

## בְּרִכּוֹת הַשַּׁחַר

*We rise.*

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,  
אֲשֶׁר נָתַן לְשִׁכְוֵי בֵינָה לְהַבְחִין בֵּין יוֹם וּבֵין לַיְלָה.  
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שְׁעָשִׂנִי בְּצַלְמוֹ.  
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,  
שְׁעָשִׂנִי בְּנוֹ אֶבֶת חוֹרִין.  
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שְׁעָשִׂנִי יִשְׂרָאֵל.  
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, פּוֹקֵחַ עֵוְרִים.  
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, מְלַבֵּישׁ עֲרֻמִּים.

**BLESSINGS FOR A NEW DAY** בְּרִכּוֹת הַשַּׁחַר. As reported in the Babylonian Talmud, most of the *b'rakhot* in this collection were originally recited at home as one went through the daily acts of waking and rising (Berakhot 60b). Each passage extols God as we begin the day: on arising from sleep, on hearing the birds sing, on dressing, on taking one's first steps, and so on. Maimonides stated: "These *b'rakhot* are without a prescribed order; each is to be recited only on the appropriate occasion... and not as part of the synagogue service" (Mishneh Torah,

Hilkhot Tefillah 7:7, 9). Other authorities, however, beginning with the siddur of Rav Amram Gaon in the 9th century, recommended the public recitation of these *b'rakhot*. This has been the standard Ashkenazic practice to this day; the common Sephardic practice is to recite these *b'rakhot* privately and to begin the service with the morning psalms.

**BARUKH** בְּרוּךְ. Many commentators argue that the word *barukh* is not a passive verb meaning "blessed," but rather an adjective descriptive of God: God is the wellspring of all blessings. (The similar-sounding Hebrew word *b'reikhah* means "pool of water.") Thus the opening words of a *b'rakhah* are an acknowledgment that God is the source of all blessings (Meir ibn Gabbai).

**WHO ENABLES THE BIRD TO DISTINGUISH** אֲשֶׁר נָתַן לְשִׁכְוֵי בֵינָה. We are a part of the natural world, responding to the morning sunlight as does all of nature. This first blessing attributes understanding to the animal realm and points to humans taking instruction from them.

The language is taken from the Book of Job (38:36), where God responds to Job out of the whirlwind, saying: "Who placed wisdom in the most hidden places? Who gave understanding to the bird? Who is wise enough to describe the heavens?" The word used for bird is *sekhvi*, and the Babylonian Talmud identifies it as a rooster (Rosh Hashanah 26a).

**WHO MADE ME IN THE DIVINE IMAGE** שְׁעָשִׂנִי בְּצַלְמוֹ. This blessing and the next one ("who made me free") are versions of blessings mentioned in the Tosefta (Berakhot 6:18) and in the Babylonian Talmud (Menaḥot 43b). They have been emended in Conservative prayerbooks on the basis of manuscript fragments, found in the Cairo Genizah.

**WHO MADE ME A JEW** שְׁעָשִׂנִי יִשְׂרָאֵל. This positive formulation is the wording in the Babylonian Talmud (Menaḥot 43b).

**WHO GIVES SIGHT TO THE BLIND** פּוֹקֵחַ עֵוְרִים. Said when opening the eyes. Many of these blessings are taken from the psalmist's descriptions of God's actions: "... sets prisoners free ... restores sight to the blind ... makes those who are bent stand straight ..." (Psalm 146:7–8).

**WHO CLOTHES THE NAKED** מְלַבֵּישׁ עֲרֻמִּים. God's clothing of Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:21) was an act of kindness exhibited to these first humans, even as they were exiled from the Garden.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, מַתִּיר אֲסוּרִים.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, זוֹקֵף כְּפוּפִים.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,  
רוֹקֵעַ הָאָרֶץ עַל הַמַּיִם.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,  
הַמְּכִיֵן מִצְעָדֵי גָבֵר.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,  
שׁוֹעֵשָׂה לִי כָל-צָרָפִי.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,  
אוֹזֵר יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּגִבּוֹרָה.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,  
עוֹטֵר יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּתַפְאָרָה.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,  
הַנוֹתֵן לַיַּעַף כֹּחַ.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,  
הַמְּעַבִּיר שָׁנָה מֵעֵינֵי וּתְנוּמָה מֵעַפְעָפִי.

וַיְהִי רָצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ, יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ  
[וְאֲמוֹתֵינוּ], שְׁתַּרְגִּילֵנוּ בְּתוֹרָתְךָ, וְדַבְּקֵנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתֶיךָ,  
וְאֵל תְּבִיאֵנוּ לֹא לַיַּדִּי חַטָּא, וְלֹא לַיַּדִּי עֲבָרָה וְעוֹן, וְלֹא  
לַיַּדִּי נִסְיוֹן, וְלֹא לַיַּדִּי בְּזִיוֹן, וְאֵל תִּשְׁלַטְּבֵנוּ יֵצֵר הָרַע,  
וְהִרְחִיקֵנוּ מֵאָדָם רָע וּמַחְבֵּר רָע. וְדַבְּקֵנוּ בְּיֵצֵר הַטוֹב  
וּבְמַעֲשֵׂים טוֹבִים, וְכוּף אֶת-יֵצֵרֵנוּ לְהִשְׁתַּעֲבֹד-לָךְ.  
◀ וְתַנְּנֵנוּ הַיּוֹם, וּבְכַל-יּוֹם, לְחֵן וּלְחַסֵּד וּלְרַחֲמִים בְּעֵינֶיךָ,  
וּבְעֵינֵי כָל-רוּאֵינוּ, וְתַגְּמַלְנוּ חֲסָדִים טוֹבִים.  
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה, גּוֹמֵל חֲסָדִים טוֹבִים לְעַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל.

