

*V'shinantam l'vanecha:*  
**"The Wonder of Marking Sacred Time  
Through Blessing"**

**A curriculum guide for parents and guardians of first  
time preschoolers**

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## Curriculum Rationale

Our ancient rabbis taught that what is learned in early childhood is absorbed into the blood.<sup>1</sup> Judaism has a way of informing life that can add depth, meaning and purpose for every member of the family. Very often, especially for liberal Jewish families, this Jewish journey begins at preschool. Research and the commonsense experience of parents reveal that the quality of early childhood education (ECE) can make a tremendous difference in the intellectual and social development of a child.<sup>2</sup> Equally important is the role parents' play as supporters of and active participants in their child's life-long learning.<sup>3</sup>

This curriculum guide, designed for parents of 1<sup>st</sup> time preschool children, addresses the need for a stronger connection between home and school and works to strengthen this bridge. The goal of the guide is to foster in families a greater awe and wonder of sacred time using existing blessings as well as original blessings created by the family. The course's cumulative assessment will be *A Book of Blessings Marking Sacred Time* to be designed, written, illustrated, and created by the learners.

The Jewish Early Childhood Education Initiative (JECEI)<sup>4</sup> is a collaborative philanthropic project that begun in 2004. Their intent is to increase the number of

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1 Avot de Rabbi Natan 24

2 Saul P. Wachs, Jewish Nursery Schools: Day Schools for Little Children from The Journal of Jewish Life Network; volume 5, number 1, pp. 12

3 James P. Comer and Michael Ben-Avie, Promoting Community in Early Childhood Programs: A Comparison of Two Programs; Early Childhood Education J (2010) 38:87-94

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.jecei.org/index.php>

families sending their children to high quality Jewish early childhood centers and to inspire them to become involved in Jewish life both during and long after the school experience has ended. JECEI places unparalleled emphasis on the importance of serious Jewish inquiry and dialogue on the part of the entire family in the community of the early childhood center. These thought leaders assert that immersion in Jewish values, community, and life, have the power to transform the lives of families in meaningful and significant ways.<sup>5</sup>

Preschool aged children often provide the impetus for families to connect with and formally join a Jewish community. Once members of ECE settings, they are frequently impelled and inspired to explore their Jewish knowledge and beliefs. Moreover, they are *together* first exploring Jewish practices and ideas in which they may ultimately engage and explore for the rest of their lives. Preschool, therefore, presents an ideal chapter in the life of a family to explore lifelong Jewish learning and living.

Over the past two decades working in Jewish early childhood education, however, I have noticed that all too often, particularly in the liberal Jewish world, preschools lack an effective bridge between the home and school that supports and encourages parent involvement. This Curriculum Guide addresses one particularly egregious dimension of this gap; namely, there is little opportunity for parents to discover and explore their own Jewish beliefs on their own, but also with their child, particularly about topics relevant to the family. Doing so would allow parents to

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5 Overview of Engaging Families with Young Jewish Children, Copyright 2011 by Jewish Early Childhood Education Initiative

internalize *big Jewish ideas* and in turn help them to effectively and authentically transmit them to their children.

Daily Jewish prayer exposes us to the verse “*V’shinantam l’vanecha.*” These two words, prayed everyday during the *V’ahavta*, speak about the transmission of knowledge, ritual, and belief to children. Acting out this transfer of knowledge is not only a mitzvah<sup>6</sup> but also necessary in order for children to successfully internalize Jewish knowledge, ritual, and belief. One purpose – indeed, perhaps the ultimate purpose – of Jewish education, is to pass on tradition to the next generation by promoting a life dedicated to the values and tenets of our faith. Jewish educators, parents and teachers can achieve the essential purpose of Jewish education through the effective transmission of *V’shinantam l’vanecha.*

## The Content

Marking sacred time through blessings makes use of *big ideas* that are relevant and appropriate for preschoolers and their families to engage in. Concepts that go beyond the classroom, or *big ideas*, transcend its artificial laboratory space and are also relevant and authentic to the world outside<sup>7</sup> because these subjects require lots of probing in order to get to the core of their meanings. From my experience as an early

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6 Deuteronomy 6:6 – 7

7 Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe, *Understanding By Design*, (Pearson Merrill Prentice Hall, New Jersey, 2005), 5

childhood educator, it is clear that children and their families crave the opportunity to discover and learn in depth about *big Jewish ideas*.

Although there are endless examples of these *ideas* (i.e. “Does God care about me,” “What is sacred about time,”) “Marking Sacred Time” becomes the *big idea* lens for this guide because the first year of preschool presents a great opportunity for families to become aware of, articulate the importance of, and define “sacred time”. During this period of life the natural sense of wonder expressed by preschoolers presents an optimal opportunity to teach and consistently say blessings as well as to re-sensitize parents to their own sense of wonder. Additionally, blessings are said on a regular basis at many Jewish preschools, which makes them easy to memorize and incorporate as a regular part of daily living.

Sacred time, characterized by awe and wonder, will be examined in this guide through the thought of many Jewish thinkers but in particular Rabbis Abraham Joshua Heschel, Martin Buber and Michael Comins. These teachers describe Judaism as a religion of time aiming at the sanctification of time. They further assert that all humanity has an inherent sense of the sacred and consequently plead for people to develop what Heschel specifically called “radical amazement.”

Wonder and sacred time offers us more gifts than we imagine. One of the overall curricular goals for this guide seeks to help learners highlight the spirituality and inner beauty of Judaism through religious acts of blessings. Rabbi Marcia Prager declares, “When we choose to acknowledge the miracle of these moments, to remember them, to

log them, we can do this with a *bracha* [blessing].<sup>8</sup> Marking sacred time leads to gratitude, meaning making, and community, and perhaps most crucially, it opens the heart.

In order to teach about the wonder of marking sacred time through blessings, this curriculum guide will be animated by the following enduring understandings and essential questions.

### **Enduring Understandings:**

- When parents internalize big Jewish ideas first, children learn them best.
- Something sacred is at stake in every event.
- Children exercise radical amazement naturally; oftentimes, adults must relearn it.
- Judaism is a religion of time aiming at the sanctification of time.
- In any moment, a sense of the sacred can move us to prayer, and the acts of prayer and blessing can lead us to the sacred.
- No child is too young to be offered the opportunity to tackle *big ideas*.

### **Essential questions:**

- What is sacred time?
- How do you mark time Jewishly?
- What makes a blessing meaningful?
- What is the difference between a blessing and a prayer?
- How does the mundane become amazing?

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<sup>8</sup> Rabbi Marcia Prager, quote from *Seeing The Sacred: The Way of Blessing*, in *A Wild Faith: Jewish Way into Wilderness, Wilderness Ways into Judaism* by Rabbi Mike Comins, 2007, 85

## Letter to the Educator

Dear educator,

Thank you for picking up this curriculum guide. As a student, I know the excitement upon finding a curriculum guide that can add value to my work. It is my sincere hope that this curriculum guide helps to make whatever you are working on the best it can possibly be!

This guide, designed for parents of 1<sup>st</sup> time preschool children, addresses the need for a stronger connection between home and school and works to strengthen this bridge. The goal of the guide is to foster in families a greater awe and wonder of sacred time using existing blessings as well as original blessings created by the family. The course's cumulative assessment will be *A Book of Blessings Marking Sacred Time* to be designed, written, illustrated, and created by the learners. During the first class you will be distributing notebooks to them. They will use these notebooks for drafts of their blessings and other work before they transfer them into their final Book of Blessings. I suggest handing out basic journal notebooks for drafts and allow each learner to decide what they want to use for their final Book of Blessings. Appendix 1 shows an example of a table of contents for the final product.

It is my hope that this curriculum guide can help families examine aspects of Judaism that are relevant and meaningful to their lives. Preschool presents an ideal chapter in the life of a family to explore lifelong Jewish learning and living. This guide helps a family begin this process by examining basic elements of Jewish spirituality such as blessings, wonder, and sacred time.

In order to teach this guide successfully the teacher should have experience in and understand basic concepts and philosophies of early childhood education (ECE). The teacher should be passionate, willing to take risks, have patience, and be flexible, respectful, and creative.

The units of this curriculum guide are built one upon another, and most lessons require knowledge gained in a previous lesson in order to partake in them. If you choose to do the lessons in a different order, or to utilize them as needed, ensure that your students are grounded in the information they should have gained from the other lessons before you move forward.

This guide has 5 units, the first unit introduces Jewish understandings of sacred time, wonder and blessings, units 2 – 4 focus on the three categories of blessings (*Birchot Hanehenin*, *Birchot Hamitzvot*, and *Birchot Hoda'ah*), and unit 5 brings all the elements together for the conclusion.

Most of the lessons take approximately 1 hour, however, a few require additional time as indicated by the timeline found at the beginning of each lesson. The materials are also listed there. Resources can be found directly after each lesson. Some of the lessons require reading prior to participating in them; these readings can be found at the closure of the previous lesson.



Many of the lessons include a component of group work and *chevruta* (work in pairs), and therefore require the building of a cohesive, trusting community. This journey will start on the first day as the learners share their story and as the class gets to know one another, but will require you, the educator, to continually find ways to build cohesion amongst your learners. There may be times throughout the curriculum where learners might find themselves in a vulnerable place, having to share their own blessings, experiences, and memories with the rest of the learners. The value of trust and respect will be of high importance during these times. Please remember that every idea, thought and feeling about blessings, wonder, and sacred time are highly personal and at times may be a difficult subject to broach. This content can have varying meaning for learners and often can be a life long process to figure out how they provide meaning. It is my hope that you enable yourself to take this journey of struggle along with your learners, and you yourself begin to uncover the wonder of marking sacred time through blessings.

Good Luck!

Zach Zysman

## Unit 1 – Jewish Sacred Time

### Introduction

#### Enduring Understandings

- Something sacred is at stake in every event.
- Children exercise radical amazement naturally; oftentimes, adults must relearn it.
- Judaism is a religion of time aiming at the sanctification of time.
- In any moment, a sense of the sacred can move us to prayer, and the acts of prayer and blessing can lead us to the sacred.

#### Objectives

The learners should be able to:

- Identify sacred time in their life and formulate ideas about how to mark them as a family
- Describe and reinterpret their understanding of wonder and awe and prioritize time in their lives for them to be experienced
- Distinguish between a prayer and blessing and deepen their understanding of both.
- Begin assessing whether and how to incorporate more blessings into their daily lives.
- Describe how blessings might add meaning in their life
- Identify God Moments and describe their value
- Memorize *bracha* formula
- Recall and choose to recite *Shehecheyanu* at appropriate times

#### Unit Overview

Lesson 1	Introduction to sacred time, wonder, and blessings – 1 ½ hours
Lesson 2	Sacred Time – 1 hour
Lesson 3	Wonder – 1 hour
Lesson 4	Blessings – 1 hour
<b>Total:</b>	<b>4.5 hours</b>

#### Evidence of learning

The learners:

- Responses to questions about sacred time, wonder, and blessings
- Personal blessing about sacred time
- Self-reflection through writing

## Lesson 1

### Introduction to Blessings, Wonder and Sacred Time

#### Objectives

The learners should be able to:

- Describe at least 1 moment when you felt a connection to God
- Recall and recite *Shehecheyanu* blessing at appropriate time
- Distinguish between a prayer and blessing and deepen their understanding of both
- Begin assessing whether to incorporate more blessings into their daily lives

#### Timeline

0:00 – 0:20	Ice-breaker activity
0:20 – 0:45	Learning about the <i>Shehecheyanu</i>
0:40 – 1:00	Sacred Time
1:00 – 1:20	Blessing V. Prayer
1:20 – 1:30	Closure

#### Assessment

- Responses to questions about sacred time
- Personal blessing about sacred time
- Deepened appreciation of blessings

#### Materials

- Resource 1a - 1e
- Journals (enough for each learner)

#### Icebreaker – Getting to know you

- Ask learners to share their name, their child's name and what brought them to this class. Begin with yourself (why you wanted to teach this class) to break the ice. This will give you a better picture of learners' expectations about the course and give you insight into the background and motivations of your learners.
- Introduce "book of blessings", **say:** "The final project for this curriculum is "A Book of Blessings Marking Sacred Time" that will be designed, written, illustrated, and created by you. I will be providing you with composition notebooks for you to do your work and writing in. I highly recommend doing drafts of your work in this journal before transferring them to into a nicer one. We will be using these for nearly every lesson so it is very important to remember to bring them with you every time." Hand out the journals and ask the learners to write their names on them.

**Activity #1: What brought you to this moment? – Learning about the Shehecheyanu – Resource 1a**

- Distribute resource 1a of *Shehecheyanu* blessing in both Hebrew and English.
  - Read blessing together in both Hebrew and English a couple of times.
  - Read the translation given.
  - Teach one melody for this blessing (there are plenty on-line if you do not know any by heart).
  - Ask for volunteers to read the various meanings of the blessing. Then discuss the questions provided at the bottom of the resource.

**Activity #2: Quotes about Sacred Time – Resource 1b**

- Post quotes from resource 1b around the room. They can be arranged in any way that is conducive to the room. Ask the learners to read each of the quotes and choose one that speaks to them. Once they pick one, have them sit by the quote and discuss and answer the questions found on the bottom of resource 1b.
- Then invite everyone to copy down the quote they chose into their book of blessings on the designated page (see appendix 1).

**Activity #3 – What is the difference between a blessing and a prayer? – Resource 1c & 1d**

- Remaining in the “sacred time” quote groups have the learners read resource 1c about the similarities and differences of blessing and prayer.

(The following activity is taken from *Brachot: The Jewish Way of Finding God in Our Lives and in the World* by Melissa Sheryl Fand):

- Give each group about 20 – 30 *brachot* on slips of paper (resource 1d). Without talking they should try to group the *brachot* slips. After about 10 minutes, or when learners seem to have stopped grouping, ask them to share their groupings and what the common theme among each group was. See how many different ways/characteristics you can come up with for categorizing *brachot*.<sup>2</sup>
- After every group shares, **Say:** “This curriculum guide introduces three categories of *brachot*: *Birchot Hanehenin* (blessings of enjoyment), *Birchot Hamitzvot* (blessings of commandment), and *Birchot Hoda’ah* (blessings of gratitude). Now try grouping the *brachot* according to these categories.”
- End by asking the learners to explain their understanding of the difference between a blessing and a prayer.

**Closure – A Blessing Story and Shehecheyanu – Resource 1e**

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<sup>9</sup> Melissa Sheryl Fand, *Brachot: The Jewish Way of Finding God in Our Lives and in the World*, Beginning the Journey

- For the next class session ask the class to bring in their favorite poem or song that evokes the sacred for them.
- Identify this particular moment (the end of the first lesson and beginning of this journey) as a sacred time worthy of blessing. Have the learners gather in a circle and ask for a volunteer (or take turns) to read the following story: *A Blessing Story*<sup>10</sup> (resource 1e).
- End class by together reciting the *Shehecheyanu*

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<sup>10</sup> Rabbi Sheryl Lewart, *Blessings for Life's Journey*, 2013, xiv – xix

## Resource 1a

### *Shehecheyanu*

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה	Blessed are You,
אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם	our God, Creator of time and space,
שֶׁהַחַיֵּנוּ וְקִיָּמָנוּ	who has supported us, protected us,
וְהַגִּיעָנוּ לְזֶמֶן הַזֶּה.	and brought us to this moment.

#### **Translation:**

“Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of all, for giving us life, for sustaining us, and for enabling us to reach this season.”<sup>11</sup>

#### **Meaning:**

- The *Shehecheyanu* blessing was introduced to encourage Jews to offer thanks for new and unusual experiences. It is traditionally recited at the beginning of holidays, upon eating the first fruit of a season and at major life milestone events such as births, *B’nai mitzvah*, and weddings.

#### **Questions**

1. When do you say the *Shehecheyanu*? Why?
2. What value does it add when you say this blessing?
3. Identify what you would count as “*Shehecheyanu* moments” in your life.
4. How do you usually mark these times?

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<sup>11</sup> Translation from Mishkan T’Filah, 2007, p. 572

## Resource 1b

### Quotes about Sacred Time

#### Torah

- “On the seventh day God finished the work that He had been doing, and He ceased on the seventh day from all the work that He had done. And God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy, because on it God ceased from all the work of creation that He had done.” (Genesis 2:2 – 3)<sup>12</sup>
- “The Israelite people shall keep the Sabbath, observing the Sabbath throughout the ages as a covenant for all time: it shall be a sign for all time between Me and the people of Israel.” (Exodus 31: 16 – 17)<sup>13</sup>
- “On six days work may be done, but on the seventh day you shall have a Sabbath of complete rest, holy to the Lord; whoever does any work on it **shall be put to death** (Exodus 35:2)...One commentator would not take these words literally. He understood them to mean that those who ignore Shabbat forfeit their souls. That is, they become dead to the spiritual dimension of life. According to Jewish lore, on Shabbat a person acquires an additional deeper soul. At Shabbat’s end, it is taken away, to be restored the following Shabbat. A person who makes no distinction between Shabbat and the weekday forfeits that gift.”<sup>14</sup>
- “On six days work may be done, but on the seventh day there shall be a Sabbath of complete rest, a sacred occasion. You shall do no work; it shall be a Sabbath of the Lord throughout your settlements. These are the set times of the Lord, the sacred occasions which you shall celebrate each at its appointed time: In the first month...” (Leviticus 23:3 – 4)<sup>15</sup>

#### Abraham Joshua Heschel

- The higher goal of spiritual living is not to amass a wealth of information, but to face sacred moments. In a religious experience, for example, it is not a thing that imposes itself on man but a spiritual presence. What is retained in the soul is the moment of insight rather than the place where the act came to pass. A moment of insight is a fortune, transporting us beyond the confines of measured time.

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<sup>12</sup> *JPS Hebrew – English Tanakh*, Philadelphia, 1999, p. 3

<sup>13</sup> *JPS Hebrew – English Tanakh*, Philadelphia, 1999, p. 182

<sup>14</sup> *Etz Hayim: Torah and Commentary*, 2001, 554

<sup>15</sup> *JPS Hebrew – English Tanakh*, Philadelphia, 1999, p. 260

Spiritual life begins to decay when we fail to sense the grandeur of what is eternal in time.<sup>16</sup>

- Time and space are interrelated. To overlook either of them is to be partially blind. What we plead against is man's unconditional surrender to space, his enslavement to things. We must not forget that it is not a thing that lends significance to a moment; it is the moment that lends significance to things.<sup>17</sup>
- Judaism is a religion of time aiming at the sanctification of time. Unlike the space-minded man to whom time is unvaried, iterative, homogeneous, to whom all hours are alike, qualitiless, empty shells, the Bible senses the diversified character of time. There are no two hours alike. Every hour is unique and the only one given at the moment, exclusive and endlessly precious. Judaism teaches us to be attached to holiness in time, to be attached to sacred events, to learn how to consecrate sanctuaries that emerge from the magnificent stream to the year.<sup>18</sup>
- "The meaning of Shabbat is to celebrate time rather than space. Six days a week we live under the tyranny of things in space; on Shabbat we try to become attuned to the holiness of time. It is a day on which we are called upon to share in what is eternal in time."<sup>19</sup>

### Martin Buber

- "All of life is meeting. Where do we find God? Not in the *aron ha-kodesh*, the Holy Ark. Not in the Torah. Not even in the sanctuary itself. We find God in a simple Hebrew word. The word *bein*, which means "between." We find God in between – in the in-between a wife and husband, between a parent and child, between two lovers, between a student and teacher. We find God in relationship – between human beings, *bein adam l'chavero*, and between human beings and God, *bein adam l'Makom*. The Rabbis knew this. They created an entire religious system based on these two axes. How are we supposed to treat one another? How are we supposed to treat God?<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Sabbath*, 1951, p. 6

<sup>17</sup> Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Sabbath*, p. 6

<sup>18</sup> Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Sabbath*, p. 8

<sup>19</sup> Mishkan T'Fillah, 2007, p. 173, quote by Abraham Joshua Heschel

<sup>20</sup> Martin Buber, *Synagogue 2000: A trans-Denominational Project for the Synagogue of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, 2000, p. 2 – 18



- “Our relationship lives in the space between us – it doesn’t live in me or in you or even in the dialogue between the two of us – it lives in the space we live together and that space is sacred space.”<sup>21</sup>

### **Questions**

1. Explain what the quote says about sacred time?
2. Determine what is appealing about sacred time for you?
3. What new insights about sacred time do you glean from this quote?
4. How do you and your family currently mark sacred time?
5. Are there elements from this text that you could adapt into your practice?

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<sup>21</sup> <http://www.centreforinspiredliving.org/honouring-sacred-space/>

## Resource 1c

### Blessings vs. Prayer

#### Prayer

- “Prayer has been defined as “the service of the heart” or “in the heart,” as opposed to the service that was performed in the Temple, which consisted basically of the offering of sacrifices...Jewish prayer is recitation about God, about our history, about our ancestors, about God’s deeds, and about God’s demands.”<sup>22</sup>
- “The other major component of worship is the opportunity to hear God’s message to us...if prayer is an expression of our connection with God, that connection, to be meaningful, must be ongoing. Everything we do – all of our lives – must be an expression of that connection. Neither our deeds, our thoughts, our actions toward others, our ethics and morality can be excluded from expressing our relationship to God. Prayer is the conscious expression of that relationship, the moments and hours we devote exclusively to developing that connection: addressing ourselves to God, speaking about God, listening to the words of God.”<sup>23</sup>

#### Blessings

- “The predominant motif in the liturgy is praise. Of all possible Hebrew words that could have been used to express this feeling, the tradition chose the word *baruch* – “blessed.” The blessing in its various formulae is the most significant building block of Jewish worship. It is not even possible to cite the number of times it appears. Even the time of death and burial are occasions for blessings. The uniqueness of a blessing is that it is pure praise, asking nothing of God but rather giving us an opportunity to remind ourselves of God’s presence and of the ways in which we experience Him in the world. Every moment when we are aware of God, we speak His praise by proclaiming that God is blessed, that He is the supreme being of the universe.”<sup>24</sup>
- “Through the medium of its brief *brachot* formulae Judaism enables us to express a momentary flush of spiritual wonderment as a response to all the varied experiences of life. If our people have been hailed, justifiably, for their literary capability and intellectual creativity, the ritual of *brachot* must be given its share of credit for having made us reflective, contemplative, and keenly sensitive to all

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<sup>22</sup> Reuven Hammer, *Entering Jewish Prayer*, 1994, p. 4 – 5

<sup>23</sup> Reuven Hammer, *Entering Jewish Prayer*, p. 10

<sup>24</sup> Reuven Hammer, *Entering Jewish Prayer*, p. 25 – 26

the stimuli and phenomena of life and nature. Not only do we offer a blessing to the Creator for our food and drink, but we also have specially prescribed and individually formulated *brachot* when smelling fragrant trees and plants, fruits, spices, and oils, when seeing a flash of lightning or the rainbow, or when hearing thunder. There are also special blessings to be made when witnessing wonders of nature, such as high mountains, great deserts, rivers, and seas.”<sup>25</sup>

### **Reuven Hammer – Prayer vs. Blessings**

- “It is important to differentiate between “blessing” and “prayer.” Although we commonly use “prayer” to refer to everything in the service, in Hebrew “prayer” (*Tefilah*) also has a specific meaning: petition. “Blessing,” on the other hand, refers to the praise of God, proclamation of His greatness. According to Solomon Zeitlin, “A prayer is a plea for something in the future, while a blessing is a expression of thankfulness for something past or present.”<sup>26</sup>
- “In the technical sense, “prayer” in Judaism is a request; essentially it is the person asking God for something. A blessing, on the other hand, asks for nothing. It concentrates rather on praising God and describing His actions and attributes. Although over the years some brief aspects of prayer have also been incorporated, the blessings are overwhelmingly opportunities for the individual to respond to the presence of God, to become sensitive to the actions of God in the world, and to be reminded of that presence. To bless is even more than to praise. It is to bestow upon God the highest attributes we are capable of imagining and to proclaim Him before the entire world.”<sup>27</sup>
- “Blessings are words of praise for what God has done. Prayers are requests for God to help us.”<sup>28</sup>

### **Joel Lurie Grishaver – Prayer vs. Blessings**

- “I learned to make *brachot* (“blessings”) at the dining room table. I learned to pray on the battlefield.”<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Rabbi Jeffrey Cohen, *Blessed Are You*, 1993, p. 133

<sup>26</sup> Reuven Hammer, *Entering Jewish Prayer*, p. 89

<sup>27</sup> Reuven Hammer, *Entering Jewish Prayer*, pp. 135 – 136

<sup>28</sup> Reuven Hammer, *Entering Jewish Prayer*, p. 236

<sup>29</sup> <http://tjpnnews.com/?p=4555>

Resource 1d  
*Brachot*<sup>30</sup>

On eating bread:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, הַמוֹצִיא לֶחֶם מִן הָאָרֶץ.

*Baruch atah Adonai eloheinu melech ha'olam hamotzi lechem min ha'aretz.*

Praised are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the Universe,  
who brings forth bread from the earth.

On eating foods other than bread prepared from wheat, barley, rye, oats, or spelt (such as cakes and cookies):

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא מִיְּנֵי מְזוֹנוֹת.

*Baruch atah Adonai eloheinu melech ha'olam boray meenay mezonote.*

Praised are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the Universe,  
who creates different kinds of nourishment.

On drinking wine:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרִי הַגֶּפֶן.

*Baruch atah Adonai eloheinu melech ha'olam boray pri ha'gafen.*

Praised are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the Universe, who creates the fruit of the vine.

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<sup>30</sup>

[http://chai.urj.org/\\_kd/Items/actions.cfm?action=Show&item\\_id=1063&destination=ShowItem](http://chai.urj.org/_kd/Items/actions.cfm?action=Show&item_id=1063&destination=ShowItem)  
<http://www.akhlah.com/jewish-traditions/blessings/putting-up-a-mezuzah/>,  
<http://www.aish.com/sh/ht/fn/48965051.html>

On eating fruit:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְרֵי הָעֵץ.

*Baruch atah Adonai eloheinu melech ha'olam boray pri ha'eytz.*

Praised are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the Universe, who creates the fruit of the tree.

On eating foods which grow in the ground, like potatoes:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְרֵי הָאֲדָמָה.

*Baruch atah Adonai eloheinu melech ha'olam boray pri ha'adamah.*

Praised are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the Universe, who creates the fruit of the ground.

A general blessing for other food and drink:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁהַכֹּל נִהְיָה בְּדַבְּרוֹ.

*Baruch atah Adonai eloheinu melech ha'olam she'hakol nihiyeh bidvaro.*

Praised are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the Universe,  
at whose word all things come into existence.

On smelling fragrant spices:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא מִיְּנֵי בְשָׁמִים.

*Baruch atah Adonai eloheinu melech ha'olam boray minay vesamim.*

Praised are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the Universe,  
who creates different kinds of spices.

On smelling the fragrance of shrubs and trees:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא עֵצִי בְּשָׁמִים.

*Baruch atah Adonai eloheinu melech ha'olam boray atzay vesamim.*

Praised are you, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the Universe, who creates fragrant trees.

