

## Come Life, Shaker Life

**Verse 1 & 3**

Come, life, Sha-ker life! Come, life e - ter - nal! Shake, shake out of me  
Come, life, Sha-ker life! Come, life e - ter - nal! Shake, shake out of me

**Verse 2**

All that is car - nal. I'll take nim- ble steps, I'll be a Da - vid,  
All that is car - nal.

*DC. al Fine*

I'll show Mic-hal twice how he be-hav - ed.

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| <p>1. Come, life, Shaker life!<br/>Come, life eternal!<br/>Shake, shake out of me<br/>All that is carnal.</p> | <p>2. I'll take nimble steps.<br/>I'll be a David.<br/>I'll show Michal twice<br/>How he behav-ed.</p> | <p>3. Come, life, Shaker life!<br/>Come, life eternal!<br/>Shake, shake out of me<br/>All that is carnal.</p> |
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"Come Life, Shaker Life" is a dance song was written by Elder Issachar Bates in 1835, shortly after his return to the Lebanon, New York Shaker community after many years in the Western Shaker communities of Kentucky, Ohio and Indiana.

The reference is to a scriptural passage often used by the Shakers to justify their dancing practices, in 2 Samuel 6:1 4-1 6, in which David dances before the Ark, to the disapproval of Michal, the daughter of King Saul.

This song is one of several Quick Dances of the Shakers. In these dances, the singers stood along the side walls of the meeting hall and the dancers formed two circles, the men on their side of the meeting hall and the women on theirs. During the first half of the song, the men skipped or danced counterclockwise around their circle and the women did the same clockwise in their circle. During the second half of the song, each group faced the singers on their side of the room and stepped or shuffled in place. The texts of the Quick Dance songs typically exhorted the worshippers to wake up, to dance, to be alive. They were considered particularly appropriate toward the end of the meeting, when, in the words of one participant, the people would dance "each like a living spark, as David danced before the Ark".

I followed Alan Lomax's practice and supplied chords even though Shaker singing was always unaccompanied.

It is included in the **Roud Folk Song Index** as #6669.

It was printed in Lomax's **The Folk Songs of North America** (1960), Cook's **Shaker Music: A Manifestation of American Folk Culture** (1973) and Andrews' **The Gift to be Simple: Songs, Dances and Rituals of the American Shakers** (1940).

It was recorded by Sister R. Mildred Barker on **Early Shaker Spirituals** (1977) and Malcom Dalglish on **A Winter's Solstice II** (1988).