



# Chofesh Chavruta

חורף תשפ"ה - בזכות אחינו בארצינו הקדושה

Daily Family Learning & Inspiration

**Birchot HaShachar Explained**



**Generously Dedicated By  
The Khaimov Family**





# Chofesh Chavruta

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Generously  
Dedicated By The  
**Khaimov Family**  
In Honor Of  
All Our Soldiers

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# Thank You to Our Generous Sponsors

Days of Learning

## **The Neman Family**

In Honor of the IDF soldiers who are fighting tirelessly to protect Medinat Yisrael and Am Yisrael wherever they are.

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Tehilim & Tefilot

### **Gavi & Tali Hoffman & Family**

In memory of Marion and David Zierler,  
grandparents of Mrs. Hoffman

### **Olivia & Uri Rozic**

In Memory of the Yahrzeit  
of Moshe Ben-Zur z”l

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Partner

### **Penny Stern, MD**

In honor of  
Diana Zarowin, MD,  
Joseph Zarowin,  
and David Zarowin



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**We want your feedback!**  
Please email [yzimilover@ycq.us](mailto:yzimilover@ycq.us) or  
DM us on Instagram with ideas and comments!



## We Salute Our Alumni and Members of the Extended YCQ Family For Their IDF Service.

| Name of Alumnus                | YCQ Class |
|--------------------------------|-----------|
| אלעזר מנחם דניאל בן רחל שולמית | 2017      |
| רפאל נתן הכהן בן דבורה שמחה    | 2015      |
| מידן אושר בן יוספה             | 2015      |
| אתי בנימין בן הינדה            | 2014      |
| בנימין הענך בן רייזל           | 2011      |
| יהודה דורון בן יוספה           | 2011      |
| שמחה צבי בן לאה אסתר           | 2011      |
| מאיר גבריאל הכהן בן פנינה רחל  | 2008      |
| יונתן דניאל בן מינדל הדסה      | 2008      |
| יהושע שלמה בן בלימה רבקה       | 2004      |

|                               |                       |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------|
| בנימין שמחה בן יעל שרון       | גלעד אברהם בן תמר     |
| אריאל יצחק בן מורת שרון       | נדב בן תמר            |
| איתן דוד בן מורת שרון         | מורן בת חנה           |
| נועם שמואל בן מורת שרון       | נאוה רינה בת שרה דינה |
| יגאל יהונתן בן חנה רחל        | דוב ניסן בן רחל לאה   |
| מאיר בן שפרה                  | נועם אהרון בן שושנה   |
| עמישב נתנאל בן ושפע אביגיל    | אופיר מנחם בן שושנה   |
| נפתלי יצחק זכריה בן שאולה חיה | דוב בער בן רחל חיה    |



# Birchot HaTorah and The Pursuit of Peace

**Rabbi Mark Landsman, Principal**

The first brachot we make each morning in shul are Birchot HaTorah, a beautiful tefilah thanking Hashem for giving us the Torah and asking Him to make His words sweet in our mouths.

Immediately afterward, we read the pesukim of Birkat Kohanim, to connect the brachot to actual Torah learning. Out of all the pesukim in the Torah, why is this the passage we read each morning? The answer lies in the very essence of what the Torah is meant to achieve.

The Torah is not just a book of laws or a collection of stories. It is our guide to living.



The Gemara (Gittin 59b) teaches us: “The entire Torah was also given on account of the ways of peace, as it is written: ‘Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace’” (Mishlei 3:17).

By placing Birkat Kohanim immediately after Birchot HaTorah, we are reminded that the ultimate goal of Torah learning is to bring peace into our lives and the world.

At YCQ, this vision drives everything we do. Our goal is to cultivate students who are not only knowledgeable in Torah but those who apply their learning to make the world a better place and sanctify Hashem’s name.

As we embark on winter break, I am delighted to share this special booklet of insights on Birchot HaShachar.

These brachot, which frame our day with gratitude and purpose, are a cornerstone of our values. This collection of divrei Torah from our staff is an opportunity for all of us to deepen our understanding and connection to these special words.

Our booklet also includes special tefilot for the situation in Eretz Yisrael. In these challenging times, we daven for an end to war, for the safety of our courageous chayalim, and for the speedy return of all the hostages. May our tefilot and the zechut of our learning bring shalom to Eretz Yisrael and the entire world.

Wishing you a break filled with meaning, learning, growth, and peace.



# Names of the Hostages

Please Daven for Their Safe and Speedy Release

|                     |    |                                       |                     |    |                                  |
|---------------------|----|---------------------------------------|---------------------|----|----------------------------------|
| אגם בת מירב         | 20 | Agam bat Meirav (Berger)              | מקסים בן טלה        | 36 | Maxim ben Tella (Herkin)         |
| סשה אלכסנדר בן ילנה | 28 | Sasha Alexander ben Yelena (Trufanov) | נעמה בת איילת       | 20 | Na'ama bat Ayelet (Levy)         |
| אלון בן עידית       | 23 | Alon ben Idit (Ohel)                  | נמרוד בן ויקי       | 20 | Nimrod ben Vicky (Cohen)         |
| ארבל בת יעל         | 29 | Arbel bat Yael (Yehud)                | עודד בן בלהה        | 84 | Oded ben Bilha (Lifshitz)        |
| אריאל בן שירי       | 5  | Ariel ben Shiri (Bibas)               | עופר בן כוכבה       | 51 | Ofer ben Kochava (Kalderon)      |
| אריאל בן סילביה     | 27 | Ariel ben Silvana (Konio)             | אוהד בן אסתר        | 56 | Ohad ben Esther (Ben-Ami)        |
| אברהם בן אנרש       | 37 | Avraham ben Agranesh (Mengistu)       | אוהד בן אסתר        | 50 | Ohad ben Esther (Yahalomi)       |
| אבינת בן דיצה תרצה  | 31 | Avinathan ben Ditz Tirtza (Or)        | עומר בן מלכה        | 22 | Omer ben Malka (Shem Tov)        |
| בר אברהם בן ג'וליה  | 22 | Bar Avraham ben Julia (Kuperstein)    | עומר בן ניבה        | 23 | Omer ben Niva (Wenkert)          |
| ביפין ג'ושי         | 24 | Bipin Joshi                           | זרי בן ורוניקה אסתר | 47 | Omri ben Veronika Esther (Miran) |
| דניאלה בת אורלי     | 20 | Daniela bat Orly (Gilboa)             | אור בן גאולה        | 34 | Or ben Geula (Levy)              |
| דוד בן סילביה       | 34 | David ben Silvana (Konio)             | פינטה נטפונג        | 36 | Pinta Nattapong                  |
| דורון בת שרה סימונה | 31 | Doron bat Sarah (Steinbrecher)        | פונגסאק טהנה        | 37 | Pongsak Tanna                    |
| עידן בן יעל         | 20 | Edan ben Yael (Alexander)             | רום בן תמר נועה     | 20 | Rom ben Tamar Noa (Braslavski)   |
| איתן אברהם בן אפרת  | 23 | Eitan Avraham ben Efrat (Mor)         | רומי בת מרב         | 24 | (Romi bat Merav (Gonen           |
| איתן בן רות אידית   | 38 | Eitan ben Rut Idit (Horn)             | שגיא בן נאמית       | 36 | Sagui ben Naamit (Dekel-Chen)    |
| אליה בן סיגלית      | 28 | Eliya ben Sigalit (Cohen)             | סאסיוואן פנקונג     |    | Sasiwan Pankong                  |
| אליהו בן חנה        | 52 | Eliyahu ben Chana (Sharabi)           | סטיואן סוונקאם      | 35 | Sathian Suwankam                 |
| אלקנה בן רוחמה      | 35 | Elkana ben Ruchama (Bohbot)           | שגב בן גלית         | 26 | Segev ben Galit (Kalfon)         |
| אמילי תהילה בת אמנה | 28 | Emily Tehila bat Amanda (Damari)      | שירי בת מרגית       | 33 | Shiri bat Margit (Bibas)         |
| אביתר בן גילה       | 24 | Evyatar ben Gila (David)              | שלמה בן מרסיל       | 86 | Shlomo ben Marcel (Mansour)      |
| גדי משה בן שרה      | 80 | Gadi Moshe ben Sara (Mosez)           | סוראסאק לאמנאו      | 31 | Surasak Lamnau                   |
| גלי בן טליה         | 27 | Gali ben Talya (Berman)               | קית' שמואל בן חוה   | 65 | Keith Shmuel ben Chava (Siegel)  |
| גיא בן מירב         | 23 | Guy ben Meirav (Gilboa-Dalal)         | טל בן ניצה          | 39 | Tal ben Nitza (Shoham)           |
| חמזה אלזיאדנה       | 24 | Hamza Alziadna                        | תמיר בן חירות       | 20 | Tamir ben Cherut (Nimrodi)       |
| הישאם בן מנאל       | 37 | Hisham ben Manal (al Sayed)           | צחי בן דבורה        | 50 | Tsachi ben Devorah (Idan)        |
| יצחק בן חנה         | 70 | Itzik ben Chana (Elgarat)             | יר בן רות אידית     | 46 | Yair ben Rut Idit (Horn)         |
| קארינה בת אירה      | 20 | Karina bat Ira (Ariev)                | ירדן בן פנינה       | 35 | Yarden ben Penina (Bibas)        |
| כפיר בן שירי        | 1  | Kfir ben Shiri (Bibas)                | יוסף חיים בן מרים   | 25 | Yosef Chaim ben Miriam (Ohana)   |
| לירי בת שירה        | 19 | Liri bat Shira (Elbag)                | יوسف אלזיאדנה       | 54 | Yusuf Alziadna                   |
| מתן בן עינב         | 25 | Matan ben Einav (Zangauker)           | ווצ'רה סריון        | 32 | Watchara Sriuan                  |
| מתן שחר בן ענת      | 22 | Matan Shachar ben Anat (Angrest)      | זיו בן טליה         | 27 | Ziv ben Talya (Berman)           |