On smelling the fragrance of plants and herbs:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא עֲשָׂבִי בְּשָׁמִים.

*Baruch atah Adonai eloheinu melech ha'olam boray isvay vesamim.*

Praised are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the Universe, who creates fragrant plants.

On smelling fragrant fruit:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, הַנוֹתֵן רֵיחַ טוֹב בְּפִירוֹת.

*Baruch atah Adonai eloheinu melech ha'olam hanotayn rayach tov bapayrot.*

Praised are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the Universe,  
who gives a pleasant fragrance to fruits.

On smelling fragrant oils:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא שֶׁמֶן עָרֵב.

*Baruch atah Adonai eloheinu melech ha'olam boray shemen arayv.*

Praised are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the Universe, who creates fragrant oil.



On seeing a rainbow:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, זֹכֵר הַבְּרִית, וְנֶאֱמַן בְּבְרִיתוֹ, וְקַיָּם  
בְּמֵאֲמָרוֹ.

*Baruch atah Adonai eloheinu melech ha'olam zocher ha'berit ve'ne'eman bivrito vekayam  
bema'amaro.*

Praised are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the Universe, who remembers the covenant  
and is faithful in keeping promises.

On seeing trees blossoming for the first time in the year:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁלֹּא חִסַּר בְּעוֹלָמוֹ דָּבָר וּבְרָא בוֹ  
בְּרִיּוֹת טוֹבוֹת וְאֵילָנוֹת טוֹבִים לְהֵנֹת בָּהֶם בְּנֵי אָדָם.

*Baruch atah Adonai eloheinu melech ha'olam shelo chisar b'olamo davar uvara vo briyot tovot  
v'ilanot tovim l'hanot bahem b'nai adam.*

Praised are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the Universe, who has withheld nothing from  
the world, and has created lovely creatures and beautiful trees for people to enjoy.

On seeing the ocean:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁעָשָׂה אֶת הַיָּם הַגָּדוֹל.

*Baruch atah Adonai eloheinu melech ha'olam she-asah et hayam hagadol.*

Praised are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the Universe, who has made the great sea.

On seeing trees or creatures of unusual beauty:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁכָּכָה לוֹ בְּעוֹלָמוֹ.

*Baruch atah Adonai eloheinu melech ha'olam shekacha lo b'olamo.*

Praised are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the Universe, who has such beauty in the  
world.

On seeing someone of abnormal appearance:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, מְשַׁנֶּה הַבְּרִיּוֹת.

*Baruch atah Adonai eloheinu melech ha'olam mishaneh ha'briyot.*

Praised are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the Universe, who makes people different.

On seeing lightning, shooting stars, mountains, or sunrises:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, עוֹשֶׂה מַעֲשֵׂה בְּרֵאשִׁית.

*Baruch atah Adonai eloheinu melech ha'olam ma'asey v'reshit.*

Praised are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the Universe, Source of creation.

On seeing restored synagogues:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, מַצִּיב גְּבוּל אֶלְמָנָה.

*Baruch atah Adonai eloheinu melech ha'olam matziv ge'vul almanah.*

Praised are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the Universe,  
who restores the borders of the widow [Zion].

On seeing a person who is really knowledgeable about Torah:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁחָלַק מַחְכְּמָתוֹ לִירֵאָיו.

*Baruch atah Adonai eloheinu melech ha'olam shechalak me'chochmato lirey'av.*

Praised are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the Universe,  
who has given wisdom to those who revere God.



On seeing a person who knows lots of things about lots of things:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁנָּתַן מִחֲכָמָתוֹ לְבָשָׂר וָדָם.

*Baruch atah Adonai eloheinu melech ha'olam she'natan me-chochmato l'vasar va'dam.*

Praised are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the Universe,  
who has given wisdom to human beings.

On seeing a head of state (like a president):

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁנָּתַן מִכְבוֹדוֹ לְבָשָׂר וָדָם.

*Baruch atah Adonai eloheinu melech ha'olam she'natan mi'kvodo l'vasar va'dam.*

Praised are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the Universe,  
who has given special status to human beings.

#### Blessing for Putting up a Mezuzah

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר  
קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ לְקַבֹּעַ מְזוּזָה:

*Baruch ata Adonai elohaynu melech ha'olam asher kidshanu bemitzvotav vetzivanu likboah mezuzah.*

Praised are you, Adonai our G-d, Sovereign of the Universe, who has made us holy with Mitzvot and instructed us to affix the Mezuzah.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ	Baruch ata Adonoy
אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם	Eloheinu melech ha-olam
אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו	asher kid'shanu be'mitzvo'sav
וְצִוָּנוּ לְהַדְלִיק נֵר שֶׁל שַׁבָּת.	ve-tzivanu lehadlik ner shel Shabbos.

Blessed are You, God, King of the Universe,  
Who made us holy with His commandments  
and commanded us to kindle the Shabbat light.

*Immediately upon waking up, say:*

מוֹדֶה אֲנִי לְפָנֶיךָ.	Modeh ani l'fanecha,
מֶלֶךְ חַי וְקַיִם.	Melech chai v'kayam,
שֶׁהַחַיְתָּה בִּי נִשְׁמָתִי בְּחַמְלָה	she'heh'chezarta bi nishmati b'chemla
רַבָּה אֱמוּנָתְךָ.	Raba emuna'techa.

I gratefully thank You, O living and eternal King, for  
You have returned my soul within me, with compassion.  
Abundant is your faithfulness.

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל: יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ, יְהוָה אֶחָד!

Sh'ma Yis-ra-eil: Adonai Eh-lo-hei-nu, Adonai Eh-chad!  
*Hear, O Israel: the Eternal One is our God,  
the Eternal God alone!*

בָּרוּךְ שֵׁם כְּבוֹד מַלְכוּתוֹ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד!

Ba-ruch shem k'vod mal-chu-to l'o-lam va-ed!  
*Blessed is God's glorious majesty for ever and ever!*

*Resource 1e*  
*A Blessing Story*<sup>31</sup>

(This story is from *Blessings for Life's Journey*, by Rabbi Sheryl Lewart, pp. xiv – xviii):

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Once upon a time, a long time ago, there was an Officer of the Law, a newly minted graduate of the academy, filled with pride as you can imagine, in his crisp uniform of blue with brass buttons and gold epaulets, and ribbons for swordsmanship.

If truth be told, and truth should be told in a story, he was as pompous and full of himself as he could be. Arrogant, callous even, and with his new sword gleaming at his side, bold and cold as he could be, as well.

One day he was walking his beat and heard a commotion in the alley. He ventured into the darkness and there, in the distance, he saw a man in rags. "Come forward," he commanded. "Come forward now!" But the man in rags did not come forward. "I am an Officer of the Law, and I command you to come forward!"

The man in rags still did not move. He shifted his weight from one foot to the other and spoke, "I don't know what I'm going to do with you."

"Do with me?" the Officer of the Law mocked. "Do with me? You don't do with me! I do with you! I am an Officer of the Court and I order you to come forward."

"Ahh," said the man in rags, "now I know what to do with you," and as he spoke, he drew his sword. "Now I know exactly what to do," and without another word he moved to attack.

The Officer of the Law drew his sword, of course, in defense. "Stop that!" he ordered. "Put down your sword right now or someone is going to get hurt for no reason." But the man in rags did not stop. "Stop!" he said again, but to no avail, and as the man in rags thrust his sword forward, the Officer of the Law was forced to retreat. Just as it seemed that the man in rags would actually prevail over the Officer, he suddenly lowered his guard, and what the Officer of the Law had intended as a parry became a thrust. His sword ran right through the man in rags.

"I didn't mean that," the Officer of the Law said. "I didn't mean to hurt you. Why didn't you stop when I ordered you to? Why did you attack me?"

All the man in rags could say was "I am leaving you – but as I do, I put upon you the Curse of Blessings."

"What do you mean?" asked the Officer of the Law, now quite confused by all that

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<sup>31</sup> Rabbi Sheryl Lewart, *Blessings For Life's Journey*, 2013, pp. xiv – xxiii

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had happened in that narrow alleyway.

“The Curse of Blessings means that every day you must say a new blessing, one you have never said before. On the day you do not say a new blessing, on that day you will die.”

The man in rags closed his eyes. The Officer of the Law looked around for help. No one was in sight. When he turned back, the man in rags had disappeared. He was gone.

“It must have been a dream or a nightmare,” the Officer of the Law thought. “I imagined the whole thing.”

The time was late in the afternoon. The sun was setting. As much as the Officer of the Law tried to ignore his experience he could not. It was sunset, the end of every Jewish day (after all this is a Jewish story), and the Officer of the Law suddenly felt his body growing colder and knew for certain from the chill that his life was actually leaving him.

In a panic, he uttered these words of blessing: “O my God, thank you for creating such a beautiful sunset.” At once warmth and life flowed back into him. He realized, with both shock and relief, the curse had been for real.

The next morning he did not delay. He woke with words of blessing: “I bless the Source that allowed me to wake up this morning.” His life felt secure the entire day. The next morning he blessed his ability to rise from his bed, the following day, that he could tie his shoes.

Day after day he found abilities he could bless: that he could go to the bathroom, that he had teeth to brush, that each finger of his hands still worked, that he had toes on his feet and hair on his head. He blessed his clothes, every garment. He blessed his house, the roof and floor, his furniture, every table and chair.

At last he ran out of things to bless, so he began to bless relationships. He blessed his family and friends, fellow workers, and those who worked for him. He blessed the mailman and the clerks, firefighters and schoolteachers. He was surprised to find they appreciated his blessings. His words had power. They drew family and friends closer to him. Word went out that this was an unusual Officer of the Law, one who spread blessings.

Years passed, decades. The policeman had to go farther afield to find new sources of blessing. He blessed city councils and university buildings, scientists and their discoveries. As he traveled through the world he became in awe of its balance and beauty and blessed that. He realized that the more he learned, the more he had to bless. His life was long, and he had the opportunity to learn in every field.

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He passed the age of one hundred. Most of his friends were long gone. His time was relegated to searching for the purpose in his life and the one source from which all blessings flow. He had long since realized he was not the source but only the conduit, the channel, and even that realization was welcomed with a blessing that sustained him for yet another day.

As he approached the age of one hundred and twenty, he decided that his life was long enough. Even Moses had not lived longer than that. So on his birthday, he decided to utter no new blessing and allow his life to come to an end.

All that day he recited old blessings and reviewed all the blessings of his life. As the sun was setting, a chill settled into his body. He did not resist it. In the twilight, a figure appeared, the man in rags.

"You," said the Officer of the Law. "I have thought about you ever day for a hundred years! I never meant to harm you. Please, forgive me."

"You still don't understand," said the man in rags. "You don't know who I am, do you? I am the angel who was sent a hundred years ago to harvest your soul, but when I looked at you, so arrogant and proud, so pompous and full of yourself, there was nothing there to harvest. An empty uniform was all I saw. So I put upon you the Curse of Blessings, and now look what you've become."

The Officer of the Law grasped in an instant all that had happened and why. Overwhelmed, he said, "*Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu melech HaOlam, Shehecheyanu, Vekeiyamanu, Vehigianu Lazman HaZeh.*"

"Now look what you've done!" the man in rags said in frustration. "A new blessing – the Shehecheyanu."

And the policeman and the man in rags looked at each other, neither knowing what to do...

## Lesson 2

### Sacred Time

#### Objectives

The learners should be able to:

- Identify sacred time in their life and illustrate its value
- Describe what they do, or not do, to mark this time

#### Timeline

0:00 – 0:10	Set Induction
0:10 – 0:30	A Sacred Moment in Time
0:30 – 0:50	Meditative Walk
0:40 – 1:00	<i>Sacred Art (Poetry or Music)</i>

#### Assessment

- Identify sacred time and justify its importance in your life
- Begin personal definition of sacred time

#### Materials

- Resource 1f - 1g

#### Set Induction – Free-write about Sacred Time

- Hand out or write the following quote taken from the Chabad website on the board:

*"All events take place in the "vessel of time." They may seem simply a string of meaningless unrelated occurrences. Yet you have the capacity, through consciousness, to elevate these by drawing insight from them, and raising them to a plane of meaning. Living consciously and deeply means taking the moments of time and connecting them to your deepest awareness. Then not only are the events elevated, but the time of "here and now" becomes sacred as well."*<sup>32</sup>

- Invite the learners to do a free-write about their thoughts and feelings of this text.  
Additional Guiding Questions:
  - With whom or what group do you share your most sacred and private hopes for your life and for the lives of those you love?
  - What are those most sacred hopes?
- Invite a few people to share their thoughts and/or feelings.

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<sup>32</sup> [http://www.chabad.org/library/article\\_cdo/aid/58672/jewish/The-Making-of-Sacred-Time.htm](http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/58672/jewish/The-Making-of-Sacred-Time.htm)

### Activity #1 – A Sacred Moment in Time – Resource 1f

- Learners will get in to groups of 4 – 6 and read this short piece then answer and discuss the questions (resource 1f):
- The groups will gather together as a whole and share their answers to the questions with the rest of the learners.

### Activity #2 – Meditative Walk – Resource 1g

The following is an activity taken from *A Wild Faith* by Rabbi Mike Comins:

- **Say:** When we remove ourselves from the social world by walking silently, other distractions are ready to jump in. Our minds might occupy our attention with worries regarding tomorrow's meeting, regrets about something we said yesterday, or thoughts about what we're having for dinner. Meditation is the art of dealing with our restless minds in order to live fully in the present.
  - One meditative strategy is to occupy the mind with several simultaneous tasks, all focused on the present. This is my favorite way of staying in the here and now while feeling stressed or anxious. The goal is simply to pay attention to the natural world.<sup>33</sup>
- 
- **Procedure:**
    - Find a route (either around your facilities or in the direct neighborhood) and go for a 10-minute walk following the procedures below. First, gather the group and read the guidelines for the walk found in resource 1h.
    - Take the group on a silent walk giving them directions every few moments.

### Activity #3 – Sacred Art (Poetry or Music)

- Learners will have an opportunity to recommend and defend their choice of the poem or song they were asked to bring that, for them, evokes the sacred. These could be copied and handed out as a resource for the Book of Blessings.

### Closure – HOMEWORK

- Invite the learners to write in their Book of Blessings what their ideal *Shabbat* (day off) looks like. Practice writing a blessing for that day.

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<sup>33</sup> Mike Comins, *A Wild Faith: Jewish Ways into Wilderness, Wilderness Ways into Judaism*, 2007, p. 60



*Resource 1f*  
*A Sacred Moment in Time*

(The following information on sacred time is from the website [www.myjewishlearning.com](http://www.myjewishlearning.com) and the Etz Hayim Torah Commentary and can be found at the links listed in the footnote):

“Are there special, sacred moments that you set aside in the hopes that you won’t be interrupted or distracted? When are these times? How consistently do they happen? Do they even exist for your family? If they do, think about how those times feel different from the rest of the week. What do you do during sacred time? Are you playing the latest app on your iphone, do you make phone calls or answer email? What occupies your time? What does your family do? Like to do? How do you go about making sure that this special time actually happens?”<sup>34</sup>

The Torah describes the sacred time of Shabbat in life and death terms. Exodus 35:2 reads, “On six days work may be done, but on the seventh day you shall have a Sabbath of complete rest, holy to the Lord; whoever does any work on it shall be put to death.” At first glance, this seems harsh and full of anger, especially in our modern age and where we live. A comment by J. Eybeschutz, however, helps to frame the verse in a new light. He understood these words to mean, “those who ignore *Shabbat* forfeit their souls. That is, they become dead to the spiritual dimension of life.”<sup>35</sup>

Instead of thinking of Shabbat as being a time when there are lots of rules of things we "don't do," we could think of Shabbat as a time when we are freed from those limitations and have the power to create those sacred moments in our lives.”<sup>36</sup>

**Questions to Discuss:**

1. Does this image of Shabbat or sacred time resonate with you?
2. What are the things you might do, or not do, on Shabbat in order to make it more special for you?
3. Imagine and outline what an ideal Shabbat (day off) would look like for you.

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<sup>34</sup> [http://www.myjewishlearning.com/texts/Bible/Weekly\\_Torah\\_Portion/family-pekudei\\_Prn.shtml](http://www.myjewishlearning.com/texts/Bible/Weekly_Torah_Portion/family-pekudei_Prn.shtml)

<sup>35</sup> Etz Hayim Torah and Commentary, p. 552

<sup>36</sup> [http://www.myjewishlearning.com/texts/Bible/Weekly\\_Torah\\_Portion/family-pekudei\\_Prn.shtml](http://www.myjewishlearning.com/texts/Bible/Weekly_Torah_Portion/family-pekudei_Prn.shtml)



## **Resource 1g** ***Meditative Walk Script***

(This script contains information from *A Wild Faith*, by Mike Comins, pp. 60 – 61):

### **Say:**

We are now going to begin our walk (ask the learners to begin walking, making sure they know the path and when to return).

### **Continue by saying:**

During the walk, remain silent. Do not talk, as hard as it may be. Focus on your breath. Resist the urge to make comments or talk with your neighbor. “You might listen for the subtle sound of breathing, notice the rising and falling of the belly and chest, or focus on the sensation of air passing through the nostrils. When thoughts arise, gently let them go and return to the breath.”<sup>37</sup>

### **After 1 minute of walking say:**

“Leave half your attention on the breath and place the other half on the bottoms of your feet. Feel the pressure of your body on the earth; notice the constant adjustments your muscles make to maintain balance.”<sup>38</sup>

### **After 3 minutes of walking say:**

“After another minute, shift your focus once again. Place 25% of your awareness on your breath, another 25% on the soles of your feet, and 50% on the world around you. Take in all the sounds and sights of the land you are traversing.”<sup>39</sup>

### **After 5 minutes of walking, turn around and begin heading to where you started and say:**

“When your mind wanders and focus fades, try not to get angry at yourself. This happens to everyone, no matter how experienced at meditative walking. Gently return

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<sup>37</sup> Mike Comins, *A Wild Faith: Jewish Ways into Wilderness, Wilderness Ways into Judaism*, p. 60

<sup>38</sup> Mike Comins, *A Wild Faith: Jewish Ways into Wilderness, Wilderness Ways into Judaism*, p. 60

<sup>39</sup> Mike Comins, *A Wild Faith: Jewish Ways into Wilderness, Wilderness Ways into Judaism*, p. 61

your attention to the breath and the soles of your feet, then look, listen, and continue on.”<sup>40</sup>

**After 7 minutes of walking say:**

Remember to focus on your breath, the soles of your feet and on the world around you. When your mind wanders, do not get angry. Gently return your attention to the breath and the soles of your feet.

**After 10 minutes of walking you should return to the class and go right into Activity #3.**

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<sup>40</sup> Mike Comins, *A Wild Faith: Jewish Ways into Wilderness, Wilderness Ways into Judaism*, p. 61

## Lesson 3

### Wonder

#### Objectives

The learners should be able to:

- Describe wonder and awe
- Identify, make time for, and value God Moments in your life

#### Timeline

0:00 – 0:05	Set Induction
0:05 – 0:35	Wonder Jigsaw
0:35 – 0:55	An Awesome Thing I've Seen
0:55 – 1:00	Closure

#### Assessment

- Presentation to jigsaw groups about wonder

#### Materials

- Resource 1h – 1n
- Posters marked:
  - “An awesome thing I’ve seen” (at top) with “What I did when I saw it” (at bottom)
  - “An awesome thing I’ve tasted” (at top) with “What I did when I tasted it” (at bottom)
  - “An awesome thing I’ve smelled” (at top) with “What I did when I smelled it” (at bottom)

#### Set Induction – Free Write on Heschel

- Write the following quote on the board and invite the learners to free write about it in their blessings book.

“As civilization advances, the sense of wonder declines. Such decline is an alarming symptom of our state of mind. Humanity will not perish for want of information, but only for want of appreciation.” – Abraham Joshua Heschel

- How would you describe what Heschel calls “the sense of wonder?”

#### Activity #1 – Wonder Jigsaw – Resource 1h – 1k

- Divide students into groups of 3.
- Assign each person in the group to learn one of the following segments, making sure learners have direct access only to their own segment.
  - Radical Amazement (Heschel) – resource 1h

- I/Thou (Buber) – resource 1i
  - Spiritual Dynamics (Comins) – resource 1j
- Give students time to read over their segment at least twice and become familiar with it. There is no need for them to memorize it.
- Form temporary “expert groups” by having one student from each group join other students assigned to the same segment.
- Give students in these expert groups time to discuss the main points of their segment and to rehearse the presentations they will make to their jigsaw group.
- Bring the students back into their jigsaw groups.
  - Ask each student to present her or his segment to the group. Encourage others to ask questions of clarification.
- Come together as a class to discuss the various approaches to wonder (resource 1k)

### **Activity #2 – An Awesome Thing I’ve Seen! – Resource 1l**

(This activity was taken from *Chai Learning for Jewish Life* and can be found at the link in the footnote):

- Introduce Awe (resource 1l)
- Create three posters for learners to complete.
  - On the first one, write, “An awesome thing I’ve seen” across the top and “What I did when I saw it” across the middles.
  - On the second, write “An awesome thing I’ve tasted” and “What I did when I tasted it.”
  - On the third, write “An awesome thing I’ve smelled” and “What I did when I smelled it.”
    - You may want to include an answer of your own on each poster as an example to help focus the students.
- Give everyone a marker; different colors are preferable and ask them to add their thought to the poster, either by writing or drawing. Encourage each learner to start at a different poster and work his or her way around the room.
- When everyone has had a chance to share their thoughts explain that something “awesome” is something that inspires awe, reverence, and wonder. That feeling can often be a feeling of connection to God. **Ask if anyone remembers feeling a connection to God at the moments they wrote about on the posters.** Explain that Judaism encourages us to recognize these awesome moments as moments of connection to God by reciting blessings to acknowledge and give thanks to God at

those times.<sup>41</sup>

### Closure

- Handout reading for next time:
  - *What is a bracha*<sup>42</sup> (Resource 1*m*)
  - *Moses sees the afterward of God*<sup>43</sup> (Resource 1*n*)

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<sup>41</sup>

[http://chai.urj.org/\\_kd/Items/actions.cfm?action=Show&item\\_id=1063&destination=ShowItem](http://chai.urj.org/_kd/Items/actions.cfm?action=Show&item_id=1063&destination=ShowItem)

<sup>42</sup> Joel Lurie Grishaver, *Stories We Pray*, 271

<sup>43</sup> Joel Lurie Grishaver, *Stories We Pray*, 273 – 275

## Resource 1h Wonder Jigsaw

### Radical Amazement (Heschel)

(The following information about A.J. Heschel was taken from <https://theshalomcenter.org/node/88>):

"What does it mean that we are moved to tears by the sight of a sunset? Our human responses to the miraculous may be merely a result of evolution, but is there more significance to them than that? For theologian Abraham Joshua Heschel, as for many scholars of religious studies, wonder is the very source of religion, and the mother of human creativity: not theology but amazement; not understanding but mystery.

Among the many things that religious tradition holds in store for us is a legacy of wonder. The surest way to suppress our ability to understand the meaning of God and the importance of worship is to take things for granted. Indifference to the sublime wonder of living is the root of sin.

Wonder or radical amazement is the chief characteristic of the religious man's attitude toward history and nature. One attitude is alien to his spirit: taking things for granted, regarding events as a natural course of things. To find an approximate cause of a phenomenon is no answer to his ultimate wonder. He knows that there are laws that regulate the course of natural processes; he is aware of the regularity and pattern of things. However, such knowledge fails to mitigate his sense of perpetual surprise at the fact that there are facts at all. Looking at the world he would say, "This is the Lord's doing, it is marvelous in our eyes" (Psalms 118:23).

As civilization advances, the sense of wonder declines. Such decline is an alarming symptom of our state of mind. Mankind will not perish for want of information; but only for want of appreciation. The beginning of our happiness lies in the understanding that life without wonder is not worth living. What we lack is not a will to believe but a will to wonder.

Awareness of the divine begins with wonder. It is the result of what man does with his higher incomprehension. The greatest hindrance to such awareness is our adjustment to conventional notions, to mental clichés. Wonder or radical amazement, the state of maladjustment to words and notions, is therefore a prerequisite for an authentic awareness of that which is.

Radical amazement has a wider scope than any other act of man. While any act of perception or cognition has as its object a selected segment of reality, radical amazement refers to all of reality; not only to what we see, but also to the very act of seeing as well as to our own selves, to the selves that see and are amazed at their

ability to see.

The grandeur or mystery of being is not a particular puzzle to the mind, as, for example, the cause of volcanic eruptions. We do not have to go to the end of reasoning to encounter it. Grandeur or mystery is something with which we are confronted everywhere and at all times. Even the very act of thinking baffles our thinking, just as every intelligible fact is, by virtue of its being a fact, drunk with baffling aloofness. Does not mystery reign within reasoning, within perception, within explanation? What formula could explain and solve the enigma of the very fact of thinking?"<sup>44</sup>

### Discussion Questions:

- Would your life be different if you carried this consciousness with you on a daily basis? Is it possible/realistic to live in this consciousness on a daily basis?
- How can you achieve radical amazement with your family?
- What fills you with awe and wonder? What baffles you? What scares you?
- Is life orderly or chaotic? A finely tuned machine or random?
- If you were to speak to someone about God who knew nothing of the term, what might you say?

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<sup>44</sup> <https://theshalomcenter.org/node/88>

## Resource 1i Wonder Jigsaw

### I/Thou Relationship (Buber)

(This information comes from [www.myjewishlearning.com](http://www.myjewishlearning.com) and can be found in the link listed in the footnote):

"Martin Buber is best known for his religious philosophy of dialogue. In *I/Thou*, Buber describes two kinds of relationships, the "I-It", and the "I-Thou". The I-It relationship is one based on detachment from others and involves a utilitarian approach, in which one uses another as an object.

Our relationship with God serves as the foundation for our I-Thou relationships with all others, and every I-Thou relationship--be it with a person or thing--involves a meeting with God. God, in a sense, is the unifying context, the meeting place, for all meaningful human experience. According to Buber, one encounters God through one's encounters with other human beings and the world. "Meet the world with the fullness of your being and you shall meet God."

When one encounters the world in this way, revelation occurs. "God speaks to man in the things and beings he sends him in life. Man answers through his dealings with these things and beings." The Bible itself contains models of this human experience of God. Moses perceives natural events as indications of God's power and God's presence in the human realm. Similarly, the power and show of natural forces at Sinai led the Israelites to accept the revelation of God's Torah.

Buber's understanding of the religious experience of the biblical writers also applied to his understanding of the works of the Hasidic masters. In many of the teachings Buber collected in *Tales of the Hasidim*, God is portrayed as immanent--an immediate and felt presence. God can be found in every encounter, in each experience, and in every aspect of the world. Because of his focus on experiential existence, Buber is considered an existentialist thinker."<sup>45</sup>

### Discussion Questions:

- According to Buber, how does one experience wonder?

