

## ***Berakhot* to Recite on Natural Phenomena, Great Wonders, and Unique People, Places, and Events**

One of the core fundamentals of Judaism is the recitation of *berakhot*, “blessings”. On the simplest level, a blessing serves as a little bit of gratitude to God for what He bestows upon us. A Jew must be thankful at all times. In fact, it is the very root of the word *Yehudi*, which comes from *lehodot*, “to thank”, and from Leah thanking God for blessing her with a fourth child, Yehuda. As is well-known, a Jew is encouraged to make 100 blessings over the course of a single day. This ensures that a Jew remains grateful and positive always, and such a positive attitude is a valuable key to a successful and happy life.

While many are already careful with reciting blessings before and after eating food, as well as after going to the bathroom, *hagomel* after perilous situations, and reciting *sh’echeyanu* on happy occasions, new fruits, and significant new items, there are actually many more wonderful blessings that a Jew can recite throughout the day. These are taught in the ninth chapter of the tractate *Berakhot*. With these intriguing blessings in mind, it becomes much easier to hit those important 100 blessings a day.

More significantly, while the simple reason for reciting blessings is to thank God, we should not forget the deeper Kabbalistic reason for doing so. Recall that the purpose of a *berakhab* is actually to rectify the very cosmos. As taught by the Arizal, based on earlier mystical sources, the physical world is full of holy sparks, *nitzotzot*, that are trapped within material *kelipot*, “husks”. When reciting a *berakhab* before eating an apple, for instance, whatever holy sparks may be lurking inside are “unlocked” and restored to their place in the Heavens, thus serving to rectify Creation and bring the world one step closer to the Final Redemption.

For this reason, the Sages taught us numerous blessings to recite on all kinds of natural phenomena, on unique creations of God, on special places and occurrences, and even upon seeing certain kinds of people and animals. Through the proper recitation of such *berakhot*, we are able to not only maintain a consistent God-consciousness and positive, awe-inspired attitude, but also to practically and spiritually rectify the world around us. As such, the blessings guide below has been put together as a useful aid for every Jew, compiled from the teachings of the Mishnah and Talmud, with additional footnotes added for further *halakhic* clarification.

Blessing to recite upon hearing especially good news, and upon a bountiful rain in the land of Israel:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם הַטּוֹב וְהַמְטִיב

*Barukh Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melekh haOlam HaTov v'HaMetiv*



Upon hearing tragic news:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם דִּין הָאֵמֶת

*Barukh Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melekh haOlam Dayan ha'Emet*



Upon seeing lightning, comets or shooting stars, experiencing an earthquake or strong winds,  
or hearing thunder:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם שְׂכַחוּ וּגְבוּרַתוֹ מְלֵא עוֹלָם

*Barukh Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melekh haOlam sb'Kocho u'Gvurato Mal'e Olam*



Upon seeing breathtaking mountains, hills, wildernesses, large bodies of water or rivers:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם עוֹשֶׂה מַעֲשֵׂה בְּרֵאשִׁית

*Barukh Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melekh haOlam Oseh Ma'aseh Beresheet*



Upon seeing the Mediterranean Sea<sup>1</sup>:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם שֶׁעָשָׂה אֶת הַיָּם הַגָּדוֹל

*Barukh Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melekh haOlam sb'Asah et haYam haGadol*



Upon seeing a rainbow:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם זוֹכֵר הַבְּרִית, וְנֹאֲמָן בְּבְרִיתוֹ וְקַיָּים בְּמַאֲמָרוֹ

*Barukh Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melekh haOlam Zokher haBrit v'Ne'eman biVrito v'Kayam b'Ma'amaro*



Upon seeing a very large and awe-inspiring gathering of Jews<sup>2</sup>:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם חֲכָם הַרְזִים

*Barukh Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melekh haOlam Chakham haRazim*



Upon seeing an exceedingly wise Jew:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם שְׁחָלַק מִחֻכְמָתוֹ לִירְאָיו

*Barukh Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melekh haOlam sh'Chalak m'Chokhmato Lire'av*



Upon seeing an exceedingly wise gentile:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם שִׁנַּתָּן מִחֻכְמָתוֹ לְבָשָׂר וְדָם

*Barukh Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melekh haOlam sh'Natan me'Chokhmato l'Basar vaDam*



Upon seeing a Jewish king:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם שְׁחָלַק מִכְבוֹדוֹ לִירְאָיו

*Barukh Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melekh haOlam sh'Chalak miKvodo Lire'av*



Upon seeing a gentile king:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם שִׁנַּתָּן מִכְבוֹדוֹ לְבָשָׂר וְדָם

*Barukh Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melekh haOlam sh'Natan miKvodo l'Basar vaDam*



Upon seeing a close friend or relative after thirty days of no contact:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם שְׁהַחַיְנוּ וְקִיְמָנוּ וְהַגִּיעַנוּ לְזִמְן הַזֶּה

