

בְּרִכּוֹת הַשַּׁחַר

We rise.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
אֲשֶׁר נָתַן לְשִׁכְוֵי בֵּינָה לְהִבְחִין בֵּין יוֹם וּבֵין לַיְלָה.
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שְׁעָשָׂנִי בְּצַלְמוֹ.
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
שְׁעָשָׂנִי בְּנוֹאֶבֶת הוֹרִין.
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שְׁעָשָׂנִי 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 בֵּינָה. 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 שְׁעָשָׂנִי 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 (Menahot 43b). They have been emended in Conservative prayerbooks on the basis of manuscript fragments, found in the Cairo Genizah.

WHO MADE ME A JEW שְׁעָשָׂנִי יִשְׂרָאֵל. This positive formulation is the wording in the Babylonian Talmud (Menahot 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.

Who Gives Sight to the Blind

When we thank God for giving sight to the blind, we express thankfulness not only for the literal gift of sight, but also for our capacity for insight, for our ability to be aware of the world around us, and for the capacity to understand ourselves and our world.

Rabbi Benjamin said:
We are all blind until the Holy One enlightens our eyes, as the Bible records regarding Hagar, "And God opened her eyes and she saw a well" (Genesis 21:19).

—GENESIS RABBAH

Imitating God

Our prayers thanking God for the clothes we wear and for the ability to stand up and walk about are also a reminder of the imperative for us to provide clothing for the "naked," to offer help to those who are in physical need, and to defend those who are unjustifiably "bound." The ancient rabbis commented on the verse, "You shall follow Adonai your God..." (Deuteronomy 13:5)—just as God is kind and loving, so too you should be kind and loving; just as God performs acts of generosity, so should you; just as God is patient, so should you be, as it is written, "You shall make yourselves holy, for I, Adonai your God, am holy" (Leviticus 19:2).

—based on THE BABYLONIAN TALMUD

Blessings for a New Day

We rise.

*Barukh atah ADONAI, our God, sovereign of time and space,
who enables the bird to distinguish day from night,
who made me in the divine image,
who made me free,
who made me a Jew,
who gives sight to the blind,
who clothes the naked,*

*Barukh atah Adonai eloheinu melekh ha-olam,
asher natan la-sekhvi v'nah l'havvin bein yom u-vein lailah.*

*Barukh atah Adonai eloheinu melekh ha-olam,
she-asani b'tzalmo.*

*Barukh atah Adonai eloheinu melekh ha-olam,
she-asani ben/bat horin.*

*Barukh atah Adonai eloheinu melekh ha-olam,
she-asani yisrael.*

*Barukh atah Adonai eloheinu melekh ha-olam,
pokei-ah ivrim.*

*Barukh atah Adonai eloheinu melekh ha-olam,
malbish arumim.*

Barukh atah ADONAI, our
 God, sovereign of time
 and space,
 who endows each and
 every living thing with
 unique capabilities and
 purpose,
 and creates me in the
 divine image;
 who grants me free will,
 and the ability to exer-
 cise it,
 and blesses me with the
 gift and responsibility of
 being a Jew;
 who opens my eyes to
 the world around and
 within me, blessing me
 with insight, awareness,
 and understanding,
 and protects me when I
 feel vulnerable,
 exposed, or ashamed;
 who frees me from all that
 limits or confines me,
 and restores my dignity
 when I feel bent or
 broken;
 who leads me back to solid
 ground when the world
 shifts beneath my feet,
 and guides me along my
 path when I am lost or
 confused;
 who creates me with
 needs, and the where-
 withal to meet them,
 and strengthens the
 people Israel with the
 courage to embody our
 beliefs;
 who crowns the people
 Israel with a sense of
 mission and purpose,
 and renews me each night
 when I am weary, that I
 may awake to each new
 day with strength.

—JAN UHRBACH

who releases the bound,
 who straightens those who are bent,
 who stretches out the earth over the waters,
 who steadies our steps,
 who has provided for all my needs,
 who strengthens the people Israel with courage,
 who crowns the people Israel with glory,
 and who gives strength to the weary.

Barukh atah Adonai eloheinu melekh ha-olam, matir asurim.

Barukh atah Adonai eloheinu melekh ha-olam, zokef k'fufim.

Barukh atah Adonai eloheinu melekh ha-olam,

roka ha-aretz al ha-mayim.

Barukh atah Adonai eloheinu melekh ha-olam,

ha-meikhin mitzadei gaver.

Barukh atah Adonai eloheinu melekh ha-olam,

she-asah li kol tzorki.

Barukh atah Adonai eloheinu melekh ha-olam, ozer yisrael bigvurah.

Barukh atah Adonai eloheinu melekh ha-olam, oter yisrael b'tifarah.

Barukh atah Adonai eloheinu melekh ha-olam,

ha-noten laya-eif ko-ah.

Barukh atah ADONAI, our God, sovereign of time and space,
 who removes sleep from my eyes and slumber from my eyelids.

May it be Your will, our God and God of our ancestors,
 that You accustom us to study Your Torah
 and cling to Your mitzvot;

do not lead us into error, or transgression, or sin,
 nor subject us to trials or disgrace.

Do not let the inclination to evil control us,
 and distance us from people who would do us evil
 and from friends who commit evil;

spur in us the yearning to do good and to act with goodness.

Bend our will and our desires to Your service.

▷ Today and every day, may You look upon us, and may all who
 see us look upon us, with eyes filled with kindness, love,
 and compassion. Act toward us with kindly love.

Barukh atah ADONAI, who acts with kindly love to the
 people Israel.