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<sup>45</sup>

<http://www.myjewishlearning.com/beliefs/Theology/God/Modern Views/Encountering God.shtml?p=1>



- What does an I/Thou relationship mean to you?
- Would your life be different if you carried this consciousness with you on a daily basis? Is it possible/realistic to live in this consciousness on a daily basis?
- What are some ways you can be in an I/Thou relationship with the members of your family?

## Resource 1j Wonder Jigsaw

### *Spiritual Dynamics (Rabbi Mike Comins)*

(The following information about spiritual dynamics is from [www.ejewishphilanthropy.com](http://www.ejewishphilanthropy.com) and can be found at the link listed in the footnote):

“People get to God, if they get to God, because of God-moments, not God-concepts. While the ideas in prayer are important, it is the experience of prayer – facilitated by poetry, music, introspection and community – that moves people. Words like “transcendence,” “heart” and “connection” are used to describe meaningful services, not “intellectually satisfying.”

As Rabbi Zalman Schachter Shlomi puts it, “Theology is the afterthought of the believer.” That’s why the most influential theological writers of our time begin with lived experience. Buber speaks of I-thou and Heschel of wonder and awe. They describe the spiritual dynamics of encountering the Divine in great detail, and largely ignore philosophical discussions on the why and what of God in favor of exploring the how and the who.

Instead of theological speculation about God, we can ask, what makes some moments transcendent, how do we get more of them, and what do we do with them? Regarding prayer, we can talk less about what happens on God’s end and more about what makes prayer work on our end. Instead of “why do bad things happen to good people,” and other insoluble dilemmas, we can ask, what makes for a good prayer session, how do I uncover my heart’s truest yearnings, how do I put those yearnings into words, and how does prayer help me cope with loss?

The Hebrew word *yirah*, writes Heschel, refers to both “fear” and “awe.” What, he asks, is the difference? If a lightening storm is about to descend on us, a healthy response would be to get as far away as possible. But if we can safely watch, we are attracted. We want to get close. We somehow know that genuine living, and its meaning, are found here.

Awe is a composite term. Think of the most awesome event you know. Most say childbirth. What makes it awesome? We are lost in a swirl of emotions caused by danger and beauty, by being so close to the great mystery of life and death. Somehow, in moments like this, we intuit that this life has importance, that we are called to serve life, and that the source of this call is deep within this world, and somehow beyond it.

In a spiritual dynamics approach, a question is what do good pray-ers do when they pray? What goes into a transcendent moment and how can I make that happen more often? The spiritual dynamics approach explores topics such as putting heart into

words, or connecting to our deepest yearnings. God-ideas are not critical: we let God-ideas arise when our experience makes them relevant. Instead, we concentrate on what is critical: the skills of spiritual practice that produce God-moments.”<sup>46</sup>

**Discussion Questions:**

- According to Comins, how does one experience the divine?
- How do you understand the spiritual dynamics approach?
- Would your life be different if you carried this consciousness with you on a daily basis? Is it possible/realistic to live in this consciousness on a daily basis?
- What is your interpretation of spiritual dynamics? Do you see this approach working for you? Why or why not?

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<sup>46</sup> <http://ejewishphilanthropy.com/it%E2%80%99s-only-natural-the-powerful-connection-of-jewish-spirituality-in-the-great-outdoors/>

## **Resource 1k**

### **Various Approaches to Wonder**

#### **A.J. Heschel (Radical Amazement)**

- Wonder or radical amazement is the chief characteristic of the religious man's attitude toward history and nature.
- The beginning of our happiness lies in the understanding that life without wonder is not worth living. What we lack is not a will to believe but a will to wonder.
- Awareness of the divine begins with wonder. It is the result of what man does with his higher incomprehension.
- Wonder or radical amazement, the state of maladjustment to words and notions, is therefore a prerequisite for an authentic awareness of that which is.

#### **Buber (I/Thou)**

- Martin Buber is best known for his religious philosophy of dialogue. In *I/Thou*, Buber describes two kinds of relationships, the "I-It", and the "I-Thou". The I-It relationship is one based on detachment from others and involves a utilitarian approach, in which one uses another as an object.

#### **Comins (Spiritual Dynamics)**

- In a spiritual dynamics approach, a question is what do good pray-ers do when they pray? What goes into a transcendent moment and how can I make that happen more often? The spiritual dynamics approach explores topics such as putting heart into words, or connecting to our deepest yearnings. God-ideas are not critical: we let God-ideas arise when our experience makes them relevant. Instead, we concentrate on what is critical: the skills of spiritual practice that produce God-moments.

## Resource 11

### Awe

(The following information about awe is from [www.reformjudaism.org](http://www.reformjudaism.org) and can be found at the link listed in the footnote):

#### **Definitions of Awe**<sup>47</sup>

- Awe precedes faith; it is at the root of faith. We must grow in awe in order to reach faith. We must be guided by awe to be worthy of faith. Awe rather than faith is the cardinal attitude of the religious Jew. It is "the beginning and gateway of faith, the first precept of all, and upon it the whole world is established." In Judaism, *yirat hashem*, the awe of God, or *yirat shamayim*, the "awe of heaven," is almost equivalent to the word "religion." In Biblical language the religious man is called not "believer," as he is for example in Islam, but *yirat hashem*. (Abraham Joshua Heschel, *God in Search of Man* [New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1955], p. 77)
- *Rav Yehudah* said, "The Holy One, blessed be God, created God's world only that humans should fear/revere God, for it is said, and God hath done it, that humans should fear/be in awe before God" (Ecclesiastes 3:14). (Babylonian Talmud, Shabbat 31b)
- Where there is no wisdom, there is no awe.  
Where there is no awe, there is no wisdom. (Pirkei Avot 3:21)
- I feared in my joy, I rejoiced in my fear, and my love prevailed over all. (Seder Eliyahu Rabba, chapter 3)

#### **Discussion Questions**

1. Heschel suggests that awe is at the root of faith. Does the sense of *yirat HaShem*, "fear of God," or *yirat hashamayim*, "fear of the heavens," inspire faith for you?
2. How do you view the connection between faith and fear? What about the connection between wisdom and awe?
3. There is an inherent tension between what there seems to be to fear and what there really is to fear. Can one also say the same about what there is to be in awe of?

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<sup>47</sup> <http://www.reformjudaism.org/fear-and-awe>

Resource 1m  
What is a Bracha?<sup>48</sup>

The following information about a *bracha* is from *Stories We Pray* by Joel Grishaver, p. 271.

## ברכות BRAKHOT

### WHAT IS A BRAKHAH?

There are two kinds of Jewish prayers.

One kind just pours out of our hearts. These are personal words that are made up on the spot. The other kind you find in the Siddur or other books. These are the prayers that Jews share. At the heart of most of these book prayers is the word *Barukh*.

ברוך *Barukh* is a Hebrew word that is very hard to translate. Sometimes it translates as “bless” and sometimes as “praise.” Neither tells the whole story.

A *brakhah* is a prayer that either begins or ends with a sentence that starts with the word *barukh*. The word *brakhah* actually means three different things.

- A *brakhah* is a gift from God. A person can say, “I have been blessed with good health” or “I have been blessed with a wonderful family.”
- A *brakhah* is a “thank you” to God for a gift that we have received. That is why we say prayers like “Praised are You Who gives strength to those who are tired.”
- A *brakhah* is a request for a gift from God. In every morning service Jews say, “Grant us peace... the One Who blesses Israel with peace.”

In order to really mean a *brakhah* in our hearts we need to:

- notice the gifts that we have been given.
- believe that God is the source of those gifts.
- believe that it is important to thank God (if this is a “thank you” *brakhah*) and that it makes a difference if we ask God for help (if this is a “please give us a gift” *brakhah*).

A *brakhah* is not just words. It is a connection to God.

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<sup>48</sup> Joel Lurie Grishaver, *Stories We Pray*, 271

*Resource 1n*  
*Moses Sees the Afterward of God*<sup>49</sup>

The following information about a *bracha* is from *Stories We Pray* by Joel Grishaver, pp. 273 – 275.

**MOSES SEES THE AFTERWARD OF GOD**

This Moses story begins with Jacob. Only part of this story can be found in the Torah. Much of it comes from different places in the Midrash.

**J**acob left home on an adventure. Partially he was running away from his brother, who was ready to kill him.

He had pulled a very bad trick on Esau. Partially he was out looking for a wife. Clearly, he was on his own for the first time. As sundown came he found a place to camp for the night. He took a stone, put it under his head as a pillow, and fell asleep. What then followed was one of the great dreams of all times. In his dream Jacob saw a ladder that went from earth into the heavens. Angels were traveling up the ladder, and angels were traveling down the ladder. The next thing that happened was that God spoke with Jacob and told him, “I will always be with you.”

The meaning of dreams is never clear. Every dream has many interpretations, and this one was no exception. Many scholars have said many things about this dream. But this much is clear: Jacob woke up in the morning and said, “God was in this place, and I, I hadn’t noticed.” The ladder showed him that people have many ways of connecting to God.

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<sup>49</sup> Joel Lurie Grishaver, *Stories We Pray*, 273 – 275

Moses also had to run away from home. He left Egypt and went to a country named Midian. There he, too, found a wife, Zipporah. He began work as a shepherd for her father. One day he had taken his sheep way into the wilderness to find a good place to graze. It was here in the wilderness, near a mountain that would later be called Sinai, that he had his vision of getting close to God. He was awake when he saw a bush burning, a bush that burned and burned and yet was not burned up. It was then that God spoke to Moses.

God wondered for a long time about how to sound. God didn't want to sound too powerful, for a loud voice might scare Moses into running away. God didn't want to sound too soft, or Moses wouldn't have the right respect. God came up with an idea. God spoke to Moses using his father's voice. Moses thought his father had come into the desert and asked, "Is that you, Father?" God answered, "I am not your father, but the God of your father" and began to speak. Moses hid his eyes because he was afraid to look at God.

Years later Moses led the Jewish people to Mount Sinai the way he had once led his sheep there. Many things happened. God spoke words of Torah to everyone gathered there. Moses went up the mountain and received the Ten Commandments.

Then Moses said to God, "I want to see Your face. I want to know what You look like." Things had changed from that first moment at the mountain when Moses was afraid. God said, "You cannot see My face and live." Moses said, "Please."



God said, "I will let you hide your face in the rock and cover you with My hand. I will go past you. When I have gone by, I will take away my My hand, and you will see my 'afterwards.'" And that is what God did. Many people think that God showed Moses God's "back," but if you read the Hebrew carefully, it says "afterward." Moses saw the wake of God, the differences made because God was there.

We are like Jacob and Moses. We want to get close to God, but that is not easy. We have to realize that God is where we are, because we often forget that. And we have to learn that while we cannot see God, we can see God's afterward. We can see the things God does.

*A brakbab* is a way of saying God is in this place. *A brakbab* is a way of saying, "I noticed what God did, and I am thankful"

(Your author's assemblage of lots of parts of the Jewish tradition).

*A brakhah* is a way of saying "God has been here." What's the last thing that God did for you?

## Lesson 4 Blessings

### Objectives

The learners should be able to:

- Explain what a blessing is
- Describe how blessings might add meaning in your life
- Memorize *bracha* formula

### Timeline

0:00 – 0:05	Set Induction
0:05 – 0:15	Free write on <i>Brachot</i>
0:15 – 0:35	Blessing Round-table
0:35 – 0:55	Mindfulness and Blessings
0:55 – 1:00	100 Blessings Challenge

### Assessment

- Takeaway from reading

### Materials

- Resource 1o

### *Set Induction – Takeaways from reading*

- Take a moment to jot down 1 – 3 takeaways from the article we read for tonight (*What Are Blessings*)
- Each participant will have the opportunity to share one of their takeaways

### *Activity #1: Free write on brachot*

- Answer the following questions based on readings, previous knowledge and experiences:
  - Does saying blessings change us? If so, how?
  - What is another way you can experience wonder and gratitude if you do not feel comfortable reciting blessings to God?

### *Activity #2: Blessing Round-table: What are Blessings? – Resource 1o*

- There will be one text from resource 1o on at least 4 tables around the room (use as many tables as you have room for). Participants will be asked to roam around the room to read each of the quotes. Invite them to sit at the table with the quote that compels them the most. Once they are at the table they will have a roundtable discussion with others who join. Before the discussion, have them copy the quote into their book of blessings.

### *Activity#3 – Mindfulness and Blessings*

- Write the following quotation on the board. Ask for a volunteer to read it and then discuss the questions together.

*"The skill of becoming more mindful and present and compassionate is something we may learn sitting on a meditation cushion. But this capacity for awareness helps in many other ways: in computer programming, playing tennis, lovemaking, or walking by the ocean and listening to life around you. In fact meditation is really the central art in all other arts." – Jack Kornfield*

### Discussion Questions:

1. What does mindfulness means to you?
2. How are mindfulness and blessings related?
3. How do you practice mindfulness?

### Activity #4 – Game of Fives

(The following is an activity taken from [www.pocketmindfulness.com](http://www.pocketmindfulness.com) and can be found at the link listed in the footnote):

- **Say:** In this mindfulness exercise, all you have to do is notice five things in your day that usually go unnoticed and unappreciated. These could be things you hear, smell, feel or see. For example, you might see the walls of your front room, hear the birds in the tree outside in the morning, feel your clothes on your skin as you walk to work, or smell the flowers in the park. But are you truly aware of these things and the connections they have with the world?
  - Are you aware of how these things really benefit your life and the lives of others?
  - Do you really know what these look and sound like?
  - Have you ever noticed their finer, more intricate details?
  - Have you thought about what life might be without these things?
  - Have you thought about how amazing these things are?
- Take a few moments and write down these five things in your Book of Blessings.
- **Say:** Let your creative mind explore the wonder, impact and possibilities these usually unnoticed things have on your life. Allow yourself to fall awake into the world and fully experience the environment. By becoming mindful of who we are, where we are, what we are doing and the purpose, if any at all, and how everything else in our environment interacts with our being, we cultivate a truer awareness of being. This helps us learn to identify and reduce stress and anxiety and difficult, painful and perhaps frightening thoughts, feelings and sensations. Mindfulness exercises help center the mind and restore balance to our lives, tempering that “monkey mind” that persistently leaps from branch to branch. Rather than being led by thoughts and feelings, often influenced by past experiences and fears of future occurrences, we are able to live with full attention

and purpose in the moment.<sup>50</sup>

**Closure – 100 Blessings Challenge**

- Try it for one day! Make a list of your experiences and a record of what you said by way of thanks. After you have composed your list, ask yourself what affect the whole experience has had on you.

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<sup>50</sup> <http://www.pocketmindfulness.com/6-mindfulness-exercises-you-can-try-today/>

## Resource 1a

### Blessing Texts

#### Texts:

1. The root *bet-resch-khaf* is the same as for knee, *berech*. This relation reminds us that blessing is an act of humility. Blessings of food remind us that it is not by our might alone that we survive in the world. Blessings before doing mitzvot remind us that our lives are not completely free, we have obligations both to our people and to God.<sup>51</sup>
2. Rabbi Meir said, “A person is obliged to recite 100 blessings every day.”<sup>52</sup> This passage was later codified into Jewish law.<sup>53</sup>
3. Whether traditional or original, a blessing is meant to bring our hearts to the forefront, move us to *mochin d’gadlut* (expanded consciousness), and connect us to holiness in the world by bringing God into the equation.<sup>54</sup>
4. The Hebrew word for blessing is *bracha* (plural *brachot*). The Jewish practice of blessing derives from our tradition’s desire to promote joy and appreciation, wonder and thankfulness, amazement and praise. A *bracha* is, we might say, a kind of “gratitude yoga” we can employ not only day to day but moment to moment. It is in itself not at all strenuous. It doesn’t require a minyan, the quorum of ten worshippers; it doesn’t require travel; it doesn’t require that we have any accoutrements or a special mantra or that we become a yogi, an adept, a *tzaddik*, or a Buddha. It merely asks us to engage in a moment of delayed gratification, using the respite as an opportunity for something else to occur.<sup>55</sup>
5. Through the medium of its brief *brachot* formula Judaism enable us to express a momentary flush of spiritual wonderment as a response to all the varied experiences of life...Not only do we offer a blessing to the Creator for our food and drink, but we also have specially prescribed and individually formulated *brachot* when smelling fragrant trees and plants, fruits, spices, and oils, when seeing a flash of lightning or the rainbow, or when hearing thunder. There are also special blessings to be made

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<sup>51</sup> Sheryl Fand, p. *Baruch*

<sup>52</sup> Babylonian Talmud, Menachot 43b.

<sup>53</sup> Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayyim 46:3.

<sup>54</sup> Rabbi Mike Comins, *Making Prayer Real: Leading Jewish Spiritual Voices on Why Prayer is Difficult and What to Do about it*, (Jewish Lights Publishing, Vermont, 2010), 107.

<sup>55</sup> Marcia Prager, *The Path of Blessing*, 2003, p. 12

when witnessing wonders of nature, such as high mountains, great deserts, rivers, and seas.<sup>56</sup>

6. Judaism helps us to find an intense, sensory experience of God, yet the routine of day-to-day living not only fills our time and awareness, it can easily dull the senses. Blessings came into being in part so that everyday experiences could be used to prompt us to an awareness of God. Blessings call attention to the ordinary parts of our days, as well as to the special moments, both providing a reminder of God's handprint on our world and – with our own words – helping to bring the Holy Presence directly into our lives.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Jeffrey Cohen, *Blessed Are You: A Comprehensive Guide To Jewish Prayer*, 1993, p. 133

<sup>57</sup> Siddur Sha'ar Zahav, 2009, p. 2

## Unit 2 – Marking Times of Enjoyment

### Introduction

#### Enduring Understandings

- Blessings function as vehicles for radical amazement and mark sacred time.
- Something sacred is at stake in every event.
- Judaism is a religion of time aiming at the sanctification of time.
- In any moment, a sense of the sacred can move us to prayer, and the acts of prayer and blessing can lead us to the sacred.

#### Objectives

The learners should be able to:

- Define Birkot *Hanehenin* and assess how they may add meaning to their lives
- Assess how *brachot* are tools that develop an awareness of God in all aspects of their lives.
- Illustrate that *brachot* can help develop a cognizance and relationship with God.
- List and define the three major ingredients of *Shabbat* (Rest, Joy, and Holiness)
- Imagine and create *Shabbat* experiences for your family
- Begin generating their Book of Blessings

#### Unit Overview

Lesson 1	“ <i>Hamotzi</i> ” and “ <i>Birkat Hamazon</i> ” – 1 hour
Lesson 2	<i>Birkot Hanehenin</i> – 1 hour
Lesson 3	Memorable Moment (Wonder Hike #1) – 2 hours
Lesson 4	<i>Shabbat</i> – 1 hour
Lesson 5	Blessing Book #1 – 1 hour
<b>Total:</b>	<b>6.5 hours</b>

#### Evidence of learning

- Progress of the Blessing Book/Journal
  - Personal blessings
  - Micrography art
  - Self-reflection through free and guided writing

**Lesson 1**  
**“Hamotzi” and “Birkat Hamazon”**  
**(Scripted)**

**Objectives**

Learners should be able to:

- Explain that the word *Baruch* is both a praise of God and an acknowledgment that God is the source of all blessings and abundance.
- Recognize that *brachot* were instituted to help you remember God and bring God into your daily routine.

**Timeline**

0:00 – 0:05	Top three lessons to teach your 3 – year – old
0:05 – 0:30	“We give thanks to God for bread” – <i>Hamotzi</i>
0:30 – 0:50	“Who nourishes all” <i>Birkot Hamazon</i>
0:50 – 1:00	Family mealtimes

**Materials**

- Resource 2a – 2g

**Set Induction – Top 3 lessons to teach your 3 – year – old**

- Invite learners to write the top three lessons they are trying to teach their child right now and why.
  - Likely responses:
    - Say “please” and “thank you” (good manners)
    - Share
    - Be nice to others (help, be kind, etc)
- **Say:** *Birkot HaNehenin* (“Blessings of Enjoyment”) are recited when we derive pleasure from this world. Judaism invites us to recite *brachot* both before (*Hamotzi*) and after (*Birkat Hamazon*) we eat and drink, as well as before we inhale pleasant fragrances. The purpose of these *brachot* are to help us recognize that God is the Source of our pleasure, and to focus our minds on how to use this pleasure to fulfill our purpose in this world. Judaism offers a way to say please and thank you...today we will be learning the Jewish way to say “please” and “thank you.”

**Activity #1 – “We Give Thanks to God For Bread” – HaMotzi – Resources 2a & 2b**

- Divide the learners into groups of 4 – 6. Once the learners are in their groups distribute resource 2a and ask them to read and discuss both quotes.
- After another 5 minutes, or when discussion seems to be settling down, have them read Rabbi Marcia Prager’s description of blessings as a “Jewish mindfulness practice”(resource 2b).



- Then invite the learners to brainstorm some ways that they can put these teachings into practice in their life. If they feel none would work they should be honest and realistic. Be ready to share your ideas and thoughts with the others.

***Activity #2 – “Who nourishes all” – Birkat HaMazon - Resources 2c – 2g***

- Learners will read the *Birkat HaMazon* information sheet (resource 2c) as a class
- Learners will then split into 4 groups and read a different story (resource 2d – 2g)
- Groups will then present their story in a creative manner (skit)
- Discussion Questions:
  - Who should we thank: the cook who prepared it, the person who bought it, the farmer who grew it?
  - In your opinion, is after a meal a good time to pray? Why or why not? Do you see this working for your family? How or how not?

***Closure – Family Mealtime***

- Try to incorporate both of these blessings during at least 3 meal times before we meet again. Keep a journal, takes pictures, write a vignette, etc and be prepared to tell us how it went!

## Resource 2a

### *HaMotzi*

#### Quote #1

“Yes, it is important that our children eat, and enjoy eating – but we, the parents, are entitled to pleasant and nutritious dining as well. Our little ones’ enjoyment of a meal should not come at our own expense”<sup>58</sup>

#### **Question:**

1. Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Why?

#### Quote #2

While many religious traditions call for a blessing before sitting down to a meal, Judaism calls for a short blessing before the meal and a longer one after. The Rabbis wanted us to be aware of God’s role in the creation of the food we eat. Why do you think this is?

#### **Questions:**

1. How do children influence and/or change this practice?
2. Why should our family say a blessing before we eat?”
3. “Why before meals is it particularly important/meaningful to have a reflective moment?

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<sup>58</sup> Elaine Rose Glickman, *Sacred Parenting: Jewish Wisdom and Practical Guidance for Your Family’s Early Years*, 2010, p. 68

## Resource 2b

### Jewish Mindfulness Practice

(The following information is from *The Path of Blessing* by Marcia Prager, pp. 2 – 3):

“One summer evening after a Jewish woman’s retreat, I was invited to have a dinner with one of the participants and her family. In our brief pre-dinner conversation her husband, Stan, spoke of his years of Buddhist practice – such a welcome refuge from the intrusively demanding yet vacant formulas of his Jewish upbringing. He had only recently begun to re-explore Jewish practice, he said, but it wasn’t until dinner began that I learned why. We sat at the table and when the food was served, everybody looked at me: I was, after all, a rabbi, and, well, wasn’t I supposed to say something?

Everyone waited. I looked around, absorbing the goodness of the people gathered at the table. With a deep breath I reached toward the basket of warm dinner rolls and lifted it up, closing my eyes to be alone with the sensations. Steamy-hot, just-baked bread. I inhaled its warm sweetness. For just a moment it seemed that I held the fertile earth sprouting ripening wheat and saw the dough rising in an extravagant explosion of yeast. My fingertips touched the hot loaves. I sang: “*Barukh Ata Adonay, Eloheynu Melekh Ha’Olam, ha’motzi lechem min ha’aretz. A Fountain of Blessings are You, Source of Life of all the Worlds, Source of the nourishment that is this bread, which You bring forth from the earth.*” We shared the bread around the table, and then Stan spoke.

“I grew up so angry!” he said. “All these blessings, these *brakhas* and prayers that I had to memorize. Always some rote formula to recite, another phrase to mumble. When I finally discovered Buddhism, it was such a relief. I embraced meditation and cultivated a practice of insight and mindfulness. It was only because of my deepening relationship with Judy that I began to be anywhere near practicing Jews again. But there was the same obsessive-compulsive stuff that I hated before. Every time they used something or saw something or ate something, there was another interruption and another mumble. It was so annoying. I was so grateful to be past that.

“One day, I don’t remember what I was doing, it hit me! I was with someone and he stopped what he was doing to make a *brakha*. Like you just did. Suddenly I got it! All those years cultivating mindfulness and I didn’t see. Making a *brakha*, the act of blessing, it IS a mindfulness practice. Mindfulness is what blessing IS.”<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Rabbi Marcia Prager, *The Path of Blessing*, 2003, pp 2 – 3

**Question:**

Does saying the blessing automatically create that awareness? Do people sometimes say brachot without meaning them or even thinking about them? What does that say (positive and/or negative) about the value of reciting them?

## Resource 2c

### *Birkot Hamazon*

(The following information is from *A Guide to Jewish Practice* by Isaac Klein, p. 44):

- Like the benediction before the meal (Hamotzi), the Grace afterwards raises the satisfaction of a physical craving into the realm of the spirit. Through the Grace, the family table becomes the family alter. The prayer not only expresses gratefulness for the food, but also binds the participants to their people by expressing gratitude to God for favors to the people as a whole and hope for its blessed future.<sup>60</sup>

(The following information is from *Stories We Pray* by Joel Grishaver, p. 261):

- *Birkat Hamazon* means “the blessing of the food,” and it is said after eating. It is sometimes called, “the grace after eating.” Some things to know about the *Birkat Hamazon* are:
  - It should be said at the table where you ate.
  - When three or more people say it together, it begins with an invitation and response that is very much like the *Barekhu*.
  - There are actually four blessings in *Birkat Hamazon*
  - Each paragraph tells a story, and when you put them together they retell the history of the Jewish people.
  - When we say *Birkat Hamazon* we turn every table into a place of worship.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Isaac Klein, *A Guide to Jewish Religious Practice*, 1979, p. 44

<sup>61</sup> Joel Lurie Grishaver, *Stories We Pray*, 2012, p. 261

**Resource 2d**  
***Birkot Hamazon Stories***

(The following story is from *Stories We Pray* by Joel Grishaver, p. 262):

**About Manna (story #1)**

“Israel spent forty years in the desert. God made manna rain down six days a week. Manna was the special food that fed the Families of Israel in the desert. God made twice as much manna fall on Fridays. God let no manna fall on Shabbat.

The two *hallot* on the Friday night table remind us of the double portion of manna that was stockpiled for Shabbat.

Rabbi Shimon Bar Yohai’s students asked, “Why did God make manna fall daily rather than falling only once a year and providing a year’s worth?”

He told this story: Once there was a king who gave his son an allowance big enough to last a whole year. Therefore, the prince came to visit his father only once a year to pick up his money. The king got lonely so he changed the plan. He switched the annual allowance to a daily allowance and got to see his son every day (*Yoma 76a*).

Rabbi Shimon Bar Yohai taught that each day the manna fell was a new chance to get close to God. *Birkat Hamazon* turns each meal into a reliving of the Jewish experience. We ask: “What stories are part of this eating experience?”