[chabad.org/hostages](http://chabad.org/hostages)



On behalf of our brothers and sisters in  
Eretz Yisrael, please take a few minutes each day  
to recite the Tehilim and Tefilot printed below.

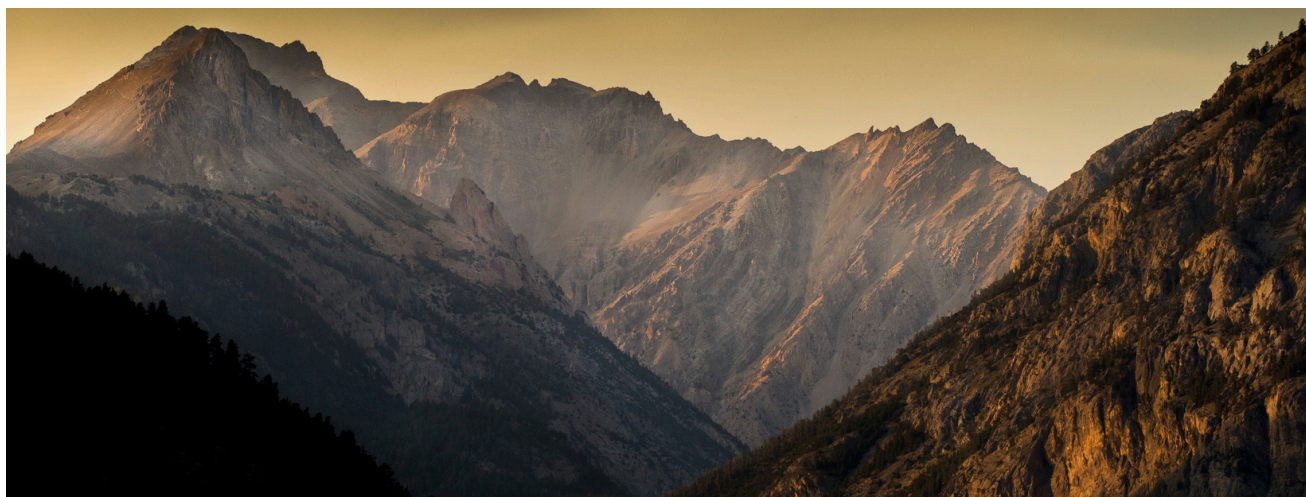
# תהילים ותפילות

## פרק כ

לְמִנְצַח מְזִמּוֹר לְדָוִד: יַעֲנֶה ה' בְּיוֹם צָרָה יִשְׁגָּבֶה שֵׁם  
אֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב: יִשְׁלַח עֲזָרָה מִקֹּדֶשׁ וּמִצִּיּוֹן יִסְעָדֶה: יִזְכֹּר כָּל  
מִנְחָתָהּ וְעוֹלֹתֶיהָ יִדְשָׁנָה סֵלָה: יִתֵּן לָהּ כִּלְבָבָהּ וְכָל עֲצָתָהּ  
יַמְלֵא: נִרְנְנָה בִּישׁוּעָתָהּ וּבְשֵׁם אֱלֹהֵינוּ נִדְגַל יְמֵלֵא ה' כָּל  
מִשְׁאֲלוֹתֶיהָ: עֲתָה יִדְעָתִי כִּי הוֹשִׁיעַ ה' מְשִׁיחוֹ יַעֲנֶהוּ  
מִשְׁמֵי קֹדֶשׁוֹ בְּגִבְרוֹת יֵשַׁע יְמִינוֹ: אֵלֶּה בָּרֶכֶב וְאֵלֶּה  
בְּסוּסִים וְאֶנְחֵנוּ בְּשֵׁם ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ נִזְכִּיר: הִמָּה כָרְעוּ וְנִפְּלוּ  
וְאֶנְחֵנוּ קָמְנוּ וְנִתְעוֹדֵד: ה' הוֹשִׁיעָה הַמֶּלֶךְ יַעֲנֵנוּ בְּיוֹם  
קִרְאָנוּ:

**Gavi & Tali Hoffman & Family**

In memory of Marion and David Zierler, grandparents of Mrs. Hoffman



## פרק קכ"א

שִׁיר לַמַּעֲלוֹת אֲשָׁא עֵינַי אֶל־הַהָרִים מֵאֵין יָבֹא עֲזָרִי־עֲזָרִי מֵעַם  
ה' עֲשֵׂה שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ־אֶל־יָתֵן לְמוֹט רִגְלָךָ אֶל־יָנוּם שְׁמֶרְךָ־הִנֵּה  
לֹא־יָנוּם וְלֹא יִישָׁן שׁוֹמֵר יִשְׂרָאֵל־ה' שְׁמֶרְךָ ה' צִלָּךָ עַל־יַד  
יְמִינְךָ־יּוֹמָם הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ לֹא־יִכָּכֶה וְיָרֵחַ בַּלְיִלָה־ה' יִשְׁמְרֶךָ מִכָּל־רָע  
יִשְׁמַר אֶת־נַפְשְׁךָ־ה' יִשְׁמַר־צִיאָתְךָ וּבּוֹאָךָ מֵעַתָּה וְעַד־עוֹלָם

