

ברכת המזון



עם פירוש ברכת מרדכי
With Bircas Mordechai Commentary

Written and Compiled by Rabbi Moshe Zidell

ברכת המזון

לחול:

על נהרות בבל שם ישבנו גם בכינו, בְּזַכְרֵנוּ אֶת צִיּוֹן. על עֲרָבִים בְּתוֹכָהּ, תְּלִינוּ כְּנֹרֹתֵינוּ. כִּי שָׁם שָׂאלוּנוּ שׁוֹבֵינוּ דְּבָרֵי שִׁיר וְתוֹלְלֵינוּ שְׁמִיחָה, שִׁירוּ לָנוּ מִשִּׁיר צִיּוֹן. אִיךְ נִשְׁרֵי אֶת שִׁיר יְיָ, עַל אֲדָמַת נֶגֶר. אִם אֶשְׁכַּחךְ יְרוּשָׁלַיִם, תִּשְׁכַּח יְמִינִי. תִּדְבַּק לְשׁוֹנֵי לֶחֶמֶי אִם לֹא אֶזְכְּרֶכֶּי, אִם לֹא אֶעֱלֶה אֶת יְרוּשָׁלַיִם עַל רֹאשׁ שְׁמִיחָתִי. זָכֹר יְיָ לְבְנֵי אָדָם אֶת יוֹם יְרוּשָׁלַיִם, הַאֲמָרִים עָרוּ עָרוּ עַד הַיְסוּד בָּהּ. בַּת בָּבֶל הִשְׁדוּדָהּ, אֲשֶׁרֶי שִׁישְׁלָם לָךְ אֶת גְּמוּלָךְ שְׁגַמְלָתָ לָנוּ. אֲשֶׁרֶי שִׁיאֲחֹז וְנִפְץ אֶת עַלְלִיךְ אֶל הַסָּלַע.

לשבת ויום טוב:

שִׁיר המעלות, בְּשׁוֹב יְיָ אֶת שִׁיבַת צִיּוֹן, הֵינּוּ כְּחֻלְמִים. אִזּוּ יִפְלֹא שְׁחֹק פִּינוּ וְלִשְׁוֹנֵנוּ רְנָה, אִזּוּ יֵאָמְרוּ בַּגּוֹיִם, הֲגִדִיל יְיָ לַעֲשׂוֹת עִם אֱלֹהֵי. הֲגִדִיל יְיָ לַעֲשׂוֹת עִמָּנוּ, הֵינּוּ שְׁמַיִם. שׁוֹבָה יְיָ אֶת שְׁבִיתֵנוּ, כְּאֶפְיָקִים בְּנֶגֶב. הַזְרַעִים בְּדִמְעָה, בְּרִנָּה יִקְצְרוּ. הַלֶּחֶן יִלֵּךְ וּבֹכָה נִשְׂא מִשֶּׁךְ הַזְרַע, בֹּא יְבֵא לְבִירָתָנוּ שִׂישְׁלָם לָךְ אֶת גְּמוּלָתָ לָנוּ. אֲשֶׁרֶי שִׁיאֲחֹז וְנִפְץ אֶת עַלְלִיךְ אֶל הַסָּלַע.

הנני מוכן ומזומן לקיים מצוות עשה של ברכת המזון, שנאמר: ואכלת ושבעת, וברכת את יי אלהינו, על הארץ הטבה אשר נתן לך.

זימון בסעודת (נשואין של) שבעת ימי משתה

המזמן נוטל כוס של יין בידו ואומר: רבותי מיר ונעלען בענטשען. [רבותי נברך].

המסובים עונים: יהי שם יי מברך מעתה ועד עולם

. והמזמן חוזר: יהי שם יי מברך מעתה ועד עולם. דני הסר וגם חרון, ואז אלם בשיר ירון, נחנו במעגלי צדק, שעה ברכת בני אהרן. ברשות מרנן ורבנן ורבותי, נברך אלהינו שהשמחה במעוננו ושאכלנו משלו.

המסובים עונים: ברוך אלהינו שהשמחה במעוננו, ושאכלנו משלו ובטובו חיינו.

והמזמן חוזר: ברוך אלהינו שהשמחה במעוננו, ושאכלנו משלו ובטובו חיינו.

המזמן: רבותי מיר ונעלען בענטשען. [רבותי נברך].