**Resource 2e**  
***Birkot Hamazon Stories***

(The following story is from *Stories We Pray* by Joel Grishaver, pp 262 – 263):

***A Visit to Heaven and Hell (story #2)***

“A very righteous man died. The angels offered him a choice between heaven and hell. He said, “I’ve never been there. How can I choose?” The angels offered him a visit to each. First he was taken to a banquet hall loaded with food. It was the ultimate feast. Out came sad, very skinny people who walked to the tables filled with food and just stood there. They could not eat because on one hand was tied a very long fork and on the other a very long spoon. The people could not reach their mouths with the utensils. This was hell.

Then he was taken to a second hall, also loaded with food. Out came happy people, well-fed people who were singing and dancing. They walked to the tables. On their hands were tied the same huge spoons and forks. When they reached the tables they picked up the food in their giant silverware and lifted it to their neighbors’ mouths. When the rabbi was offered his choice again, he chose hell. He said, “I know the secret of how to turn it into heaven” (*A Jewish folktale*).

The first blessing in *Birkat Hamazon* ends with the idea that “God feeds everyone.” This story makes it clear that for God to feed all, we have to feed each other. Ask simply, “Who needs food? Am I part of the solution?”

**Resource 2f**  
***Birkot Hamazon Stories***

(The following story is from *Stories We Pray* by Joel Grishaver, p. 263):

**Abraham's Two Mitzvot (story #3)**

The Midrash tells two different stories that connect Abraham to *Birkat hamazon*.

- Abraham had a tent with four doors, one pointing in each direction. That way no one looking for hospitality would ever have to look for a way in. He would feed them and offer them a place to stay.
- After dinner Abraham would invite his guests to join him in thanking God for the food and shelter that God had provided. Abraham tried to teach them that even though he was sharing food with them it really came from God. In this way Abraham was the first person to say a *Birkat Hamazon* (Genesis Rabbah 48:9, 49:7, 39.21).

First Abraham performs the *mitzvah* of feeding, an echo of God's feeding people. Second, he performs *Kiruv*, bringing people closer to God. *Birkat Hamazon* is about both. We ask: "Do I share my food?" "Do I help people to get closer to God?"



**Resource 2g**  
***Birkot Hamazon Stories***

(The following story is from *Stories We Pray* by Joel Grishaver, pp. 263 – 265):

***The Twelve Loaves of Hallah (story #4)***

“In 1492 many Jews had to leave Spain because of the Spanish Inquisition. Two of them were Esperanza and her husband Jacobo. When they left Spain they decided to go home. They went to the Land of Israel and settled in the city of Tzfat, the place that was becoming the new center for Kabbalah. Jacobo was just a tailor. He set up a shop. On his first Shabbat he went to the synagogue. This Shabbat was the rabbi’s sixtieth birthday, and he gave a sermon about the twelve loaves of shew bread that tribes put in the Temple before each Shabbat. Jacobo did not understand much of the sermon, but he did understand clearly that the rabbi said, “God likes the smell of bread.”

When he told Esperanza about the sermon she came up with an idea. She said, “I will bake twelve loaves of *pan de Dios* (the bread of God), and we will offer them as a gift of thanksgiving.” When Shabbat was over she began to bake. In the middle of the night Jacobo brought them to the synagogue and left them in the ark. He said a prayer thanking God for the good things that had happened to them, and then he went home.

A little while later the *shammes*, the man who worked for the synagogue, came in to start to get things ready for the service. He cried to God while he worked. He said, “I have not been paid in many weeks.” He yelled at God, “I am doing Your work, taking care of Your house, and my family is hungry. You need to do something.” When he started to clean the ark he found the *hallot* and thanked God for help.

Thirty years went by. Every week Esperanza baked *Hallah*. Every week Jacobo brought it to the synagogue and thanked God. And every week God gave the *Shammes* and his family food. On the rabbi’s ninetieth birthday he decided to give another sermon on the shew bread. He stayed late on Saturday night, using the library at the back of the sanctuary to do research. When Jacobo came in he listened to the tailor’s prayer and then yelled at him, “Fool! People do not feed God.” When the two of them heard the *shammes* coming, they hid. When the *Shammes* took the *hallot* out of the ark, the rabbi called him a thief, saying, “That food belongs to God.”

The three men were yelling at one another when the door opened. In walked the Holy Ari, the great Kabbalist, and who “God sent me here to tell you the following. People can really share what they have with God, and with their help God really is *Hazan et Ha-Kol*, the One Who feeds all. Remember, your hands are the hands of God.”

Here is another story about the duality of *Birkat Hamazon*. It brings us to feed others, and it brings us closer to God. “

## Lesson 2

### *Birkot Hanehenin*

#### Objectives

- Learners should be able to:
  - Define *Birkot Hanehenin* and explain their meaning
  - Recite *N'tilat Yadaim*, *HaMotzi*, *Kiddish*, *Fragrance*, and *Birkat HaMazon*
  - Create a personal *Birkot Hanehenin* blessing for their Book of Blessings

#### Timeline

0:00 – 0:05	Set Induction
0:05 – 0:40	<i>Birkot Hanehenin</i>
0:40 – 1:00	Blessing Stations (Hand Washing, Wine, Bread, and Flowers)
0:50 – 1:00	Original <i>Birkot Hanehenin</i>

#### Assessment

- Personal blessing of enjoyment

#### Materials

- Big Bowl with ladle (washing station)
- Bread and cheese
- Wine, juice, water
- Flowers
- Resource 2*h* – 2*n*

#### *Set Induction: Pleasures and Senses – resource 2h*

- Read Samuel Agnon's speech given at the Nobel banquet when he received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1966 and discuss questions (resource 2*h*).

#### *Activity #1 – Birkot Hanehenin Text Study – Resource 2i*

- Divide the learners into pairs (*chevruta*) and invite them to work their way through the text study (resource 2*i*). Directions are on the sheet. (The groups should have no more than 3 people in them).

#### *Activity #2: Blessing Stations – Resource 2j – 2m*

- The learners will get into groups of 4 and spend a few minutes at each station:
  - Washing hands before the meal
    - Choose someone to read the index card (Resource 2*j*)
    - Choose someone to read the blessing in Hebrew
    - Choose someone to read the blessing in English
    - Discuss pro's and con's of doing the blessing
    - Does saying this *bracha* add any value to the experience? How so?
    - Describe your experience if you have washed before eating.

- Choose one word that describes this experience and write it on the post-it.
- Wine
  - Choose someone to read the index card (Resource 2k)
  - Choose someone to read the blessing in Hebrew
  - Choose someone to read the blessing in English
  - Discuss pro's and con's of doing the blessing
  - Does saying this *bracha* add any value to the experience? How so?
  - Choose one word that describes this experience and write it on the post-it.
- Bread and Cheese
  - Choose someone to read the index card (Resource 2l)
  - Choose someone to read the blessing in Hebrew
  - Choose someone to read the blessing in English
  - Discuss pro's and con's of doing the blessing
  - Does saying this *bracha* add any value to the experience? How so?
  - Choose one word that describes this experience and write it on the post-it.
- Fragrance Station
  - Choose someone to read the index card (Resource 2m)
  - Choose someone to read the blessing in Hebrew
  - Choose someone to read the blessing in English
  - Discuss pro's and con's of doing the blessing
  - Does saying this *bracha* add any value to the experience? How so?
  - Choose one word that describes this experience and write it on the post-it.

### Closure – Homework Assignment

#### 1. *Compose personal blessing of enjoyment*

- Referring to the readings and activities from class, compose a personal blessing of enjoyment. The simplest way is to begin a sentence with, “Blessed Are You”, or “Praised Are You,” or “Please, God...” or “Thank You God,” and let the rest follow. Think about the added value of saying a *bracha* in your life and what meaning it can add. Be as honest as possible. The idea is to say words that, as much as possible, come directly from your emotional center.”

#### 2. Read the introduction to *Spirit in Nature: Teaching Judaism and Ecology on the Trail* (resource 2n)

## Resource 2h

### Samuel Agnon's speech

(The following activity is taken from [www.urj.org](http://www.urj.org) and can be found at the link listed in the footnote):

"Our sages of blessed memory have said that we must not enjoy any pleasure in this world without reciting a blessing. If we eat any food, or drink any beverage, we must recite a blessing over them before and after. If we breathe the scent of goodly grass, the fragrance of spices, the aroma of good fruits, we pronounce a blessing over the pleasure. The same applies to the pleasures of sight: When we see the sun in the Great Cycle of the Zodiac in the month of Nisan, or the trees first bursting into blossom in the spring, or any fine, sturdy and beautiful trees, we pronounce a blessing. And the same applies to the pleasures of the ear. Through you, dear sirs, one of the blessings concerned with hearing has come my way. It happened when the Swedish Chargé d'Affaires came and brought me the news that the Swedish Academy had bestowed the Nobel Prize upon me."<sup>62</sup>

### Questions

1. Did Agnon "hear" something that many of us would not have if we had been in his position? What is it that would lead someone not just to uncork champagne but also to immediately be driven to recite a blessing to God?
2. Can we find ways to put ourselves so in touch with the transcendent that we do the same? Read through Agnon's speech. Which senses of the body does he mention?
3. What pleasurable things are connected to each of these senses?
4. Why do you think the Rabbis created these blessings of enjoyment?

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<sup>62</sup> [http://urj.org/kd/\\_temp/D1455C51-1D09-6781-A1226F613F578E02/JPP\\_TuBishvat2006\\_ixiv\\_rv2009.pdf](http://urj.org/kd/_temp/D1455C51-1D09-6781-A1226F613F578E02/JPP_TuBishvat2006_ixiv_rv2009.pdf)

## Resource 2i

### *Birkot Hanehenin text study*

(The following information is taken from <http://www.morashasyllabus.com/class/Brachot.pdf> and can be found at the link listed in the footnote):

- *Birkot Hanehenin* are recited when we derive pleasure from this world. Judaism invites us to recite *brachot* both before and after we eat and drink, as well as before we inhale pleasant fragrances. The purpose of these *brachot* is to help us recognize that God is the Source of our pleasure, and to focus our minds on how to use this pleasure to fulfill our purpose in the world.
- The following Talmudic passage cites a fundamental aspect of the *brachot* recited prior to partaking of any pleasure; their recitation allows us to take benefit from the physical world.

#### 1. Talmud Bavli, Brachot 35a – This world is given to us only after we recognize its Source.

Rabbi Levi contrasted two verses. One states, "The world and all that is contained within it belongs to God." Another verse says, "The heavens belong to God, but the earth He gave to man." He resolved the contradiction by stating that one verse refers to the status of the world before reciting a Bracha and the other to after its recitation.

רבי לוי רמי כתיב לה' הארץ ומלואה וכתיב השמים  
שמים לה' והארץ נתן לבני אדם. לא קשיא כאן קודם  
ברכה כאן לאחר ברכה.

Said Rabbi Chanina Bar Pappa: When someone derives enjoyment from this world without a Bracha, it is tantamount to stealing from God...

אמר רבי חנינא בר פפא בר פפא כל הנהנה מן העולם הזה בלא  
ברכה כאילו גזול להקב"ה...

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### Questions:

1. Which verse quoted by Rabbi Levi do you prefer? Do you agree with how he resolves the contradiction? How would you resolve the contradiction?
2. If earth in fact does belong to humans, should they still be required to say a *bracha*? Why or why not?

<sup>63</sup> <http://www.morashasyllabus.com/class/Brachot.pdf>

3. This Gemara teaches us that the world is given to us only after we recognize the Source. What is the value of recognizing the source of things? What lessons can this teach our children?
4. Do you agree with Rabbi Chanina Bar Pappa? Why or why not? What lessons can this teach our children?

### 3. Rav Shimshon Pincus, Nefesh Shimshon, Siddur HaTefilla, Chapter on Bircat Hashachar (the morning blessings) – How to get a free lunch.

A simple analogy: If a man goes to the supermarket to buy bread and other foods, he must pay for them. But suppose the same man comes to the shopkeeper's home for a meal and eats exactly the same food; he doesn't pay a penny.

משל פשוט לכך - אדם הולך למכולת וקונה לחם... הוא משלם עליהם. אך אם אותו אדם בא אל המוכר הביתה ומקבל בדיוק אותה ארוחה... הוא לא משלם כלום.

So it is with Brachot. God has His "business" – the universe. Anything one wants in life is [within the domain of] God's business and must be paid for. But if he develops a loving connection and relationship with God, he can eat from the Heavenly table. [This is accomplished by making a Bracha]. And when you eat by the shopkeeper you don't receive a bill!

כך גם לעניינינו - להקב"ה יש עסק, העולם הוא העסק שלו. וא"כ כשאדם רוצה לחם או עינים בחנות של הקב"ה עליו לשלם על כך. אך אם האדם... מתקשר אליו בקשר של אהבה הוא אוכל משולחן גבוה, משולחנו של הקב"ה. וכשאוכלים משולחנו של החנוני לא מקבלים אה"כ חשבון.

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### Questions:

1. Why do you think it is important to say thank you and/or to show gratitude?
2. Name ways people typically show their gratitude to someone who has had you over to his or her home for a meal? What do you usually do to show gratitude? What do you think is an appropriate way for your child to show gratitude?
3. How can a *bracha* be a means of developing a relationship with God?

<sup>64</sup> <http://www.morashasyllabus.com/class/Brachot.pdf>

Below are additional understandings for the institution of *Birkot Hanehenin*:

5. Rabbi Shlomo Wolbe, Alei Shur Vol. 1, p.112 – Reciting Brachot helps us remain sensitized to everything in Creation.

How does one come to “see” God? Through recognizing His goodness and praising Him for it. One of the wondrous achievements of the Sages was to ensure the continued awareness of the “Hand of Creation.”

איך ובמה רואים את ה' ממש? בהכרת טובתו ובהודאה.

The world before us is neither fully developed nor completed. Rather, day by day, hour by hour, creation is renewed. All that our eyes see and every pleasure we taste is a new creation which God has created from nothingness to bestow upon us, so that we realize His kindness and His wisdom... A world like this, which is renewed before our eyes day in and day out, ensures that we do not become rusty [in our acknowledgement of God] due to monotony.

מנפלאות תקנות חז"ל להעמידנו תמיד על יד היצירה. אין כלל עולם מגובש ועתיק לפנינו. אלא יום יום, שעה שעה, בריאה חדשה. כל אשר עינינו רואות וכל הנאה שאנו טועמים - בריאה חדשה אשר הושיט לנו הבורא מדין כדי שנכיר חסדו עלינו וחכמתו... עולם כזה המתחדש לפני עינינו יום יום אינו מעלה חלודת שיגרה.

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### Questions:

1. Do you feel that reciting a *bracha* can help us remain sensitized to everything in creation? How so?
2. Do you agree with Rabbi Shlomo Wolbe that a person can “see” God through recognizing God’s goodness and praising God?

<sup>65</sup> <http://www.morashasyllabus.com/class/Brachot.pdf>



3. What benefits do you get when you show praise and gratitude? What about when you recognize the good in people?

In addition to bringing blessing to the world at large, a *bracha* brings spiritual energy to the person who recites it.

8. Ma'yana Shel Torah (Anthology), Devarim 8:3, citing Arizal – Saying Brachot releases the food's spiritual energy and hence nourishes the soul.

It is difficult to understand how the soul, which is entirely spiritual, finds sustenance in physical food. However, since every object in the universe came into existence solely through God's word, therefore the spiritual power of those Godly words that lies hidden within the food is what nourishes the soul. When a person takes a piece of fruit and recites a Bracha...the Divine powers dormant in the food are activated...and that provides the spiritual nourishment for the soul.

וקשה להבין איך יכולה הנשמה שכל עצמה אינה אלא רוחניות להיות ניזונית ממאכל חומרי. ברם מכיון שכל עצם נברא אינו מתקיים אלא בדיבורו של ה' יתברך בשעת הבריאה, הרי אותו כח של הדיבור האלוקי הטמון בתוך המאכל הוא המזון לנשמה. שעה שאדם מישראל נוטל פרי ואומר ברוך אתה ה'... מתעוררים הכחות הפנימיים הרוחניים שטמונים בתוך הפרי... והם מהווים מזון רוחני עבור הנשמה.

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Questions:

1. What do you think the essence of spiritual energy is?
2. Do you feel spiritual energy has relevance in your life? Your child's life? The life of your family?
3. Does saying *brachot* release spiritual energy and nourish the soul?

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<sup>66</sup> <http://www.morashasyllabus.com/class/Brachot.pdf>

## Resource 2j

### Washing hands before the meals

A religious ritual lifts a biological act from the realm of the physical and raises it to the realm of the spiritual. Hence, the benedictions before eating.

(The following information is from *A Guide to Jewish Religious Practice* by Isaac Klein, p. 49):

The rabbis made a distinction between casual eating and a regular meal (B. *Yoma* 79b). Lest the distinction become arbitrary, they based it on the eating of bread and the recital of *Hamotzi*. Bread is the staff of life, and therefore the eating of bread determines whether the meal is considered casual or regular. A meal at which bread is eaten must be preceded by the washing of the hands.

Since this washing of the hands is not a hygienic measure (because one has to wash even if his hands are clean), but rather a religious ritual, it must be done in a specified way.

The washing should be performed with a vessel and it should result from human effort. Hence, holding one's hands under an open faucet with the water already running is to be avoided. One should fill a vessel with water, hold it in one hand, and pour it over the other, and then do the same with the second hand.

The vessel should not be chipped or broken.

After both hands are washed, one should recite the benediction *Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech Haolam, Asher Kidshanu, B'mitzvotav, V'zevanu, N'Tilat Yadayim* (Our Praise to You, Eternal our God, Sovereign of the universe: You hallow us with Your *mitzvot* and command us to life up our hands).<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Isaac Klein, *A Guide to Jewish Religious Practice*, p. 49

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה	Bâruch Atâ Adonoy,
אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,	Eloheinu Melech hâ'olâm,
אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָי	asher kidishânu bi'mitzvo'tâv,
וְצִוָּנוּ עַל נְטִילַת יָדַיִם.	vi'tzivânu al netilat yâdâyim.

Blessed are You, God, our Lord, King of the universe,  
Who has sanctified us with His commandments,  
and commanded us regarding washing the hands.

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<sup>68</sup> <http://www.jewishpathways.com/daily-living/starting-day>

## Resource 2k Kiddush (Wine)

(The following information is from *Jewish Literacy* by Joseph Telushkin, p. 664):

The *Kiddush* prayer, recited immediately before drinking the wine, emphasizes two themes: first, God's creation of the world. On the Sabbath, humans are to refrain from creating, in imitation of God who refrained from creating on the seventh day (Genesis 2:2 – 3). The second theme of the prayer is the Exodus from Egypt. Slaves cannot rest when they wish; they can only do so when their masters permit it. We Jews, however, who are free – because God led us out of Egypt – can choose to rest on the Sabbath. At the conclusion of the *Kiddush's* final blessing, the participants respond “Amen,” and wine is distributed to everyone at the table.<sup>69</sup>

(The following information is from *Stories We Pray* by Joel Grishaver, p. 259):

You can't hold Shabbat in your hand. You can't taste it or smell it, see it or hear it. Shabbat is not concrete. We say a *brakhah* over wine that we can smell, taste, and see, that we can hold in our hand, and we add the Shabbat part to it.

The Talmud tells us that we have to say the wine *brakhah* before the *brakhah* for Shabbat. The Talmud compares the wine *brakhah* to a friend we see every day and the *brakhah* over Shabbat to a queen. One might want to say hello to a queen first and then realize that a friend is in the room, but that would be rude. The Talmud wants us to celebrate the everyday first and then look at the special. That is why the wine *brakhah* comes before the *brakhah* for Shabbat.<sup>70</sup>

Lift your glass of wine and say: *Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech Haolam, Borei Poree Hagafen* (“Blessed are You, our God, Sovereign of the universe, Creator of the fruit of the vine). And then say “Amen.”

On drinking wine:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגֶּפֶן.

*Baruch atah Adonai eloheinu melech ha'olam boray pri ha'gafen.*

Praised are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the Universe, who creates the fruit of the vine.

<sup>69</sup> Rabbi Joseph Telushkin, *Jewish Literacy*, 1991, p. 664

<sup>70</sup> Rabbi Joel Grishaver, *Stories We Pray*, p. 259

## Resource 2/ Hamotzi

(The following story is from [www.shlockrock.com](http://www.shlockrock.com) and can be found at the link in the footnote):

This is a story based on the Talmud (*Tractate Berachot*, Chapter 6: *Tosefta* 5) that talks about Rabbi *Ben Zoma* feeling gratitude for the offerings brought to the Temple Mount.

A long time ago, in the land of Israel there lived a boy named *Ben Zoma*. *Ben Zoma* loved to play with his friends. Whenever he went into the woods to explore, he would see his friends out in the woods too. He would always remember to look at each person, greet him or her and think about how each person was different and unique. Wow! Adonai created all these people. *Ben Zoma* would say thank you to Adonai for creating so many different kinds of people, all with their own minds to think with.

After a long morning of exploration, *Ben Zoma* headed home for lunch. His *Ima* (Mom) made him a wonderful sandwich with cheese, lettuce, and tomatoes. *Ben Zoma* loved his sandwiches on pita bread! He enjoyed his lunch so much that he wanted to thank his mom for his meal. So he thanked his *Ima* for the sandwich and his *Ima* replied: "*Bevakashah* ("with pleasure") but there is no need to thank me! You should thank the man at the *shuk* (market) where I bought the pita bread."

So after lunch, *Ben Zoma* went to the *shuk* to thank the grocer. The *shuk* was filled with wonderful sights! There were so many amazing sounds and the most delicious smells! When *Ben Zoma* found the grocer, he told him thank you for the pita from his lunch. The grocer was surprised! It wasn't very often that people came in to say thank you to him! He said, "That's so kind of you! But if you really want to thank someone; you should thank the baker who made the pita!"

So he walked over to the bakery. The baker was covered in flour and was kneading some dough. "Oh Mrs. Baker," said *Ben Zoma*, "I would like to thank you for the delicious pita bread I ate for lunch." "Oh my," said the baker, "No need to thank me; you should thank the miller who ground the flour so I could make the pita!"

So *Ben Zoma* continued on his journey to see the miller. He thought about how many people it had taken to make his lunch! He arrived at the Flour Mill, and went inside to thank the miller. The miller replied, "Well, actually, you should thank the farmer who grew the wheat. Without the wheat, there would be no flour!"

So *Ben Zoma* walked a bit further to the local farm. He found the farmer out in the field. "Excuse me Mr. Farmer, but I would like to thank you for my delicious lunch I ate today." Now the farmer replied, "That is very kind of you to say, but really you

should thank *Adonai* who is the One who made the sun shine and the rain to fall so my crops could grow. Without *Adonai*, there would be no wheat for bread! Do you remember the prayer the Hamotzi? *Hamotzi Lechem Min Ha'aretz* (Thank You *Adonai*, Who brings forth bread from the Earth").

Now *BenZoma* understood! *Ben Zoma* headed for home again realizing that everything comes from *Adonai*. "Thank You *Adonai* for my delicious lunch. Thank You for the farmer, the miller, the baker, the grocer, and my *Ima*, and thank You for helping all of them work together to make my lunch. Amen!"<sup>71</sup>

### Hamotzi Blessing

- Have someone hold the bread/challah. Everyone else should touch either the bread or someone who is touching the bread and say, *Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech Ha'olam, Hamotzi Lechem Min Ha'aaretz* (Blessed are You *Adonai*, our God, sovereign of the universe, who brings forth bread from the land), and let us say, Amen.
- *B'tayavon!*

On eating bread:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, הַמוֹצִיא לֶחֶם מִן הָאָרֶץ.

*Baruch atah Adonai eloheinu melech ha'olam hamotzi lechem min ha'aretz.*

Praised are You, *Adonai* our God, Sovereign of the Universe,  
who brings forth bread from the earth.

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<sup>71</sup> <http://www.shlockrock.com/MakingHaMotzee>

## Resource 2*m*

### Fragrance Blessing

(This information is from [www.exodusconversations.org](http://www.exodusconversations.org) and can be found at the link found in the footnote):

Being the youngest in my family, I was unfamiliar with the finer points of the art of diaper changing. Prior to the birth of my oldest child, I actually found myself looking forward to this rite of parenthood, waiting to be introduced to this new ritual.

At first it was not bad, not much of a challenge. More recently, however, as my son approaches his second birthday, the stench emanating from his diaper is unreal. I don't really mind changing his diaper -- and the odor provides an incentive to do so expeditiously, but the smell that precedes the changing is quite unbearable.

The messes my son makes in the dining room, the unpolished silver in the china closet, or my unmade bed -- all bother me. But they are relatively manageable in comparison to the stench that extends from the diaper. I find this intriguing. Why can I mentally block out images of chaos and disarray but not a foul smell?

Ironically, the faculty of smell seems to be the least important of the human senses and faculties. A lack of ability to walk, speak, hear or see is considered a major handicap. A deficiency in any of these vital areas presents extreme challenges to the individual possessing such a disability. Lacking olfactory ability, on the other hand, is not considered a grave handicap. I have yet to hear anyone say, "Oh what a pity on that guy, he cannot smell!" I'm still waiting for the day when one of my colleagues enters the office and announces, "My God, I did not smell anything today! Please, bring me something fragrant, quick!" Life in the office has "toughened" me; nowadays I'm rarely amazed by some of the odd habits I witness... but I'll admit that I'd be highly surprised to hear such a statement!

This is because smell is not a human need. Contrast this with food. Food provides us with life-energy; we cannot exist without eating. And yes, on a daily basis one or more of my coworkers enter the office grumbling about being hungry, or expressing their absolute inability to function unless they have a coffee ASAP.

However, as "insignificant" as olfaction may seem, it has an intrinsic quality that goes beyond food, beyond voice and sight. An individual is refreshed upon smelling a pleasant fragrance. Coming home on Friday afternoon and smelling the delicious aromas of the Shabbat foods baking in the oven... In a certain sense, the aromas provide what ingesting the foods cannot. They calm a person down; they please, refresh, and warm the soul.

In my grandfather's synagogue there was a bottle of pungent smelling salt. A senior member of the congregation explained to me that the bottle was set aside



for Yom Kippur, the holiest day in the Jewish calendar, a day when all fast. "In the event that someone faints," he said, "we pull out the bottle and place it beneath the individual's nose. It does the trick. It brings the person back to consciousness." While I never personally witnessed such an incident, it got me thinking. Why not just stuff a piece of cheesecake in the person's mouth. Would that not do the trick?

Food is very physical and that's what it offers a person, physical nourishment. We eat to strengthen our bodies, and thus provide our souls with healthy habitats.

Fragrance is not palpable, and neither are the benefits it offers. Kabbalah teaches that smell is the connection of the physical and spiritual, our connection to the soul.

In the story of Creation, after God formed Adam out of earth, "He breathed into his nostrils the soul of life." The connection between the nose and the soul remains; olfaction is a sensation of the soul; the soul benefiting or suffering from pleasing or disturbing aromas. The physical person's ability to share the sensations provided by smell is a window into the world of the soul.