## פרק ק"ל

שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת מִמַּעַמְקִים קָרָאתִיהָ ה': ה' שְׁמָעָה בְּקוֹלִי  
תְּהַיִּינָה אַזְנוֹתֶיהָ קִשְׁבוֹת לְקוֹל תַּחֲנוּנָיִי אִם־עֲוֹנוֹת תִּשְׁמַר־קוֹה ה'  
מִי יַעֲמֵד־כִּי־עָמָךְ הִסְלִיחָה לְמַעַן תִּזְרָא־קוֹיָתִי ה' קוֹתָה נַפְשִׁי  
וְלִדְבָרוֹ הוֹחֵלְתִּי־נַפְשִׁי לֵה' מִשְׁמָרִים לְבָקָר שְׁמָרִים לְבָקָר־  
יַחַל יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל־ה' כִּי־עַם־ה' הַחֲסֵד וְהַרְבֵּה עָמוּ פְדוּתִי וְהוּא  
יַפְדֶּה אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל מִכָּל עֲוֹנוֹתָיו־

**Olivia & Uri Rozic**

In Memory of the Yahrzeit of Moshe Ben-Zur z"l





## מי שברך לחיילי צה"ל For the IDF

מי שברך אבותינו אברהם יצחק ויעקב הוא יברך את חיילי צבא הגנה לישראל, העומדים על משמר ארצנו וערי אלקינו מגבול הלבנון ועד מדבר מצרים ומן הים הגדול עד לבוא הערבה ביבשה באויר ובים. יתן ה' את אויבינו הקמים עלינו נגפים לפניהם. הקדוש ברוך הוא ישמר ויציל את חיילינו מכל צרה וצוקה ומכל נגע ומחלה וישלח ברכה והצלחה בכל מעשה ידיהם. ידבר שונאינו תחתיהם ויעטרים בכתר ישועה ובעטרת נצחון. ויקים בהם הכתוב: כי ה' אלקיכם ההלך עמכם להלחם לכם עם איביכם להושיע אתכם ונאמר אמן:

## תפילה לשלום המדינה For the State of Israel

אבינו שבשמים, צור ישראל וגואלו, ברח אֶת מדינת ישראל, ראשית צמיחת גאולתנו. הגן עליה באברת חסדה, ופרש עליה סכת שלומה, ושלח אורה ואמתה לראשיה, שריה ויועציה, ותקנם בעצה טובה מלפניה. חזק את ידי מגני ארץ קדשנו, והנחילים אלקינו ישועה ועטרת נצחון תעטרים, ונתת שלום בארץ ושמחת עולם ליושביה. ואת אחינו כל בית ישראל פקד-נא בכל ארצות פזוריהם, ותוליכם מהרה קוממיות לציון עירה ולירושלים משכן שמה, ככתוב בתורת משה עבדה: "אם יהיה נדחה בקצה השמים, משם יקבצה ה' אלקיה ומשם יקחה. והביאה ה' אלקיה אל הארץ אשר ירשו אבותיה וירשתה, והיטבה והרבה מאבתיה." ויחד לבבנו לאהבה וליראה את שמה, ולשמר את כל דברי תורתה. ושלח לנו מהרה בן דוד משיח צדקה, לפדות מחכי קץ ישועתה. הופע בהדר גאון עזה על כל יושבי תבל ארצה, ויאמר כל אשר נשמה באפו: ה' אלקי ישראל מלה, "ומלכותו בכל משלה." אמן סלה:



## מי שברך לשבויים For the Hostages

מי שברך אבותינו אברהם יצחק ויעקב יוסף משה ואהרן דוד ושלמה, הוא יברך וישמר וינצר את נעדרי צבא הגנה לישראל ואת השבויים בתוך שאר אחינו בית ישראל הנתונים בצרה ובשביה. בעבור שהקהל מתפלל בעבורם, הקדוש ברוך הוא ימלא רחמים עליהם, ויוציאם מחשך וצלמות, ומוסרותיהם ינתק, וממצוקותיהם יושיעם, וישיבם מהרה לחיק משפחותיהם. "יודו לה' חסדו ונפלאותיו לבני אדם". ויקים בהם מקרא שכתוב: "ופדויי ה' ישובו ובאו ציון ברנה ושמחת עולם על ראשם. ששון ושמחה ישיגו ונסו יגון ואנחה" ונאמר אמן.

## מי שברך לפצועים For the Injured

מי שברך אבותינו אברהם יצחק ויעקב, הוא יברך וירפא את כל הפצועים הזקוקים לרפואה שלמה, בעבור שאנחנו מתפללים להחלמתם. בשכר זה הקדוש ברוך הוא ימלא רחמים עליהם להחלימם ולרפאתם ולהחזיקם ולהחיותם וישלח להם מהרה רפואה שלמה מן השמים, עם כל חולי ישראל, רפואת הנפש ורפואת הגוף, השתא בעגלא ובזמן קריב ונאמר אמן.

## אחינו

אחינו כל בית ישראל הנתונים בצרה ובשביה העומדים בין בים ובין ביבשה המקום ירחם עליהם ויוציאם מצרה לרוחה ומאפלה לאורה ומשעבוד לגאולה השתא בעגלא ובזמן קריב ונאמר אמן:



# שירי ילדים

## Children's Songs



I open one eye I open two,  
I say Modeh Ani because it means thank you  
I wash my Yadayim three times its true  
That's what every Jewish girl and boy must do.

### To the tune of "You Are My Sunshine"

Oh every morning when you're done sleeping,  
we open up our eyes and say,  
Thank you Hashem for my Neshama,  
and for giving us another day

מוֹדֵה אֲנִי לַפָּנִיךָ  
מֶלֶךְ חַי וְקַיִם  
שֶׁחֲזַרְתָּ בִּי נִשְׁמָתִי  
בְּחֶמְלָה רַבָּה אֲמוֹנָתְךָ

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם עַל נְטִילַת יָדַיִם:

### To the tune of Here We Go Round the Mulberry Bush

This is the way we wash our hands  
wash our hands, wash our hands,  
this is the way we wash our hands  
so early in the morning.

Once on the right, and once on the left  
once on the right, and once on the left,  
once on the right and once on the left,  
so early in the morning.



תורה צוה לנו משה  
מורשה קהלת יעקב:



Oh Little Torah Little Torah  
let me hold you tight  
Teach me, teach me, all the Mitzvot  
so I can do them right  
The Torah teaches every Jew  
Torah, Torah I love you

Hashem is here, Hashem is there,  
Hashem is truly everywhere.  
Hashem is here, Hashem is there,  
Hashem is truly everywhere.

Up, up, down, down,  
Right, left, and all around,  
Here, there, and everywhere  
That's where He can be found  
(x2)



**Tune: Tzion Tzion Tzion**

Tzedakah Tzedakah that is what we give,  
for the poor people to help them live  
So they'll have food and clothes,  
so they'll have food and clothes,  
even a penny a day, before we go to play.