**WHO RELEASES THE BOUND**  
מתיר אסורים. Releasing the fetters of wickedness, freeing the oppressed, feeding the hungry, and providing for the homeless are mentioned by the prophet Isaiah as acts that God desires of human beings (58:6).

**WHO STRAIGHTENS THOSE WHO ARE BENT**  
זוקף כפופים. Literally, "making those who are bowed down stand upright." This phrase, as found in Psalm 146:8, is the biblical warrant for standing up straight when God's name is pronounced, after having bowed at the beginning of a blessing.

**WHO STRETCHES OUT THE EARTH OVER THE WATERS**  
רוקע הארץ על המים. Psalm 136:6. Genesis depicts dry land being formed from the splitting of the primal waters.

**MAY IT BE YOUR WILL**  
ויהי רצון. A prayer recorded in the Babylonian Talmud (Berakhot 60b).

**TRIALS**  
נסיון. The trials of life are many: confronting personal illness or tragic situations, difficult ethical dilemmas, temptations that may endanger us. In addition, because faith is often accompanied by doubt, and even the strongest faith may be vulnerable in trying times, we hope that today will affirm rather than challenge our faith.

**INCLINATION TO EVIL**  
יצר הרע. The ancient rabbis

believed that we are subject to impulses that lead us to do good or evil. For instance, competitiveness can spur us to exert greater energy but it can also lead to hurtful behavior. The yearning for fame and the approbation of others can influence us to perform acts of kindness and to exercise leadership roles, but it can also produce egos that are never satisfied. We yearn to do good, but we are often impeded by our jealousies, our self-concern, and our desire for mastery and conquest.

הַלְלוּ יְהוָה,  
הַלְלוּ אֵל בְּקֹדֶשׁוֹ, הַלְלוּהוּ בְּרִקיעַ עֶזְרוֹ.  
הַלְלוּהוּ בַּגְּבוּרֹתָיו, הַלְלוּהוּ בְּרֹב גְּדֻלוֹ.  
הַלְלוּהוּ בְּתִקְעַ שׁוֹפָר, הַלְלוּהוּ בַּנְּבֵל וּכְנֹר.  
הַלְלוּהוּ בְּתוֹף וּמְחֹל, הַלְלוּהוּ בַּמְנִים וְעֶגְב.  
הַלְלוּהוּ בְּצִלְצְלֵי שְׁמַע, הַלְלוּהוּ בְּצִלְצְלֵי תְרוּעָה.  
◀ כֹּל הַנְּשָׁמָה תְהַלֵּל יְהוָה, הַלְלוּ יְהוָה.  
כֹּל הַנְּשָׁמָה תְהַלֵּל יְהוָה, הַלְלוּ יְהוָה.

תהלים קג

בְּרוּךְ יְהוָה לְעוֹלָם, אָמֵן וְאָמֵן.  
בְּרוּךְ יְהוָה מְצִיּוֹן, שֶׁכֵּן יְרוּשָׁלַיִם, הַלְלוּ יְהוָה.  
בְּרוּךְ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, עֲשֵׂה נִפְלְאוֹת לְבָדוֹ.  
◀ וּבְרוּךְ שֵׁם כְּבוֹדוֹ לְעוֹלָם,  
וַיְמַלֵּא כְבוֹדוֹ אֶת־כָּל הָאָרֶץ,  
אָמֵן וְאָמֵן.

*Some congregations continue with נְשַׁמַּת, page 145.*

**PSALM 150.** This psalm brings the Book of Psalms to an exultant close. The Book of Psalms begins with the praise of the single righteous individual, “Blessed is the one who does not walk in the way of the wicked” (Psalm 1:1), and concludes with every living being praising God.

**BLESS ADONAI, ALWAYS** בְּרוּךְ יְהוָה לְעוֹלָם. The Book of Psalms is composed of five smaller “books”; each of the first four conclude with a blessing. Two of those blessings, Psalms 89:53 and 72:18–19, are quoted here, to conclude the morning recitation of the Davidic psalms. Between these two, another verse (Psalm 135:21) is added, specifying that Adonai is the God of Israel—much like a letter’s address on an envelope. The selected verses all begin with the word *barukh*, “blessed.”

Thus, just as we began P’sukei D’zimra with a multiple repetition of “blessed” in Barukh She-amar (page 122), so too, here, we repeat that word with multiple verses. The oldest versions of P’sukei D’zimra ended here, and so the opening and closing verses of this paragraph form a conclusion by repeating the affirmative response, “Amen.”