When I have a cold and my congested nose doesn't allow me to smell, I am not handicapped. Being unable to smell is not a physical handicap; it is a spiritual impairment. I have lost my connection between body and soul.

Because sound and sight are connected to the physical, they have the ability to absorb my entirety. I become engrossed in the film, my entire being is forgotten as I watch a fascinating documentary or listen to a delightful composition of fine music.

Smell, on the other hand, calms. It brings renewed strength from a higher plateau, the soul. It awakens one from a faint because it reaches the soul and brings down renewed strength to the body.

And when there is a bad stench, it, too, touches my soul. And therefore I cannot handle the smell. My soul cannot handle it and I am compelled to remove the source of the offending odor and air out the room.

Every Shabbat we are endowed with an additional soul that accompanies us on this holy day. This soul departs us with the arrival of darkness on Saturday night, and our "weekday soul" grieves at the loss of its spiritual companion. During the *Havdalah* parting services, when we bid the Shabbat farewell, we smell a pleasant fragrance. This comforts the soul, bringing it a sense of tranquility and relief.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> <http://exodusconversations.org/questions/what-does-it-mean-for-humans-to-bless-god/>



- Take deep smell from the flowers and recite the following blessing: *Baruch Atah Adoni, Eloheinu Melech Haolam, Borei isvei v'samim* (Praise to You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the universe, for fragrant flowers and herbs), Amen.

On smelling the fragrance of plants and herbs:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא עֲשֵׂי בִשְׁמִים.

*Baruch atah Adonai eloheinu melech ha'olam boray isvay vesamim.*

Praised are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the Universe, who creates fragrant plants.

Resource 2*n*  
*Introduction to Spirit in Nature*

(This excerpt is found in the introduction of *Spirit in Nature* by Biers-Ariel, Matt, and Newbrun, Deborah, and Smart, Michael Fox):

**J**udaism's roots are in nature. It was in the wilderness that Jacob dreamed of a ladder reaching to heaven, Moses spoke with God at the burning bush, and the children of Israel received the Torah. The people of the Bible were a people of the land. Our stories, laws, and sacred writings reflect the environmental wisdom of our people. Today many of us live in urban centers or suburbs and have lost our connection to the natural world. The biosphere that nurtures us suffers from overpopulation, unbridled consumerism, extensive pollution, massive extinction, and habitat destruction. In a time when many Jews are searching for a path to spiritual growth, the land beckons us to return. Judaism offers us ways of interacting with the environment that are both nurturing and sustaining.

In Genesis 13:17 God commands Abraham, "Walk about the land [of Canaan], through its length and its breadth, for I give it to you." This biblical narrative implies that Abraham could not encounter the Promised Land abstractly. Rather, he had to walk the land—climb its slopes, cross its streams, feel its heat, encounter its flora and fauna, and protect himself from its dangers to forge a covenant with it. The Bible suggests that a people can merit the inheritance of a land only through the intimate, living experience of it. This is true not only for those who live in Israel, but for all people living on earth. ¶

### Lesson 3

#### Memorable Moment (Wonder Hike #1)

(Scripted Lesson)

#### Objectives

Learners should be able to:

- Experience nature through a Jewish lens through blessings and wonder
- Develop an understanding of what “a sense of the sacred” means
- Determine the value of saying blessings in their lives
- Recall and summarize *T’filat Haderech*
- Recall and summarize blessing for seeing natural wonders

#### Timeline

0:00 – 0:20	<i>T’filat Haderech, Shehecheyanu, Safety procedures</i>
0:20 – 0:30	Silent Walking
0:30 – 0:35	Rest
0:35 – 0:45	Meditative 25 – 25 – 50 Walking
0:45 – 0:55	Rest
0:55 – 1:30	As you walk on your way (begin returning home)
1:30 – 1:35	Rest
1:35 – 1:50	Hike back to trailhead at own pace
1:50 – 2:00	Giving Thanks

#### Materials

- Water
- First aid kit
- Resource 2n (enough copies for every learner) – 2q
- 50 index cards

#### Schedule of hike

(Some of the following activities were taken from *A Wild Faith* by Mike Comins):

#### **Set Induction: T’filat Haderech, Shehecheyanu, & Safety Procedures – resource 2o**

- Gather the group at the trailhead and **say:** Judaism has a prayer called *T’filat Haderech*, the traveler’s prayer (literally the “prayer of the road”). This prayer requests God to protect travelers from the dangers faced on a journey. Reciting this prayer can be a way to help focus your goals, hopes, and fears about the impending hike.” Recite *T’filat Haderech* (resource 2n; make copies for everyone in the group).
- Next, explain that since this is the first hike for the group we will be reciting the *Shehecheyanu*.
- Finally, go through safety procedures.

### Walk Silently

(The following activity is from *A Wild Faith* by Mike Comins, p. 59):

- Begin hike – but do not explain that this is a silent hike.
- **After about 3 – 5 minutes** ask the group to stop. **Say:** So far on the hike we have been doing what every group does when left to its own devices. We talk. We are social creatures. Ignoring another person is rude, and we are often uncomfortable if we have not exchanged at least a few words with the human being standing next to us. It is the friendly thing to do. From now on we will continue in silence. Silence frees one to focus on the natural world that we have come to experience. This is an essential practice for those who wish to be fully present in wilderness. As you walk refrain from speech of any kind. Do not fill the silence by listening to music on headphones.”
- Spread the group out on the trail and leave space between yourself and others.
- **After another 5 minutes** or so of silent walking ask the group to stop. **Say:** The more you concentrate on outer geography, the more aware you become of inner geography – emotions, feelings, and yearnings. In reality, it is not a contradiction at all. Free of the incessant chatter of the media, the Internet, and social niceties, awareness grows into a fullness that holds everything we experience. The more we are alert and focused on our surroundings, the more we are aware of our interaction with them. As Martin Buber showed us in his theory of I/Thou, sometimes the deepest dialogue is wordless. **We will now take 5 minutes to rest** and have some water.
- **After 5 minutes**, gather the learners for the meditative walking exercise.<sup>73</sup>

### Meditative Walking (25, 25, 50) – resource 2p

(The following activity is from *A Wild Faith* by Mike Comins, p. 60):

- **Say:** This exercise will be an extension of the short walk we did in Unit 1. While standing still in the wilderness, begin to focus on your breath. You might listen for the subtle sound of breathing, notice the rising and falling of your belly and chest, or focus on the sensation of air passing through your nostrils. When thoughts arise, gently let them go and return to your breath. Let us begin hiking again, with these concepts in mind.”
- **After 3 minutes of walking say (continue walking):** “Now, leave half your attention on the breath and place the other half on the bottoms of your feet. Feel the pressure of your body on the earth; notice the constant adjustments your

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<sup>73</sup> This activity is from Rabbi Mike Comins, *A Wild Faith*, 2007, 59

muscles make to maintain balance.”

- **After another 3 minutes say (continue walking):** “Now, shift your focus once again. Place 25% of your awareness on your breath, another 25% on the soles of your feet, and 50% on the world around you. Begin to walk, taking in all the sounds and sights of the land you are traversing. Simply concentrate on your breath, the soles of your feet and your surroundings. Do not get caught up in the percentages. These are just guidelines. The important thing is to stay present.”
- **After another 3 minutes say (continue walking):** “When your mind wanders and focus fades, try not to get angry with yourself. This happens to everyone, no matter how experienced at meditation you are. Gently return your attention to the breath and the soles of your feet, then look, listen, and continue on.”
- **After another 3 minutes say (continue walking):** When we remove ourselves from the social world by walking silently, other distractions are ready to jump in. Our minds might occupy our attention with worries regarding tomorrow’s meeting, regrets about something we said yesterday, or thoughts about what we’re having for dinner. Meditation is the art of dealing with our restless minds in order to live fully in the present. One meditative strategy is to occupy the mind with several simultaneous tasks, all focused on the present. This is my favorite way of staying in the here and now while felling stressed or anxious. The goal is simply to pay attention to the natural world.
- **After another 3 minutes** ask everyone to stop and look off somewhere in nature that grabs their attention, or is interesting to them at this moment. Once the learners have settled and are quite, ask everyone to recite the blessing on seeing natural wonders (resource 2p), and recite it together.<sup>74</sup>

- Then gather around and ask the following questions during rest time:
  1. How are you feeling so far? Has anything interesting come up for you?
  2. What sounds have you heard? What sights have you seen? Would you normally notice these things? Were you surprised by what you could sense?
  3. Was concentrating on your breath, the soles of your feet, and the surroundings challenging? Why or why not? If why not, why, what strategies do you use?

#### **As You Walk on Your Way – resource 2q**

- **Say:** “We are at the halfway point and in a moment we will start heading back. The next part of the hike will be a little more interactive, however you will be walking alone. This will be another opportunity to be quiet, and alone, in nature.

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<sup>74</sup> This activity is from Rabbi Mike Comins, *A Wild Faith*, 2007, 60

A chance to pay attention to what you are experiencing, and to notice all the life and sounds that are in nature. I will be walking ahead along the path laying out cards. Everyone will then walk ahead along the same path one at a time, going from card to card."

- **Give the following directions:**
  - Assign a person to dismiss the walkers in about fifty-foot intervals (this person walks last).
  - Walk silently.
  - Stop and read each card; do or think about what is on the card.
- Walk ahead down path and lay out the index cards that you have prepared in advance (see resource 2q for suggestions).
- The person assigned to dismiss the walkers will walk last and should pick up the cards as they go along the path. The walk ends when everyone reaches the leader.

#### Rest (5 minutes)

#### Hike back trailhead at hikers own pace

- **Say:** "We will now be hiking back to the trailhead. You may go at your own pace, but please keep in mind that there is a closing activity that we will do before we leave, and also that it is always best to walk with a partner. If you go quickly you should be back in no more than 10 minutes. For those who want to move at a slower pace, know that we will be beginning the closure activity in 20 minutes from now. Enjoy and be safe!"

#### Closure Activity – Giving Thanks – resource 2r

- **Say:** "Great hike everyone! Let's gather in a circle. To conclude the day we will be thanking God for all of the good things we have experienced during our hike. Take a few moments right now to reflect on the terrain you have just seen and the experiences along the way."
- **(Pause)**
- Invite the hikers to share thoughts as they come to mind – perhaps something they experienced on the hike for which they want to give thanks. Descriptive words or phrases work best – for example, "chirping birds," or "crunching leaves." Be comfortable with moments of silence as hikers gather their thoughts.

Resource 2o  
*T'filat Haderech*

**T'filat Haderech** (traditional text)

יהי רצון מלפניך יי אלהינו ואלהי אבותינו, שתוליכנו לשלום  
ותצמידנו לשלום ותסמכנו לשלום, ותגיענו למחוז חפצנו  
לחיים ולשמחה ולשלום, ותחזירנו לביתנו לשלום. ותצילנו  
מכף כל-אויב ואורב ואסון בדרך ומכל-מיני פרעניות  
המתרגשות לבוא לעולם. ותשלח ברכה במעשה ידינו, ותתנו  
לחן ולחסד ולרחמים בעיניך ובעיני כל-רואינו. ותשמע קול  
תחנונינו, כי אל שומע תפלה ותחנון אתה. ברוך אתה יי  
שומע תפלה.

*Y'hi ratzon mi'l'fanecha, Adonai Eloheinu veilohei avoteinu, shetolichenu  
l'shalom v'tatzideinu l'shalom v'tasm'cheinu l'shalom, v'tagi'enu lim'hoz  
heftzeinu l'hayyim ul'simhah ul'shalom, v'tahazireinu l'veiteinu l'shalom.  
V'hatzileinu mikaf kol-oyeiv v'oreiv v'ason baderech umikol-minei  
pur'aniyot hamitragshot lavo la'olam. V'tishlah brachah b'ma'aseh  
yadeinu, v'titneinu l'hen ul'hesed ul'rahamim b'einecha uveinei chol  
ro'enu. V'tishma kol tahananuneinu, ki eil shomei'a t'filah v'tahanun atah.  
Baruch atah Adonai shomei'a t'filah.*

May it be your will, Adonai, our God and God of our ancestors, to lead us in peace, to keep us in peace, to direct us to our destination in health and happiness and peace, and to return us to our homes in peace. Save us from all enemies and calamities on the journey, and from all threatening disasters. Bless the work of our hands. May we find grace, love, and mercy in your

sight and in the sight of all who see us. Hear our pleas, for You listen to prayer and supplication. Praised are You, Adonai, who hears prayer.

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<sup>75</sup> Translation from *Spirit in Nature: Teaching Judaism and Ecology on the Trail*, p. 4 – 5

**T'filat Haderech** (contemporary version)

*May we be blessed as we go on our way,*

*May we be guided in peace,*

*May we be blessed with health and joy,*

*May this be our blessing Amen.*

*May we be sheltered by the wings of peace,*

*May we be kept in safety and in love,*

*May grace and compassion find their way to every soul,*

*May this be our blessing Amen.*

—FROM *And You Shall Be a Blessing*

BY DEBBIE FRIEDMAN



Resource 2p  
Blessing on seeing natural wonders

*On seeing natural wonders—mountains, valleys, oceans,  
rivers, and wilderness:*

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, עֹשֶׂה מַעֲשֵׂה בְרָאשִׁית.

*Baruch atah, Adonai Eloheinu, Melech ha'olam, oseh ma'asei v'reishit.*

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the universe, who  
makes the wonders of creation.

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<sup>76</sup> Translation from *Spirit in Nature: Teaching Judaism and Ecology on the Trail*, p. 62

**Resource 2g**  
**As You Walk on Your Way**  
**Card Ideas**

- “As civilization advances, the sense of wonder declines. Such decline is an alarming symptom of our state of mind. We will not perish for want of information, but only for want of appreciation.” (A.J. Heschel, *Man is Not Alone*)
- Take your shoes off and walk barefoot to the next card.
- Close your eyes and listen for three natural sounds.
- Look down and grab the first natural object you see. Pick it up and look at it. Try to remember what it looks like and see if you can draw it in your book of blessings.
- Say the prayer and then smell this leaf:

On smelling the fragrance of shrubs and trees:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא עֵצִי בְשָׁמִים.

*Baruch atah Adonai eloheinu melech ha'olam boray atzay vesamim.*

Praised are you, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the Universe, who creates fragrant trees.

- (Draw a rainbow on the index card) Say the prayer over seeing a rainbow:

On seeing a rainbow:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, זוֹכֵר הַבְּרִית, וְנֶאֱמָן בְּבְרִיתוֹ, וְקָיָם  
בְּמַאֲמָרוֹ.

*Baruch atah Adonai eloheinu melech ha'olam zocher ha'berit ve'ne'eman bivrito vekayam  
be'ma'amaro.*

Praised are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the Universe, who remembers the covenant  
and is faithful in keeping promises.

- Think about how you will describe this hike to your child.
- Close your eyes and explore the bark of this tree.
- Do you think God is in this place? How can you tell?
- (Leave blank cards – enough for each learner). On one index card leave these instructions:
  - Here is a blank card for you. You may use it to write a nature poem or prayer, draw the item that you looked at, or what ever you wish.

## Lesson 4 Shabbat (Scripted)

### Objectives

Learners should be able to:

- List and define the major ingredients of *Shabbat*
- Create and imagine possible *Shabbat* experiences

### Timeline

0:00 – 0:10	<i>Shabbat</i> Memories
0:10 – 0:35	<i>Shabbat</i> Blessings
0:35 – 1:00	Children’s Blessing
1:00 – 1:20	Your ideal <i>Shabbat</i>
1:20 – 1:30	Closure

### Materials

- Resource 2r - 2s

### Set Induction – Shabbat Memories

- Distribute pencils and blank paper to the learners. When everyone has arrived and is settled **Say:** “Think about and then jot down your favorite *Shabbat* memories either from childhood or from something that happened recently that you want to remember. Imagine what made those memories special and memorable?”
- Once it seems that the learners are done, invite 2 – 3 people to share these memories. After these responses, **say:** “Now think about and jot down your least favorite *Shabbat* memories. What made those memories unfavorable?”
- Once it seems that the learners are done, invite 2 – 3 people to share these memories.

### Activity #1 – Shabbat Blessings – Resource 2r

- **Say:** “In this activity, you will have an opportunity to learn from as well as teach each other about *Shabbat*. There will be seven stations: Candles, Wine, Challah, Children’s blessing, *Shabbat* songs, *Shabbat*, and *Havdalah* for this activity. At each station you will find information about that particular subject (resource 2r). In a moment, I will ask you to roam around the room to read each card at each station. While you are at each table write down your favorite *Shabbat* memories if appropriate (for example if your favorite memory from *Shabbat* was lighting the candles, then you would write this at the candle table).”
- Allow time for everyone to go from table to table and write down their thoughts. When the learners seem to be finished writing down their memories, encourage them to walk to the tables one more time to read everyone’s responses.

- After everyone has had a chance to read the responses gather together to discuss the following questions.

### Questions:

1. Were there any similarities to the responses either good or bad? If so, what were they?
2. Does one aspect of *Shabbat* stand out as being the most memorable? If so, what is it and why do you think this is so?
3. Did you learn anything new or see anything that you will try at home? If so, what is it?
4. Did you think of any new ideas as a result of walking from table to table? What are they?

### Activity #2 – Children's Blessing

- Hand out resource 2s and read together:

(The following information is from PJ Library's *Blessing Our Children*):

"A beautiful thing about Judaism is the importance we place on family. From the very first chapters in the Bible, we are instructed: "Be fruitful and multiply." Children not only help to ensure our future, they enrich our lives tremendously by breathing joy, wonder, and meaning into them. From the same early chapters of the Bible, we are taught about the importance of the Sabbath. Life today is busy, demanding, and sometimes stressful. The Jewish Sabbath, the Day of Rest, is one of the greatest gifts our tradition offers. There is nothing more special than gathering around the dinner table, *Shabbat* candlelight in the background, warm *challah* on the table, and the joy of conversation with family and friends.

Of the many customs of *Shabbat*, one that is particularly beautiful, is blessing our children. Throughout the world parents place their hands on the heads of their young ones, or cup their faces in their hands, and recite words of blessing, wishing them protection, favor, and peace. In receiving these blessings, our children take in our unconditional love and security and hope. The blessing is almost always sealed with a hug or kiss. It is most important to do what is comfortable for your family.

In the traditional blessing, parents say to their sons, "May God make you like Ephraim and Menasseh." This comes from the part of the Bible in which the Jewish patriarch, Jacob, offered blessings to the children of his favorite son, Joseph. Ephraim and Menasseh were known both for being faithful to Judaism and for being the first brothers whose relationship was harmonious. To daughters, parents say, "May God make you like Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah." These four Jewish matriarchs are known as wonderful role models; in spite of living lives filled with challenge and hardship, they maintained faith in God."<sup>77</sup>

These blessings are followed by the Priestly Blessing, "May God bless you and keep you. May God look kindly upon you, and be gracious to you. May God reach out to You in tenderness, and give you peace."<sup>78</sup>

- Read together

(The following information is from [www.kveller.com](http://www.kveller.com) and can be found at the link in the footnote):

"While fixed prayers offer a measure of consistency and a power that the same words have been uttered for generations, I often feel the desire to offer a personal prayer that reflects my own special relationship with my children. Judaism recognizes the need for fixed prayer and prayers that also have personal meaning and intentionality. When inspired, I add a spontaneous blessing, one that notes milestones in my children's life from the past week and anything else that moves me about my relationship with them.

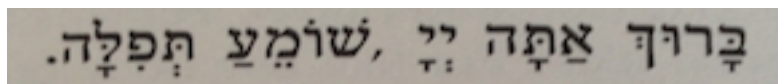
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<sup>77</sup> Adapted from *PJ Library's Blessing Our Children*

<sup>78</sup> Translations from Chaim Stern, *On the Doorposts of your House*, 40

There are no specific formulations to these personal prayers, just simple sentiments like, "May you continue to approach the smallest discoveries in life with wonder and joy" or "May I continue to learn how to be the best parent to you." Adopting a spiritual practice of blessing my children on a weekly basis has helped me move from the banal to the sacred which, with all of the new routines and chores, is itself a blessing.<sup>79</sup>

- You will now have an opportunity to draft your own blessing for your child. The simplest way is to begin a sentence with, "Please God..." or "May it be..." or "Bless and praise my..." and let the rest follow. Be as honest as possible. What do you really want for your children? What are your best hopes for them? In blessing, simplicity is a virtue. This idea is to say words that as much as possible come directly from your emotional center. When prayer is heartfelt, it carries an emotional charge.
- "You might end with a traditional blessing, such as this:



*Baruch Atah Adonai, Shomeiah T'filah.*

*"Blessed be you Adonai, who hearkens to prayer."<sup>80</sup>*

- If there is time, invite learners to share their blessings.

### **Activity #3 – An Ideal Shabbat**

- **Say:** "What do you think are the essential elements of a successful, meaningful, and memorable *Shabbat*?"
  - Ask the learners to answer the question by raising their hand.
- Then **say:** "Using the elements we have named, and what you know about *Shabbat*, synthesize your own personal version of an ideal *Shabbat* (either Friday night, Saturday, or a combination of both). Spend 5 – 10 minutes brainstorming some ideas with a partner, or by yourself, then another 10 minutes outlining and/or free writing about what this would actually look like."

### **Closure**

- If there is time, invite learners to share what their ideal *Shabbat* looks like.
- Ask learners to watch this instructional video (use this link) about micrography before the next session. Explain that we will be creating our own micrography

<sup>79</sup> <http://www.kveller.com/traditions/Shabbat/blessing-child.shtml>

<sup>80</sup> Mishkan T'Filah, p. 90

art for our book of blessings.

<http://thevirtualinstructor.com/micrography.html>



## Resource 2r

### *Shabbat Blessings*<sup>81</sup>

The following information is from <http://www.mishpacha.org/> and can be found at the link found in the footnote):

#### Candles

- According to Genesis, light was the first thing God created. If the sun was created afterwards, what was the source of the first light? One understanding is that the light that filled the world must have been a spiritual light -- the light of the dawning of consciousness.

Just as the creation of the world was initiated by light, so too is *Shabbat*, as is fitting for the celebration of creation. We usher in *Shabbat* before sunset, with a candle-lighting ritual. Traditionally, women have lit *Shabbat* candles. Both men and women now participate in, and enjoy, this practice. Young children especially love to be present for this moment.

#### Wine

- The *Shabbat* meal is preceded by the reciting of *kiddush*, the sanctification of *Shabbat* over wine. In Jewish life, wine is a symbol for joy. The *kiddush* describes *Shabbat* as a commemoration of both the universal -- the creation of the world -- and the particular -- God's redemption of Israel from Egypt.

What does the exodus from Egypt have to do with *Shabbat*? Not only do we ourselves rest on *Shabbat* in imitation of God's rest from creation, but even animals, plants, and those not typically given the luxury (i.e. slaves) get to rest. Since God liberated the Israelites from servitude, they are commanded in turn to give rest to others on *Shabbat*.

#### Challah

- *Challot* (the Hebrew plural of *challah*) are the braided loaves traditionally eaten on *Shabbat*. We bless two *challot* at every meal to commemorate the Jews who wandered in the desert after they were freed from Egypt. On each morning in the desert the wanderers received one portion of manna, but on Friday they received two portions to prevent bread collecting on *Shabbat*. After collecting this double portion they had everything they needed for *Shabbat*.

#### Children's Blessing

- Blessing your children can be a very special shared moment. Before beginning

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<sup>81</sup> <http://www.mishpacha.org/shabbat-seven.shtml>

Sabbath dinner take a moment to lay your hands on your child's head and give the gift of your blessing. You can use the traditional words in the words and deeds section, or bless your children in whatever way you wish. If this feels alien to you, think in terms of your personal prayers for your child's well-being, protection and growth. Some households have the custom of blessing everyone present.

### Shabbat Songs

- As you have seen, *Shabbat* is a time of many blessings -- those which we recite, and those in which we partake. One central blessing is the *Hamotzi*, recited after the meal. This blessing is not particular to *Shabbat* but one that is recited every time one eats a meal with bread -- the staple of our diet. The blessing gives thanks for the land and its bounty, and for God's goodness in feeding all creatures. Some families sing this blessing and others recite it to themselves. Many families also sing many songs after dinner. In addition to any memories you have that relate to songs and *Shabbat*, write down your favorite *Shabbat* songs.

### Shabbat Day

- On *Shabbat* day there is traditionally a festive midday meal. Again *kiddush* is recited and after lunch many people take an opportunity for a long and luxurious nap. Saturday afternoon is also a good time for study, reading, or taking long meditative walks. What is your ideal Saturday afternoon?

### Havdalah

- Havdalah brings *Shabbat* to a close in the same way it began -- with light. For this ritual, we use one braided candle instead of two separate candles. The braided candles symbolize the two separate flames becoming one through the unifying force of *Shabbat*. This ceremony includes blessings over wine, spices, light, and for the God who distinguishes between the sacred and the profane, between darkness and light.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> <http://www.mishpacha.org/shabbat-seven.shtml>

Resource 2s  
Children's Blessing

Traditional blessing for boys:

יְשִׁמְחָה אֱלֹהִים    Ye'simcha Elohim  
כְּאַפְרַיִם וְכִמְנַשֶּׁה:    ke-Ephraim ve'chi-Menashe  
May God make you like Ephraim and Menashe.

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יְבָרֶכְךָ יְיָ וְיִשְׁמְרֶךָ:    Ye'varech'echa Adonoy ve-yish'merecha.  
יָאֵר יְיָ פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ וַיַּחֲנֶנְךָ:    Ya'eir Adonoy panav eilecha viy-chuneka.  
יֵשָׂא יְיָ פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ    Yisa Adonoy panav eilecha,  
וְיָשִׁים לְךָ שָׁלוֹם:    ve-yaseim lecha shalom.

May God bless you and watch over you.  
May God shine His face toward you and show you favor.  
May God be favorably disposed toward you,  
and may He grant you peace.

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Traditional blessing for girls:

יְשִׁמְעָה אֱלֹהִים    Ye'simech Elohim  
כְּסָרָה רִבְקָה רָחֵל וְלֵאָה:    ke-Sarah, Rivka, Rachel ve-Leah  
May God make you like Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah.

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יְבָרֶכְךָ יְיָ וְיִשְׁמְרֶךָ:    Ye'varech'echa Adonoy ve-yish'merecha  
יָאֵר יְיָ פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ וַיַּחֲנֶנְךָ:    Ya'eir Adonoy panav eilecha viy-chuneka  
יֵשָׂא יְיָ פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ    Yisa Adonoy panav eilecha,  
וְיָשִׁים לְךָ שָׁלוֹם:    ve-yaseim lecha shalom.

May God bless you and watch over you.  
May God shine His face toward you and show you favor.  
May God be favorably disposed toward you,  
and may He grant you peace.

