

Whoever repeats a
thing in the name
of the one who
said it brings
redemption unto
the world. – Pirkei
Avot 6:6

Iris Odani Elyashiv

**“The Torah that Moshe commanded us
is the heritage of the congregation of Yaakov”**

“And you shall speak them” – Devarim 6:7

Our rabbis explain that “them” in this phrase refers to “that which you are allowed to speak, specifically, the written Torah and the oral Torah because their words are everlasting” (Yomah 19:72).

Our rabbis derive this from the word “bam,” the Hebrew word for “them.” “Bam” (בם) in Hebrew is spelled with two letters: Bet (ב) and Mem (ם or מ).
The written Torah begins with the letter Bet: “...בראשית ברא אלקים...” (Bereishit 1:1)
The oral Torah begins with the letter Mem: “מאימתי קורין את שמע בערבית?”
(Berachot 1:71).

It is written in Pirkei Avot 1:17: “Not study, but practice is the main thing.”

In Bava Kamah 17 it is written: “Great is the study of Torah that leads to an action”

In Judaism, three verses were established that became the fundamentals for thousands of important halachot required of the Jewish people:

1. “I have placed Hashem before me constantly” – Tehillim 16:8
This verse expresses faith in the Creator, that “all the land is filled with His honor” and there is no hiding from His devoted supervision on His world and His creations.
2. “Prepare yourself to meet your G-d, Israel” – Amos 4:12
This verse expresses the commitment of a Jew to always stand ready to fulfill his task, day in and day out.
3. “Know Him in all your ways” – Mishlei 3:6
Judaism does not allow an empty life at all, but it commands sanctification of G-d’s name even in physical matters: eating, drinking, waking up, taking care of your needs, etc.

* The written Torah is made up of three books: Torah, Neviim, and Ketuvim. It is collectively called Tanach.

* The oral Torah is made up of many books, some of which include: The Six Books of the Mishnah, Talmud Yerushalmi (Gemarah), Talmud Bavli (also Gemarah), Medrashim, Shulchan Aruch (which is comprised of four sections: Orech Chaim, Yorah Deyah, Even HaEzer, and Choshen Mishpat), Mishneh Torah, etc.

Torah Commandments (known in Hebrew as Mitzvot DeOreitah):

248 positive commandments (“thou shalt...”) like the 248 organs in the human body +
365 negative commandments (“thou shalt not...”) like the 365 tendons in the human
body = 613 commandments in total

Positive Commandments That are Time Bound (Mitzvot Aseh ShehaZman Gramah):

Commandments that are dependent on a certain time like shofar, succah, lulav, and etc.
that we fulfill only during set times.

Rabbinical Commandments (Mitzvot Derabanan):

1. Mitzvot Hanehenin – Commandments that one takes pleasure from (like smelling a good herb, etc)
2. Netilat Yadaim – Washing one’s hands (before a meal, after one wakes up, etc)
3. L’Hadlik Ner Shabbat – Lighting candles for the Sabbath
4. Eruvin – Rabbinical laws that apply to the act of carrying on the Sabbath (An example: many rabbis say that if there is an “eruv” in the neighborhood, then one is allowed to carry within the boundaries of that “eruv,” etc.)
5. Kriyat Hallel – Recitation of Hallel (Praises that are said on certain holidays/occasions)
6. Ner Chanukah – Lighting the Hanukah candles
7. Kriyat Megilah – Reading the Megilah on certain holidays (like Megilat Esther on Purim, Megilat Kohelet on Succot, etc.)

The Seven Commandments for the Sons of Noah (Shevah Mitzvot Bnei Noach):

1. Ever Min HaChai – a limb that was cut or torn from a live animal when it was still alive is not allowed to be eaten
2. Birkat Hashem – Do not curse the name of G-d
3. Gezel – Do not steal
4. Dinin – Erect courthouses
5. Gilui Arayot – Do not engage in immoral behavior (incest, etc)
6. Shfichut Damim – Do not kill
7. Avodah Zarah – Do not worship strange gods

The Three Commandments that a Jew must die for instead of transgressing (YeHareg Ve'al Ya'avor):

1. Gilui Arayot – engaging in licentious behavior (like incest, etc.)
2. Shfichut Damim – killing a person
3. Avodah Zarah – worshipping strange gods

Morning Blessings

A person who wakes up in the morning is indebted to his Creator and begins the course of his day with the words:

“I gratefully thank you, O living and eternal King, for You have returned my soul within me with compassion – abundant is your faithfulness!”

