

Tefillah Focus Of The Week:

BIRCHAS HASHACHAR

Blessings Bring Blessings

MEANING: The simple translation of the prayer

Blessed are You, Hashem, our G-d, King of the universe, Who spreads out the earth upon the waters.

ברוך אתה ה' אלקינו
מלך העולם רוקע
הארץ על המים.

WORD TO THE WISE: Meaning within the meaning

Elokainu — Our G-d.

Our G-d is Omnipotent and Almighty, a powerful Master Who monitors and oversees each and every one of us on a personal basis. We accept upon ourselves Hashem's dominion and render ourselves as insignificant before Him. We announce that we are ready to serve Him (according to our individual capabilities). (Siman 5, Se'if 1, Nefesh HaChaim, 3:11, Michtav M'Eliyahu, Volume 4, page 63).

THEME:

An essential concept of the prayer

Revealing Hashem's Goodness

One of the purposes of making brachos is to request that Hashem's goodness and blessing be revealed to the world.

INSIGHT:

Deeper meanings of the theme

Recognizing The Source

רוקע הארץ על המים – The nature of water is that it tends to spread and flood everything in its path. **In His great compassion, G-d overrode water's nature**, confining it to its designated place and leaving dry land for man, plants and animals to inhabit. One need only view images of the devastation brought by a tidal wave or tsunami to understand what happens when, for just a few hours, G-d releases his hold on the waters.

As we explained last week (in 'Did You Know'), the **Birchos HaShachar are not analogous to the blessings recited before deriving a benefit** such as food. Therefore, they are recited even by those who are not deriving the benefit (i.e. a blind person and the blessing for sight). But if the primary reason to make blessings, as the Gemara teaches, is to receive permission from G-d before deriving benefit, **why must one recite the Birchos HaShachar even when no benefit is derived?**

Rav Chaim Friedlander, *Mashgiach* of the Ponevezh Yeshivah, explains, citing the words

of *Rabbeinu Bachaya*:

"...Everyone who [makes a] blessing ... is testifying to [G-d's] supervision, Who supplies sustenance enabling us to survive. And in that merit (if one recites a blessing before consuming food) the grain and fruit are blessed and are plentiful."

Every blessing includes two aspects: (a) we request that Hashem's goodness and blessing be revealed; (b) we acknowledge that everything is His and that He is the source of everything. The result of that recognition is that Hashem infuses His supervision of the world with goodness and blessing.

Sefer HaChinuch explains that reciting a blessing enables us to fulfill G-d's desire to do good for His creation. **By stirring one's awareness of G-d as the Source of all good, the act of reciting a blessing generates the merit for the world to continue receiving G-d's bounty.**

VISUALIZE:

Images that bring the prayer to life

A Limitless, Gushing Spring

Many years ago in a remote area, there was a farm, and on the farm grew peppers, tomatoes, potatoes and corn. The corn fed the chickens, which laid eggs and provided poultry. A few goats gave the family ample milk. The farmer and his family lived well from the produce of their successful farm, feeding themselves and selling the rest to cover their other expenses.



The entire enterprise depended on a spring which flowed underground. The water from that spring enabled the crops to grow and the family and animals to live. Were the spring to dry up, the farm and all that thrived there would be completely unsustainable. In just a few weeks, it would be dust and decay. But this

spring was a rushing, gushing, seemingly endless supply of life-giving water, and therefore, the family felt its future was secure.

Like this underground spring, **G-d is a boundless, overflowing source of sustenance for us.** Everything we rely upon draws its existence from Him. When we recite the words in the blessings, **we trace our sustenance back to its Source and acknowledge that there would be nothing if G-d did not provide it.**

Try This! ▶

This week, when you say the words in any blessing, imagine the **clear, gushing waters of the Source of the blessing**—our Creator. Imagine the crops thirstily drinking in the water, growing strong and lush. Imagine the bounty spawned by that rushing spring, and **feel the sense of fullness, satiation and abundance.**

Did You Know

▶ 100 Blessings A Day

Men are obligated to recite at least a hundred blessings each day (Siman 46:3). The reason is that in the time of King David, 100 people were dying every day due to a terrible plague. In order to stop the plague, **King David instituted that 100 blessings be said every day**

and indeed the plague stopped. In practice, one normally says even more than a hundred blessings each day (Mishneh Berurah, Ibid:14). On Shabbos (and festivals) the silent *amidah* prayer has fewer blessings than the weekday *amidah* prayer. One can make up for the 'missing' blessings by eating different types of foods, smelling various spices, and saying the appropriate blessing for each one (Ibid). If need be, according to some authorities (*Pri Megadim, Ibid:7*), one can include in the 100 blessings the morning blessings made by someone else as long as he hears the entire blessing and answers "Amen" after them.