

Tefillah Focus Of The Week:

**BIRCHAS HASHACHAR**

*Up And Running*

**MEANING:** The simple translation of the prayer

Blessed are You, Hashem, our G-d, King of the universe, **Who gives sight to the blind.**

...Who clothes the naked.

...Who releases the bound.

...Who straightens the bent.

ברוך אתה ה' אלקינו מלך  
העולם פוקח עורים.  
...מלביש ערמים.  
...מתיר אסורים.  
...זוקף כפופים.

**WORD TO THE WISE:** Meaning within the meaning

*Hashem* - Master of All, Who Always Was, Is, and Will Be.

When one mentions the Divine Name, he should have in mind the meaning of the Name as it is read, referring to His Mastery and that He is the Master of all creation (*Siman 5, Se'if 1; Cf. Halichos Shlomo (Tefillah), page 2, "Dvar Halachah" 4*). (See also *Mishneh Berurah, Siman 5, Se'if Katan 2*).

**THEME:**

An essential concept of the prayer

***Waking Up With Hashem***

The **Birchos HaShachar** have the ability to reawaken in us each day a **profound awareness** of Hashem's constant care and faith that He continually provides us with all we need to live.

**INSIGHT:**

Deeper meanings of the theme

***How to Make Emunah Real***

From the moment we awaken, we are constantly using gifts from Hashem. Each time we benefit from these gifts, we have the opportunity to build our relationship with Him. The key is to remember Who gave these gifts. **By thinking of the Giver and offering thanks, we build a bond with the Giver.**

An analogy would be a loving grandfather who lives far away from his grandchildren. To let the children know that he cares about them, the grandfather sends them gifts. The parents know that the bond will only be built if it is developed from both sides, and therefore, they encourage the children to thank their grandfather. In this way, the attachment between them grows.

Likewise, each morning blessing gives us a chance to acknowledge the Giver, creating a strong cable that connects us to G-d. The cable

is strengthened throughout the day as we use these gifts again and again – if, as we use them, we remember to think of the Giver.

**Through this process, we develop a faith that is not shaken.** As the saying goes: "Seeing is believing." Philosophy, thinking and logic can impart faith to a person, but it is only an intellectual faith – *emunah sichlis*. While this intellectual faith is essential, it could be shaken by competing intellectual ideas. What we see and feel with our own eyes and hearts, however, cannot be countered. This is *emunah chushis* - a sensory awareness imprinted on one's consciousness through direct experience. The berachos are a concrete, verbal expression of this awareness. By saying the berachos we acknowledge the tangible, physical manifestations of G-d's goodness as they impact our lives.

**VISUALIZE:**

Images that bring the prayer to life

***Awaiting Hashem's Kindness***

Imagine that rather than starting each day "fully loaded" and ready to go, you needed to be re-equipped each morning with the faculties and abilities required for productive daily life. There you are, lying in bed, surrounded by complete darkness, waiting for G-d to return your eyesight to you. When will He bestow it? At last, light and shadows come into view, then colors, and finally, **it all snaps into focus and you can see!** פוקח עורים

You want to get up out of bed, but you are immobile. Your



limbs are frozen in place. You become restless and uncomfortable waiting for the bonds of paralysis to be released. **Finally, G-d sends a surge of strength and energy into your muscles and you can move!** מתיר אסורים

It's time to get out of bed. There is so much you need to accomplish this day. But as you try to stand up, you realize that your back is still stuck in the curled-up position of sleep. Like a beggar, you stand with

your eyes cast on the floor in front of you as you wait for G-d to set you straight. **At last, you feel the flexibility return to your spine** and you stand up to face the day. זוקף כפופים

Now, it is time to leave your home and go to shul to pray. You stand before your closet wearing your pajamas, wondering how you will protect yourself against the cold. The closet is empty — no clothing, no jacket, nothing. You are essentially stuck in your bedroom, unable to encounter the rest of the world until suddenly, G-d **presents you with a suit of clothes and a warm coat.** Now life can begin! מלביש ערמים

**TAKE IT WITH YOU:**

Your personal connection to the prayer

***Blessings Anyone Can See***

Some of the prayers you pray every day call for a deeper level of understanding in order to say the words with real meaning. What does it mean, for instance, to pray for the Final Redemption? Or for the resurrection of the dead? Or even for real peace – a phenomenon we have never experienced?

The *Birchos HaShachar* discussed here, however, are the nuts and bolts of a person's daily life. If you are blessed with sight, mobility

and clothes to wear, **you do not need profound commentaries to explain how these blessings benefit you** each and every minute of the day. The benefits are **simple and tangible** - and they are from G-d. *Birchos HaShachar* are blessings that any person willing to apply a moment's thought and focus can say with true gratitude, enthusiasm and love for his Maker. They are the perfect spark to ignite your morning prayers, and a powerful way to start your day.

**Try This!**

Using the above scenarios or some of your own, create an image that reflects the rush of gratitude you would feel upon being granted each of the blessings discussed above. This week, connect to that feeling when you recite the words specific to each *beracha*.

**Did You Know**

Even if one does not have occasion to make these blessings (i.e. a blind person and the blessing 'Poke'ach Ivrim', 'Who gives sight to the blind') he should nevertheless say them since the blessings are not required to be said specifically for one's own benefit. Rather, one says them to acknowledge that Hashem provides for these needs throughout the world. (Rama, Siman 46:8).