

Count Your Blessings
Torah Study for Parashat *Eikev*
July 31, 2021 / 23 Av 5781

Source Sheet by Rabbi Nicole Auerbach based on a sheet by Maharat Dasi Fruchter

1. **Deuteronomy 8:10**

(10) When you have eaten your fill, give thanks to Adonai your God for the good land which Adonai has given you.

א. דברים ח'י'

(י) וְאָכַלְתָּ וְשָׂבַעְתָּ וּבֵרַכְתָּ אֶת־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ עַל־הָאָרֶץ הַטֹּבָה אֲשֶׁר נָתַן־לְךָ:

2. **Ramban on Deuteronomy 8:10:1**

...as it is written, "and thou shalt eat and be satisfied, and bless"--because you will remember the slavery of *mitzrayim* and the difficulties of the *midbar*, and when you eat and are satisfied in a Good Land you will Bless Hashem's name.

ב. רמב"ן על דברים ח'י'א'

(א) ואמר ואכלת ושבעת וברכת - כי תזכור עבודת מצרים ועינוי המדבר, וכאשר תאכל ותשבע בארץ הטובה תברך עליה את השם.

3.

TB Mashechet Brachot 35a

Berakhot 35a

Rabbi Levi contrasted two verses. One states, "The world and all that is contained within it belongs to God." Another verse says, "The heavens belong to God, but the earth He gave to man." He resolved the contradiction by stating that one verse refers to the status of the world *before* reciting a Bracha and the other to after its recitation.

Said Rabbi Chanina Bar Pappa: When someone derives enjoyment from this world without a Bracha, **it is tantamount to stealing from God...**

ג. ברכות ל"ה א

רבי לוי רמי כתיב: "לה" הארץ ומלואה" וכתוב "השמים שמים לה" והארץ נתן לבני אדם. "לא קשיא! כאן קודם ברכה כאן לאחר ברכה..."

אמר רבי חנינא בר פפא כל הנהנה מן העולם הזה בלא ברכה כאילו גזול להקב"ה...

4. **Menachot 43b**

It was taught in a baraita, Rabbi Meir used to say: A Person must bless one hundred blessings every day, as it says (Deuteronomy 10:12): "Now Israel what (mah) does God as of you" - don't read "mah" rather "meah".

ד. **מנחות מ"ג ב**

תניא היה ר' מאיר אומר: חייב אדם לברך מאה ברכות בכל יום שנאמר (דברים י"ב) ועתה ישראל מה ה' אלהיך שואל מעמך

5. **Berakhot 35a**

MISHNA: This mishna discusses the blessings recited over various foods. **How does one recite a blessing over fruits?** Over different **fruits** that grow on a **tree one recites: Who creates fruit of the tree, with the exception of wine.** Although wine is produced from fruit of the tree, due to its significance, its blessing differs from other fruits of the tree. **Over wine one recites: Who creates fruit of the vine.** Over **fruits** that grow from **the earth, one recites: Who creates fruit of the ground, with the exception of bread.** Bread, too, is significant and its blessing differs from other fruits of the ground, **as over bread one recites: Who brings forth bread from the earth.** Over **herbs and leafy vegetables one recites: Who creates fruit of the ground.** **Rabbi Yehuda says** that there is room to distinguish between fruits that grow from the earth, herbs, and leafy vegetables. Although they are all fruit of the ground, since they have different qualities, the blessing on the latter is: **Who creates various kinds of herbs.**

ה. **ברכות ל"ה א**

מתני' פיצד מבְּרַכִּין על הפירות? על פירות האילן הוא אומר: "בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הָעֵץ", חוץ מן היין, שְׁעַל היין הוא אומר: "בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגֶּפֶן". ועל פירות הארץ הוא אומר: "בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הָאֲדָמָה", חוץ מן הפת, שְׁעַל הפת הוא אומר: "הַמּוֹצֵיא לֶחֶם מִן הָאָרֶץ". ועל הירקות הוא אומר: "בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הָאֲדָמָה". רבי יהודה אומר: "בּוֹרֵא מִיְּנֵי דְשָׂאִים".

6. **Mishnah Berakhot 9:1-5**

(1) One that sees a place where miracles were done for Israel should say, "Blessed [is the One] who did miracles for our ancestors in this place."
[If one sees] a place that had idol worship uprooted from it, say, "Blessed [is the One] who uprooted idol worship from our land."
(2) On comets, and on earthquakes, and on lightning and on thunder, and on storms

ו. **משנה ברכות ט'א-ה'**

(א) הרואה מקום שנעשו בו נסים לישראל, אומר ברוך שעשה נסים לאבותינו במקום הזה.
מקום שנעקרה ממנו עבודה זרה, אומר ברוך שעקר עבודה זרה מארצנו.
(ב) על הזיקין, ועל הזועות, ועל הברקים, ועל הרעמים, ועל הרוחות,

say, "Blessed [be the One] whose strength and might fill the world." On mountains, and on hills, and on seas, and on rivers, and on deserts say, "Blessed [is the One] who makes the works of the beginning (*bereshit*)." R' Yehuda says, "One who sees the great sea says, 'Blessed [is the One] who made the great sea,' only if he sees it occasionally."