The first thing that is done after saying these words is –
Netilat Yadaim (Washing of the hands):

The source of “netilah” comes the Aramaic word “Natlah” which means vessel. The act of Netilat Yadaim must be done with a vessel filled with clean water. With this water, we wash each hand three times very well, alternating from the right hand to the left hand each time. We take the vessel (usually a special cup with handles) in the right hand, transfer it to the left hand to wash the right hand first, then transfer it back to right hand to wash the left hand, and so on until each hand is washed three times.

The significance:

1. Our rabbis say that the hands of a person are always busy and it is likely that they touched something dirty while the person was sleeping
2. There is a law that sleep is almost like death and so one must purify oneself after sleeping since it was as if he was dead
3. Every morning, man is considered a new creation reporting to serve the Creator: and like the Kohen (high priest), who would wash his hands in a special sink before he would enter the Beit Hamikdash (the Holy Temple) to perform holy tasks to serve G-d, so to our first act is to wash our hands as an expression of our entering into service of G-d.

* Our rabbis say that before doing Netilat Yadaim, one is prohibited from touching himself and from getting dressed. One is also prohibited from walking more than a couple of feet without having washed his hands.

The Blessing of “Asher Yatzar” is required to be said not only in the framework of the morning blessings, but also throughout the course of the day – after a person uses the bathroom and takes care of his bodily needs

Elokai Neshama is a blessing for the soul that was given to the body so they can coexist. “My G-d, the soul You placed within me is pure. You created it, You fashioned it, You breathed it into me, You safeguard it within me, and eventually you will take it from me, and restore it to me in Time to Come. As long as the soul is within me, I gratefully thank You, Hashem, my G-d and the G-d of my forefathers. Master of all works, Lord of all souls. Blessed are you, Hashem, who restores souls to dead bodies.”

After the morning blessings, there are three blessings dedicated to the giving of the Torah:

1. “Blessed are you Hashem, our G-d, King of the universe, Who has sanctified us with His commandments and has commanded us to engross ourselves in the words of Torah.”
2. “Please, Hashem, sweeten the words of Your Torah in our mouths and in the mouth of Your people, the House of Israel...”
3. “Blessed are you, Hashem, our G-d, King of the universe, Who has selected us from all the nations and gave us His Torah. Blessed are you, Hashem, Giver of the Torah.”

Birkat HaKohanim (Blessing of the High Priests) “May Hashem bless you...May Hashem illuminate His countenance for you...May Hashem turn his countenance to you...”

The morning process is set up until this point.

There are three types of blessings that are required in Judaism: Blessings for commandments, blessings for things that involve material pleasures, and blessings for praise and gratitude.

Blessings recited before one fulfills a commandment:

Recognition of thankfulness to G-d that He chose us, the Jewish nation, out of all the other nations and that He allowed us to have a spiritual side through the commandments of the Torah. In these types of blessings, the phrase “Who has sanctified us with His commandments and has commanded us to...” is standard.

Blessings recited before enjoying a material pleasure:

These are a gift of praise and gratitude for G-d, Who gave us from His goodness, and Who bestowed upon us great abundance. These blessings are recited for physical things, such as “Blessed is Hashem Who brings forth bread from the earth,” and for spiritual things, such as “Who has selected us from all the nations and gave us His Torah.”

Blessings recited at special times and events (usually involve praise):

Includes the blessings of praise and requests that the rabbis wrote, even if they have no pleasurable aspect and have nothing to do with fulfilling a commandment, like “Blessed are You, Hashem, the King who is praised with praises.”

The Three Mitzvot of Channah (חנ"ה)

“Rabbi Chalavo said: A man should always be careful about honoring his wife because only on account of his wife does blessing does come unto his house, like it says ‘and [Pharaoh] benefited Abraham for [Sarah’s] sake’ (Bereishit 12:16). And thus Raba said to the townspeople of Machuza: ‘Honor your wives so that you may become rich...’ (Bava Metzia 59a).

Every woman is required to keep and observe the following three commandments: Challah, Nidah, and Hadlakat Nerot, abbreviated as Channah by taking the first letter of each word in Hebrew (חַלָּה, נִידָה, הַדְּלָקַת נְרוֹת → חנ"ה).

All three are Torah commandments.