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<sup>83</sup> <http://www.aish.com/sh/ht/fn/48966831.html>

<sup>84</sup> <http://www.aish.com/sh/ht/fn/48966831.html>

## Lesson 5

### *A Book of Blessings Marking Sacred Time #1*

#### Objectives

Learners should be able to:

- Gain the skills necessary to create their micrography art

#### Timeline

0:00 – 0:05	Set Induction
0:05 – 0:10	Introduction to Micrography
0:10 – 0:50	Blessing Book Work Time (Decorate cover and <i>Shehecheyanu</i> page)
0:50 – 1:00	Closure

#### Assessment

- Micrography of *Shehecheyanu* Blessing – First page of Blessing Book

#### Procedure

(The following activity was taken from the lesson plan *Graphic Design and Illustration: Micrography Portrait* by Arts, A/V Technology, and Communications):

- **SAY:** “Micrography,” which comes from Greek, literally small-writing, is also called Microcalligraphy. It is a Jewish form of calligrams developed in the ninth century, with parallels in Christianity and Islam - utilizing minute Hebrew letters to form representational, geometric and abstract designs. The artwork is created from text that forms an image when viewed at a distance, creating interplay between the text and image. The connection between this form of art and religious restrictions placed on images by religious leaders is significant. Micrography provides a unique solution to the visual artist who wishes to remain devout in observation of Jewish law, by using only text to express thoughts. Since similar restrictions exist in certain Muslim societies, this solution has been adapted in Islamic calligraphy as well.
  - a. **SHOW:** Show examples of Micrography art. -  
<http://www.jtsa.edu/prebuilt/exhib/microg/01.shtml>
  - b. **Say:** In this lesson we are going to create a micrographic portrait using the Shehecheyanu Blessing as the cover for our Blessings Book How come? Learners need a rationale for why they are doing this book, and why micrography, how is it all linked to the core purposes of this guide?

**c. Procedure:**

- i. Trace all major outlines of symbol (Jewish star, Tree, Tablets).
- ii. Now transfer the contour drawing onto a "good piece of paper."
- iii. Fill in with words! The actual lines are just written on with words. Students will start to notice the smaller the letters and the less space between, the more "filled in" the image appears. This part is all done with pencil.
- iv. Next step is to extra fine point sharpie over the words.
- v. Erase any visible pencil mark<sup>85</sup>

## Unit 3 – Marking Times of Mitzvot

### Enduring Understandings

- Something sacred is at stake in every event.
- Children exercise radical amazement naturally; oftentimes, adults must relearn it.
- Judaism is a religion of time aiming at the sanctification of time.
- In any moment, a sense of the sacred can move us to prayer, and the acts of prayer and blessing can lead us to the sacred.
- No child is too young to be offered the opportunity to tackle *big ideas*.

### Objectives

- Describe your understanding of *mitzvot* and evaluate how they add meaning in your lives
- Defend observing *mitzvot* vs. not observing them
- Evaluate what *mitzvot* means/can mean for your family
- Assess how *mitzvot* are tools that develop in us an awareness of God in all aspects of our lives.

### Unit Overview

Lesson 1	<i>Mitzvot</i>
Lesson 2	<i>Birkot HaMitzvot</i>
Lesson 3	<i>Mitzvot</i> and the family
Lesson 4	Blessings Book #2
<b>Total:</b>	<b>4 hours</b>

### Evidence of learning

- Learners understanding of how *mitzvot* can add meaning and value to their lives
- *Mitzvot* Letter to your child(ren)
- Original *mezuzah* blessing

## Lesson 1

### Mitzvot

#### **Objectives:**

Learners will be able to:

- Describe your understanding of *mitzvot* and evaluate their value
- Defend marking *mitzvot* vs. not marking them
- Evaluate what *mitzvot* means/can mean for your family

#### **Timeline**

0:00 – 0:10	• Set Induction
0:10 – 0:30	• <i>Mitzvot Synectics</i>
0:30 – 0:50	• <i>Mitzvot Discussion in Small Groups</i>
0:50 – 1:00	• Closure

#### **Assessment**

- Learners' understanding of *mitzvot*

#### **Material**

- Resource 3a – 3d

#### **Set Induction – Mitzvot “Wordle”- <http://www.wordle.net/>**

- **Ask the learners:** What are the first words you think of when you hear the word *mitzvah*? Text those to the following address. Allow 3 – 5 minutes for people to think of words. Once the *wordle* is complete, ask and discuss the following questions:
  - Does one word stand out? If so, why? What about that word resonates with the learners? Does anything else stand out?
  - Is there any word missing that you were expecting to see?
  - Is there anything surprising here?

#### **Activity #1 – Mitzvot Discussion in Small Groups – Resource 3a**

- Split the learners in into small groups of 4 – 6 and distribute resource 3a to them.
- Discuss the questions as a group and be prepared to share them with the whole group.

#### **Activity #2 – Mitzvot Synectics**

(This activity was derived from William Gordon, *Synectics* (New York: Harper and Row, 1961):

- The word “*mitzvot*” is written on the board.
  - Facilitator will lead the learners through a synectics exercise with the concept

of *mitzvot*. The word “*mitzvot*” is written on the board.

- To warm up and introduce the idea of synectics, ask each student, “To which fruit or vegetable are you or a person you know similar? Why?”
- Ask learners to list metaphors for “*mitzvot*,” and write these metaphors on the board in column 1.
- Vote on one metaphor (X) to focus on for the rest of the exercise.
- Ask learners to imagine that they are X, or that they are looking at X. How does X look? How does X feel? List these answers on the board in column. If not enough contrasting terms are listed, ask probing questions.
- Find pairs of opposites within the list, and list them in column 3.
- Vote on which pair to discuss further. List things that have both these conflicting qualities in column 4. Vote on one thing (Y) which will become the new metaphor for stranger. Ask learners to write, “X is like Y when...” or “X is like Y because...” on slips of papers. Collect and redistribute the papers, and ask learners to read the paper in their hands out loud.
- **Ask the learners**, “What did you learn about the concept of ‘*mitzvot*’ from doing this exercise?”

#### Closure – What can *mitzvot* mean to me? – Resource 3b – 3d

- Ask for a volunteers to take turns reading from *The History of Mitzvot* from *Stories We Pray* (resource 3b)
- Recommended Reading:
  - *Mitzvot for Moderns*<sup>86</sup> (resource 3c)
  - *The Meaning of Mitzvah*<sup>87</sup> (resource 3d)

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<sup>86</sup> <http://www.newlondon.org.uk/articles/?article=73>

<sup>87</sup> Abraham Joshua Heschel, *God In Search Of Man*, 361 - 366



### Resource 3a

#### Introduction to *Mitzvot*

(The following information is from *Teaching Mitzvot* by Barbara Binder Kadden and Bruce Kadden, p. ix):

- The word *mitzvah* (plural *mitzvot*) means commandment, specifically a divine commandment. Through common usage, sometimes misuse, the word has also come to mean a good deed.

The most common associations with the word *mitzvah* are *Bar Mitzvah* and *Bat Mitzvah*, the ceremonies that mark the passage from childhood to religious maturity. A Jewish child becomes *B'nai Mitzvah* at age 13. But these terms refer to something far more significant than ceremonies. They refer to young persons coming of age, taking on the *Ol HaTorah* – the obligation to participate in the Jewish community and to observe the commandments.

The original source of *mitzvot* is the Torah. Yet, though the commandments are in the Torah, they neither specified nor enumerated there. One must go to the Talmud to find the tradition that Torah contains 613 *Mitzvot* (*Makkot* 23b). The number 613 is not, in and of itself, significant. Rather, it is the sum of 365 positive *mitzvot* (which, according to the Rabbis, correspond to the number of days in a solar year), and 248 negative *mitzvot* (corresponding to the bones in the human body).<sup>88</sup>

Here are some modern views of *mitzvot* and their importance in Jewish life from Rabbi David Hartman:

- “My understanding of the covenant is radically different, since it presupposes that God *invited* the Israelites to participate in the drama of building His kingdom in history. It is more in keeping with another rabbinic Midrash, according to which the Torah was offered to all the nations, but only Israel agreed to accept it. The community accepts the *mitzvot* both because it loves God and because it appreciates the significance of the way of life charted out by the *mitzvot*. God has the community’s allegiance because the *mitzvot* give meaning to its relationship with God and to its existence in the world. The *mitzvot* are not perceived as the price exacted by God at Sinai for services rendered, not as quid pro quo, but as a gift of God’s love.”
- “*Mitzvah* anchors the spiritual life in history and the community, keeping individuals from the mistaken notion that they can build a full spiritual life in isolation from a community. Thus the philosopher understands that the *mitzvot* are not meant *only*

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<sup>88</sup> Barbara Binder Kadden & Bruce Kadden, *Teaching Mitzvot*, 2003, ix

for training in spiritual meditation, since they also organize and serve the well-being of the nation.”<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> David Hartman, *A Living Covenant: The Innovative Spirit in Traditional Judaism*, 2012, p. 3

**Resource 3b**  
***The History of Mitzvot***<sup>90</sup>

(The following information is from *Stories We Pray* by Joel Grishaver, p. 278):

It is hard to be a parent. God learned that with Adam and Eve. God wanted people to be good to themselves and good to each other, so God gave them just one rule.<sup>91</sup> It should have been enough. This one *mitzvah* was “No idols.” This was a big rule. It wasn’t just “Don’t think that you can make up our own gods who will tell you what you want to hear.” And most of all “No idols” meant, “Don’t think that you can decide that right is what you feel like doing.” Even if you are angry at someone, you cannot hit him. Even if someone cheated you, you cannot cheat the person back. Fighting is never the way to solve anything. You can’t steal something no matter how much you want it. “No idols” meant that there is One God who created everyone and Who wants us to treat everyone the right way.

The “No idols” *mitzvah* didn’t work. The world turned into a pretty bad place. People stole. People hurt. People did what they wanted and didn’t care about anyone else. Adam and Eve’s descendents were unhappy, and God was really angry. God decided to start over. That is where the flood came in. It was time for the parent to add some new rules. This time God gave Noah and his family six more rules. God kept the (1) “No idols” *mitzvah* and added (2) be good to your family, (3) no killing,

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<sup>90</sup> Rabbi Joel Lurie Grishaver, *Stories We Pray*, 278

<sup>91</sup> There were actually two other rules. “Be fruitful and multiply:” This wasn’t counted because it was given to all life and not just people. And “Don’t eat the fruit from the tree in the middle of the garden:” This also doesn’t count because it was particular to just the people living in the garden. God gave them only one *mitzvah* that is still on the list.

(4) no stealing, (5) no cursing our God, (6) no being cruel to animals, and (7) set up courts to fix things when you are angry at each other. God hoped that by His being more specific people would act better. It didn't work. Even with seven *mitzvot*, they still hurt, killed, stole, and more or less did what they wanted. The world wasn't much better.

God decided to try a third way of parenting. God went for an experiment. God picked one small family, Abram's family, and said, "We are going to make a deal. I will work with you (in private lessons), and when we figure it out you will teach everyone else." So God gave the Families of Israel lots of rules, 613 *mitzvot*. Some of these were things to do. Some were things not to do. Some were rules about how to treat each other. Some were ways of looking at our actions – the way one looks at a wardrobe in a mirror – and learning how to improve them. Israel got the Torah, which had holidays and stories, things to do every day, and a large collection of "Do this" or "Don't do this" things. The idea was that God gave them the gift of not just a couple of rules but a whole way of living that would help them to make themselves into better people and help them teach others how to be better, too. All of this is just a huge version of "No idols" that works on getting us past the moments when "how we feel" gets in the way of "what we know we should do."

Therefore, it is hard to be a Jew. Torah comes with a lot of things to do and not do. But being a Jew also offers a path to becoming happy by letting the best you

emerge and join with others to make a much better world.

The Torah is a gift from God. It contains 613 *mitzvot*. Of these, 365 are positive. That means they are rules that we are supposed to do. There is one positive mitzvah for every day in the year (though we are supposed to do a lot more than one every day). There are 248 negative *mitzvot*. These are *mitzvot* that say, “Do not do.” There are also 248 bones in our body.

The big idea is this: *Mitzvot* are the ways we are supposed to shape ourselves – down to the bone – every single day. They are chances to come to know God. They are ways of becoming better people. They are ways of making the world better.

## Lesson 2

### *Birkot HaMitzvot*

#### Objectives

- Be able to define Birkot HaMitzvot and assess the value of saying them in your family

#### Timeline

0:00 – 0:05	• <i>Free write: Do Jews Practice Mitzvot?</i>
0:05 – 0:20	• <i>Birkot Hamitzvot</i>
0:20 – 0:40	• <i>Thieves!</i>
0:40 – 1:00	• <i>A Different Perspective</i>

#### Assessment

- *Mitzvot* Letter to your child(ren)
- Original blessings (Activity #3)

#### Materials

- Resource 3c - 3d

#### Set Induction – Free write about Mitzvot

- Ask the learners to respond to the following prompts:
  - What is your understanding of the word *mitzvah*?
  - Do Reform Jews really practice/observe *mitzvot*?
  - What do you do if you do not feel obligated?
  - Are there certain things you expect your child to do “just because” or “because I said so?”
- When people appear to be finished, ask if anyone would like to share their responses.

#### Activity #1 – Birkot Hamitzvot – Resource 3c

- Split learners into groups of 4 – 6 to read and discuss *Birkot Hamitzvot* handout

#### Activity #2 – Thieves! – Resource 3d

- **Say:** (The following information is from *The Path of Blessing* by Marcia Prager, pp. 13 -14):

The practice of blessing helps us see that consuming without returning the gift of our conscious awareness makes us in a way like thieves. In the first book of the Talmud, *Brakhot*, a detailed record of early rabbinic teachings on

blessing and prayer, one teacher unabashedly exclaims, “Anyone who derives pleasure from this world without a *bracha* is stealing from God!”<sup>92</sup>

- We will now examine and discuss some similar texts (resource 3d) in our groups.

### Activity #3 – Mitzvot – A Different Perspective

(The following information is from *Learning To Love You More* by Harrell Fletcher and Miranda July):

- **Say:** Sometimes it is a relief to be told what to do. Often, our most joyful and even profound experiences come when we are following instructions. When we are making crepes from a recipe, attempting to do a handstand in yoga class, or singing someone else’s song. Sometimes it seems like the moment we let go of trying to be original, we actually feel something new. What would it be like to think about *mitzvot* in this way? For this activity, you will choose from one of the following prompts, and do what you are told to do.
  - **Choices:**
    - Draw a scene from a movie that made you cry. Then write a blessing for sadness or sad times.
    - Recall your favorite book from fifth grade. Draw the cover from memory and then write a blessing for reading.
    - Draw a picture of your first kiss with your partner.
    - Remember a significant outfit. Write a blessing to your child significant to the age you wore the outfit in.
    - Describe what to do with your body when you die
    - Give advice to yourself in the past. Turn that advice into a blessing to your child at that age.
    - Illustrate an experience you have had with a dying person. Write a blessing about it.

Learners will be invited to add their blessings to their Blessings Book; if time permits they may also share blessings with each other.

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<sup>92</sup> Marcia Prager, *The Path of Blessing*, p. 13 – 14

***Closure – Letter to your child(ren) – (Homework)***

- Write a letter to your child(ren) about *mitzvot* and what it means to you and your family. Be honest. If you do not believe in *mitzvot*, acknowledge that and try to articulate what is important and essential about Judaism for your family.



### Resource 3c *Birkot Hamitzvot*

(The following information is from *Stories We Pray* by Joel Grishaver, p. 277):

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Being a Jew is trying to:

- Learn about and love God.
- Become the best people we can be.
- Make the world into the best possible place for everyone.

The Torah is the guidebook that God gave the Jewish people. It gives us ways to learn about God, it teaches us lessons about becoming the best people we can be, and it directs us to work on making the world better.

When you study the Torah you learn that it has 613 ways of living that bring us close to God and help us to live the way God wants us to live.

Some of these are holiday celebrations like Passover, Sukkot, and Shabbat. Some of these are good things to do like loving your neighbor, giving *tzedakah*, and helping people to get well. And some of these ways to live are things not to do. These include not murdering, not embarrassing, and not hating another person in our heart.

We call these ways of living, *mitzvot*. In Yiddish the word *mitzvah* is understood to mean “good deed.” That is not exactly the meaning that is found in the Torah. Most English translations of the Torah and the Siddur translate *mitzvah* as “commandment.” These are things that God has told us to do and that God has told us not to do.

Some (but not all) *mitzvot* have *brachot*. These *brachot* help us to remember that the reason we are doing these things is to get closer to God. There are *brachot* for putting on a *tallit*, lighting candles, studying Torah, and sitting in a *sukkah*.

A *mitzvah bracha* is different from an ordinary *bracha*. We add a few more words to the beginning. We add *Asher Kidshanu B'mitzvotav V'tzivanu* (“Who hallows us with *mitzvot* and commands us”).

It says that when we do a *mitzvah* it is a connection to the holy. This *bracha* with extra words reminds us that the thing we are doing is a chance to experience holiness.

#### Discussion Questions:

1. What were you taught as the translation of *mitzvah* in your Jewish education?  
How does this affect your practice of Judaism?

2. Do you agree with this description of a Jew? Why or why not?
  - a. To Learn about and love God.
  - b. Become the best people we can be.
  - c. Make the world into the best possible place for everyone.
3. How can *mitzvot* be meaningful if I don't believe in God?
4. Do you agree that doing a *mitzvah* connects us with the holy and gives us a change to experience holiness

### Resource 3d Thieves!

- Maimonides, a famous Jewish teacher, wrote: “Anyone who eats food or enjoys anything without saying a *bracha* is a thief.”<sup>93</sup>
- Our job is to appreciate everything that God created and thank God for it. When we fail to notice and learn, when we do not say thank you, we are “stealing” and not paying the “rent” on the things that God gave us (Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Introduction to Book of Knowledge*).<sup>94</sup>
- “Each of us will be called to give account for the innocent delights of the world which our eyes saw, but which we didn’t let our mouths taste. However, one who delights in this world without a *bracha* is like a robber, because the *bracha* is what causes the continuation of the divine flow of *shefa* (abundant flow) into the world. All of creation is fashioned of sparks of divinity, and so when the *bracha* is offered with directed awareness and purposeful intention, we avoid becoming destructive agents who selfishly hoard the sparks of divine energy in the food. By blessing the Source of the fruit/food...we purify and release the sparks back into the life-sustaining flow of holiness.”<sup>95</sup>
- “A *bracha* completes our energy-exchange with God. We are partners in a sacred cycle of giving and receiving in which we are not only “on the take.” When we offer our blessings, we raise up sparks of holiness, releasing the God-light housed in our world back to its Source. We receivers become givers, and the nurturing flow is sustained. When, on the other hand, we receive but fail to give, we become clogged, sick, and destructive. When we fail to praise, it is *we* who suffer.”<sup>96</sup>
- “Without gratitude we become bored and depressed! This teaching, so fundamental to the Jewish practice of blessing, is movingly reflected as well in the poetry of Rumi, the Sufi poet: “Your depression is connected to your insolence and refusal to praise! Whoever feels himself walking on the path and refuses to praise – that man or woman steals from others every day – is a shoplifter!”<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Joel Lurie Grishaver, *Stories We Pray: Insights into the Inner-Work of Jewish Worship*, 2012, p.273

<sup>94</sup> Joel Lurie Grishaver, *Stories We Pray: Insights into the Inner-Work of Jewish Worship*, 2012, p.273

<sup>95</sup> Marcia Prager, *The Path of Blessing*, p. 14

<sup>96</sup> Marcia Prager, *The Path of Blessing*, p. 14

<sup>97</sup> Marcia Prager, *The Path of Blessing*, p. 14 – 15

- The very fact that the day is filled with events that require blessings provides constant inspiration. The thinking person finds himself drawn ever closer to the loving God by the awareness that every delicious morsel and soothing drink affords him a fresh opportunity to recognize and thank the Giver of all. In the words of the Talmud, whoever enjoys this world's pleasures without reciting a blessing is tantamount to one who steals from God (*Berachot* 35a).<sup>98</sup>

## Questions

1. What does it mean to you that anyone who enjoys something without saying a *bracha* is a thief? Do you agree? Why or why not?
2. As parents, are there responsibilities that you expect of your child that you can relate to this idea of being thieves?
3. Do you agree that without gratitude we become bored?
4. Are there ways other than saying a *bracha* to show gratitude for the things you have in your life? If so, what are they?
5. How do you show gratitude as a family?

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<sup>98</sup> Rabbi Nosson Scherman and Rabbi Meir Zlotowitz, ed. of *The Complete Artscroll Siddur* 224.

### Lesson 3

#### Mitzvot and the Family (Scripted)

#### Objectives

The learners should be able to:

- Explain the significance of the *mezuzah*
- Describe the contents of the *mezuzah* as including the *V'ahavta*
- Make connections between their family life and the *mezuzah* as a symbol

#### Timeline

0:00 – 0:05	• Top Ten Rules
0:05 – 0:30	• Twitter Torah
0:30 – 0:50	• <i>Mezuzah</i>
0:50 – 1:00	• Closure

#### Set Induction – Top Ten Rules

- Watch the clip found at the link here:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LbKPa5VbmVE>
- Write your own top ten rules you have for your child

#### Activity #1 – Torah Twitter

- **Say:** “The *V’Ahavta* is clearly commanding us to teach words of Torah to your children, “*V’shinantam L’vanecha*,” (Teach them to your children).” What are your words of Torah?

In the age of Twitter, where we are given 140 characters to express yourself, give your Torah on one foot (i.e. the nuggets of truth you have learned, important lessons gleaned from experience, and/or what you really want your child to know) in 140 characters or less. Take 5 – 10 minutes to brainstorm some ideas and try to compose your very own Torah Tweet.

- Share “tweets.”

(The following information was taken from *On The Doorposts Of Your House* edited by Chaim Stern):

- **Say:** In the spirit of our Jewish faith, we consecrate our homes with prayers of thanksgiving and invoke upon it God’s blessing. Our homes have always been the dwelling place of the Jewish spirit. Our tables have been alters of faith and love. It is written: “When words of Torah pass between us, the Divine Presence is in our midst. As parents, we pray that the homes we make will keep alive the beauty of our heritage. We hope they will be a place for learning and doing informed by the Torah and its teachings.

The *mezuzah* is an ancient Jewish symbol that speaks to our need to live by the words of the Eternal One. We affix the *mezuzah* to the doorposts of our home with the hope that it will always remind us of our duties to one another as members of the household and the world.

The *mezuzah* invokes God's blessing, "May the Eternal One guard your going out and your coming in, now and always" (Psalm 121:7).<sup>99</sup>

### Activity - Mezuzah

(The following information is from *Teaching Mitzvot* by Barbra Binder Kadden and Bruce Kadden, pp. 71 - 72):

- **Say:**

- "The literal meaning of the word *mezuzah* is "doorpost," but it has come to refer to the biblical passages and encasement which are affixed to the doorposts of Jewish houses. Some sources trace the origin of the *mezuzah* to the time of the enslavement in Egypt, basing that practice on an Egyptian custom of placing a sacred document at the entrance to their houses.

Originally, biblical verses may have been carved into the doorpost. Later, they were written on parchment, which was then fastened to the doorpost. Eventually, the parchment was placed in a hollow reed or other casing for protection, as is the current custom.

The *mezuzah* identifies a home as the residence of Jews, reminds us to make our home a place worthy of God's blessing, and reminds us, each time we leave and enter the house, of our responsibility to follow ethical practices in business and professional life.

The *mezuzah* is a piece of parchment on which are written the first two paragraphs of the *Shema* (Deuteronomy 6:4 - 9 and 11:13 - 21). Traditionally, it is affixed on the right-hand side of every doorpost as one enters, within the upper one-third of the doorpost, but at least one handbreadth from the top. The *mezuzah* is placed diagonally, with the top toward the inside; it may be placed vertically if the doorpost is too narrow.<sup>100</sup>

- Free write for A Book of Blessings:
  - "Why is it important to you to place a *mezuzah* on your doorpost?"
  - "Why do you think the *Shema* was chosen to be written on the *mezuzah* parchment?"
- Invite learners to share their responses

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<sup>99</sup> Chaim Stern, *On the Doorposts of your House*, 1994, 138 - 142

<sup>100</sup> Barbara Binder Kadden & Bruce Kadden, *Teaching Mitzvot*, 2003, 71 - 72

**Closure – Personal Mezuzah Blessing**

- **Say:** Imagine that the *mezuzah* on the doorpost of your home could speak. Formulate responses to the following questions:
  - What would the *mezuzah* have to say about Judaism and Jewish practice? About the family that affixed the *mezuzah*?
  - What would you write on your own personal *mezuzah* parchment? What is the blessing you say as you exit and enter your home?

## Lesson 4

### *A Book of Blessings Marking Sacred Time #2*

#### **Objectives**

Learners should be able to:

- Acquire the skills to synthesize an ideal version of *Shabbat* and compose personal blessing

#### **Timeline**

0:00 – 0:05	• Set Induction
0:05 – 0:25	• Shabbat Synectics
0:25 – 0:50	• Creative Shabbat Set
0:50 – 1:00	• Closure

#### **Materials**

- Flipchart
- Plain shoe box

#### **Set Induction – Sabbath Prayer (from Fiddler on the Roof)**

- Listen to the song “Sabbath Prayer” (found here):  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LnaZqHy2ZHE>
- Discuss the content of the song. Does it reflect an outmoded lifestyle or can we derive meaning from it for today?

#### **Activity #1 – Shabbat Synectics**

- The word “*Shabbat*” is written on the board.
  - The facilitator will lead the learners through a synectics exercise with the concept of *Shabbat*. The word “*Shabbat*” is written on the board.
  - To warm up and introduce the idea of synectics, ask each student, “To which fruit or vegetable are you or a person you know similar? Why?”
  - Ask learners to list metaphors for “*Shabbat*,” and write these metaphors on the board in column 1.
  - Vote on one metaphor (X) to focus on for the rest of the exercise.
  - Ask learners to imagine that they are X, or that they are looking at X. How does X look? How does X feel? List these answers on the board in column. If not enough contrasting terms are listed, ask probing questions.
  - Find pairs of opposites within the list, and list them in column 3.
  - Vote on which pair to discuss further. List things that have both these conflicting qualities in column 4. Vote on one thing (Y) which will become the new metaphor for stranger. Ask learners to write, “X is like Y when...” or “X is like Y because...” on slips of papers. Collect and redistribute the papers, and ask learners to read the paper in their hands out loud.



- **Ask the learners,** “What did you learn about the concept of ‘*Shabbat*’ from doing this exercise?”

### **Activity #2 – Creative Shabbat**

- Once the learners are resettled, tell them that for this activity they will be simulating an activity that they can do with their child. During the lesson, they will be playing the part of their child.
- Show them the plain box. Explain that with this box they are going to create a *Shabbat* kit that they can eventually use to help their child (and others) learn about *Shabbat*. The idea is to for the parents to go through this process in order to then facilitate the same activity with their child. Ultimately, it is hoped, that the onus of inquiry and investigation will fall into the hands of the child and/or learner (i.e. the person making the *Shabbat* kit).

