- [John Hurt](#)

Memphis Southern Male Chorus, 2011 -- <https://tinyurl.com/2bkccatk> -- [Memphis](#)

"We" -- Justice/Union versions

March on Washington with (so young!) Freedom Singers -- http://bit.ly/MOW_Freedom -- [Freedom](#)

Pete Seeger in 1968 with introduction (and Swedish captions) -- <https://tinyurl.com/57e8a6b2> -- [Seeger](#)

Joe Glazer Sings Labor Songs, 1982 -- <https://tinyurl.com/4ztxemb7> -- [Glazer](#)

Mavis Staples, 2007 album of Movement songs, "We'll Never Turn Back" -- http://bit.ly/Staples_WSNM -- [Mavis](#)

Elementary School rendition with hand gestures, union version (2021) -- <https://tinyurl.com/e4cfs7b> -- [School](#)

Hybrid

Sounds of Blackness 2015, with some hip hop additions -- <https://tinyurl.com/s8zcdw9b> -- [Blackness](#)

Rhiannon Giddens/Francesco Turrisi 2021 -- <https://tinyurl.com/2xkk6yzn> -- [Giddens/Turrisi](#)

From Shefa Gold -- chants of verses 17:13 and 14

Mikvay Yisroayl Havayah

מִקְוֵה יִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה

God is a Mikveh for Israel. (Jeremiah 17:13)

See post at Shefa Gold's website for [Mikveh chant](#) (details, plus audio files and player)

R'fa'ayni Yah v'ayrafay;

Hoshiyani v'ivashay'ah ki t'hilati atah.

רְפְּאֵנִי יְהוָה וְאַרְפֵּא הוֹשִׁיעֵנִי וְאַוְשְׁעָה כִּי תְהִלָּתִי אַתָּה

Heal me, God, and I will be healed;

Save me and I will be saved... for my praise is You. (Jeremiah 17:14)

See Shefa Gold's website for the [R'fa'ayni Yah chant](#) (details, plus audio files and player)

Virginia Avniel Spatz

Originally prepared for: Temple Micah (DC) psalms study, 2019;
Expanded: DC community Tikkun Leil Shavuot, 2021;
Old links updated, but no additions, 2024,
shared for Tzedek Chicago Torah Study, Shabbat Bechukotai 5784