- Nidah: “when a woman is menstruating...” – Vayikrah 15:25
- Challah: “from the first portion of your dough...” – Bamidbar 15:20
- Hadlakat Nerot: “and you call the Sabbath a delight [this refers to the lighting of the candles before Sabbath]...” – Yeshayahu 58:13
-
- “Why were women commanded these specific mitzvot? G-d said ‘Adam was the first of mankind and he was commanded regarding the Tree of Knowledge. And it says with Chava (Eve) “the woman saw that the tree was good...and she gave also to her husband and he ate” (Bereishit 3:6), and she caused Adam to die and spilled his blood. It says in the Torah ‘Whoever sheds the blood of man, through man shall his blood be shed’ (Bereishit 9:6) so the menstrual cycle (and with it the commandment of Nidah) came about to atone for the blood of Adam that Chava spilled.
- How did the commandment of Challah come about? Because woman contaminated the challah of the world. Rabbi Yose Ben Dusmika said just like the woman works her dough with water and she allows the challah to rise after, so did G-d do with Adam. It says in the Torah just before the verses about the creation of man: ‘And a mist ascended from the earth and watered the entire surface of the ground’ and after it says ‘And G-d formed man from the dust of the ground...’ (Bereishit 2:6-7). Thus, in essence, Adam was the challah of the world since he too was “worked” with water before being created.
- How did the commandment of Hadlakat Nerot come about? Because woman extinguished the light of man. Like it says ‘Man’s soul is G-d’s lamp’ (Mishlei 20:27). Therefore, she should observe the commandment of lighting candles” (Midrash Tanchumah 51).

“Women die in childbirth for three sins: if they were not careful with Nida, with Challah, or with Hadlakat Nerot” (Shabbat 2:6).

Meals and the Blessings Involved

“And you will eat and be sated, and you shall bless the Lord, your G-d, for the good land He has given you” – Devarim 8:10

“This is the table that is before the Lord” – Yechezkel 41:22

“Anyone who takes pleasure from this world without making a blessing first is like one who has stolen from G-d and all of Israel” – Brachot 35

Before any meal involving bread, we wash our hands and say the blessing “Al Netilat Yadaim,” (or “on the commandment of the washing of the hands” in English). After one has washed his hands, he may not talk until he has made the blessing on the bread and eaten it, an act that signifies the beginning of the meal. He is only allowed to speak for requests and orders that are necessary for the meal, like, for example, “salt,” “knife,” etc.

On the bread we say the blessing “HaMotzi Lechem Min Ha’aretz” (or “Who brings forth bread from the earth” in English), which is usually referred to as HaMotzi. The blessing of HaMotzi is the main part of the meal. Since it is an all-inclusive blessing, it exempts us from having to make many separate blessings on every component of the meal such as meat, fish, dairy products, etc.

However, things that are not eaten at the meal – various desserts, wines, nuts – each require a separate blessing in accordance with the laws of “Brachot HaNehenin” (Blessings made for things that one enjoys and gets material pleasure from).

Brachot HaNehenin

The benefits of saying these brachot can’t be evaluated (because they are so significant), and one who takes pleasure from this world without reciting a blessing is like one who has stolen from G-d. It says “The land and the fullness thereof are the Lord’s” (Tehillim 24:1) and after the blessing it says “the earth He gave to the children of men” (Tehillim 115:16). That is to say, G-d created the earth and everything in it and He provides us with the good of the land and its fruits only after there occurs a recognition on our parts that He provides us with all His goodness.

What are the “Brachot Hanehenin?” Every type of food is coupled with a blessing that suits it. Two types of foods in particular, however, merited special separate blessings because of their great importance.

- **Bread:** “and bread which sustains man’s heart” (Tehillim 104:15) we say the blessing of “HaMotzi Lechem Min Ha’aretz” (“Who brings forth bread from the earth”). This blessing is used for every type of baked good whose components are flour and water: matzoth, bread, challah, pita, rolls, etc.
- **Wine:** “and wine which cheers man’s heart” (Tehillim 104:15) we say the blessing “Boreh Pri HaGafen” (“Creator of the fruit of the vine”). This blessing applies to all types of sweet and dry wines, but it includes grape juice and champagne.

The Blessing of “Boreh Minei Mezonot”

Any type of baked good that isn't solely made out of wheat and water, but has eggs or fruit juice mixed in, or a baked good that is made out of wheat and water but was cooked somehow before it was baked, deserves the blessing of “Boreh Minei Mezonot” (or “Who Creates species of sustenance” in English).