The first step in this process is to discuss what would need to go inside the kit and why. Do this by sharing ideas with the whole class and record them on a flip chart (i.e. *Shabbat* candles, holders, *Kiddush* cup, *Challah* (2), *Challah* cover, *Havdalah* candle, spice box, and *siddur* or card with blessings). Once you have done this, have the learners choose which symbol they want to help explain for the kit. Hopefully the class will distribute themselves equally, if not you will have to assign symbols to learners. Have each team meet at a table and begin their work. The following questions may be helpful in preparing their object:

1. Ask how would you explain about ‘welcoming’, ‘resting’ and ‘treasuring’ in your *Shabbat* Kit?
  2. Could you include, for example, a ‘To do’ list for getting ready for *Shabbat*; some ‘delightful’ ideas for resting; something to treasure?
  3. How would you decorate the box to hold the *Shabbat* Kit?
  4. What signs or symbols might you decorate it with?
  5. What is significant about your symbol?
  6. How might your object help to make a Jewish person feel close to God?
- When everyone is finished, gather together to share ideas. Collect any material learners may have written down to email to the rest of the class.

### **Closure – Free Write in Book of Blessings**

- With the remaining time, have the learners journal in their book of blessings about the following questions:
  - What sort of things do you do together as a family that make you feel really close?

- When doing this activity with your family, think about the objects that are special and meaningful to you and that bring you all together. Begin to list some possibilities.

## Unit 4 – Marking Times of Gratitude

### Introduction

#### Enduring Understandings

- Blessings function as vehicles for radical amazement and mark sacred time
- Something sacred is at stake in every event.
- Children exercise radical amazement naturally; oftentimes, adults must relearn it.
- Judaism is a religion of time aiming at the sanctification of time.
- In any moment, a sense of the sacred can move us to prayer, and the acts of prayer and blessing can lead us to the sacred.
- No child is too young to be offered the opportunity to tackle *big ideas*.

#### Objectives

Learners will be able to:

- Articulate the main ideas and themes of the *Hoda'ah* blessings
- Formulate their own prayers for thanksgiving
- Describe how the recitation of *brachot* can or have affected their thinking and feeling
- Look at *brachot* and decide which ones can be effective in developing an awareness of God in all areas of your lives

#### Unit Overview

Lesson 1	<i>Birkhot Hoda'ah</i>
Lesson 2	<i>Modeh Ani</i>
Lesson 3	Bedtime <i>Shema</i>
Lesson 4	Blessings Books #4
<b>Total:</b>	<b>4 hours</b>

#### Evidence of learning

- Thank you note to God

## Lesson 1

### *Birchot Hoda'ah*

#### Objectives

Learners should be able to:

- Explain and imagine how *Birchot hoda'ah* can help develop an awareness of God
- Reflect on how a blessing may elevate something ordinary into something special
- Choose the things for which they are most thankful for
- Articulate their feelings of gratitude to God

#### Timeline

0:00 – 0:05	What are you thankful for?
0:05 – 0:25	“Thank You God”
0:25 – 0:50	<i>Birchot Hoda'ah</i>
0:50 – 1:00	Closure

#### Materials

- Resource 4a

#### Set Induction – What are you thankful for?

- **Guided imagery (Say):** Close your eyes and imagine yourself sitting around the Thanksgiving table. You’ve reached the point in the meal where the host of the evening asks the table to share the things for which they are thankful. What do you share? (Pause).
  - **What are the things in your life for which you are truly thankful?** (Pause). Open your eyes.”
  - Ask the learners to think about and write response to the prompt.

#### Activity #1 – “Thank You God”

- **Say:** “Today we are going to be looking at how Judaism employs a special set of blessings that turn every day into Thanksgiving.” Then lead a discussion with the following questions:
  - Was it difficult to think of things for which you are thankful?
  - To whom do you offer thanks for the things in your life?
  - What in life do you think is important to say thank you for?
  - Is there any reason to give thanks for a negative experience?

#### Activity #2 – *Birchot Hoda'ah* (Resource 4a)

- Class discussion. Facilitator will read resource 4a to the class and ask the discussion questions.

#### Closure – Thank You Note To God

- Free write about the following question, “How does reciting a blessing elevate something ordinary into something special?”
- Draft a thank you note to God for something that you are thankful for. Write the final draft in your blessings book.

## Resource 4a

### *Birchot Hoda'ah*

(Some of the following information is from the website <http://www.rabbiartlevine.com/Home/tabid/2652/ID/1069/Thanksgiving-More-than-a-Gratitude-Attitude.aspx> and can be found at the link listed in the footnote):

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*Birkot Hoda'ah* expresses gratitude to God, in order to remind us of God's presence in our world. This wide panoply of *brachot* has the potential to fill our entire day with awareness of God. Gratitude is central to Jewishness. The very word "Jew" in Hebrew, "Yehudi," is a form of the word "Todah" – thank you. It's not surprising, therefore, that, in our tradition, the first thing a Jew should say upon awakening each morning is "Thank You, God, for restoring my soul to me in faithfulness." In fact, we are called upon to infuse our entire existence with gratitude to God at least 100 times each day!

The word "*Baruch*" is usually translated "Blessed," but the root of the word has something to do with bending the knee. That gesture, bending the knee, can mean acknowledgment, subservience, and/or gratitude. Jewish sages also noted that the word *Baruch* might be derived from the word for "flowing spring." So expressed, Judaism intends that we consciously and continuously express our gratitude for the flow of manifold blessings that we might not otherwise think about. In Judaism, therefore, every day should be a "Thanksgiving Day."

Count our blessings, identify the sources, sincerely express our gratitude to the sources, and, most importantly, act in ways that prove our sincere gratitude. These are the elements of Thanksgiving. Showing gratitude to all who, in innumerable ways, make our lives more meaningful, easier, productive, safer, happier, better. If we are sincere about Thanksgiving, we must act in ways that show this.<sup>101</sup>

### **Texts:**

1. Who is rich? One who is happy with what one has, as it says, "When you eat what your hands have provided, you shall be happy and good will be yours" (Psalms 128:2) – Pirkei Avot 4:1.

### **Discussion Questions:**

- a. Do you agree with this definition of happy?

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<sup>101</sup> <http://www.rabbiartlevine.com/Home/tabid/2652/ID/1069/Thanksgiving-More-than-a-Gratitude-Attitude.aspx>

- b. How can we be happy with our portion?
  - c. What is your definition of happy?
  - d. While this is a seemingly simple statement, what is the deeper meaning?  
Do you find that it is difficult to be grateful for what you have? What would make it easier to acknowledge the good things in your life?
2. "Gratitude is not just a nice gesture or a worthy personal quality. It is a real obligation like any other in the code of law. If you withhold it, you are a thief!" – Rabbi Yerucham Levovitz (1873-1936)

**Discussion Questions:**

- a. Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not?
  - b. How do you describe gratitude?
  - c. How realistic is it to always be grateful for the good things in your life?  
What gets in the way of gratitude? How do you acknowledge the things you value in your life, and how often?
3. "One should be happy in one's portion and give thanks and praise to God for the smallest element, even when one lacks a strong awareness or is feeling depressed." - Hanhagot of R. Abraham of Slonim, 47

**Discussion Questions:**

- a. Is there a difference between simply recognizing what you have and being grateful for what you have? If so, what is the nature of the difference?
- b. What are the benefits of acknowledging the good things in your life more frequently?

## Lesson 2

### *Modeh Ani*

#### **Objectives**

Learners should be able to:

- Remember and recite the blessing *Modeh Ani* as part of your morning routine
- Gain a richer understanding of Jewish morning rituals and routines
- Value and show gratitude Jewishly for waking up in the morning
- Acquire tools to create new morning rituals

#### **Timeline**

0:00 – 0:10	• Introduction
0:10 – 0:25	• <i>Modeh Ani</i>
0:25 – 0:40	• Picking your wins and an ideal morning ritual
0:40 – 0:55	• Realistic Morning Routine
0:55 – 1:00	• Closure

#### **Materials**

- Resource 4b- 4d

#### **Set induction – Introduction**

(The following information is from [www.kveller.com](http://www.kveller.com) and can be found in the link at the footnote):

**Say:** “Every parent with small children knows that waking up can be one of the most chaotic times of the day. But routines help to make this transitional moment manageable. Incorporating rituals also infuses these times with meaning, transforming ordinary activities into something you can cherish. In this lesson I will be asking you to think about your own current morning ritual and invite you to think about and invent new ways to navigate this hectic, yet vitally important time. Take a moment to jot down some of the chaotic and challenging elements of waking up in the morning as a parent of a young child. What makes those moments chaotic and challenging? What might make them less so?”<sup>102</sup>

- After a few moments ask people to share.

#### **Activity #1 – Modeh Ani – resource 4b & 4c**

- Handout resource 4b and teach the *Modeh Ani* blessing in *Hebrew*, *English*, and one melody (if you do not know any melodies, many can be found on-line).

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<sup>102</sup> [http://www.kveller.com/preschooler/Rituals/evening\\_morning\\_rituals.shtml](http://www.kveller.com/preschooler/Rituals/evening_morning_rituals.shtml)



Then read together the short descriptive paragraph about the blessing and answer the question.

- Then ask the learners to pair up with someone and ask them to think about and describe their typical morning routine with their child. Have them take turns sharing.
- Once it seems that pairs are finished sharing pass out resource 4c and ask the learners to read the short paragraph.
- Then have them list the 5 things they think about when they wake up that they are most grateful for and the 5 things they think their child is most grateful for (resource 4c)

#### **Activity #2 – Picking your wins – Resource 4d**

- Watch this short video clip  
[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/02/07/morning-rituals-\\_n\\_4746292.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/02/07/morning-rituals-_n_4746292.html)
- List 3 wins you can realistically accomplish every morning for yourself, for/with your child, for/with your family.
- Create morning ritual cards to use with your child (resource 4d)
- Visualize and formulate your ideal morning routine with your child. Take turns sharing with a different person than before.

#### **Activity #3 – Realistic morning ritual**

- Evaluate both depictions of the morning routine (typical and ideal) and create a realistic combination of the two. Take turns sharing with a different person.

#### **Closure – Hearing about the New Routines**

(The following information is from [www.reformjudaism.org](http://www.reformjudaism.org) and can be found at the link in the footnote):

**Say:** “Ritual turns the everyday into the sacred. Our tradition speaks of praising God with 100 blessings a day. Really, few of us actually stop 100 times a day to thank God; yet each time we do stop to sanctify time and space by remembering how blessed we are, we are enriched spiritually and emotionally. Praising God connects us to our families, to Judaism, and to the larger world. Our rituals, our sanctifying acts, are idiosyncratic, yet their roots are in the traditions of Judaism. When we share rituals from our childhood or create new rituals for our families, we raise strong children. Research has shown that families who engage in rituals have children who are more resilient as adults. The rituals that we choose to share promote a shared language among members of our household. They tie our children to generations past and generations to come through shared behaviors. Most

importantly, rituals enable us to communicate the values we cherish to our children.”<sup>103</sup>

- Invite learners to share aspects or parts of their new routine

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<sup>103</sup> <http://www.reformjudaism.org/crafting-jewish-tradition-young-children-morning-rituals>

**Resource 4b**  
**Modeh Ani Blessing**

מוֹדֵה אֲנִי לְפָנֶיךָ,    Modeh ani l'fânechâ,  
מֶלֶךְ חַי וְקַיִם,    Melech chai v'kayâm,  
שֶׁהַחַיּוֹת בִּי נִשְׁמָטִי בְּחֶמְלָה    she'heh'chezartâ bi nishmâtî b'chemlâ  
רַבָּה אֱמוּנָתְךָ.    Rabâ emunâ'techâ.

I gratefully thank You, O living and eternal King, for  
You have returned my soul within me, with compassion.  
Abundant is your faithfulness.

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(The following information is from *Stories We Pray* by Joel Grishaver, p. 15)

*Modeh Ani* is a wake-up prayer. It is designed to be the first words that a Jew says upon awakening. Later it was added to the beginning of the morning service.

The *Modeh Ani*:

- Thanks God for returning our soul.
- Makes our connection to God our first thought of the day.
- Reminds us that we can count on God.
- Says that everyday we get to start over.

*Modeh Ani* connects to part of the traditional prayers that we say at bedtime, which come from the books of Psalms. We ask God to take care of our soul while we sleep. We say, "Into Your hands I place my soul." In the morning, we say *Modeh Ani*. It thanks God for watching over our soul and for returning it to us.

Rabbi Helbo explained, "Everyday God creates a new set of angels who sing a brand new song of praise to God. *Modeh Ani* tells us that everyday we wake up to a new

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104 [www.jewishpathways.com](http://www.jewishpathways.com)

adventure, a new set of possibilities, and a new chance to connect to God”  
(Lamentations Rabbah 3:8).<sup>105</sup>

**Question:**

1. Do you agree with Rabbi Helbo that everyday we wake up to a new adventure?  
Is this something you might share with your child? How?

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<sup>105</sup> Joel Lurie Grishaver, *Stories We Pray*, 2012, p. 15

**Resource 4c**  
**"I give thanks before you"**

Unlike other prayers, the *Modeh Ani* begins as a personal statement and not a blessing. In some ways this prayer has more in common with a meditation than a blessing. The prayer is a statement that "I" (*ani*) give thanks to God. *Modeh* is actually a variant of the word *hodah*. *Hodah* does mean to thank, but it also has a deeper meaning. It can also mean to admit, to acknowledge, to confess, or rise to the understanding of something. This is very appropriate wording, because before we can actually give thanks we have to have the ascent of understanding that we should be grateful. Before we can give thanks we need to acknowledge in ourselves that we ought to give thanks. As you wake up, lying on your bed, before saying any other words and before opening your eyes is the perfect moment to consider all the reasons "I" have to be grateful. And it all starts with the obvious, that we woke up to a new day of life.

Rabbi Karen Fox suggests, "When I end my morning meditation, I repeat a phrase from the liturgy, one that speaks of gratitude, and then I say five things I'm grateful for. Then I conclude with a prayer for God's compassion for me and for others, and ask, "How can I be compassionate today?"

**Questions:**

1. What are ways that you can talk to your child about how to be compassionate? Brainstorm some ideas with a partner and generate a list of ideas.
2. When you wake up in the morning, what are the five things for which you are most grateful? List them in your Book of Blessings.
3. What do you think the five things your child is most grateful for?

**Resource 4d**  
**Boker Tov Cards**

*Boker Tov* is how you say “Good morning” in Hebrew. Holding your child, looking out the window and taking turns wishing *boker tov* to what you see outside can be one great morning ritual to start your day. To make things interesting, you can make *boker tov* cards to use every morning. Here is an example of what one can look like and some questions you might ask. Take a few moments to add some of your own questions.

**בוקר טוב**

**Boker Tov**

**Good Morning!!**



**Today, I am happy because...**

**Sample Questions:**

- What are you going to do today to be happy? Grateful? To be a mensch?
- What would make today a great day?
- Tell me one thing you want accomplish today.
- What is one thing new that you can try today?

### Lesson 3

#### Bedtime Shema

#### Objectives

Learners should be able to:

- Gain a richer understanding of the Bedtime *Shema* as a window into the Jewish experience of bedtime.
- Share knowledge of existing Jewish bedtime prayers rituals
- Acquire tools to create new bedtime rituals

#### Materials

- Resource 4e – 4g
- Plain white pillow cases
- Fabric markers, paints
- Stencils (Hebrew letters, moons, stars)

#### Timeline

0:00 – 0:05	Set Induction – Listen to the bedtime <i>Shema</i>
0:05 – 0:20	Bedtime
0:20 – 0:35	Bedtime Shema text
0:35 – 0:55	<i>Laila Tov</i> Cards & Pillow Cases
0:55 – 1:00	Closure

#### Set induction – Listen to the bedtime Shema

- Introduce the bedtime *Shema*. Listen to the recording found at the link:  
[http://www.wbtla.net/enews/audio/camp\\_music/60\\_anniversary\\_music/Haskeevaynu.mp3](http://www.wbtla.net/enews/audio/camp_music/60_anniversary_music/Haskeevaynu.mp3)

#### Activity#1 – Bedtime

- Ask the learners to split in to groups of 4 – 6 to discuss the following prompts
  - To describe what they remember about bedtime when they were their child's age.
  - What bedtime routines (good or bad) do they remember from their childhoods?
  - What is bedtime like for your child? How do you comfort them if needed? How do you comfort yourself or were you comforted as a child?
  - Children are often afraid of the dark or of going to sleep. Why do you think this is? Were/are you afraid of the dark or of going to sleep? What are some strategies to address these fears?
- Gather together to discuss answers

#### Activity #2 – The Bedtime Shema – Resource 4e & 4f

- Remaining in your small groups pass out resource 4e and read and discuss the questions.
- Look at the suggestions for bedtime rituals (resource 4f). Which of them can you see yourself doing with your child? See if you can come up with any new ones.
- Come together as a class to share ideas.

### Activity #3 – Laila Tov Cards & Pillow Cases – Resource 4g

- Remain in small groups and work your way through resource 4g. Be prepared to share your ideas with the rest of the group.
- After you finish going through resource 4g invite the learners to decorate a pillowcase that their child will use for bedtime (either to sleep on or as a transitional object). Set up a table with plain white pillowcases, fabric paints, and fabric markers. You can also use sponges or stencils of moons, stars, Hebrew letters, or even the bedtime blessings. Write the word *Shema* on the pillow as a reminder to say the prayer before bed. Decorate the pillowcase in a way your child would appreciate. Perhaps you want to decorate the outline of a picture so your child can color in the rest.

### Closure – Reflection

- Come together as a whole and discuss the following questions:
  - What does it mean to engage in a consistent ritual, every night? What does it add to our evenings?
  - Why would we say the *Shema* at night? What do these pieces add to our evenings? What might they add to our relationships with our children, with Judaism, or with God?
  - Share any new bedtime rituals you or your *chevruta* discussed and/or are thinking of trying.

### Recommended Reading

- *Making the Mundane Holy: Creating Jewish Rituals in Our Homes* by Rabbi Nancy Fuchs-Kreimer - [http://www.jkidphilly.org/Making\\_the\\_Mundane\\_Holy](http://www.jkidphilly.org/Making_the_Mundane_Holy)



## Resource 4e Bedtime Shema

The bedtime *Shema* offers us a reflective moment with our children right before they go to sleep. The various blessings invite us to examine our actions of the day, search for any negativity we may have caused others and others may have caused us, to forgive and to ask for forgiveness. Some explain that the *Hashkiveinu* was added as a blessing at night because the nighttime has always been scary enough that it takes an extra prayer for protection.

הַשְׁכִּיבֵנוּ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ לְשָׁלוֹם וְהַעֲמִידֵנוּ מִלְּפָנֶיךָ חַיִּים. וּפְרוֹשׁ עָלֵינוּ סֶכֶת שְׁלוֹמְךָ וְתַקְנֵנוּ בְּעֵצָה טוֹבָה מִלְּפָנֶיךָ וְהוֹשִׁיעֵנוּ לְמַעַן שְׁמֶךָ  
וְהַגֵּן בְּעַדָּנוּ. וְהַסֵּר מֵעָלֵינוּ אוֹיֵב דָּבָר וְסָרֵב וְרָעָב וְגֹן וְהַסֵּר שָׁטָן מִלְּפָנֵינוּ וּמֵאַחֲרֵינוּ וּבְצֵל כְּנָפֶיךָ תִּסְתִּירֵנוּ כִּי אֵל שׁוֹמְרָנוּ וְלְשָׁלוֹם  
מִמֶּתָה וְעַד עוֹלָם. בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ הַפּוֹרֵשׁ סֶכֶת שְׁלוֹם עָלֵינוּ וְעַל כָּל עַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל וְעַל יְרוּשָׁלַיִם.

Grant that we may lie down in peace, Eternal God, and awaken us to life. Shelter us with Your tent of peace and guide us with Your good counsel. Shield us from hatred, plague and destruction. Keep us from warm famine and anguish. Help us to deny our inclination to evil. God of peace, may we always feel protected because You are our Guardian and Helper. Give us refuge in the shadow of Your wings. Guard our going forth and our coming in and bless us with life and peace. Blessed are You, Eternal God, whose shelter of peace is spread over us, over all Your people Israel, and over Jerusalem.

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### Questions:

- Why might we say the *Shema* before we go to bed? What does the *Shema* encourage us to do with our child?
- To what extent is this text about intergenerational Jewish life?
- How do we, as Jews, teach our tradition to the next generation? How were you taught?
- Why might it be important for adults or children to have an opportunity to forgive and ask forgiveness before they go to sleep?
- Name the important things you wish to teach your child. How can this nighttime ritual suggested by the *Shema* help you to achieve this?

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<sup>106</sup> <http://www.adateloheim.org/Hashkiveinu-s/7660.htm>

**Resource 4f**  
Bedtime ritual suggestions

1. "Peaks and Pits" – Review the day with your child. Ask them the following questions:
  - a. What was the "peak" of your day (the best part of your day)?
  - b. What was the "pit" of your day (the most challenging part of the day)?
  - c. What did you do in morning before school?
  - d. Do you remember what you ate for breakfast?
  - e. What was something that you learned today?
  - f. What was something that was challenging?
    - i. Add your own questions and be ready to share them with the class.
2. After saying the *Shema*, tell your child that you love him/her very much. Then appreciate your child for something they did that day. Then ask your child to appreciate you for something you did that day.
  - a. What are others things that would be appropriate here?
3. After getting your child out of the bath, drying them off and putting on their pajamas, bless them by saying, "Thank you God for a clean, fresh body and for this time to rest." This blessing can help children transition from the day to the night.
  - a. Write your own after bath time blessing.
4. Read this version of the *Shema* written as a Dr. Seuss poem:
  - a. *And you shall love the Lord your God  
With all the heart inside you  
With every breath that you may breathe  
And all you have beside you.  
Take these words I teach you now  
And keep them close to heart  
Teach them intently to your kids  
That they may grow up smart  
Talk about them with your friends  
When you sit at home  
And speak them proudly on the road  
Wherever you may roam  
Lie down with them, so that you may  
Wake with them on your lips  
Bind them fast upon your hand  
And 'tween your eyes affix  
These words that they may be a sign*

*To you for evermore-- Inscribe these words upon your gates  
And write them on your doors!*<sup>107</sup>

- b. Choose a blessing that is meaningful to your family and write a version of it in the style of Dr. Seuss.

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<sup>107</sup> <http://www.ritualwell.org/ritual/what-if-shema-were-written-doctor-seuss>

**Resource 4g**  
***Laila Tov* cards**

***Laila Tov* is how you say “Good night” in Hebrew.** Hold your child and taking turns wishing *laila tov* to things in the room and loved ones can be one great evening ritual to end the day. To make things more interesting, you can make *laila tov* cards to use every night. Here is an example of what one can look like and some questions you might ask. Take a few moments to add some of your own questions.

לילה טוב

**Laila tov**

**Good Night!**

**“Tonight, I am happy because...”**



*Laila Tov* cards suggestions:

- “I love when you...”
- “I was surprised today when...”
- “I didn’t know about...until today”
- “I’m proud that I did...today”
- “I’m proud that you did...today.”
- “Tomorrow I’m going to...”
- “What are you going to do tomorrow?”

## Lesson 4

### A Book of Blessings #3

#### Objectives

Learners should be able to:

- List and define three major symbols in the *Havdalah* service
- Assess the value of this ceremony for your family
- Gain the skills necessary to synthesize and plan your version of an ideal *Havdalah* service and compose your own personal *Havdalah* blessing(s)

#### Timeline

0:00 – 0:05	Introduction
0:05 – 0:20	Honoring <i>Havdalah</i>
0:20 – 0:45	How to make <i>Havdalah</i>
0:45 – 1:00	Spice Box & <i>Havdalah</i> Candles

#### Materials

- Box, glue, jewels, markers
- Resource 4h

#### Introduction

(The following information can be found in *Stories We Pray* by Joel Lurie Grishaver):

- **Say:** “*Havdalah* is a way of ending *Shabbat*. It is a ceremony that uses a candle, a cup of wine, and spices. In many ways, we end *Shabbat* the same way we begin it.

**Wine** is used to welcome *Shabbat*. The blessing over wine is also used to organize the ending of *Shabbat*. Every time we use wine it is a celebration. It is traditional to fill the cup to overflowing and spill a little bit as we lift it (*Eruvim* 65a).

There is a tradition that on *Shabbat* we are given an extra soul. We smell **spices** at the end of *Shabbat* to give us a boost when that extra soul is taken from us. Their smell refreshes us.

In the Torah we are told that one should not create **fire** on *Shabbat*. In the *Talmud* (*Pesachim* 53b) we are taught that God showed Adam and Eve how to create fire after the first *Shabbat* was over. God gave them fire as a tool. At the end of *Shabbat* we celebrate that gift by creating fire and saying a blessing over it.

The last blessing in the service is a blessing over distinctions. The *Midrash* teaches that Adam and Eve learned about distinctions during the first *Havdalah*. They saw shadow and light, and they saw the difference between holy and ordinary. We

use the end of *Shabbat* to learn the same lesson.<sup>108</sup>

### **Activity #1 – Honoring Havdalah**

- Get into pairs to discuss these questions (be prepared to share with the rest of the group):
  - When is it hard to say goodbye? When might it be hard to say goodbye to *Shabbat*?
  - Make a list of the things you and your children will miss the most about *Shabbat*, during the rest of the week.
  - If you could take aspects of holiness into your workweek with you, which would they be, and how might you do that?
  - Is the separation anxiety often experienced during *Havdalah* a good thing? Yes, no? Why?
- Come together as a class to discuss the questions all together.
  - Combine the list of the things you will miss the most about *Shabbat* that each group made.
  - Were there commonalities?
  - Distribute the final list for the book of blessings.

### **Activity #2 – How to make Havdalah**

- Split the learners into 3 groups. Have each group sit at a table with a laptop and visit this page:  
[http://www.myjewishlearning.com/daily\\_life/Shabbat/Overview\\_Shabbat\\_at\\_Home/Havdalah/havdalah.swf](http://www.myjewishlearning.com/daily_life/Shabbat/Overview_Shabbat_at_Home/Havdalah/havdalah.swf)
- Once they are at the site have them follow the prompts, reading and learning about the various aspects of *Havdalah*
  - Group 1 will learn about boxes 1 – 4
    - “How to make *Havdalah* (1 page)
    - “What is *Havdalah* about?” (2 pages)
    - “Celebration of time on *Shabbat* and *Havdalah* (4 pages)
  - Group 2 will learn about boxes 5 – 7
    - “The components of *Havdalah*” (5 pages)
    - “The opening verses” (2 pages)
    - “Blessings recited at *Havdalah*” (6 pages)
  - Group 3 will learn about boxes 8 – 12
    - “The *Havdalah* Blessing” (1 page)
    - “Extinguishing the candle” (1 page)
    - “Traditional songs” (4 pages)
    - “Holiday variations” (3 pages)
    - “Conclusion” (3 pages)

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<sup>108</sup> Joel Lurie Grishaver, *Stories We Pray*, 2012, p. 4572 of 4947 in Kindle reader

- The groups will be tasked with delivering the information they learned to the other people in the class.