## Dignified Distinctions

Rabbi Jordan Blitstein, Fifth Grade Rebbe



The brachot that we say every morning have both particular significance and special origins. Part of their design is to make us aware of the many things to be thankful for during the first few moments of waking up and beginning our day.

In the first *bracha* we state that Hashem gives understanding to a "Sechvi" What is the simple understanding of the word, and what is the deeper meaning behind this *bracha*?

For certain, this *bracha* is made when one hears the sound of a rooster. The Gemara (Berachot 60b) tells us this. Rashi tells us that Sechvi means a rooster and

shows us where this term is used. The Rosh explains that sechvi can also mean the heart. It is our heart that is able to distinguish between night and day. A rooster also has this ability, and by knowing when it is day he makes his noise in the morning. The Chachamim therefore used the rooster as an example of when to say this *bracha*. If one does not hear a rooster, they can nevertheless make the *bracha*.

Other animals also wake up in the morning, but the rooster is unique. He not only can discern the difference between night and day, but the rooster makes this a public affair.

The rooster wakes those who are asleep and represents a call to an awakening. When the heart has the ability to distinguish between dark and light; between what's clearly true and what is not, we have an obligation to bring this forward.

We learn from here that Hashem blesses us with hearts that are able to discern and experience life. These are tools that allow us to connect to others, ourselves, and Hashem. The *bracha* reminds us to make the correct choices; distinguishing between night and day.



**Discussion Question: What makes the Jewish people distinct from the other nations?**

**Today's Learning is Dedicated by the Neman Family**

In honor of the IDF soldiers who are fighting tirelessly to protect Medinat Yisrael and Am Yisrael wherever they are.



ברוך אתה ה' אלקינו מלך העולם שלא עשני גוי:  
ברוך אתה ה' אלקינו מלך העולם שלא עשני עבד:

Women Say:

ברוך אתה ה' אלקינו מלך  
העולם שעשני כרצוני:

Men Say:

ברוך אתה ה' אלקינו מלך  
העולם שלא עשני אשה:

## Created With Purpose

Rabbi Joshua Rohr, Elementary School  
Judaic Studies Assistant Principal

ט"ז טבת  
Thursday,  
January 16

We began Birchot HaShachar by thanking Hashem for giving us the ability to discern the difference between opposing things. We immediately follow that up with the next two brachot, *shelo asani goy* and *shelo asani aved*, where we thank Hashem for our unique status as Jews and appreciate the fact that we are obligated in *mitzvot*.

However, the fourth bracha is one of the few instances where men and women recite different tefilot. While men recite the bracha of "shelo asani isha", thanking Hashem for not making them women, women recite the bracha of "sheasani kirtzono," thanking Hashem for making them according to His will. Both brachot are difficult to understand. Is the man's bracha an implication that men are better than women? Are women just accepting their fate as "second-class citizens"? The answer to both questions is a resounding "No!"

In the eyes of Hashem, and according to the perspective of the Torah, both men and women are equal. Hashem loves every Jew, man or woman, like a parent loves a child, *k'viyachol*, and does not have any favorites. That being said, there are different roles for men and women and these brachot are referring to those different roles.

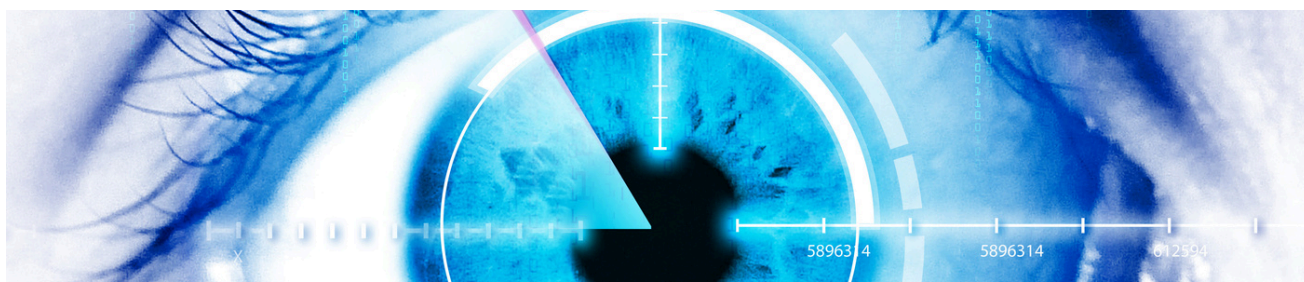
When a man thanks Hashem for not making him a woman, he is not, chas v'shalom, demeaning women in any way. Rather, he is thanking Hashem for the obligation to learn Torah. Although women are allowed, and even encouraged to learn Torah, they aren't obligated. They don't have the responsibility to use every spare minute studying Hashem's Torah like men do. And since our Sages teach us that learning Torah is the greatest thing a person can do, men recite a special bracha thanking Him for that privilege.

In a similar way, women are not just accepting their fate when they say "sheasani kirtzono," but rather thanking Hashem for making them like Him. Rav Moshe Shapiro zt"l beautifully explains that the ultimate will of Hashem and His purpose in creating the world, was to bestow good, with no prerequisites and nothing expected in return. Women, by nature, are created with a similar characteristic. Their essence is to give unconditionally. That's what motivates them to take care of their families and perform heroic acts of chesed without any fanfare. As such, when they recite "sheasani kirtzono," they're acknowledging that their inner essence is similar to Hashem's and thanking Him for creating them that way.

As we recite each bracha that is appropriate for us each morning, let us make the effort to appreciate the unique roles that Hashem has bestowed upon each of us and fulfill the purpose of our lives.



**Discuss: How can you use your unique talents to best help the people around you and serve Hashem?**



בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם פּוֹקֵחַ עֵוְרִים:

## Eyes on the Prize

Rabbi Mordechai Rovner, Fifth Grade & JHS Rebbe



Imagine a blind person who has never seen their family, friends, a beautiful sunset, or a bouquet of flowers. Now imagine a doctor approaches this person and says, "I can perform a surgery to restore your sight, and you'll be able to see again!" The blind person is ecstatic, jumping for joy. Then the doctor adds, "The procedure will cost \$10,000."

That's a lot of money, but when compared to the priceless gift of sight, it's nothing! Many people would gladly pay double, triple, or even ten times that amount for such a blessing.

I had a relative who was blind. I used to watch her carefully navigate her way down the steps, holding the railing with both hands, as she made her way into the waiting car. I'm sure she would've paid anything for the ability to see.

The ability to wake up in the morning and open our eyes should fill us with sheer gratitude and joy for a gift we often take for granted. Baruch Hashem, we can get out of bed, walk to the bathroom, get dressed, eat breakfast, and go about our day with ease, tasks that are monumental challenges for someone who is blind.

The simple translation of *Pokeach Ivrim* is that Hashem opens the eyes of the blind. However, there's another interpretation. The Hebrew word פֶּקֶח means "wise," as we see in the Torah, where the brilliant and influential Korach is described by Rashi as a פֶּקֶח (before he sinned by instigating a machloket, a dispute). The word עוֹר means "blind," and the Torah cautions us:

לפני עור לא תתן מכשול  
 "Before a blind person, do not place a stumbling block."  
 (Vayikra 19:14)

The Meforshim explain that this does not only refer to literal blindness, but to any situation where someone's clarity is obscured, such as giving bad advice.