המסובין: יהי שם יי מברך מעתה ועד עולם.

המזמן: יהי שם יי מברך מעתה ועד עולם. ברשות מרנן ורבנן ורבותי, נברך (אלהינו) שאכלנו משלו.

המסובין: ברוך (אלהינו) שאכלנו משלו ובטובו חיינו.

המזמן: ברוך (אלהינו) שאכלנו משלו ובטובו חיינו.

ברוך הוא וברוך שמו.

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם, הזן את העולם פלו בטובו בחן בחסד וברחמים, הוא נותן לחם לכל בשר כי לעולם חסדו. ובטובו הגדול תמיד לא חסר לנו, ואל יחסר לנו מזון לעולם ועד. בעבור שמו הגדול, כי הוא אל זן ומפרנס לכל ומטיב לכל, ומכין מזון לכל בריותיו אשר ברא. כאמור: פותח את ידך, ומשביע לכל חי רצון. ברוך אתה יי, הזן את הכל:

נודה לך, יי אלהינו, על שהנחלת לאבותינו ארץ חמדה טובה ורחבה, ועל שהוצאתנו, יי אלהינו, מארץ מצרים, ופדיתנו מבית עבדים, ועל בריכתך שחתמת בבשרנו, ועל תורתך שלמדדתנו, ועל חקיך שהודעתנו, ועל חיים חן וחסד שחוננתנו, ועל אכילת מזון שאתה זן ומפרנס אותנו תמיד, בכל יום ובכל עת ובכל שעה.

לחנוכה ופורים:

ועל הנסים, ועל הפרקו, ועל הגבורות, ועל התשועות, ועל הנפלאות, ועל הנחמות, ועל המלחמות, שעשית לאבותינו בימים ההם בזמן הזה.

לחנוכה: בימי מתתיהו בן יוחנן כהן גדול, חשמונאי ובניו, כשעמדה מלכות זון הרשעה על עמך ישראל להשכיחם תורתך, ולהעבירם מחקי רצונך, ואתה ברחמיך הרבים עמדת להם בעת צרתם, רבת את ריבם, דנת את דינם, נקמת את נקמתם, מסרת גבורים ביד חלשים, ורבים ביד מעטים, וטמאים ביד טהורים, ורשעים ביד צדיקים, וזדים ביד עוסקי תורתך. ולך עשית שם גדול וקדוש בעולמך, ולעמך ישראל עשית תשועה גדולה ופרקו כהיום הזה. ואחר כן באו בניך לדביר ביתך, ופנו את היכלך, וטהרו את מקדשך, והדליקו נרות בחצרות קדשך, וקבעו שמונת ימי חנוכה אלו, להודות ולהלל לשמך הגדול.

לפורים: בימי מרדכי ואסתר בשושן הבירה, כשעמד עליהם המן הרשע, בקש להשמיד להרג ולאבד את כל היהודים, מנער ועד זקן, טף ונשים, ביום אחד, בשלושה עשר לחדש שנים עשר, הוא חדש אדר, ושללם לבו. ואתה ברחמיך הרבים הפרת את עצתו, וקלקלת את מחשבתו, והשבות לו גמולו בראשו, ותלו אותו ואת בניו על העץ.

ועל הכל, יי אלהינו, אנחנו מודים לך, ומברכים אותך, יתברך שמך בפי כל חי תמיד לעולם ועד. כפיתוב, ואכלת ושבעת, וברכת את יי אלהיך על הארץ הטבה אשר נתן לך. ברוך אתה יי, על הארץ ועל המזון.

רחם נא, יי אלהינו, על ישראל עמך, ועל ירושלים עירך, ועל ציון משכן כבודך, ועל מלכות בית דוד משיחך, ועל הבית הגדול והקדוש שנקרא שמך עליו. אלהינו, אבינו, רענו, זוננו, פרנסנו, וכלכלנו, והרויחנו, והרוח לנו יי אלהינו מהרה מכל צרותינו, ונא אל תצריכנו, יי אלהינו, לא לידי מתנת בשר ודם, ולא לידי הלואתם, כי אם לידיך הפלאה, הפתוחה, הקדושה והרחבה, שלא נבוש ולא נכלם לעולם ועד.