### Activity #3 - Spice Box & Havdalah candles - resource 4h

- Learners will make a spice box and *Havdalah* candles.
  - Distribute blank spice boxes to each family (or individually) so they can decorate them. See resource 4h for some clever ideas.
  - Purchase sheets of different colored beeswax, and wicks, at your local art store. Cut out 3 squares (each about 8x8) of beeswax. Cut 3 wicks (about 9 inches long, so you will have a wick sticking out of the candle). Take one wick, and place it on the very edge of one of the wax squares. Pinch the wax over the wick, and now just roll it, keep it tight, until you have a cylinder (i.e. one candle). Repeat this for the other two wax squares and wicks. Finally, take all three, and pinch the bottoms together tightly, and slowly braid the three candles into one. It is okay if there are small gaps. Voila! A *Havdalah* candle.

### Closure - Homework

- Participate in *Havdalah* on a Saturday night with other families or friends, possibly led by some of the families (maybe even you). Use the new rituals you discussed during this lesson.

Resource 4h  
Spice Box ideas

# Havdalah Spice Boxes



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109 <http://www.pjlibrary.org/uploaddocs/2/havdalah-family-draft-2.pdf>



## Unit 5 – Conclusion

### Introduction

#### Enduring Understandings

- Blessings function as vehicles for radical amazement and mark sacred time.
- Something sacred is at stake in every event.
- Children exercise radical amazement naturally; oftentimes, adults must relearn it.
- Judaism is a religion of time aiming at the sanctification of time.
- In any moment, a sense of the sacred can move us to prayer, and the acts of prayer and blessing can lead us to the sacred.

#### Objectives

The learners should be able to:

- Gain a deeper appreciation of their parenting style
- Justify and defend how Judaism may or may not influence their parenting
- Articulate their vision of parenting and the role Judaism has in it

#### Unit Overview

Lesson 1	<i>V'shinantam L'vanecha</i>
Lesson 2	Parent and child exploring wonder, sacred time, and blessings together
Lesson 3	Memorable Moment #3 ( <i>Havdalah</i> /Presentation of Book of Blessings)
<b>Total:</b>	<b>5 hours</b>

#### Evidence of learning

- Responses to questions about Sacred Time, Wonder, and Blessings
- Answers to questions about parenting

## Lesson 1

### *V'shinantam L'vanecha*

#### Objectives

Learners should be able to:

- Articulate their vision of parenting and the role Judaism has in it
- Identify aspects of Judaism they find meaningful to their roles as parents.

#### Timeline

0:00 – 0:10	The Guarantors
0:10 – 0:25	What is Jewish parenting?
0:25 – 0:40	Jewish texts about parenting
0:40 – 1:00	What is your <i>Torah</i>
1:00 – 1:25	Texts study
1:25 – 1:30	Closure

#### Materials

- 5a – 5b

#### Set Induction – The Guarantors

- **Say:** “A Midrash relates that prior to God giving the *Torah* to the Jewish people, God requested guarantors who would ensure that the people would indeed study Torah and fulfill the *mitzvot*. Take a moment to think about whom you think was chosen for this important task. When you have thought of something write down your answer on the paper in front of you and turn it over.”
- Watch the video found at this link.  
[http://wejew.com/media/2048/Shavuot\\_Torah\\_ATM\\_Child\\_Guarantors/](http://wejew.com/media/2048/Shavuot_Torah_ATM_Child_Guarantors/)  
Ask people to turn over their papers to reveal whom they thought would be chosen as the guarantors. Discuss reasons why children were chosen and whether people agree with this or not.
- **End by saying:** “One purpose – indeed, perhaps the ultimate purpose – of Jewish education, is to pass on tradition to the next generation by promoting a life dedicated to the values and tenets of our faith. Jewish educators, parents and teachers can achieve the essential purpose of Jewish education through the effective transmission of *V'shinantam L'vanecha*. Who better, then our children, to be the guarantors of Torah?”

#### Activity #1 – What is Jewish Parenting?

- Ask learners to get into groups of 4 – 6 to discuss the following questions:
  1. In what ways do children learn from their parents?
  2. What is unique about Jewish parenting?
  3. What trade or skills do you hope to impart to your child? How can Judaism help?

4. What are important “commanded responsibilities and sacred practices” of being a parent? What are the main responsibilities of a Jewish parent?
5. For those who do not follow or believe in *mitzvot*, how else are parents and children bound to each other if not through a series of commanded responsibilities and sacred practices?
6. Make a list of the things you think you believe the *Torah* is inviting us to teach to our children?
7. What is the most important thing for you to teach your child?

(The following information is from *Sacred Parenting* by Elaine Rose Glickman):

- **Say:** “Jewish tradition teaches that 613 *mitzvot* are delineated in the *Torah*. The first of these is the *mitzvah* of becoming a parent. On the sixth day of Creation, the Book of Genesis recounts, “God created humanity in God’s own image; in the Divine image God created them. And God blessed them, and God said to them: ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth.’

“Be fruitful and multiply,” means simply to become a parent – to bear a child, to adopt a child, to bring a child into a home and a family. In doing so, we “replenish the earth,” we ensure the survival of our species, our family, our community, our values. It is a sacred obligation – so sacred that the words *p’ru u’revu*, “be fruitful and multiply,” were the first words God addressed to humanity. It is the first *mitzvah*; every other commandment flows from it.

And in fulfilling the first commandment of the *Torah* – in becoming parents – we incur an entirely new and perhaps unfamiliar set of obligations. If *p’ru u’revu* – be fruitful and multiply – is the first dimension of Jewish parenting, *V’shinantam L’vanecha* – and you shall teach your child – is the second.<sup>110</sup>

### Activity #2 – Jewish texts about parenting – resource 5a

- Before the learners enter class, place the quotes in resource 5a around the room on the walls. Ask them to roam around the room to read the quotes. As people are settling down, invite them to their seats.
- Ask the learners to share the quote that resonated with them and why? How does the text describe parenting?

### Activity #3 – What is your Torah?

- Cover 4 tables with butcher paper. Ask the learners to separate themselves equally to the four tables. Watch the short video found at this link  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tcBoSI6bKn4>

<sup>110</sup> Elaine Rose Glickman, *Sacred Parenting*, 2010, pp. 2 – 3

- **Say:** “Pretend that an alien from another planet, who knows nothing about Judaism, approaches you. The alien wants to know what Judaism is. What would you teach the alien? What are the most important elements, rituals, and ideas to you about Judaism? On the large sheet of butcher paper, you will see the phrase “What I would teach about Judaism” in the center. Draw and/or write down all of the things that come to your mind.
- When people are done, invite them to roam around to read and look at all of the other ideas, then come back to discuss.

#### **Activity #4 – Text study**

- Divide the group into pairs (*Hevruta*) and distribute the texts (resource 5b). Ask each *Hevruta* to work their way through as much of the texts and questions as they can in the time allotted.

#### **Closure – Free write about parenting**

- Ask learners to spend the remaining minutes articulating, in writing, their vision of parenting and the role Judaism has in it.
- Ask learners to bring *Kiddush* cups from home next session for an activity.

**Resource 5a**  
**Jewish texts about parenting**

- Honor your father and your mother, that you may long endure on the land that the Lord our God is assigning to you. – Exodus 20:12
- And you shall love the Lord your God with all of your heart and all of your strength and all your might. And these words which I command you today shall remain in your heart. And you shall teach them diligently to your children and speak of them when you are sitting in your home and when you are walking on your way and when you lie down and when you rise up. And you shall bind them as a sign upon your arms and wear them as frontlets between your eyes. And you shall write them upon the doorposts of your house and upon your gates. – Deuteronomy 6:4-9
- Train a child in the way he should go and even when he is old he will not depart from it. – Proverbs 22:6
  - Midrash on Proverbs 22:6:
    - Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Joshua differed. Rabbi Eliezer said: The verse means that if you train your son with words of Torah until he becomes a young man, he will continue growing in allegiance to them.... But Rabbi Joshua said: The child may be compared to a heifer – if she is not taught to plow when young, it will be difficult for her to do so in the end; or to a wine branch – if you do not bend it when it is full of sap, once it hardens, you can do nothing with it.
- The folk saying goes: What the child says out in the street comes either from his father or his mother. – Talmud Sukkah 56b
- A man came to Menahem Mendel of Kotzk and asked how he could make his sons devote themselves to Torah. Menahem Mendel answered, “If you really want them to do this, then you yourself must spend time over the Torah, and they will do as you do. Otherwise they will not devote themselves to Torah, but only tell their sons to do it. And so it will go on. If you, yourself forget the Torah, your sons will also forget it, only urging their sons to know it, and they will forget the Torah and tell their sons that they should know it. And no one will ever know the Torah. - Kotzker Rebbe (Hassidic, Eastern Europe, early 19<sup>th</sup> century).
- Rabbi Isaac stated: In Usha, it was ordained that a man should be patient with his son until the age of twelve. After that, he may even threaten his life. – Babylonian Talmud, Ketubot 50a

- There is a story about a man who made out his will with this provision: 'my son shall not inherit anything of mine until he acts the fool.' Rabbi Yosi bar Judah and Rabbi went to Rabbi Joshua ben Korhah to get an opinion about this strange provision. When they peeked in from outside his house, they saw him crawling on his hands and knees, with a reed sticking out of his mouth, and being pulled along by his child. Seeing him thus, they discreetly withdrew, but they came back later and asked him about the provision in the will. He began to laugh and said, 'As you live, this business you ask about – acting the fool – happened to me a little while ago.' Hence the aphorism "When a man looks on his children, his joy makes him act like a fool." – Midrash Tehillim 92:13
- Choose life – if you and your offspring would live – by loving your God, heeding his commandments, and holding fast to him. – Deuteronomy 30:19

**Resource 5b**  
**Texts about Parenting**

**1. Text #1 – RAMBAM, Mishneh Torah, Laws of Torah Study 1:2**

“Just as it is a person’s duty to teach their child, so it is their duty to teach their grandchild, as it is written: “Make them known to your children and your children’s children” (Deuteronomy 4:9). This obligation does not refer only to one’s child and grandchild, but it is a duty resting upon every Jewish scholar to teach all those who seek to be their students, even though they are not that scholar’s own children, for it is written: “You shall teach them diligently to your children” (Deuteronomy 6:7). On traditional authority, the term “your children” in this verse has been interpreted to mean that your pupils are likewise called children, for it is written: “And the sons of the prophets came out” (II Kings 2:3). [CAJE translation. Edited for gender neutrality]

**Questions:**

- According to the Rambam, who is a teacher?
- What is the obligation of a teacher?
- How does treating your students as your children transform your responsibility to them?

**2. Text #2 – Talmud, Kiddushin 29a**

"A father is obligated to do the following for his son: to circumcise him, to redeem him if he is a first born, to teach him Torah, to find him a wife, and to teach him a trade. Others say: teaching him how to swim as well."<sup>111</sup>

**Questions:**

- What does this tell us about parents’ obligations to their children?
- What type of knowledge were the authors of this text concerned about parents imparting to their child?
- What is missing from the list?

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<http://www.uscj.org/JewishLivingandLearning/FamilyLife/RaisingJewishChildren/WhatParentsOweTheirChildren.aspx>

### 3. Text #3 – A Hassidic Tale

“A father once came to the Baal Shem Tov with a problem concerning his son. He complained that the son was forsaking Judaism and morality and asked the rabbi what he could do. The Baal Shem Tov answered: "Love him more."

#### **Questions:**

- How does this quote speak to you?
- What character traits are necessary in order to follow the Baal Shem Tov's advice?
- Do you agree with the advice given? Why or why not?
- Name different ways to deal with this situation.

### 4. Text #4 – Making and keeping promises

“A person should not promise to give a child something and then not give it, because in that way a child learns to lie.”

#### **Questions:**

- Do you agree that this is how children lie?
- What are some of the modern-day obligations that you believe parents should have as duties to their children?
- When is it ok to break a promise to your child?

### 5. Text #5 – Proverbs 17:1

The Sages teach: “Better a morsel of dry bread, with peace, than a house full of feasting with strife.”

#### **Questions:**

1. What do you think the author is trying to teach us about life?
2. What are some of the common challenges we face each day that, if ignored, can lead to strife in a family?



3. What are different ways that families “feast with strife?” Name some strategies to deal with this.

## Lesson 2

### Parent and child exploring wonder, sacred time, and blessings together

#### **Objectives**

Parents and children will be able to:

- Create a “Children’s Book of Blessings,” together to be used at home in order to apply the knowledge learned from this class
- Explore different ideas about wonder, sacred time, and blessings
- Interact and share their feelings and thoughts on the topics of wonder, sacred time, and blessings
- Work with each other to create a home in which wonder, sacred time and blessings are experienced and discussed.

#### **Timeline**

0:00 – 0:10	Set induction – The interview
0:10 – 0:25	Wonder
0:25 – 0:40	Sacred Time
0:40 – 0:50	Snack
0:50 – 1:00	Blessings
1:00 – 1:25	Mock <i>Shabbat</i> and <i>Havdalah</i>
1:25 – 1:30	Children’s blessing

#### **Materials**

- Resource 5c – 5f

#### **Set Induction – The Interview**

- Parents ask their child the following questions:
  - What is a mommy? What is a daddy?
  - What does a mommy do? What does a daddy do?
  - What is a child?
  - What does a child do?
  - What are good things for parents to do?
  - What are good things for children to do?
  - Tell me the most amazing thing you have ever seen.
  - What is a blessing?
  - Can you tell me anything about *Shabbat*?

#### **Activity #1 – Wonder – resource 5c**

- Parent and child should spend about 5 minutes rotating to each station.
  - Wonder walk cards (resource 5c)
  - Watch the video found at this link:  
<http://www.kdramastars.com/articles/15450/20140207/little-girl-first-rain-video.htm>

- List of things you should/can do once a week to experience wonder

### **Activity #2 – Sacred Time – resource 5d, 5e, 5f**

- Parent and child should spend about 5 minutes rotating to each station:
  - Decorate a *Kiddush cup* (resource 5d)
  - Decorate a *Challa* cover (resource 5e)
  - Make a *Havdalah* candle (resource 5f)

### **Activity #3 – Blessings**

- Parent and child should spend about 5 minutes rotating to each station:
  - Chant Candle lighting, *Hamotzi*, and *Kiddush* Blessings
  - Draw a picture for each blessing:
    - Candle lighting
    - *Kiddush*
    - *Challah*

### **Activity #4 – Mock Shabbat**

- The class will engage in a mock *Shabbat* and *Havdalah* service. Begin by singing some *Shabbat* songs. Ask the families what songs they know. Then read a *Shabbat* story (you can ask the families if they have a favorite *Shabbat* book from home or borrow one from any synagogue library). After this you will be ready to “make *Shabbat*.” Say the blessings and perform the rituals over the candles, *Kiddush* cup, and the *challah*. When you finish the *motzi* over the *challah* you can have a short snack of *challah* and juice.

### **Closure – Children’s Blessing**

- To finish the session ask each parent to embrace their child and recite both the traditional children’s blessing said on *Shabbat* and the one they wrote.

**Resource 5c**  
**Wonder Walk Cards**

- Take your shoes off and walk barefoot to the next card.
- Close your eyes and listen for three sounds. Open your eyes. Tell me the sounds.
- Look down and grab the first object you see. Pick it up and look at it. Try to remember what it looks like. Put it down and see if you can draw it.
- Say the prayer and then smell this leaf:

On smelling the fragrance of shrubs and trees:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא עֵצֵי בְשָׁמִים.

*Baruch atah Adonai eloheinu melech ha'olam boray atzay vesamim.*

Praised are you, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the Universe, who creates fragrant trees.

- (Draw a rainbow on the index card) Say the prayer over seeing a rainbow:

On seeing a rainbow:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, זֹכֵר הַבְּרִית, וְנֶאֱמָן בְּבְרִיתוֹ, וְקִיָּם  
בְּמַאֲמָרוֹ.

*Baruch atah Adonai eloheinu melech ha'olam zocher ha'berit ve'ne'eman bivrito vekayam  
be'ma'amaro.*

Praised are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the Universe, who remembers the covenant  
and is faithful in keeping promises.

**Resource 5d**  
**Decorate a *Kiddush* cup**

Choose from these options:

1. Begin with a plastic wine cup. Decorate with basic collage materials and cover with Mod-Podge.
2. Begin with a plastic cup. Provide modeling clay or homemade hardening clay. Display the different *Kiddush* cups that people brought. Together with your child create clay *Kiddush* cups to hold the plastic cup. Decorate with beads and/or paint.
3. Let children decorate one plastic cup as the base, using collage, markers, or paint. Glue another cup to the decorated cup – bottom to bottom – as the drinking cup.

**Resource 5e**  
**Decorate a *Challah* cover and *Kipot***

Choose from these options:

1. Try tie dying. First, tie fabric in knots or with rubber bands. Then dip into liquid tempera paint made for tie dying.
2. Paint your child's hands onto the cover.
3. Paint with sponges or cookie cutters in Jewish/ *Shabbat* shapes.
4. Children use eyedroppers and water that is colored with food coloring.
5. Color with fabric crayons or make designs with paint markers.

**Resource 5f**  
**Make a *Havdalah* candle**

1. Roll 3 beeswax sheets and twist into or braid into one big candle. Or roll one big sheet with more than one sheet inside (add wicks one at a time, in different layers).

### Lesson 3

#### Memorable Moment #3

(*Havdalah*)

#### Objectives

Learners should be able to:

- Reflect back on their journey in this class
- Participate in *Havdalah* through prayer and song
- Celebrate and enjoy with their new friends

#### Timeline

0:00 – 0:15	Set induction – Memorable Moments
0:10 – 0:35	Book of Blessings presentations
0:35 – 1:00	Dinner
1:00 – 1:25	Presentations
1:25 – 1:30	<i>Havdalah</i>

#### Set Induction – Memorable Moments

- Write the directions on the board:
  - You will make three lists about the things you most like to do:
    - 10 things you liked to do as a child or when you were younger
    - 10 things you enjoy doing alone
    - 10 things you like doing as a family.
  - Are there any commonalities? Did anything surprise you? Do you get to do the things you like doing as a family often? What about those times do you like the most?
- Ask everyone to pick something from one of the lists and try to match a blessing to the thing (i.e. if hiking was a thing someone enjoyed doing as a family, they could pick the blessing for seeing beauty in nature – refer to resource 1d). Be prepared to share your thing and the blessing that goes with it.

#### Activity #1 – Book of Blessings presentations

- The learners' wills present their Book of Blessings.
- Procedure:
  - The learners will read aloud the "Quote they chose about sacred time" found in their book of blessings and explain why they choose it.
  - Share "Torah Tweet"
  - The learner can choose any other reading if they want and/or share a word or two about their process throughout the course.
  - The presentations should be about 3 – 5 minutes (no longer than 5).

#### Activity #2 – Dinner

- As for volunteers to participate in a potluck dinner.

*Activity #3 – Book of Blessings presentations*

- See directions above (activity #1)

*Activity #4 – Havdalah*

- After the last learner has presented gather everyone into a circle for *Havdalah*.
- Begin with blessings over the wine, spice box, and fire.
- After the blessing for fire, invite each person to share the most meaningful thing they learned over the course of this class. Allow for wait time. Ask people to speak whenever they think of something.
- When people are finished, end with *Eliyahu Hanavi* and *Shavua Tov*.

## Appendix 1

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## Appendix 2

### *Birchot Hanehenin*

On eating bread:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, הַמוֹצִיא לֶחֶם מִן הָאָרֶץ.

*Baruch atah Adonai eloheinu melech ha'olam hamotzi lechem min ha'aretz.*

Praised are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the Universe,  
who brings forth bread from the earth.

On eating foods other than bread prepared from wheat, barley, rye, oats, or spelt (such as cakes and cookies):

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא מִיְּנֵי מְזוֹנוֹת.

*Baruch atah Adonai eloheinu melech ha'olam boray meenay mezonote.*

Praised are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the Universe,  
who creates different kinds of nourishment.

On drinking wine:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגֶּפֶן.

*Baruch atah Adonai eloheinu melech ha'olam boray pri ha'gafen.*

Praised are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the Universe, who creates the fruit of the vine.

On eating fruit:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הָעֵץ.

*Baruch atah Adonai eloheinu melech ha'olam boray pri ha'eytz.*

Praised are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the Universe, who creates the fruit of the tree.

On eating foods which grow in the ground, like potatoes:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הָאֲדָמָה.

*Baruch atah Adonai eloheinu melech ha'olam boray pri ha'adamah.*

Praised are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the Universe, who creates the fruit of the ground.

A general blessing for other food and drink:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁהַכֹּל נִהְיָה בְּדִבְרֶךָ.

*Baruch atah Adonai eloheinu melech ha'olam she'hakol nihiyeh bidvaro.*

Praised are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the Universe,  
at whose word all things come into existence.

On smelling fragrant spices:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא מִיְּנֵי בְשָׂמִים.

*Baruch atah Adonai eloheinu melech ha'olam boray minay vesamim.*

Praised are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the Universe,  
who creates different kinds of spices.

On smelling the fragrance of shrubs and trees:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא עֵצִי בְּשָׁמִים.

*Baruch atah Adonai eloheinu melech ha'olam boray atzay vesamim.*

Praised are you, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the Universe, who creates fragrant trees.

On smelling the fragrance of plants and herbs:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא עֲשָׂבִי בְּשָׁמִים.

*Baruch atah Adonai eloheinu melech ha'olam boray isvay vesamim.*

Praised are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the Universe, who creates fragrant plants.

On smelling fragrant fruit:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, הַנוֹתֵן רֵיחַ טוֹב בְּפִירוֹת.

*Baruch atah Adonai eloheinu melech ha'olam hanotayn rayach tov bapayrot.*

Praised are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the Universe,  
who gives a pleasant fragrance to fruits.

On smelling fragrant oils:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא שֶׁמֶן עָרֵב.

*Baruch atah Adonai eloheinu melech ha'olam boray shemen arayv.*

Praised are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the Universe, who creates fragrant oil.

On seeing a rainbow:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, זֹכֵר הַבְּרִית, וְנֶאֱמַן בְּבְרִיתוֹ, וְקַיָּם  
בְּמַאֲמָרוֹ.

*Baruch atah Adonai eloheinu melech ha'olam zocher ha'berit ve'ne'eman bivrito vekayam  
bema'amaro.*

Praised are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the Universe, who remembers the covenant  
and is faithful in keeping promises.

On seeing trees blossoming for the first time in the year:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁלֹּא חָסַר בְּעוֹלָמוֹ דָּבָר וּבָרָא בּוֹ  
בְּרִיּוֹת טוֹבוֹת וְאֵילָנוֹת טוֹבִים לְהֵנֹת בָּהֶם בְּנֵי אָדָם.

*Baruch atah Adonai eloheinu melech ha'olam shelo chisar b'olamo davar uvara vo briyot tovot  
v'ilanot tovim l'hanot bahem b'nai adam.*

Praised are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the Universe, who has withheld nothing from  
the world, and has created lovely creatures and beautiful trees for people to enjoy.

On seeing the ocean:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁעָשָׂה אֶת הַיָּם הַגָּדוֹל.

*Baruch atah Adonai eloheinu melech ha'olam she-asah et hayam hagadol.*

Praised are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the Universe, who has made the great sea.

On seeing trees or creatures of unusual beauty:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁכָּכָה לוֹ בְּעוֹלָמוֹ.

*Baruch atah Adonai eloheinu melech ha'olam shekacha lo b'olamo.*

Praised are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the Universe, who has such beauty in the  
world.



On seeing someone of abnormal appearance:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, מְשַׁנֶּה הַבְּרִיּוֹת.

*Baruch atah Adonai eloheinu melech ha'olam mishaneh ha'briyot.*

Praised are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the Universe, who makes people different.

On seeing lightning, shooting stars, mountains, or sunrises:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, עוֹשֶׂה מַעֲשֵׂה בְּרֵאשִׁית.

*Baruch atah Adonai eloheinu melech ha'olam ma'asey v'reshit.*

Praised are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the Universe, Source of creation.

On seeing restored synagogues:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, מַצִּיב גְּבוּל אֶלְמָנָה.

*Baruch atah Adonai eloheinu melech ha'olam matziv ge'vul almanah.*

Praised are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the Universe,  
who restores the borders of the widow [Zion].

On seeing a person who is really knowledgeable about Torah:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁחָלַק מַחְכְּמָתוֹ לִירֵאָיו.

*Baruch atah Adonai eloheinu melech ha'olam shechalak me'chochmato lirey'av.*

Praised are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the Universe,  
who has given wisdom to those who revere God.

On seeing a person who knows lots of things about lots of things:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁנָּתַן מִחֲכָמָתוֹ לְבִשָּׂר וָדָם.

*Baruch atah Adonai eloheinu melech ha'olam she'natan me-chochmato l'vasar va'dam.*

Praised are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the Universe,  
who has given wisdom to human beings.

On seeing a head of state (like a president):

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁנָּתַן מִכְבוֹדוֹ לְבִשָּׂר וָדָם.

*Baruch atah Adonai eloheinu melech ha'olam she'natan mi'kvodo l'vasar va'dam.*

Praised are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the Universe,  
who has given special status to human beings.

Appendix 3  
*Birchot Hamitzvot*

**Blessing for Putting up a Mezuzah**

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר  
קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ לְקַבֹּעַ מְזוּזָה:

Baruch ata Adonai elohaynu melech ha'olam asher kidshanu bemitzvotav vetzivanu likboah mezuzah.

Praised are you, Adonai our G-d, Sovereign of the Universe, who has made us holy with Mitzvot and instructed us to affix the Mezuzah.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ	Baruch ata Adonoy
אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם	Eloheinu melech ha-olam
אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו	asher kid'shanu be'mitzvo'sav
וְצִוָּנוּ לְהַדְלִיק נֵר שֶׁל שַׁבָּת.	ve-tzivanu lehadlik ner shel Shabbos.

Blessed are You, God, King of the Universe,  
Who made us holy with His commandments  
and commanded us to kindle the Shabbat light.

Appendix 4  
*Birchot Hoda'ah*

*Immediately upon waking up, say:*

מוֹדֶה אֲנִי לְפָנֶיךָ.    Modeh ani l'fanecha,  
מֶלֶךְ חַי וְקַיָּם.    Melech chai v'kayam,  
שֶׁהֵחֵזְרַתָּ בִּי נִשְׁמָתִי בְּחַמְלָה    she'heh'chezarta bi nishmati b'chemla  
רַבָּה אֱמוּנָתְךָ.    Raba emuna'techa.

I gratefully thank You, O living and eternal King, for  
You have returned my soul within me, with compassion.  
Abundant is your faithfulness.

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל: יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ, יְהוָה אֶחָד!

Sh'ma Yis-ra-eil: Adonai Eh-lo-hei-nu, Adonai Eh-chad!

*Hear, O Israel: the Eternal One is our God,  
the Eternal God alone!*

בָּרוּךְ שֵׁם כְּבוֹד מַלְכוּתוֹ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד!

Ba-ruch shem k'vod mal-chu-to l'o-lam va-ed!

*Blessed is God's glorious majesty for ever and ever!*



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