The following foods are included in this category: cakes, wafers, crackers, various biscuits, bourekas, noodles, and also cooked rice. Likewise, any dish made with the five grains: wheat, barley, spelt, rye, and oats is included in this category.

The Blessing of “Boreh Pri Ha'adamah”

If one is to eat vegetables, or anything that grows from the ground and not on a tree, like tomatoes or potatoes, watermelon, cantaloupe, bananas, etc., he must recite the blessing of “Boreh Pri Ha'adamah” (or “Creator of the fruit of the earth” in English).

The Blessing of “Boreh Pri Ha'etz”

Anyone who is to eat a fruit that grows on a tree, whether it is one of the seven species of Israel (grapes, dates, figs, pomegranates) or any other kind of fruit, recites the blessing of “Boreh Pri Ha'etz” (or “Creator of the fruit of the tree”).

The Blessing of “Shehakol N'heeyeh Bidvaroh”

If one is to eat something that does not grow from the ground at all, such as cheese, eggs, meat, and fish, or if one is to drink fruit juice, water, or any other drink (except wine), he must recite the blessing of “Shehakol N'heeyeh Bidvaro” (or “by Whose word all things come into being” in English).

Foods like candies, chewing gum, chocolate, ice cream, ices etc. are included in this category. The blessing of “Shehakol” is also recited in cases of uncertainty: if one has a food or a drink placed before him whose blessing he is uncertain about, then he should recite the blessing of “Shehakol.” The blessing of “Shehakol” is recited to eliminate the uncertainty since, technically speaking, the blessing applies to every food and drink. If one has not studied the blessings at all, the Talmud states that one should not eat “until he goes to a Chacham [a man who is learned in Judaism] to learn the blessings.”

If it is clear that the product you have is grown from the ground, but you are unsure whether you should recite “Boreh Pri Ha'adamah” or “Boreh Pri Ha'etz” on it, don't recite the blessing of “Shehakol.” Instead, recite the blessing of “Boreh Pri Ha'adamah” on it, since even fruits that grow on trees also technically grow from the ground.

What comes first?

- “If one has a main food and a secondary food, he blesses the main food and exempts the secondary food from receiving a blessing”

For example: If one has before him a certain dish, consisting of two or more different types of food, then he must determine what the “main ingredient” of the dish is so that he may recite the blessing over that ingredient. This determination is personal, however, and it can differ for each relative diner based on his/her preference.

If various pastries that all warrant the same blessing or some fruits that all warrant the same blessing are placed before someone, and he intends to eat more than one pastry or fruit, then he need not make a separate blessing on each one he eats. He can merely recite one blessing over a single pastry (while having in mind that he intends to eat more), and then he may proceed to eat as many pastries as he likes without having to recite a separate blessing on each one. The same applies to the fruits.

Prioritizing Among the Blessings

“A land of wheat and barley, grapes and figs and pomegranates, a land of oil producing olives and honey (of dates)” – Devarim 8:8

The blessing of “Boreh Minei Mezonot” should come before the blessing of “Boreh Pri Ha’etz” because in the above verse delineating the seven species of Israel, the grains (wheat and barley, which warrant the blessing of “Mezonot”) are listed before the fruits (grapes, figs, pomegranates, etc., which warrant the blessing of “Ha’etz”).

The blessing of “Boreh Pri Ha’etz” should come before the blessing of “Boreh Pri Ha’adamah,” and the blessing of “Boreh Pri Ha’adamah” should come before the blessing of “Shehakol N’heeyeh Bidvaroh.”

When drinks are involved, the blessing of “Boreh Pri HaGafen” should come before the blessing of “Shehakol N’heeyeh Bidvaroh.”

Prioritizing Within the Blessings

If one has before him a plate of different fruits that all warrant the same blessing, and thus, he is only required to recite one blessing, then he should choose the fruit he likes best to recite the blessing over (this is the determining standard of the laws of prioritizing within blessings) while having in mind that the blessing applies to all the other fruits he intends to eat.

Another way to measure “favorites” is reliability on the seven species of Israel.

Therefore, if you have a pomegranate and an orange – both “Ha’etz” and both of which you equally like – you should recite the blessing on the pomegranate and exempt the orange from a blessing, since the pomegranate is one of the seven species.