לשבת:

רצה והחליצנו יי אלהינו במצותיך ובמצות יום השביעי השבת הגדול והקדוש הזה. כי יום זה גדול וקדוש הוא לפניך, לשבת בו ולנוח בו באהבה כמצות רצונך, וברצונך הניח לנו יי אלהינו, שלא תהא צרה ויגון ואנחה ביום מנוחתנו. והראנו יי אלהינו בנחמת ציון עירך, ובבגן ירושלים

עיר קדשך, כי אתה הוא בעל הישועות ובעל הנחמות.

בר"ח ויו"ט וחול המועד וראש השנה:

אלהינו ואלהי אבותינו, יעלה ויבא, ניגיע, ונראה, ונרצה, וישמע, ויפקד, ויזכר וזכרוננו ופקדוננו, וזכרון אבותינו, וזכרון משיח בן דוד עבדך, וזכרון ירושלים עיר קדשך, וזכרון כל עמך בית ישראל לפניך, לפליטה, לטובה, לחן ולחסד ולרחמים, לחיים (טובים) ולשלום, ביום ראש החדש | חג המצות | חג השבועות | חג הסוכות | שמיני עצרת החג | הזכרון הזה, זכרנו, יי אלהינו, בו לטובה, ופקדנו בו לברכה, והושיענו בו לחיים טובים. ובדבר ישועה ורחמים, חוס וחסנו, ורחם עלינו והושיענו, כי אליך עיינינו, כי אל מלך חנון ורחום אתה.

ובנה ירושלים עיר הקדש במהרה בימינו. ברוך אתה יי, בונה ברחמי ירושלים. **אמן**

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם, האל, אבינו, מלכנו, אדירנו, בוראנו, גואלנו, יוצרנו, קדושנו קדוש יעקב, רוענו רועה ישראל, המלך הטוב והמטיב לכל, שבכל יום ניום הוא הטיב, הוא מטיב, הוא ייטיב לנו. הוא גמלנו, הוא גמלנו, הוא יגמלנו לעד, לחן ולחסד ולרחמים ולרחמים ולרחמים והצלחה, ברכה וישועה, נחמה, פרנסה וכלכלה, ורחמים וחיים ושלום וכל טוב, ומכל טוב לעולם אל יחסרנו.

הרחמן, הוא ימלוך עלינו לעולם ועד. הרחמן, הוא יתברך בשמים ובארץ. הרחמן, הוא ישתבח לדור דורים, ויתפאר בנו לעד ולנצח נצחים, ויתהדר בנו לעד ולעולמי עולמים. הרחמן, הוא יפרנסנו בכבוד. הרחמן, הוא ישובור עלנו מעל צוארנו והוא יוליכנו קוקמיות לארצנו. הרחמן, הוא ישלח לנו ברכה מרבה בבית הזה, ועל שלחן זה שאכלנו עליו. הרחמן, הוא ישלח לנו את אליהו הנביא זכור לטוב, ויבשר לנו בשורות טובות וישועות ונחמות.

ברכת בעל הבית:

יהי רצון שלא יבוש בעל הבית בעולם הזה ולא יכלם לעולם הבא, ויצלח מאד בכל נכסיו, ויהיו נכסיו ונכסיו מוצלחים וקרובים לעיר, ואל ישלוט שטן לא במעשה ידיו ולא במעשה ידיו, ואל יזדקק לו לפניו ולא לפנינו, שום דבר חטא ועבירה ועוון, מעתה ועד עולם.

הרחמן, הוא יברך את (אבי מורי) בעל הבית הזה, ואת (אמי מורת) בעלת הבית הזה, אותם ואת ביתם ואת זרעם ואת כל אשר להם, (אותי) (ואבי) (ואמי) ואשתי \ וזרעי \ ואת כל אשר לי) אותנו ואת כל אשר לנו, כמו שנתברכו אבותינו, אברהם יצחק ויעקב, בכל, מכל, כל, כן יברך אותנו כלנו יחד בברכה שלמה, ונאמר אמן.

במרום ילמדו עליהם ועלינו זכות, שתהא למשמרת שלום, ונשא ברכה מאת יי, וצדקה מאליה ישענו, ונמצא חן ושכל טוב בעיני אלהים ואדם.

לשבת: הרחמן, הוא ינחילנו יום שכלו שבת ומנוחה לחיי העולמים.

לר"ח: הרחמן, הוא יחדש עלינו את החדש הזה לטובה ולברכה.