Therefore, this bracha carries a dual message. On one level, we thank Hashem for the physical gift of sight. On a deeper level, we ask Hashem to help us navigate the "stumbling blocks" of life, moments where the Yetzer Hara seeks to blind us and lead us astray. In this bracha, we ask Hashem to make us a פֶּקֶח, a wise person, who can see clearly and avoid the traps of the Yetzer Hara, rather than an עוֹר, a blind person, who is lured into his schemes.

May we strive to be a פֶּקֶח in all our daily decisions, growing closer to Hashem with wisdom and clarity.



**Discuss: According to Halacha, blind people still recite this bracha. Why do you think that is?**



כָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם מְלַבֵּשׁ עַרְמִיּוֹת:

# Clothes Make the Man

Rabbi Stephen Knapp, Junior High School Principal

י"ח טבת  
Shabbat,  
January 18

Birchot HaShachar provide us with fifteen examples through which Hashem is praised for the manner in which He created and continues to run the world each and every day. If I could summarize the mission and essence of Judaism in a nutshell, it would be for man to imitate Hashem. This idea can be found in Masechet Shabbat (133b), derived from the verses on the splitting of the sea:

אֲבָא שְׁאוּל אוֹמֵר: "וְאֵנִי" – הֲיֵי דוֹמָה לוֹ, מָה הוּא חֲנוּן וְרַחוּם – אֵף אַתָּה הֵיָה חֲנוּן וְרַחוּם.

Abba Shaul says: *Ve'anveihu* should be interpreted as if it were written in two words: *Ani vaHu*, me and Him [God]. Be similar, as it were, to Him, the Almighty: Just as He is compassionate and merciful, so too should you be compassionate and merciful.

(See *Chag Chavruta, Sukkot 5785* for more on this topic)

Thus, during the Birchot HaShachar we recite fifteen different blessings, praising Hashem, for the benevolent way in which He runs the world

This serves as a model for how we are to join as His partners, imitating Him, by continuing to perfect His world.

There is no greater example of this than this blessing - *Malbish Arumim*, "Who clothes the naked." The Gemara (Sotah 14a) says that the entire Torah from beginning to end is all about chessed. The Gemara explains that in the beginning of the creation of the world, HaShem demonstrated chessed by providing clothing for Adam and Chava in Gan Eden following their sin of eating from the forbidden fruit. Despite their failure, Hashem's care for their well-being demonstrated compassion and forgiveness.

Judaism places great emphasis on clothing. The phrase "clothes makes the man" has many practical ramifications in Judaism. One of the ways a Kohen Gadol assumes this position is by simply wearing the special garments of the High Priest. We are encouraged to designate our best clothes for Shabbat.

It is a particular mitzvah of Simchat Yom Tov to buy new clothes for the holiday. There are particular laws on how one should dress when approaching HaShem in Tefilah. The laws of tzniut, modesty, guide us in terms of the types of clothes we should choose and how we are to present ourselves. The gift of clothing, celebrated in this blessing, is not only for our protection from the elements, but also for it grants us dignity and honor.

This bracha encourages gratitude and humility, reminding us that even our most basic needs are sustained by Hashem. It also inspires us to emulate His ways by clothing and caring for those in need, fulfilling the mitzvah of *chesed* and reflecting divine kindness in our own lives. Through this bracha, we reaffirm our dependence on Hashem and our responsibility to join Him in perfecting the world by providing clothes and basic needs for others.



**Discuss: How does the way you dress have an impact on the way you feel?**





בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם מְתִיר אֲסוּרִים:

## Breaking Free

Morah Mashie Kopelowitz  
Director of K-8 Judaic Studies



The bracha of *matir asurim* was established to thank Hashem for the ability to rise from bed and sit up. During sleep, we are like prisoners bound in chains, unable to move. With this blessing, we acknowledge that Hashem has released us from that state of confinement.

In the morning, we awaken from sleep, a state where we were "bound," passive, and inactive. With the new day, we regain the ability to move, rise, connect with ourselves, and take action. This blessing reflects our desire each morning to release anything that binds or entangles us and to embrace freedom.

In our generation, many people express feeling trapped. They feel bound by circumstances or limitations that hold them back from living fully. This makes the blessing especially meaningful as a moment to ask Hashem for release from spiritual imprisonment and for the strength to live a life of inner freedom.

This prayer also reminds us of those who are physically or emotionally "bound."

Today, over 100 individuals remain imprisoned in Gaza, and we yearn for their safe and healthy return.

In a sense, we are all bound with them, as we constantly hold them in our thoughts. Around us, there are also patients confined to hospital beds, the injured, and those waiting for children, livelihood, or a life partner. There are individuals whose souls feel bound—overwhelmed by frustration, anxiety, and personal struggles.

Every morning, "matir asurim" reminds us that we must take advantage of each day. It calls on us to seek freedom from our constraints and to approach life with joy, purpose, and speed.

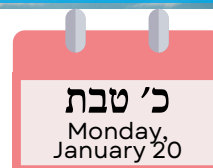


**Discuss: What is a habit that you wish you could break free from?**



# Reaching For Heaven

Rabbi Moshe Steinberg, JHS Rebbe



On a simple level, Harav Shimon Schwab explains that the bracha of “zokef kifufim” is thanking Hashem that we have the strength to get out of bed in the morning. This is not something we should take for granted, as unfortunately there are many people, whether they are older, sick, or just weak, that have a lot of trouble getting themselves up on their feet in the morning.

However, Harav Yisrael Meir Druk adds another beautiful dimension to this bracha. He quotes Rabbeinu Tam in the Sefer Hayashar, who writes why humans were created in an upright position. First, it was to give us an advantage over the animal kingdom.

Furthermore, humans were created with a piece of G-dliness inside of them, which is drawn to the upper worlds from where it came. Animals on the other hand, are created only from the dust of the earth, without a neshama, a soul, and therefore walk on all fours as they are drawn to the ground. We learn from this, says Rav Druk, that the stature of a person symbolizes the constant pull of the soul inside each of us towards our creator.

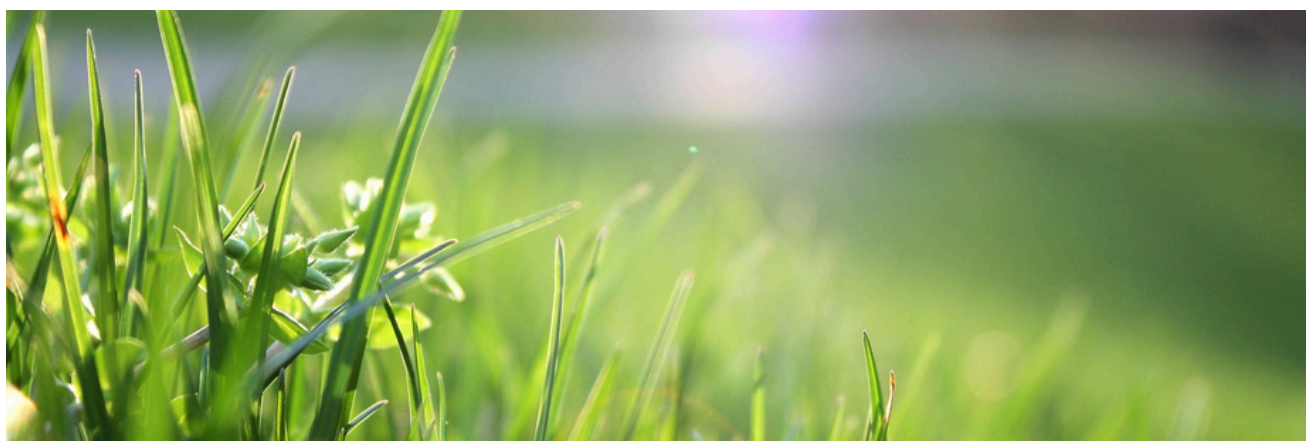
This explanation adds another tremendous and heartfelt aspect to this special bracha.