*Barukh Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melekh haOlam sh'Echeyanu v'Kiymanu v'Higiya'anu laZman haZe*



Upon seeing a close friend or relative after more than twelve months of no contact:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם מְחַיֶּה הַמֵּתִים

*Barukh Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melekh haOlam Mechayeh haMetim*

Upon seeing an albino, or a person who is especially black, red, freckled, spotted, tall or little<sup>3</sup>:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם מְשַׁנֵּה הַבְּרִיּוֹת

*Barukh Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melekh haOlam Meshaneh haBeriyot*



Upon seeing an amputee, a blind or handicapped person, or one afflicted with terrible skin ailments:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם דֵּין הָאֵמֶת

*Barukh Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melekh haOlam Dayan haEmet*



Upon seeing an elephant, monkey, owl<sup>4</sup> or great vulture:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם מְשַׁנֵּה הַבְּרִיּוֹת

*Barukh Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melekh haOlam Meshaneh haBeriyot*



Upon seeing an exceedingly beautiful person, animal, tree, or other living thing<sup>5</sup>:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם שְׂפָכָה לוֹ בְּעוֹלָמוֹ

*Barukh Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melekh haOlam sh'Kakbah Lo b'Olamo*



Upon seeing a place in Israel where idolatry has been uprooted and destroyed<sup>6</sup>:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם שְׁעָקַר עֲבוֹדָה זָרָה מֵאֶרְצֵנוּ

*Barukh Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melekh haOlam sh'Akar Avodah Zarah m'Artzenu*



Upon seeing a place outside of Israel where idolatry has been uprooted and destroyed:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם שְׁעָקַר עֲבוֹדָה זָרָה מִמְּקוֹם הַזֶּה

*Barukh Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melekh haOlam sh'Akar Avodat Kokhavim miMakom haZe*



Upon seeing a place where miracles occurred for the Jewish people, or for one's ancestors:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם שְׁעָשָׂה נִסִּים לְאַבוֹתֵינוּ בְּמִקְוֹם הַזֶּה

*Barukh Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melekh haOlam sh'Asah Nisim La'Avoteinu baMakom haZe*

Upon seeing a place where a personal miracle occurred for you:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם שְׁעָשָׂה לִי נֶס בְּמָקוֹם הַזֶּה

*Barukh Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melekh haOlam sh'Asah Li Nes baMakom haZe*



Upon visiting a Jewish cemetery or seeing Jewish graves:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר יָצַר אֶתְכֶם בְּדִין, וְזָן אֶתְכֶם בְּדִין, וְכִלְכַּל אֶתְכֶם בְּדִין, וְאַסַּף אֶתְכֶם בְּדִין, וְעָתִיד לְהַקְיִמְכֶם בְּדִין וְיִוָּדַע מִסְפַּר כּוֹלְכֶם, וְהוּא עָתִיד לְהַחְיֹתְכֶם וּלְקַיֵּים אֶתְכֶם. בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה מְחַיֵּה הַמֵּתִים

*Barukh Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melekh haOlam Asher Yatzar Etkhem baDin v'Zan Etkhem baDin v'Khilkel Etkhem baDin v'Asaf Etkhem baDin v'Atid LaHakimkhem baDin v'Yode'a Mispar Kulchem v'Hu Atid L'HaChiyot'khem u'l'Kayem Etkhem. Barukh Atah Adonai Mechayeh haMetim.*



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<sup>1</sup> There is a discussion whether this blessing applies to the Mediterranean Sea, or to the Atlantic Ocean, or both. According to the simplest understanding, this blessing really does apply specifically to the Mediterranean Sea, which played such a tremendous role in the history and economy of ancient (and modern) Israel. Upon seeing any ocean, one would say the previous blessing, which is the more general *oseh ma'aseh beresheet*.

<sup>2</sup> Officially, the size of the gathering is delineated as over 600,000 Jews in one place, as during the Sinai Revelation. However, this number is so large that it is nearly impossible to achieve in our day and age (or even in Talmudic times). Rather, the Sages likely meant *any* very large and awe-inspiring gathering of Jews—not necessarily 600,000 (which would be impractical to count or estimate anyway).

<sup>3</sup> Such blessings are typically recited only the *first time* one sees this person. If it has been more than thirty days since the first time, and the reciter is once again awed by the sight, they may recite the blessing again.

<sup>4</sup> Elephants, monkeys, and owls are famous for their human-like behaviour, appearance, and intelligence. They live very long lives and have been shown to possess complex emotions, skills, and creativity.

<sup>5</sup> According to the *Mishnah Berurah*, it is best to recite this blessing *without* mentioning God's names, ie. *Barukh sh'kakbah lo b'olamo*. Other authorities, like Rav Ovadia Yosef, maintain that the full blessing can be recited.

<sup>6</sup> An alternate text (as appearing in the *Shulchan Arukh*, for instance) has the words *avodat kokhavim* (עבודת כוכבים) instead of *avodah zarah*. The latter term is broader and more widely-applicable.