ליום טוב: הרחמן, הוא ינחילנו יום שכלו טוב.

לר"ה: הרחמן, הוא יחדש עלינו את השנה הזאת לטובה ולברכה.

לסוכות: הרחמן, הוא יקים לנו את ספת דוד הנופלת.

הרחמן, הוא יצפנו לימות המשיח ולחיי העולם הבא. בחול: מגדיל (בשבת ור"ח ויו"ט וחול המועד וראש השנה: מגדול) ישועות מלכו, ועשה חסד למשיחו לדוד ולזרעו עד עולם. עשה שלום במרומי, הוא יעשה שלום עלינו ועל כל ישראל, ואמרו אמן.

יראו את יי קדושו, כי אין מחסור ליראיו. כפירים רשו ורעבו, ודורשי יי לא יחסרו כל טוב. הודו ליי כי טוב, כי לעולם חסדו. פותח את ידך, ומשביע לכל חי רצון. ברוך הגבר אשר יבטח ביי, והיה יי מבטחו. נער הייתי גם זקנתי, ולא ראיתי צדיק נעזב, וזרעו מבקש לחם. יי עז לעמו יתן, יי יברך את עמו בשלום.

שבע ברכות

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם, בורא פרי הגפן.

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם, שהכל ברא לכבודו.

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם, יוצר האדם.

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם, אשר יצר את האדם בצלמו, בצלם דמות

תבניתו, והתקין לו מנוח בגן עדי עד. ברוך אתה יי, יוצר האדם.

שוש תשיש ותגל העקרה, בקבוץ בניה לתוכה בשמחה. ברוך אתה יי, משמח

ציון בבניה.

שמח תשמח רעים האהובים, כשמחך יצירך בגן עדן מקדם. ברוך אתה יי,

משמח חתן וכלה.

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם, אשר ברא ששון ושמחה, חתן וכלה, גילה, רנה,

דיצה וחדנה, אהבה ואחנה ושלום ורעות. מהרה, יי אלהינו, ישמע בערי יהודה

ובחצות ירושלים, קול ששון וקול שמחה, קול חתן וקול כלה, קול מצהלות

חתנים מחפתם ונערים ממשפתה נגינתם. ברוך אתה יי, משמח חתן עם הכלה.

Additionally the Zohar teaches, טוב עין הוא יבורך "The one with a good eye should bless" - this refers to one who bentshes with joy. When a person bentshes with joy, he enables the worlds to be nourished. After 120 years, when he finally comes up to Heaven, he will receive reward from what he helped nourish. How does this work?

There is a mystical teaching from the Nefesh Hachaim, that when we say a bracha to Hashem, we are, in a sense, giving Hashem strength to support and sustain this world, as the verse from Psalms says, תִּגְנוּ עַד לְאֱלֹהִים, Give strength to G-d! At first glance, this sounds ridiculous! Hashem is the One who created and sustains everything. Why would He need us to give Him power? The Nefesh Hachaim explains that Hashem constructed this world with an operating system that requires that we need to pray to Him before He releases His flow of blessing to this world. Prayer is analogous to pushing a button on a machine in order to make the machine work. Hashem is ready to give us everything. We just have to ask.

This is alluded to in the following verse from Deuteronomy 8:10: וְאָכַלְתָּ וְשָׂבַעְתָּ וּבֵרַכְתָּ: "אָתָּה ד' אֱלֹהֶיךָ", "And you shall eat, be satiated and bless Hashem your G-d". When you eat, are satiated and then bless Hashem, you, as it were, are giving Hashem the power to bless you more.

Through this teaching we can understand a Gemorah (Brachos 35a), which teaches that a person who enjoys this world without blessing Hashem, is compared to one who steals both from Hashem and the Jewish people. A person who eats and does not bentsh afterwards plugs up the pipeline of blessing that would otherwise flow into this world. He robs Hashem of the opportunity to give more, as it were, and he robs the Jewish people who would otherwise receive this blessing.