Not only are we thanking Hashem for having the energy to stand, but we are also thanking Hashem for that hidden piece of Hashem inside each of us, something so precious that it was taken from Hashem’s “chair of glory,” and makes us comparable to angels.

This is what gives us the drive to constantly draw closer to Hashem, learn his Torah, and perform his mitzvot to the greatest degree that we possibly can. May Hashem always give us the strength to get up on our feet and guide us in constantly improving in our avodat Hashem and becoming closer and closer to Him.



**Discuss: What else differentiates humans and animals?**



בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם רוֹקֵעַ הָאָרֶץ עַל הַמַּיִם:

## From the Ground Up

Mrs. Esti Dreyfuss, JHS Teacher

כ"א טבת

Tuesday,  
January 21

The bracha of “Roka HaAretz al HaMayim” is thanking Hashem for solidifying the land on the water. Why do we need a bracha like that?

Every morning, when we wake up, most of us take for granted that we stand on firm, solid, unmoving ground. Rav Schwab explains that the crust of the earth is really made up of water, and at its center is melted metal. If Hashem did not solidify the Earth that we stand on, then life as we know it would be impossible.

The Malbim explains that Hashem didn't just do it once and that's how it is, but He is constantly ensuring that the ground that we stand on solid.

If anyone has ever experienced an earthquake before, they are so much more thankful to Hashem for the secure feeling of standing on firm, unmoving ground. The Rabbis in the Gemara teach that even an experienced sailor, who spends most of his life out at sea, does not feel fully secure until he reaches land and is on solid ground.

Nowadays, the same applies to air travel. Even for the most frequent flyer, there is a certain security that they will not feel while up in the air and they'll only feel it once they are back on solid ground.

Radak explains that water typically overflows. There's no logical reason why the ocean doesn't just overflow onto dry land. But in Hashem's kindness to sustain a world that we can live properly on without the fear of water covering us, He solidifies the earth constantly.



**Discuss: What grounds you when you're feeling overwhelmed?**





בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם שֶׁעָשָׂה לִי כָל-צָרָכִי:

## A Shoe-In For Success

Morah Tova Friedman, Fourth Grade



This bracha which translates to, "who has provided for my every need" was originally recited each day when a person would put on their shoes. Why does putting on shoes warrant its own bracha? Furthermore, what do shoes have to do with Hashem meeting our needs?

The Avudraham notes that when a person has shoes, he can go out into the world and obtain his needs.

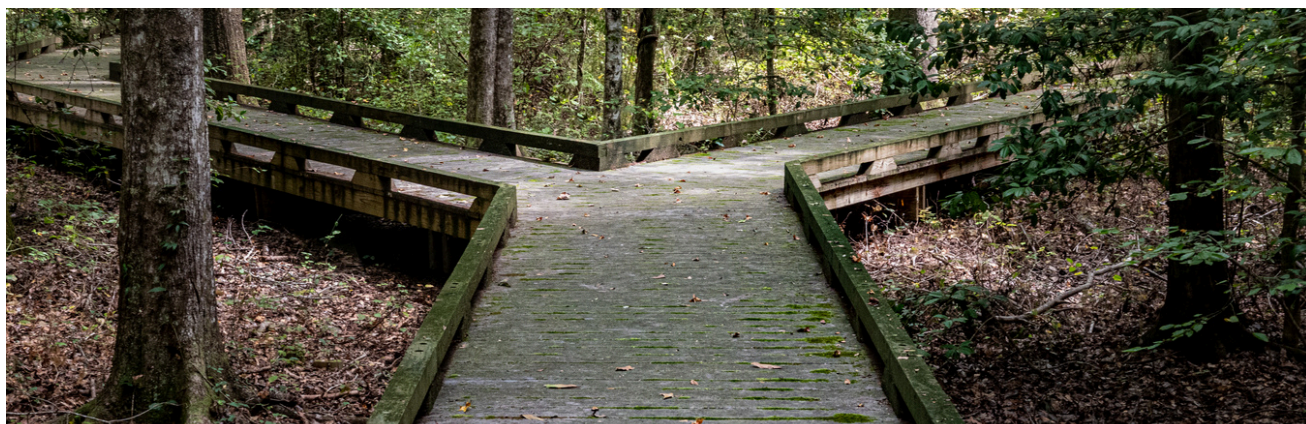
If this bracha acknowledges that Hashem gave us the ability to attend to our needs, why is it written in the past tense?

The Gra explains that this bracha hints at the creation of the world. The entire world was created for man's benefit. The Malbim tells us that shoes symbolize that we are the ones in charge, that we rise above the animals.

Each person should feel that the entire world was created for him. This bracha helps us realize that Hashem prepared the world for each of us, and we thank Hashem for allowing us to enjoy and benefit from it. This bracha enables us to strengthen our emunah that Hashem is involved in each of our lives and is giving us exactly what we need in order for us to be our best selves.



**Discuss: Why do you think halacha dictates we put our shoes on in a certain order?**



כְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מִלְּךָ הָעוֹלָם הַמְכִין מַצְעָדֵי גֶבֶר:

## One Step At a Time

Mrs. Melissa Cohen, Associate Principal, General Studies K-8

כ"ג טבת

Thursday,  
January 23

Every morning, as we say the Birchot Hashachar, we thank Hashem for all the wonderful things He does for us. Up until now, our blessings have focused on what Hashem directly gives us—gifts like the ability to see, the clothing we wear, and for making us who we are. These blessings center on receiving what Hashem has provided.

However, in the next bracha, "Hamechin Mitzadeh Gaver," we experience a shift. This bracha, which means "He who prepares the footsteps of man," acknowledges that while Hashem gives us certain gifts, He also empowers us with the ability to make choices.

Rav Schwab teaches that this blessing signifies that Hashem grants each of us a certain number of steps to

take in our lifetime. Yet, how we take those steps and where they lead us is entirely up to us. While Hashem provides the steps, it is our responsibility to choose where to go with them.

When we say this bracha, we can reflect on the choices we make every day. Sometimes life feels overwhelming, and we wonder how we'll manage everything we need to do. We might worry about the future—what will happen next week, next month, or even next year? How will I get through it all?

But this blessing offers an important lesson: We don't need to have everything figured out all at once. Instead, our job is to focus on today—on the steps we can take right now. What can I do today to move forward in the

best way I know? The key is to take things one step at a time. Life is a journey, and if we focus on taking one step after another, we will ultimately get where we need to go.

So, as we recite this bracha each morning, let us commit to making each step count. What is one thing I can do today to stay on the right path and fulfill my purpose? By focusing on today and trusting that Hashem is guiding us, we will move toward the path He has set for us.

