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Jewish tradition sanctifies time with blessings and holidays, calling us to live in the present, to open our eyes, to give thanks, to be here now! This ancient — and at the same time, very modern — tradition provides the means to wake us up and remind us that it is our parental responsibility to focus our children's eyes on the wonders of life and the universe at every possible measure of time (moment to moment, day to day, week to week, month to month, year to year and generation to generation).

Some blessings and prayers are said for certain actions — like washing our hands, eating or waking up — while others are recited to honor emotions or sights. This ever-growing compilation is a great way to add blessings to your daily life and, in doing so, take a moment to pause and slow down.

After Meals

The blessing, Birkat HaMazon, is a grace after meals, means "blessings for food" in Hebrew. It is said after meals; some communities have the custom of only saying it after a meal that includes bread.

The Birkat HaMazon is made up of four blessings, giving thanks for the food, the land, Jerusalem and God's goodness. It may be read to oneself or sung with others at the table. Many Jewish camps and youth groups have taken on customs of shouting out different words, or singing it as a call and response.

There are also shorter versions, said when time is pressed (the Talmud suggests one such occasion is when you're being chased wolves!).

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי הַזֵּן אֶת הַכֹּל.

Barukh Ata Adonai, hazan et ha'kol.

Blessed are You, Lord, sustaining everything. (A traditional translation.)

Holy One of blessing, You sustain all there is. (An alternative translation.)

Before Meals

The blessing, known as ha'motzi in Hebrew, is said before eating bread. Most commonly it's said before eating challah, a braided egg bread, on Shabbat, but it can be said before any meal.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם הַמוֹצִיא לֶחֶם מִן הָאָרֶץ.

Barukh Ata Adonai, Eloheynu Melekh ha'Olam, ha'motzi lechem min ha'aretz.

Blessed are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the Universe, Who brings forth bread from the earth.

(A traditional translation.)

Holy One of blessing, Your presence fills creation,
You cause bread to come forth from the earth. (An alternative translation.)

Good News

This blessing, HaTov HaMeitiv, is unique: most blessings are said to mark an experience by an individual. An individual says a blessing for the bread they're eating. An individual says a blessing for waking in the morning. But this blessing is said to mark occasions that are considered to bring joy to the entire community.

Some recite this blessing upon the birth of a child, upon hearing good news (can be as drastic as election results or the end of a war or as mundane as finding out your friend's flight arrived without incident), or getting through a day in which one thinks "no news is good news."

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם הַטּוֹב וְהַמֵּיטִב.

Barukh Ata Adonai, Eloheynu Melekh ha'Olam, ha'tov v'ha'may'tiv.

Blessed are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the Universe, Who is good and is the source of good.
(A traditional translation.)

Holy One of blessing, Your presense fills creation, You are the source of all that is good. (An alternative translation.)

Miracles

The sages taught that this prayer was to be said when encountering a place where miracles were performed for the majority of the Jewish people. Because of that condition, the prayer was restricted to places in the Middle East, those mentioned in the Torah, such as the Red Sea (the crossing was a miracle, during the Exodus from Egypt), the Jordan River (Joshua's tribes were able to cross) or the walls of Jericho (the walls fell after Joshua's Israelite army entered the city).

Today, some say this blessing when they feel they are in a place of personal significance. It may also be recited upon experiencing a wonder, an exceptional joy or a deliverance.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
שְׁעָשָׂה לִי נִס בְּמָקוֹם הַזֶּה.

*Barukh Ata Adonai, Eloheynu Melekh ha'Olam
sh'asah li nes ba'makom hazeh.*

Blessed are You, Lord our God,
Who made a miracle for me at this place. (A traditional translation.)



Holy One of blessing, Your presence fills creation,
You make wonders for me in this place. (An alternative translation.)

Mysterious Events

The traditional application of this blessing is to recite it upon seeing or joining a group of Jews. (Editor's note: Once, at a rest stop on the highway, a carful of Orthodox men, likewise pulled over at the rest stop, spotted me and recited this, excitedly.)

Why do we give thanks for seeing a multitude of people? It reminds us of the creation story, that all humankind was created in God's image (Genesis 9:6), which is closely followed by the commandment to be fruitful and multiply (Genesis 9:7). One could learn from that that God's image is enhanced by the diversity of all the people in the world. When we see a group of people, we give thanks that we're all different, unique individuals, but we all possess great potential.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם חָכֵם הַרְזִים.

Barukh Ata Adonai, Eloheynu Melekh ha'Olam cha'kham ha'razim.

Blessed are You, Lord our God, the wise one of secrets. (A traditional translation.)

Holy One of blessing, Your presence fills creation, You are the wise one of secrets. (An alternative translation.)

Nature

Stop and smell the roses. Marvel at that view. Appreciate the fall foliage. There is a blessing for when we see something breathtaking in nature. These words of appreciation remind us that this beautiful moment is connected to the diversity of amazing creations on the planet.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם שְׂפָכָה לוֹ בְּעוֹלָמוֹ.

Barukh Ata Adonai, Eloheynu Melekh ha'Olam, she'ka'kha lo b'olamo.

Blessed are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the Universe, Who has such creations in His world. (A traditional translation.)

Holy One of blessing, Your presence fills creation, You make beauty such as this in this world. (An alternative translation.)