“A land of wheat and barley, grapes and figs and pomegranates, a land of oil producing olives and honey (of dates)” – Devarim 8:8

This verse lists the seven species of plants (two types of grains and five types of fruits from trees) through which Israel is glorified: wheat, barley, grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives, and dates. These seven species are the most important fruits, as it is brought down in the Shulchan Aruch (Orech Chaim 211) “if one has before him many different fruits that all warrant the same blessing, and among the fruits are one of the seven species of Israel (for example: if one has grapes and pears, or dates and oranges) then he must bless the fruit from the seven species, even if it is not his favorite from the fruits placed before him.”

With regard to the order of blessing the fruits of the seven species, our rabbis established the following rule: “Anything that comes first in the verse (see above underlined) comes first in blessing” (Brachot 41:71). According to this rule, the Torah lists the seven species in the order of their importance (wheat is more important than barley, grapes are more important than figs and pomegranates, etc), and therefore, one should recite blessings over the fruits in this order (i.e. if one has a plate with all seven of the species, then he must first recite the blessing over the wheat and the barley, then the grapes, etc). However, since in the verse the phrase “a land of” is written twice, the importance of each of the species is established based on its proximity to the phrase “a land of.” So is this matter decided in the Shulchan Aruch (211, 4). Whatever is closer to the phrase “a land of” (whether the first one or the second one) is blessed first. Therefore, dates are blessed before grapes because dates are second from the phrase “a land of” (the second) and grapes are third from the phrase “a land of” (the first).

How should one act if he has wheat and olives or barley and dates whose respective proximities to the phrase “a land of” are the same? Here is where we rely on the rule our rabbis established of “Anything that comes first in the verse comes first in blessing” and therefore, we recite the blessing over the wheat first in the case of wheat and olives and we recite the blessing over the barley first in the case of barley and dates because they come first in the verse.

The “After Blessings”

“And you will eat and be sated, and you shall bless the Lord,
your God, for the good land He has given you” – Devarim 8:10

We learn in Masechet Brachot (35:71): it is prohibited for one to take pleasure from this world without blessing: and anyone who takes pleasure from this world without reciting a blessing first, it is as if he is enjoying the sacrifices that have been set aside especially for G-d” as it says: “the land and the fullness thereof are the Lord’s” (Tehillim 24:1).

It is a commandment from the Torah to recite a blessing after meals (especially those that entail bread. In Hebrew this blessing is called “Birchat HaMazon”), like it says: “And you will eat and you will be sated, and you shall bless the Lord, your G-d.” But the rabbis also made it mandatory to recite a blessing after every food and drink (“After Blessings”); and based on this, we learn how much more so one must recite a blessing *before* eating and drinking (“Pre Blessings,” also known as the “Brachot HaNehenin” [see above]).

In Masechet Brachot (7) it is brought down that one must recite “Birchat HaMazon” while sitting, and not while standing or walking. Tosfot explains this law: Because reciting the blessing after eating bread is a Torah commandment, they were stricter and said that one must be sitting – which is not the case with the rest of the blessings. Tosfot also suggests that the word for “and be sated” in Hebrew (“שבעת”) could be an abbreviation of two other Hebrew words: “שב” and “עת” which mean “sit” and “time,” respectively, as if the word is hinting “at the time you are reciting the blessing, you should be seated.”

Shulchan Aruch (Orech Chaim 180) says not to remove the tablecloth or the bread from the table until after reciting the blessing after the bread. Rabbi Yisrael Meir Kagan from Radin (the Chafetz Chaim), author of the “Mishna Brurah” explains the reason behind this law: so that we should be aware of all the goodness that we are blessing G-d for, Who provides food for all His creations. Also to make sure that the blessing doesn’t dwell on something empty, we leave a slice of bread on the table so that the blessing is recited on something tangible.

The Chafetz Chaim also comments that our rabbis said in Masechet Brachot (54:72) that anyone who extends his table, his days and years will be extended. The reasoning behind this, says Rashi, is that by doing so, there is a chance that poor people will be able to come and eat from his table, and thus the man will have the merit of performing the mitzvah of charity.

It is important to note that while dining, we are required to engage in Divrei Torah (discussions about the Torah) to emphasize that we are consecrating even the meal, a material necessity, and elevating it to the spiritual realm. Our rabbis say in Masechet Avot 3: “Three people who dined together but did not say Divrei Torah, it is as if they dined on the altars of the dead...” but “Three people who dined together and did say Divrei Torah, it is as if they ate at the Table of G-d, as it says ‘This is the table that is before the Lord’ (Yechezkel 41:22).”