Let's make each step meaningful, putting one foot in front of the other, walking the journey of life with the confidence that every step brings us closer to the destination Hashem has planned for us.



**Discuss: What's a small action that you can take to put yourself on the right path to success?**





ברוך אתה ה' אלקינו מלך העולם אוֹזֵר יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּגִבּוּרָה:

# Working Out Spiritually

Morah Avital Basalel, Associate Teacher

כ"ד טבת

Friday,  
January, 24

On the surface, this bracha acknowledges the physical strength that allows us to start our day. However, on a deeper level, it reflects gratitude for the inner strength Hashem gives us to overcome challenges, particularly in our struggles with the yetzer hara.

The Mishna (Avot 4:1) teaches:

אִיֶּהוּ גִבּוֹר, הַכּוֹשֵׁשׁ אֶת יָצְרוֹ

The ultimate display of gevurah isn't in lifting weights or running fast, but in the ability to choose good over bad, to make the right decision when faced with temptation, and to do the right thing even when it's difficult. This strength isn't something we naturally have on our own, it is a gift from Hashem.

Every morning, as we recite this bracha, we recognize and thank Hashem for empowering us with this strength.

Imagine a boy named Yoni, who is tempted to cheat on his math test. The voice of the yetzer hara whispers, "It's just one answer. Nobody will know." But Yoni knows the importance of acting with integrity and honesty. He musters the courage to resist and answers the question to the best of his ability. Though he didn't achieve the highest grade, Yoni felt pride knowing he did the right thing. In that moment, Yoni exemplified gevurah, overcoming his yetzer hara with the help of the inner strength Hashem gave him.

Rabbi Efrem Goldberg explains, to deepen our kavanah in this bracha, we can reflect each morning on one area in which we struggle, whether it's controlling anger, speaking kindly, or staying focused during tefillah. Before saying Ozer Yisrael b'Gevurah, take a moment to ask Hashem for strength in that specific area. Then, as we recite the bracha, we can internalize that Hashem provides the strength we need to conquer these challenges. May we all use the gift of gevurah that Hashem gives us to grow in our avodat Hashem, overcome our yetzer hara, and become true gibborim.



**Discuss: If we have free will, how can we ask Hashem to help us overcome our yetzer hara?**



כְּרוֹךְ אֶתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם עוֹטֵר יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּתִפְאָרָה:

## Crowning Achievements

Ms. Shoshana Rosenblum, Fifth Grade Teacher

כ"ה טבת

Shabbat,  
January 25

The phrase "Oter Yisrael Betifara" translates to "Who Crowns Yisrael with splendor."

According to Rav Schwab, this bracha possesses profound significance. It highlights the notion that when an individual performs mitzvot they create angels that surround and protect him.

This concept is supported by the phrase in Keriyat Shema al Hamitah:

בְּשֵׁם הַשֵּׁם אֱלֹקֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, מִיְמִינִי מִיְּכָאֵל,  
וּמִשְׁמָאֵלִי גַבְרִיאֵל, וּמִלְּפָנֵי אוּרִיאֵל, וּמֵאַחֲרָיו  
רְפָאֵל, וְעַל רֹאשִׁי וְעַל רֹאשֵׁי שְׂכִינַת אֱ-ל.

which translates to: "May Michael be at my right, Gavriel at my left, Uriel before me, Rephael behind me, and above my head the presence of Hashem."

When a person engages in prayer, he is then enveloped by the angels of his mitzvot, and then the Shechinah will be above his head. The Shechinah signifies a closeness to Hashem. Thus, the bracha "Oter Yisrael Betifara" expresses our gratitude to Hashem for crowning Yisrael with the glory of the Shechinah, as a result of the mitzvot that we observe.



**Discuss: What's the difference between humans and angels?**



ברוך אתה ה' אלקינו מלך העולם הנותן ליצר כח:

## Wake Up Call

Rabbi Daniel Rosenfelt, Rav of the Young Israel  
of Kew Gardens Hills and JHS Rebbe



Even though we refer to them as Birchot HaShachar, they really should be called Birchot HaYom because they are brachot for things that apply to the entire day. In fact, in the times of the Gemara, these brachot were not said together in Shul as they are today; rather the Gemara (Brachot 60b) says they were said at home as each activity occurred. So even though today it takes only a minute to say, it is quite possible that it used to take more than an hour to say all the brachot!

For example, when one would wake up early and hear the actual rooster crow, they would immediately say *asher natan l'sachvi vinah ben yom u'ven layla*

(that gave the rooster the understanding to know when daylight was). And when you opened your eyes for the day, you would say *pokeach ivrim*, and when you got dressed in the morning you would say *malbish arumim*, and so on.

If nothing else, these brachot remind us that we cannot take anything in life for granted- as everything is a chesed from Hashem. That is because we tend to forget that we also have to thank Hashem for the seemingly insignificant things in our lives. Therefore, we make them a part of our daily davening.

The greatest proof for this is the bracha of *hanoten l'ayef koach*, thank you Hashem for giving strength to the tired/weary.

The sefer, *Iyun Tefilah*, says that since this bracha is not mentioned in the Gemara, it was added in the Middle Ages, most probably as an aftermath of the First Crusade. Picture the scene, after the First Crusade, when a Jew woke up in the morning thankful to somehow still be alive, he or she would say *הנותן ליצר כח* as if to say please give me the strength I need to survive this terrible suffering.

Therefore, it is mussar for all of us who might struggle getting out of bed early in the morning to daven and thank Hashem, especially over winter vacation! Let us thank Hashem for the opportunity we all have to get up early and thank Him for everything He does for all of us.



**Discuss: What's something you take for granted? Why?**





ברוך אתה ה' אלקינו מלך העולם המעביר שנה מעיני ותנומה מעפעפי ויהי רצון מלפניך  
ה' אלקינו ואלקי אבותינו שתרגילנו בתורתך ונדבקנו במצותיה, ואל תביאנו לא לידי  
חטא ולא לידי עברה ועון ולא לידי נסיון ולא לידי בזיון ואל ישלט בנו יצר הרע  
והרחיקנו מאדם רע ומחבר רע ונדבקנו ביצר הטוב ובמעשים טובים וכוף את יצרנו  
להשתעבד לך ותננו היום ובכל יום לחן ולחסד ולרחמים בעיניך ובעיני כל רואינו  
ותגמלנו חסדים טובים: ברוך אתה ה' גומל חסדים טובים לעמו ישראל:

# The Reset Button

Mr. Yossi Zimilover, Director of Communications



This bracha begins with gratitude to Hashem for “removing sleepiness from our eyes,” and ends by recognizing Hashem as the one “who bestows kindness upon His people.” Halachically, a bracha must have the same theme in beginning and end, but these seem to be two totally separate ideas! What is the connection?

Rabbi Dr. Jay Goldmintz quotes Rabbeinu Tam (Berachot 46a) who explains that the very act of waking up is an incredible kindness from Hashem. Every single

morning, Hashem gives us an opportunity to start refreshed and energized.

If the day before didn't go as planned, we can start again today. As the popular saying goes: “The best time to plant a tree was twenty years ago, the second best time is now.” It's never too late to start making efforts to improve and form new habits.

And if we *did* have a great day yesterday, we have the chance to reflect on our past accomplishments and

create more building blocks for future success. Going to sleep at night and waking up in the morning enables us to pause and reflect on what we did well the day before and what we can do even better today.