R' Shimshon Pincus (שערים בתפילה-רינה) teaches that thanksgiving is a form of prayer. We can see this from one of the Ashkenazi Selichos, which has the following verse: "לשמוע אל הרינה ואל התפילה – You (Hashem) hearken to the song (Rinnah) and to the prayer (Tefillah)". What is the connection between the two? When we pray to Hashem, and ask Him to give us what we need, we acknowledge that He is the source of everything. When we praise Hashem, we are also showing our recognition that everything comes from Him, but we are doing it joyously. In the verse above, the word Rinnah – praise – prefaces the word Tefila – prayer. Perhaps the reason is because the power of joy makes our praise to Hashem even more powerful than our prayers.

Through bentshing loudly and joyously, we are fulfilling both a direct mitzvah of the

Introduction

Bentsh like a Mentch

A. Birkas Hamazon: Realizing That Everything Is From Hashem

Bentshing is one of the primary ways for us to develop our relationship with Hashem. Avraham Avinu would serve his guests a delicious meal, then when they wished to thank him, Avraham would instruct them to thank Hashem instead, because He is the One who provides us with everything.

Bentshing is a daily exercise in expressing gratitude towards Hashem. There are many blessings (100) that we may recite every day, yet only two have the distinction of being directly commanded by the Torah: Birkas Hatorah – the bracha said before learning Torah, and Birkas Hamazon – bentshing. Birkas Hatorah thanks Hashem for our spirituality, and bentshing thanks Hashem for the physical things we have.

The Midrash teaches that the world was created in the merit of three things. One of these is Challah (the portion of the dough that was given to the Kohen). What is the connection? Setting aside a portion of our dough for challah reminds us that our food comes from Hashem – and possibly once we remember that our food comes from Hashem, we will also remember that indeed everything comes from Hashem. This is the reason the world was created- so we will realize everything is from Hashem. Bentshing also teaches us this lesson. When we realize our food is from Hashem, we realize everything is from Him.

The חיד"א notes that "בראשית" is an acronym for "ב קל רם א ב ר כ ש ם י ת מ י ד", with a loud voice, I will bless Hashem continually". The first thing the Torah instructs us to do is show gratitude to Hashem.

B. Bentshing helps us financially

There is a tradition that a person who is careful to bentsh properly will be provided with a respectable livelihood throughout his whole life (ס' החינוך מצוה ת"ל).

Bentshing loudly and joyously is taught to be a segula for sustenance (חיד"א ניצוצי אורות) בְּרַכַּת ד' הִיא תַעֲשִׂיר וְלֹא יוֹסֵף (10:22) (ח"ב דף ר"ה). This is hinted to in a verse from Proverbs (10:22) עֲצֹב עִמָּה, "The blessing of Hashem will make him rich, and he shall not continue to be saddened". Homiletically, this verse can be interpreted to mean – through blessing Hashem, he shall become rich.

From this, we see that through bentching, we can cause Hashem to love us more.

D. Loving bentching

Our great leaders were well aware of the special relationship that we can achieve with Hashem through bentching, and this led them to value this mitzvah very highly. The "Aderes" once said, "It is years already that I have the custom to eat bread every day in order to fulfill this precious mitzvah each day".

The Chasam Sofer had a boy that used to bring him meals every day. One day, this boy was hungry, and he figured that the Chasam Sofer was so holy, he wouldn't remember if he ate breakfast or not. So the boy decided to eat the breakfast meant for the Chasam Sofer instead of bringing it to him. Later on, by dinner time, the Chasam Sofer asked the boy, "Did I eat breakfast today?". Taken aback, the boy responded, "The Rav doesn't remember whether or not he ate?". The Chasam Sofer explained that while he couldn't remember whether or not he ate breakfast, he did remember that he had not yet bentched that day. The Chasam Sofer ate in order to bentch, not in order to satisfy his appetite!

When Eliezer went to Aram Naharim to find a wife for Yitzchok, and he was served food in the house of Besuel, he protested, "I cannot eat until I say my piece". When he was then encouraged to speak, he prefaced his remarks with the phrase, "A servant of Avrohom, am I". (Bereishis 24:33). The Baal Haturim interprets this homiletically – Eliezer was saying that in the house of Avrohom we never ate until we "said our piece" - until after we washed and said Hamotzi! This is similar to the way Avrohom brought people close to Hashem – by giving them food and then encouraging them to thank Hashem.

This unfortunately is the opposite of many people who will do anything not to have to wash and bentch.