Birchat HaMazon

Mayim Achronim (washing hands after the meal) is mandatory before reciting Birchat HaMazon, and one may not stop or do anything in between the washing of the hands and the reciting of Birchat HaMazon, even if it is to say Divrei Torah. It is also recommended that during the washing of the hands, one should say “Mayim achronim chovah” (“Washing the hands after the meal is mandatory” in English).

Three men who ate together have to make a zimun (this basically entails saying a couple of extra Hebrew phrases before beginning Birchat HaMazon). Ten men who ate together have to make a zimun in the name of G-d.

“Birchat HaMazon” is said in its entirety only after one eats bread or anything else before which he recited “HaMotzi Lechem Min Ha’aretz” – it goes without saying that one was required to do Netilat Yadaim before this kind of meal.

“The Three-Faceted Blessing” or Al HaMichyah

Anyone who eats one of the fruits of the seven species of Israel, which are: olives, dates, grapes, figs, and pomegranates, and anyone who eats cake or something made from the five grains, and he eats a KiZayit (thirty grams) within seven and half minutes, then he must recite “The Three-Faceted Blessing.” Likewise, anyone who drank a Rivi’it of wine (86 milliliters) is required to recite “The Three-Faceted Blessing.”

“The Three-Faceted Blessing” is like a summary of “Birchat HaMazon” with various components.

The blessing includes baked goods, wine, and fruits of the seven species. The body of the text is the same regardless of what you ate, but the beginning and the end are different.

If one ate a baked good
Made from the 5 grains:
(Wheat, barley, oats, rye,
and spelt)

if one drank wine

if one ate fruit of the seven species
(Grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives,
and dates)

“Al HaMichyah V’Al
Ha’KalKalah”

“Al HaGefen V’Al
Pri HaGefen”

“Al Ha’etz V’Al Pri Ha’etz”

“For the nourishment
and for the sustenance”

“For the vine and for
the fruit of the vine”

“For the tree and for the fruit of the
tree”

One should be particular over an “After Blessing” recited on fruits that were grown in the land of Israel and wine whose grapes were grown in Israel because the end of the blessing is changed according to this. If one is drinking wine from Israel then he ends the blessing “Al Ha’aretz V’Al Pri Gafnah” (“On the land and on the fruit of her vine”) and if one is eating fruits from Israel then he ends the blessing “Al Ha’aretz V’Al HaPerot” (“On the land and on the fruits”). If one is eating fruits from Israel in Israel then he ends the blessing “Al Ha’aretz V’Al Perotehah” (“On the land and on her fruits”).

“Boreh Nefashot”

After eating fruits that are not from the seven species of Israel, vegetables, or things that do not grow from the ground (like meat, fish, cheeses, etc and including drinks but excluding wine), one should recite the following:

Blessed are You, Hashem, our G-d, King of the universe Who creates numerous living things with their deficiencies; for all that You have created with which to sustain the life of every being. Blessed is He, the Life-giver of the worlds.

Someone who is to wear a new article of clothing or someone who is to eat a fruit that grows during a specific season and its supply is renewed only on a yearly basis (that is to say, if someone is to eat a fruit that he has not eaten since the previous year), he recites the blessing of “SheHechyanu V’Kiyimanu V’Higiyanu LaZman HaZeh” (“Who has granted us life, sustained us, and enabled us to reach this occasion”).

On Fragrances

Spices

“Blessed are You, Lord, our G-d, King of the universe, Who creates species of fragrance”

Herbs/Grasses/Flowers)

“Blessed are You, Lord, our G-d, King of the universe, Who creates fragrant herbage”

Shrubs/Trees/Flowers that grow on shrubs or trees

“Blessed are You, Lord, our G-d, King of the universe, Who creates fragrant trees”

Edible fruit/Nuts

“Blessed are You, Lord, our G-d, King of the universe, Who places a good aroma into fruits”

Oil from a Persimmon i.e. Perfumed Oil

“Blessed are You, Lord, our G-d, King of universe Who created perfumed oil”

Blessings Over Phenomena and Events

Upon seeing lightning, shooting stars, comets, exceptionally lofty mountains, or exceptionally large rivers recites the following blessing:

“Blessed are You, Lord, our G-d, King of universe Who makes the work of creation”

Upon Hearing Thunder

“Blessed are You, Lord, our G-d, King of universe for His strength and His power fill the universe”