Oceans and Seas

Not everyone is lucky enough to live by the water. Recognizing that seeing the ocean or a sea might be an infrequent occurrence, there's a blessing for those times when we visit the shore.



בָּרַךְ אֶתְּךָ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם שֶׁעָשָׂה אֶת הַיָּם הַגָּדוֹל.

Barukh Ata Adonai, Eloheynu Melekh ha'Olam, she'asah at ha'yam ha'gadol.

Blessed are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the Universe, Who has made the great sea. (A traditional translation.)

Holy One of blessing, Your presence fills creation, You create the life-giving waters of the sea. (An alternative translation.)

Rainbow

The story of Noah's ark and the great flood ends with a rainbow. God promised Noah that there would never again be a flood that would destroy the world. As a symbol of this promise, a rainbow filled the sky. The rainbow has become a reminder of this covenant made between God and Noah (and Noah's descendents and all living creatures).

Because of this promise, when we see a rainbow, there is a special blessing that is said.

בָּרַךְ אֶתְּךָ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
זֹכֵר הַבְּרִית וְנֶאֱמַן בְּבְרִיתוֹ וְקִים בְּמַאֲמָרוֹ.

*Barukh Ata Adonai, Eloheynu Melekh ha'Olam
zo'khair ha'brit, v'ne'eman biv'rityo v'kayam b'ma'amaro.*

Blessed are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the Universe,
Who remembers the covenant, is faithful to the covenant and keeps His promise. (A traditional translation.)

Holy One of blessing, Your presence fills creation,
You remember your covenant with all that You created. (An alternative translation.)

Shehecheyanu

The Shehecheyanu (pronounced sheh-hekh-ee-ya-noo) blessing is one of the best known and most used off all Hebrew blessings.

בָּרַךְ אֶתְּךָ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
שֶׁהַחַיִּינוּ וְקִיְמָנוּ וְהַגִּיעָנוּ לְזֶמַן הַזֶּה.

*Barukh Ata Adonai, Eloheynu Melekh ha'Olam,
Shehecheyanu v'key'yemanu, v'hi'gi'anu laz'man ha'zeh.*

Blessed are You, Lord our God,
Who has kept us alive, and sustained us, and enabled us to reach this moment. (A traditional translation.)



Holy One of blessing, Your presence fills creation
You have kept us alive, You have sustained us and have enabled us to reach this season. (An alternative translation.)

This all purpose blessing is said for beginnings and "firsts" of all kinds, remembering how good it is to be alive, seeing the world anew. It is said as part of Jewish birth ceremonies and by many parents when they hold their newborn for the first time. At a bar or bat mitzvah, saying this blessing echoes that first recitation and stops the clock as you remember the birth and look forward to the adulthood of your youngster.

It is short and easy to learn. In a pinch, all you need to do is say the word *Shehecheyanu* ("You have kept us alive") and you can sanctify the moment in the grocery store when your preschooler read the word "milk" for the first time!

Some other times to say this blessing: when your baby first giggles; at the end of a fantastic first date; the first time you wear new clothes; when you eat new food for the first time — or the first time this season; when you start a new job; when you see a friend you haven't seen in a long time... It's also said when doing certain mitzvot (commandments), like sitting in a sukkah, eating matzah at a Passover seder or reading the Purim megillah, and at the beginning of holidays, like Shavuot, Rosh Hashanah or Hanukkah.

Traveling

The traveler's prayer is a longer text, which could be translated as:

May it be Your will, Lord, our God and the God of our ancestors, that You lead us toward peace; guide our footsteps toward peace; and make us reach our desired destination for life, gladness and peace. May You rescue us from the hand of every foe, ambush along the way, and from all manner of punishments that assemble to come to earth. May You send blessing in our handiwork, and grant us grace, kindness and mercy in Your eyes and in the eyes of all who see us. May You hear the sound of our humble request because You are God Who hears prayer requests. Blessed are You, Lord, Who hears prayer.

Some say this shorter version, which boils down the request to what's needed — safe travels — instead.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם שׁוֹמֵר הַנוֹסְעִים.

Barukh Ata Adonai, Eloheynu Melekh ha'Olam shomer ha'nos'im.

Blessed are You, Lord our God, protector of wayfarers. (A traditional translation.)

Holy One of blessing, Your presence fills creation, You protect the travelers. (An alternative translation.)



It is generally said on longer trips, and recited once you're well on your way (your plane's taking off, not when you've just left your home to get to the airport). It can also be said on multi-day trips, when starting out for each day.

Waking Up

The morning prayer, Modeh Ani, gives thanks for restoring the sleeper's soul upon waking. Sung to an upbeat melody, this can be a lovely way to awaken a sleepy child — or give ourselves a morning burst of energy.

מוֹדָה אֲנִי לְפָנֶיךָ מֶלֶךְ חַי וְקַיִם
שְׁהַחַיְוֹתָ בִּי נִשְׁמָתִי בְּחַמְלָה רַבָּה אֱמוּנָתְךָ.

*Modeh ani Lifanekha, Melekh Chai v'Kayam
Shehech'ezarta bee nishmati b'khamla ra'ba emunatekha.*

I offer thanks before You, living and eternal King
for You have mercifully restored my soul within me — Your faithfulness is great. (A traditional translation.)

I thank You, everlasting Source of life,
for your compassion. You have given me back my soul; great is Your Faith. (An alternative translation.)

A short version might be "Modeh ani," which means "I give thanks."