E. The Halachos of bentching

1. Concentration- A person should bentch with concentration, fear and joy (Chayei Adam, כלל מ"ד סעי' יג)
2. Like Shemona Esrei – Birchah Hamazon has the same halachos as Shmoneh Esrai. Specifically, a person who is bentching is not allowed to talk to anyone, even a king (ערה"ש סוס' קפ"ג) (שו"ע מ"ב שם סק"ל). Even to wink to someone is not permitted.

Torah and drawing on the power of joy, as explained above. This is a surefire way to ensure that Hashem will keep giving us more blessing.

There is a parable about a rich man who invited many guests to a party. After the party, anyone who thanked the host was given a gift envelope with \$150 inside. We only have to bentch in order to get an envelope with a reward that is far more priceless.

The Gemorah (Succah 53a) teaches that during the Simchas Bais Hashoeiva (the rejoicing in the Temple during the holiday of Sukkos), R' Shimon ben Gamliel, the Nasi and leader of the generation, would juggle eight torches of fire. It is taught that the joy during Simchas Bais Hashoeiva was so great that it caused many people to achieve Divine inspiration. R' Zaidel Epstein asked what was the great joy of the Simchas Bais Hashoeiva? Why would the Gadol Hador be putting on a juggling act for the audience? He answered that there is a two way relationship between Hashem and us. Hashem gives us, and in turn we thank Him, which causes Him, as it were, to give us more, and we then thank Him more, and on and on. When the Jewish people, assembled at the Simchas Bais Hashoeiva, focused on the close relationship between Hashem and them, this brought them to such levels of joy that they were able to achieve Divine Inspiration. This concept is represented in the juggling of Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel. As a juggler throws up one piece, another piece comes down, and is in turn thrown up again, and on and on in a never ending cycle. This concept is similar to what we have been discussing – through bentching we continue the cycle of giving between Hashem and us.

C. Finding favor in Hashem's eyes

The gemorah teaches (Brachos 20a): Rav Avirah taught: The angels asked Hashem, "It says in the Torah (Deuteronomy 10 – 17) that you do not show favoritism, yet you show favoritism to the Jewish people as it says, (Numbers 6:26) *ישא ה' פניו אליך* Hashem will show favor to you?" Hashem replied to them, "How can I not show the Jewish people favor? I wrote in the Torah to bentch after being full, yet they bentch even after eating a kzayis (a minimal amount of bread).

How does Hashem's reply answer the question of the angels? A possible answer is that the world was constructed with the rule of *מדה כנגד מדה*, measure for measure. When the Jewish people go beyond the letter of the law, and bentch even after eating a kzayis, because they want to show their love to Hashem, He in turn shows them special favor.

She wanted to bentsh, but there were no bentschers on the tables and she was having a hard time finding a bentscher. She went over to her teacher, who was also at the wedding, and asked for a bentscher, but her teacher didn't have one. After asking a few more people with no luck, the girl gave up, sat down at a table in the corner and started to write something. Her teacher went over to see what she was doing, and realized she was writing down Birchas Hamazon, word for word from memory. Noticing her teacher's surprised face, the girl explained that on erev Yom Kippur, she had made a kabbalah to always bentsh with a bentscher.

G. Hakaras Hatov

As previously stated, bentsching is an exercise in acknowledging what is done for us, therefore it is only correct to publicly thank all of those who contributed to the making of this bentscher. First and foremost I would like to thank Hakadosh Boruch Hu for giving me the Siyata Dishmaya in every stage that went into producing this bentscher. He has helped me until now, and may He keep on helping me and give me more opportunities to spread Torah. Secondly, I would like to thank R' Yehuda Bulman, the principal of The Chochmas Lev Seminary for giving me the opportunity to teach there; this bentscher is a printed edition of some of the classes that were taught there. Words can not express my deep appreciation to my dear devoted parents, Rabbi and Mrs. Mordechai Zidell for all they have instilled in me and for their constant encouragement towards my growing and spreading of Torah; besides for being the sponsors of this bentscher. May Hashem give them אריכות ימים and shower them with much nachas from all of their children and grandchildren. To my dear wife Raizy, who has an equal part in the production of this bentscher, and has let me devote my time to learning and preparing classes. May Hashem give us both all that we need, and the Siyata dishmaya to fulfill our job in this world. To my wife's parents, R' Shimon Yehuda Epstein זצ"ל and Mrs. L. Epstein for instilling such a deep אהבת התורה in their children. May she always have נחת and שמחות from the משפחה. A very special thank you is also due to my dear brother and sister – in-law, R' Boruch Alter and Chana Zidell for the countless hours of editing and re-editing that helped convert and translate my Yeshivish into real English. May Hashem bentsh them with much happiness together, and may they have much nachas from all of their children. Last but not least, I would like to thank R' and Mrs. B. Engelman for the computer graphics, may Hashem guide them wherever they are.