As we begin this new term, let's take this lesson to heart. Each day is a new beginning, filled with potential for growth and success. We thank Hashem for this possibility each day and ask Him to help us grow as individuals and to be spiritually successful.



**Discuss: Can you reflect on one thing you did well yesterday and one thing you could have done better?**



# Torah Teasers

by Rabbi Moshe Erlbaum

## Questions

### Parshat Shemot

1. In Egypt the Jews are forced to produce bricks (Exodus 1:14). In what context are bricks first mentioned in the Torah?
2. Aside from this parsha, where do midwives assist in a birth? (2 answers)
3. In what context does the number three appear in this parsha? (2 answers)
4. In this parsha, who runs away? What two other places in the Torah does it explicitly state that somebody runs away?
5. In this parsha, who does Hashem call by repeating his name? Who else in the Torah has his name repeated when called? (2 answers)

### Parshat Va'era

1. In this parsha, what is called a "morasha" - "a heritage"? What else in the Torah is called a "morasha"?
2. Which grandfather and grandson lived the same amount of years?
3. In this parsha, which married couple begins their names with the same letter of the Aleph-Bet?
4. Who is the ancestor of every king from the Kingdom of Judah, and every High Priest except for one?
5. In this parsha, which person has the same name as an ancient city in the Land of Israel?

# Answers

## Parshat Shemot

1. Bricks are first mentioned in Parshat Noah, where the people produced bricks to build the Tower of Bavel (Genesis 11:3).
2. In Parshat Vayishlach, a midwife is involved in the birth of Binyamin to Rachel (Genesis 35:17). In Parshat Vayeshev, a midwife assists in the birth of Peretz and Zerach to Tamar, the wife of Yehuda (Genesis 38:28).
3. Moshe's mother hid him for three months before placing him in the Nile (Exodus 2:2). At the end of the parsha, Moshe requests from Pharaoh to allow the nation to travel on a three-day journey to serve Hashem (Exodus 5:3).
4. In this parsha, Moshe runs away after killing the Egyptian (Exodus 2:15). In Parshat Vayetzei, Yaakov runs away from Lavan (Genesis 31:21). In Parshat Lech Lecha, Hagar runs away from Sarah (Genesis 16:6). (Although Yaakov also runs away from Esav, the Torah does not explicitly state so.)
5. In this parsha, Moshe's name is repeated when Hashem calls him by the burning bush (Exodus 3:4). Elsewhere in the Torah: In Parshat Vayigash, Hashem calls "Yaakov Yaakov" on the way down to Egypt (Genesis 46:2). In Parshat Vayera, Avraham's name is repeated (by an angel, not by Hashem Himself) when he is told to stop the binding of Yitzhak (Genesis 22:11).

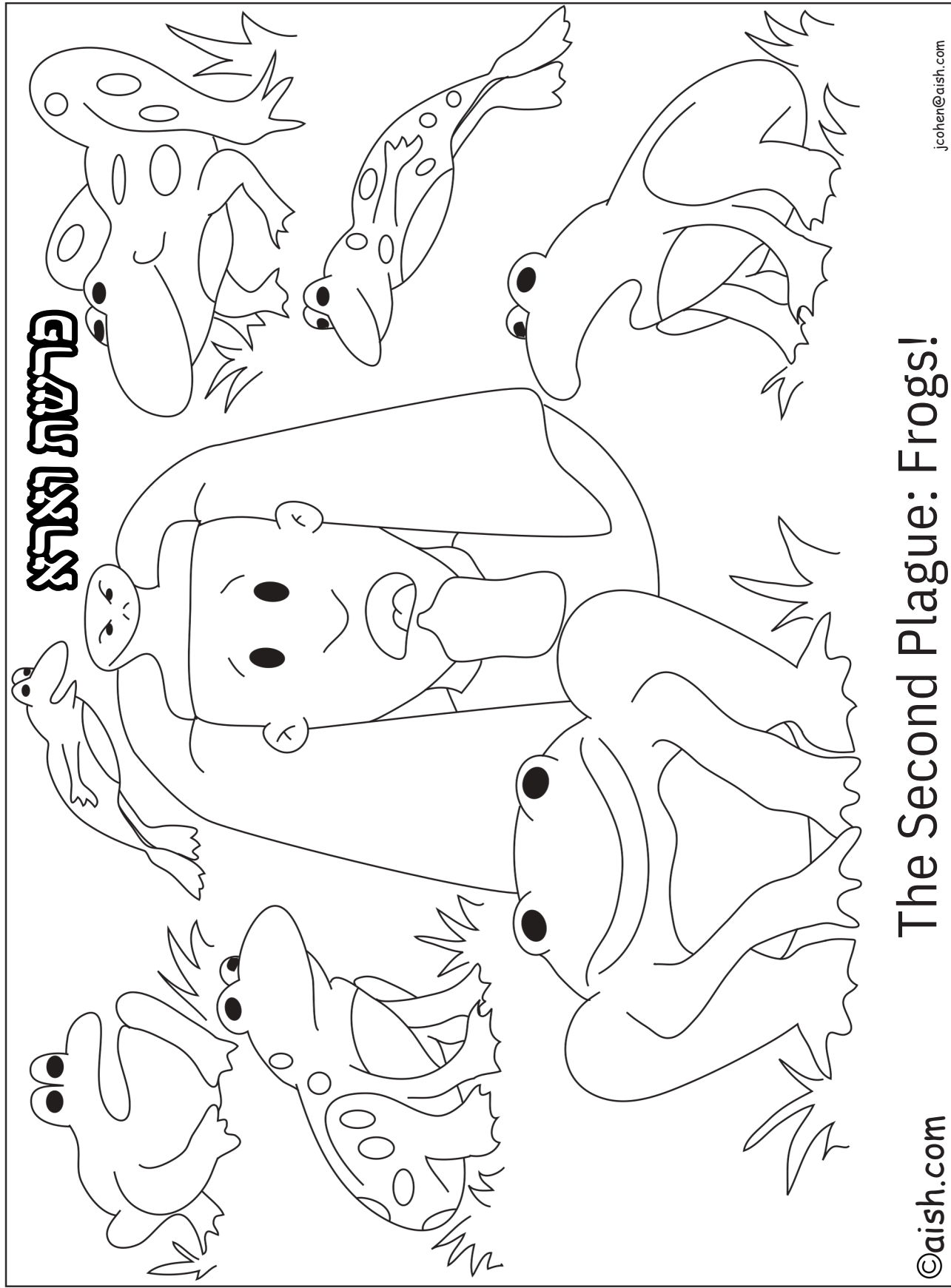
## Parshat Va'era

1. In this parsha, the land of Israel is referred to as a "morasha" - "a heritage" (Exodus 6:9). In Parshat V'zos Habracha, the Torah itself is called a "morasha" (Deut. 33:4).
2. Levi and his grandson Amram both lived 137 years (Exodus 6:16, 18).
3. The names of Aaron and his wife Elisheva both begin with the Hebrew letter aleph (Exodus 6:23).
4. Aminadav, the father of Nachshon and Elisheva (the wife of Aaron), is an ancestor of King David (Ruth 4:20) and of every High Priest except for Aaron (Exodus 6:23).
5. Chevron, an ancient city in Israel, is also the name of the third son of Kehas (Exodus 6:18)



# פרעה שמחה





פרשת הצארה

The Second Plague: Frogs!

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