אַהֲבָה רַבָּה אֶהְבֵּתֵנוּ, יְהוּה אֱלֹהֵינוּ,  
 חֻמְלָה גְדוֹלָה וַיִּתְּרָה חֻמְלַת עָלֵינוּ.  
 אָבִינוּ מַלְכֵנוּ, בְּעִבּוּר אַבוּתֵינוּ [וְאַמוּתֵינוּ]  
 שִׁבְטָחוּ בָךְ וַתִּלְמַדְם חֻקֵי חַיִּים,  
 בֵּן תִּחַנְּנוּ וַתִּלְמַדְנוּ.  
 אָבִינוּ, הָאֵב הַרְחֵמֵנוּ, הַמְּרַחֵם,  
 רַחֵם עָלֵינוּ וְתֵן בְּלַבְּנוּ לְהִבִּין וּלְהַשְׁכִּיל,  
 לְשִׁמְעַ, לְלַמֵּד וּלְלַמְּדָה, לְשָׁמֵר וּלְעֲשׂוֹת  
 וּלְקַיֵּם אֶת־כָּל־דְּבָרֵי תִלְמוּד תּוֹרָתְךָ בְּאַהֲבָה.

וְהָאֵר עֵינֵינוּ בְּתוֹרָתְךָ,  
 וְדַבֵּק לַבְּנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתֶיךָ,  
 וַיַּחַד לְבַבְנוּ לְאַהֲבָה וּלְיִרְאָה אֶת־שְׁמֶךָ,  
 וְלֹא נִבּוֹשׁ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד.  
 כִּי בְשֵׁם קִדְשְׁךָ הַגָּדוֹל וְהַנּוֹרָא בְּטַחְנוּ,  
 נִגְיִלָה וְנִשְׁמַחָה בִּישׁוּעָתְךָ.

*Some gather their tzitzit before reciting this line:*

◀ וְהִבִּיאֵנוּ לְשִׁלּוּם מֵאַרְבַּע כַּנְּפוֹת הָאָרֶץ,  
 וְתוֹלִיכֵנוּ קוּמְמִיּוֹת לְאַרְצֵנוּ,  
 כִּי אֵל פּוֹעֵל יְשׁוּעוֹת אֲתָהּ,  
 וּבְנוּ בַחֲרָתְךָ מִכָּל־עַם וּלְשׁוֹן,  
 וְקִרְבַּתְנוּ לְשִׁמְךָ הַגָּדוֹל סֵלָה בְּאַמֶּת,  
 לְהוֹדוֹת לָךְ וּלְיַחְדְּךָ בְּאַהֲבָה.  
 בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוּה, הַבּוֹחֵר בְּעַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּאַהֲבָה.

**YOU HAVE LOVED US DEEPLY** אַהֲבָה רַבָּה. The Hebrew root *alef-hei-vet*, meaning “love,” appears six times in this passage (both as the noun and a verb). Reuven Hammer points out that three of them speak of our love for God and three speak of God’s love for us. While reciting this *b'rakhah*, the worshipper can anticipate the seventh occurrence, which is found in the first paragraph of the Sh’ma: “You shall love Adonai your God.”

**AVINU MALKEINU** אָבִינוּ מַלְכֵנוּ. Literally, “our father, our king.” The pairing of the two words emphasizes that God is at once both intimate as a close relation and distant as a monarch. The word *av*, “father,” suggests the image of God as source or progenitor, and therefore it may also be translated as “creator.”

**LAWS OF LIFE** חֻקֵי חַיִּים. The word “Torah” encompasses many different meanings. In its most limited usage, it refers to the Five Books of Moses. But in a larger sense it refers to all of Scripture, and even to all of later Jewish teaching. Thus, the rabbis of the Talmud spoke

of the “Written Torah” and the “Oral Torah,” the latter referring to the teachings of the Midrash, Mishnah, and Talmud—and even to “whatever new teaching a student of wisdom might impart until the end of time” (Leviticus Rabbah 22:1). In this prayer, “Torah” embraces the widest meaning: the laws of life—all those teachings that instruct us concerning a full ethical and religious life.

**TO UNDERSTAND AND DISCERN . . . OBSERVE, FULFILL, AND PERFORM** לְהִבִּין וּלְהַשְׁכִּיל . . . לְשָׁמֵר וּלְעֲשׂוֹת וּלְקַיֵּם. This sequence implies that study is intimately linked with action—indeed, that study should lead to action.

**GATHERING THE TZITZIT.** Many observe the custom, originating in the late Middle Ages, of gathering the four *tzitziyot* (plural of *tzitzit*) of the *tallit* while reciting the words “bring us safely from the four corners of the earth,” thus symbolizing Israel’s unity and ingathering. The *tzitziyot* are then held through the third paragraph of the Sh’ma, and kissed when reciting the word *tzitzit* (which appears three times in that paragraph). By this practice, we indicate that we are lovingly undertaking to observe these words of Torah, and we hope that our commitment to strive for holiness will lead to greater unity. We are also gathering within us all our positive intentions.