3. A person should say Birchas Hamazon while sitting (וע' ערה"ש אות ח' מתוס') (רמז מן התורה "ושבעת וברכת" שב עת וברכת שו"ע). He should not recline in a haughty fashion (מ"ב שם סק"ל). He is also not allowed to walk around during bentsching (שם סע' ט).
4. Bentsching should preferably be said loudly, because it helps us to concentrate, and so we shouldn't forget (ס' קפ"ה מ"ב סק"ג) to say יעלה ויבא or רצה.

F. In a bentscher

One of the reasons it can be difficult to bentsh is because it is difficult to concentrate when one is sitting at a noisy table with loud conversation. A solution for this is to always bentsh while looking inside a bentscher. The Mishnah Berurah teaches that one who wants to be careful about bentsching should bentsh from a siddur (or bentscher) (ס' קפ"ה ס"ק א). It is well known that R' Shach ז"ל would advise people with problems to bentsh with a bentscher. Once a man whose family was suffering several misfortunes came to Rav Shach for advice. He told him to take something small upon himself, but be consistent – bentsh in a bentscher. A different time, a rich man gave Rav Shach \$10,000 for charity. Rav Shach told him, "In gratitude to you, I will give you a segulah that will ensure that you keep your wealth – just bentsh using a bentscher". The man thanked him for the advice but didn't follow it. Within a year, he lost all of his money (הגדת קנין תורה (ב"ב) תשס"ב).

Once, when Rav Shach was bentsching, part of the page in the bentscher was missing. He got up to find another bentscher. Someone once asked Rav Shach why he was so particular about this mitzvah. He answered that a kabbalah – a commitment – is a kabbalah and it has to be kept, no matter what.

Rav Shach used to tell people the story of Rav Chaim Ozer Grodenzky, a man with a phenomenal memory, and even he was careful never to bentsh without using a bentscher. Rav Chaim Ozer was in charge of the free loan fund of Vilna. One time the accounting book for the fund got lost. Rav Chaim Ozer just sat down and wrote it all again from memory – including all the names, dates and amounts. Eventually, people found the original accounting book. When they compared Rav Chaim Ozer's copy, they saw the two were exact! Surely, Rav Chaim Ozer did not have to worry that he would forget a word of Birchas Hamazon – yet he was still careful never to bentsh without a bentscher.

R' C. A. Pam once told me a story about a seminary girl at a chasuna in Yerushalayim.

Blessed are You Hashem Our G-d, King of the world, Who sustains the whole world in His goodness with grace with kindness and with mercy. He gives bread to all flesh

Now, with this frame of mind, we can proceed:

הזן את העולם כולו - Hashem sustains the whole world...

Think about this a little – it is just awesome! What does it take to feed the whole world? Scientists have so far discovered 19,000 types of birds, 46,000 species of animals, 850,000 species of insects, 25,000 different species of fish, and are discovering three new species every week. Each one of these species itself amounts to trillions of individual members. Hashem has been giving food and sustenance to each and every member of these different species, each requiring different types of food. Some creatures may need meat, some need starches, some need fish, others need bugs, and Hashem provides for all their needs. Hashem did this every day, for thousands of years. Not a day goes by without Him giving each of these different animals their different needs! It's just unbelievable! A rough calculation of the amount of food needed just for humans: There are approximately 7 billion people in the world. If the average person eats 2.5 lbs. of food each day, a day's worth of food is 6,205,000,000,000 lbs. And this is merely for humans! (see continuation #1, page 50)

בחן -with grace

Hashem doesn't just give us food to eat, he creates our food in a manner that is pleasing to us. He embellishes our foods with visual appeal, appetizing smells, and enjoyable textures, so that we will want to eat. Moreover, Hashem gives us an appetite so we will want to feed ourselves. Imagine what we would look like if we ate with the same appetite as we studied for a test! Hashem does such a wonderful job that sometimes we can hardly stop eating.

