



Hebrew Berachot -

Types of Common Hebrew Blessings

אֲבָרְכָה אֶת־יְהוָה בְּכָל־עֵת תָּמִיד תְּהִלָּתוֹ בִּפְּיִי

I will bless the LORD at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth.

- Psalm 34:2

A HEBREW BLESSING (*b'racha*, pl. *berachot*) is meant to help us become more aware of the all-encompassing Presence of God in our lives.

By pausing,

by reflecting,

by practicing kavanah (intention)

and finding gratitude



When we take the time to focus our minds and recite a blessing in response to a life event (no matter how seemingly insignificant), we transform the knee-jerk habits of our mundane experience to moments of profound sanctity. We translate the profane moments to those of the sacred. We come to see and understand that life is a gift to us.

Moreover, reciting blessings is a way of practicing the simple virtue of gratitude. If you want pleasure in this life, you must learn to focus on the good. As Ben Zoma said (*Pirkei Avot*) "Who is a rich person? One who is happy with his lot":

אִיזְהוּ עָשִׁיר? הַשֹּׂמֵחַ בְּחֵלקוֹ

*One who rejoices
in their portion*

Who then is rich?

Engaging the mind with the awareness that God is the Source of all that is good is a means, then, of increasing your joy in this life.

In early Jewish history, the berachot were not standardized. However, after the Babylonian conquest, the Men of the Great Assembly (*Anshei Knesset HaGedolah*) codified the berachot in order to help unify the Jewish experience. In the Jewish tradition it is generally considered bad form to spontaneously compose your own bracha.



The Anshei Knesset HaGedolah identified three general types of berachot:

1. **Birkhot hanehenim** - Recited before enjoying a material pleasure (such as eating, drinking, smelling something pleasant, etc.) For example, "Blessed are You, O Lord our God, Who brings forth bread from the earth," recited when partaking of bread.
2. **Birkhot ha-mitzvot** - Recited in gratitude for the privilege of being given a commandment (*mitzvah*) to perform (for example, "Blessed are You, O Lord our God, Who has sanctified us with His commandments, and has commanded us to hear the sound of the Shofar").
3. **Birkhot hoda'ah** - Blessings of praise and gratitude, usually recited at special times and events.



As followers of Yeshua the Mashiach, blessed be He, we are not constrained to follow rabbinic halakhah (rules). We are free to spontaneously offer up praise and thanks to the LORD for all things, regardless of time or place. And such will be our practice if we are living in genuine *emunah* (faithfulness) before the LORD, for we will be given the Holy Spirit with “joy unspeakable and full of glory” as we dwell within His Presence.

The Jewish tradition has a lot to teach most Christians about gratitude. How many times have you consciously thanked the LORD for all His kindness given to you this day?