On rain and on good news say, "Blessed is the One who is good and does good."

And on bad news say, "Blessed [are You] the true judge."

(3) When one builds a new house, and acquires new vessels, they say, "Blessed [is the One] that kept us alive [and sustained us and brought us to this time]."

אומר ברוך שכחו וגבורתו מלא עולם.
על ההרים, ועל הגבעות, ועל הימים,
ועל הנהרות, ועל המדברות,
אומר ברוך עושה מעשה בראשית.
רבי יהודה אומר, הרואה את הים
הגדול
אומר ברוך שעשה את הים הגדול,
בזמן שרואה אותו לפרקים.
על הגשמים ועל הבשורות הטובות
אומר ברוך הטוב והמטיב,
ועל שמועות רעות אומר ברוך דין
האמת.

(ג) בנה בית חדש, וקנה כלים חדשים,
אומר ברוך שהחינו.

7. **Abraham Joshua Heschel, God In Search of Man, p.49**

The sense for the "miracles which are daily with us," the sense for the "continual marvels," is the source of prayer. There is no worship, no music, no love, if we take for granted the blessings or defeats of living. No routine of the social, physical, or physiological order must dull our sense of surprise at the fact that there is a social, a physical, or a physiological order. We are trained in maintaining our sense of wonder by uttering a prayer before the enjoyment of food. Each time we are about to drink a glass of water, we remind ourselves of the eternal mystery of creation, "Blessed be Thou...by Whose word all things come into being." A trivial act and a reference to the supreme miracle. Wishing to eat bread or fruit, to enjoy a pleasant fragrance or a cup of wine; on tasting fruit in season for the first time; on seeing a rainbow, or the ocean; or noticing trees when they blossom; on meeting a sage in Torah or in secular learning; on hearing good or bad tidings – we are taught to invoke His great name and our awareness of Him. Even on performing a physiological function we say "Blessed be Thou...who healest all flesh and doest wonders."

This is one of the goals of the Jewish way of living: to experience commonplace deeds as spiritual adventures, to feel the hidden love and wisdom in all things.

8. **R' Samson Raphael Hirsch, Deut. 8:10**

A Bracha said before partaking of any pleasure expresses the resolution that we will employ any renewed vital energy gained from this pleasure, to serve God's purposes. Only if we make this resolution will we become worthy of enjoying that pleasure.

הברכה הנאמרת קודם האכילה
מבטאת את קבלת ההתחייבות
שתוספת הכח שנזכה בה ע"
האכילה תנוצל לעבודת ה', ורק בזכות
ההתחייבות זה נהיה ראויים לאכילה.

9. **Mishneh Torah, Blessings 1:6**
All the blessings may be recited in any language, provided one recites [a translation of] the text ordained by the Sages. [A person who] changes that text fulfills his obligation nonetheless - since he mentioned God's name, His sovereignty, and the subject of the blessing - although he did so in an ordinary language.

ט. משנה תורה, הלכות ברכות א'ו'
(ו) וכל הברכות כולן נאמרין בכל לשון
והוא שיאמר כעין שתקנו חכמים ואם
שינה את המטבע הואיל והזכיר אזכרה
ומלכות וענין הברכה אפילו בלשון חול
יצא.

10. **Rabbi Jill Jacobs, Blessings and Prayers on Social Justice**

Given the wide range of blessings included in the Jewish liturgy, we might be surprised that there are no blessings for performing ethical commandments, such as giving *tzedakah*, freeing hostages, or feeding the hungry. There are a few traditional explanations for this absence. First, poverty is understood to involve degradation. Since blessings are meant to celebrate the positive, there is a disinclination to recite blessings over degradation. Second, we generally say blessings over actions that we intend to complete immediately. Once we have lit Shabbat candles and recited the appropriate blessing, we have completed the *mitzvah* of lighting candles. We say a blessing over eating matzah on Passover and immediately fulfill the *mitzvah* of eating matzah. But we almost never discharge our obligations in regard to ethical *mitzvot*. No matter how much *tzedakah* we give, we will probably never succeed in fulfilling the obligation to provide for all of the needs of the poor. Even if we feed the hungry this week, we have not solved the problem of hunger.

Rabbi David ben R. Yosef Aboudraham, a fourteenth-century Spanish liturgical scholar, offers one additional reason for not saying blessings before giving *tzedakah*. The poor person, he writes, has the option to accept or to reject the gift. Reciting a blessing indicates an assumption that the action will be completed. Since the recipient may reject the offered assistance, a person who gives *tzedakah* can never be sure that he or she will, in fact, complete the deed. This explanation acknowledges the agency of the poor in the practice of *tzedakah*....