Upon Seeing A Rainbow

“Blessed are You, Lord, our G-d, King of universe Who remembers the covenant, is trustworthy in His covenant, and fulfills His word” *do not stare at the rainbow for too long*

Upon Seeing An Ocean (There are those who say this includes the Mediterranean Sea but many say this refers solely to an ocean) recites the blessing “Blessed are You, Lord, our G-d, King of universe Who made the great sea”

Upon Seeing Trees that Produce Edible Produce (a minimum of two trees) In Bloom During the Hebrew Month of Nissan recites the following blessing only one time a year: “Blessed are You, Lord, our G-d, King of universe for nothing is lacking in His universe, and He created in it good creatures and good trees, to cause mankind pleasure with them”

Upon Seeing An Outstanding Torah Scholar
“Blessed are You, Lord, our G-d, King of universe, Who has apportioned His knowledge to those who fear Him”

Upon Seeing An Outstanding Secular Scholar
“Blessed are You, Lord, our G-d, King of universe Who has given of His knowledge to human beings”

Upon Seeing A Jewish King of Israel
“Blessed are You, Lord, our G-d, King of universe Who has apportioned His glory to those who fear him”

Upon Seeing a Gentile King
“Blessed are You, Lord, our G-d, King of universe Who has given of His glory to human beings”

Upon Seeing a Destroyed Synagogue
“Blessed are You, Lord, our G-d, King of universe, the true Judge”

Upon Seeing A Destroyed Synagogue That Has Been Restored to its Previous Grandeur
“Blessed are You, Lord, our G-d, King of universe Who establishes the territory of the widow”

Upon Seeing A Place Where Miracles Were Done for The Jewish People, like the Jordan River or the walls of Jericho: “Blessed are You, Lord, our G-d, King of universe Who performed a miracle for our ancestors at this place”

Upon Seeing A Place Where Miracles Were Done for Oneself, One’s mother, father, rabbi/teacher, forebears, etc: “Blessed are You, Lord, our G-d, King of the universe Who performed a miracle for me/my mother/my father/my rabbi/my teacher/my forebears at this place”

Upon Seeing Exceptionally Strange-Looking People or Animals like a dwarf, etc: “Blessed are You, Lord, our G-d, King of the universe Who makes the creatures different”

Upon Seeing A Dear Friend After Thirty Days One Recites “SheHeCheyanu,” and after twelve months, one recites:

“Blessed are You, Lord, our G-d, King of the universe, Reviver of the dead.

Upon Seeing Exceptionally Beautiful People, Trees, or Fields

“Blessed are You, Lord, our G-d, King of the universe Who has such in His universe”

Upon Visiting A Jewish Cemetery or Burial Site After Thirty Days of Absence

“Blessed are You, Lord, our G-d, King of the universe Who created you with justice, and sustained you with justice, and gave you life with justice, and He has an accurate account of every one of your actions with justice, and He will eventually return you and make you live again with justice. Blessed are You, Lord, who revives the dead

The First Time There Is Abundant Rainfall in Israel or When There is Rain After A Drought in Places Outside of Israel, one recites:

“We praise You, Lord, our G-d, for each and every drop that you have poured down on us and were our mouth as full of song as the sea, and our tongue as full of joyous song as the sea’s multitude of waves, and our lips as full of praise as the breadth of the heavens, and our eyes as brilliant as the sun and the moon, and our hands as outspread as eagles of the sky and our feet as swift as hinds - we still could not thank You sufficiently Lord, our G-d, and G-d of our forefathers, and to bless Your Name for even one of the thousands of thousands and myriad of myriads of favors that You performed for our ancestors and for us. You redeemed us from Egypt, Lord, our G-d, and liberated us from the house of bondage. In famine, You nourished us and in plenty You sustained us, from sword You saved us; from plague You let us escape; and from severe and enduring diseases You spared us. Until now Your mercy has helped us, and Your kindness has not forsaken us. Do not abandon us, Lord, our G-d, forever. Therefore, the organs that You set within us, and the spirit and soul that You breathed into our nostrils, and the tongue that You placed in our mouth - all of them shall thank and bless and praise and glorify and exalt and revere and sanctify and declare the sovereignty of your Name, our King. Blessed are You, Lord, the G-d of many thanksgivings.”

“SheHecheyanu” – “HaTov V’HaMetiv”

If one hears good news that benefits him personally, then he recites the blessing “Blessed are You, Lord, our G-d, King of the universe Who has granted us life, sustained us, and enabled us to reach this occasion.” If the good news is beneficial not just for him, but for many others as well, then he recites “Blessed are You, Lord, our G-d, King of the universe Who is good and does good” instead of “SheHecheyanu.” Who is good – to us, who does good – to others.

