

SECTION IV  
DEVOTIONAL SONGS  
INTRODUCTION

Among the nine songs classified here as “devotional,” the first four are adaptations of well-known Hebrew *piyyutim*, embedded in the daily and/or Shabbat liturgy (*'Areshet*, 1980) or included in the list of morning *bakashot* sung regularly by many Kerala Jewish women (*Sefer Tefilat haHodesh*, 1931). The next four are prayers addressed directly to God. The last is quite different—a modern Malayalam composition envisioning the utopian future of a peaceful and just society in Kerala, rendered both theologically and culturally Jewish by its inclusion of a verse based on Hebrew scripture and by its repeating chorus of a Hebrew phrase asserting that this vision of the future is ordained as part of the messianic future.

Other Malayalam songs in this book might also be classified as devotional because of their content or partial content. Notable among these are the blessing songs to be sung at the festive table (songs 17–24), placed in the “special occasions” category of section II because they were traditionally performed and enjoyed during the cycle of weddings or other special occasions. Many of the biblical narratives in section III also include verses of praise or petition addressed to God.

The practice of “borrowing” both melodies and content from the Kerala Hebrew repertoire is highlighted in this section, illustrating the women singers’ familiarity with the music of the synagogue and of all Jewish ritual occasions.