The blessing of “SheHecheyanu” is recited on every Jewish holiday whose dates are set on the calendar. It is also recited during special occasions, like upon wearing a new garment, upon eating a fruit that ripens during one specific season only, etc.

“Baruch Dayan HaEmet”

Our rabbis say “A man is obligated to bless the bad just as he is obligated to bless the good” (Brachot). When, G-d forbid, someone hears about the passing of a friend, a close acquaintance, or someone special like a rabbi, etc, he must recite “Blessed are You, Lord, our G-d, King of the universe, the true judge.”

In cases when the deceased is not somebody one was particularly close to, whether physically speaking (was of no relation to you, etc) or on an emotional level, then one expresses this blessing in an abbreviated version: “Blessed is the true judge” (“Baruch Dayan HaEmet” in Hebrew), without mentioning the “Lord, our G-d, King of universe” phrase that is standard in most blessings.

The blessing of “Dayan HaEmet” does not only apply in cases of death, rather it is also applicable in any shocking tragedy, G-d forbid, that stirs emotion in one’s heart: a flood, a fire, loss of property, etc, things that one should never have to experience.

Birchat HaGomel (The Blessing of Thanksgiving)

There are four people who are required to recite “Birchat HaGomel”: One who has crossed an ocean, one who has crossed a desert, one who has recovered from a serious illness, and one who has been released from prison. We find an inference towards these four people in the “SheMonah Esreh” prayer, specifically in the words “Everything **alive** will gratefully acknowledge you, Selah!” The word for alive in Hebrew is Chaim (חיים), spelled with a chet (ח), yud (י), yud(י), and mem (מ or ם). Each letter stands for one of the four people:

- ח → חולה → choleh → a sick person
- י → ים → yam → an ocean (i.e. one who has crossed an ocean)
- י → ייסורים → yisurim → troubles (i.e. one who has been in jail)
- ם or מ → מתוירבד → midbariot → deserts (i.e. one who has crossed a desert)

Essentially, what the prayer ends up saying is “All these people who make up the word “chaim” will gratefully acknowledge you, Selah!” Today, we add those who have traveled on an airplane in the category of one who has crossed an ocean. Those who have been saved from dangers like avalanches/landslides, fires, drowning, wars, car accidents, etc. fall under the category of one who has crossed a desert.

“One who has recovered from a serious illness” – the implication is that the illness was life threatening and rendered the affected person in danger for his/her life. Thus, a new mother is required to recite “Birchat HaGomel” with a minyan (a congregation of ten adult men) after she has given birth to her child.

Birchat HaGomel must be said in the presence of a minyan within three days of the incident. Preferably, the one reciting the blessing should say it in the presence of a Torah and if possible, he should receive an aliyah (called up to the Torah). However, since the blessing should not be delayed beyond three days, one may recite it even without a Torah and an aliyah if he would exceed three days otherwise.

When the blessing should be recited – After the reading of the Torah, after saying the blessing “You have given us a Torah of truth, implanting within us eternal life. Blessed are You, Lord, Giver of the Torah” one recites “Blessed are You, Lord, our G-d, King of the Universe, Who bestows kindness upon the culpable, for He has bestowed goodness to me.” Those who hear the blessing answer Amen and “May He who has bestowed beneficence upon you always bestow every beneficence upon you.”

“The Wayfarer’s/Traveler’s Prayer”

If one is traveling from city to city and on his way he leaves a populated place, then he must recite “The Traveler’s Prayer” when he is beginning to depart from the last houses of the settlement.

If one is to travel numerous times between cities throughout the course of just one day, then it is enough to recite the prayer only one that day.

There are special versions of “The Traveler’s Prayer” devised for people traveling by boat, people traveling by airplane, paratroopers, and divers.

Sources:

- “Tefilah K’Hilchato” by Yaakov Yitzchak Fuchs
- Ben Ish Chai “Halachot” Im Maftachot
- “Shulchan Aruch”
- “Yahadut Halacha L’Maaseh” (Devarim SheBaal Peh) by HaRav Yisrael Meir Lau
- “V’Ani Tefilati” by Nissan Mindel
- “Mishnah Brurah”
- “Chai Adam HaShelem” (Im Nishmat Adam)