בחסד - with kindness

Hashem provides us with a variety of foods simply because he loves to give. Could there be any other reason that Hashem made so many different types of vegetables (189), fruits (185), herbs and spices (319)? Hashem could have made everything look and taste identical (like the snake who was cursed to eat the dust of the earth).

ברחמים -with mercy

Our food doesn't merely satisfy our hunger. Hashem packs our food with dozens of vitamins, minerals and nutrients that nourish our bodies and help our digestion. (see continuation #2, page 51)

הוא נותן לחם לכל בשר כי לעולם חסדו - He gives bread to all flesh, for His kindness is eternal

This posuk is the last praise in תהלים פרק קל"ז. This perek of Tehillim is called הלל הגדול, the great praise, because it is the praise that the angels sing to Hashem. The סידור אוצר התפילות

ברוך אתה יי, אלהינו מלך העולם, הזן את העולם כולו בטובו בחן ברחמים, הוא נותן לחם לכל בשר

ברוך אתה... הזן את העולם

Throughout this commentary, we will attempt to explain the surface meaning of the text, and at the same time, convey some of the feelings and thoughts we should have when reciting Birkas Hamazon.

Moshe Rabbeinu composed this first bracha of Birkas Hamazon to thank Hashem for the Manna that the Jews were sustained by while they were wandering in the desert.

ברוך - Blessed / the Source of all blessing

While the literal translation of Boruch means blessed, several commentators question how can it be possible to bless Hashem, when He is transcendent and so vastly superior to us. Therefore, two classical commentators offer the following interpretations of Boruch:

The Sefer Hachinuch (Mitzvah 430) understands Boruch to mean the "Source of all blessing". We are praising Hashem by saying, "You Hashem are the Source of all blessing in this world". Through realizing that Hashem is the Source of everything, we gain the merit for Hashem to bestow some of His goodness on us. This is why "הקב"ה מתאוה לתפילתן של צדיקים", Hashem yearns for the prayers of the righteous", for then he can bestow His goodness upon us.

The second approach is that of R' Chaim Volozhiner (Nefesh Hachaim Section 2, Chap. 2), who interprets the word Boruch to mean "increase" (derived from the verse: **וברך את לחמך, [and Hashem will] increase your bread**). Accordingly, Boruch is interpreted as a plea, not a praise: May You, Hashem increase Your blessings on us.

Truthfully, both of these ideas are mutually compatible (רבינו בחיי דברים ח' - י'). One interpretation is the surface explanation and the other is the hidden meaning.

אתה ד - are You Hashem

This is an unbelievable statement that we are making - to address the King of Kings in second person- You! I can remember observing R' Zaidel Epstein zt'l, (the late, great mashgiach of Yeshiva Torah Ore in Jerusalem, and one of the musar giants of the previous generation), when he recited Kiddush or Hamotzi. His eyes would flutter with awe when he said these words.

אלוקינו מלך העולם - Our G-d, King of the world

When we say this phrase, we should focus on two things: Firstly, You are my G-d and I am subservient to You. Secondly, You – G-d - are the Power and Ruler over everything in this world.

for His kindness is eternal, and through His great goodness we were never lacking and we should never be lacking nourishment ever, for the sake of His Great Name . Because He is the G-d Who nourishes,

And we should never be lacking nourishment, ever -ואל יחסר לנו מזון לעולם ועד

Simply understood, this is a request. Now that we recognize that You – Hashem - are the sole source of our sustenance, You are the only one we can ever turn to for our food. However, do we really need nourishment forever? After 120 years, when we pass on from this world, there is no longer a need for us to eat! I once posed this question to R' Zaidel Epstein zt"l, and he explained that even after we go to the Next World, we are also going to need nourishment for our נשמות, but obviously in a different, spiritual form. We don't know what the nature of this sustenance will be like – perhaps it will be a feeling of closeness to Hashem. Therefore, we daven for nourishment forever – both in this world and the next. (For a similar idea, see the Chafetz Chaim's introduction to Mishna Brura, where he explains that the neshama requires "soul food" to continue its existence, even after departing the body).

What right do we have to ask for something when we aren't deserving of? The answer is...

for the sake of His Great Name -בעבור שמו הגדול

The mere acknowledgment that our food comes from Hashem brings kavod sh'mayim (the glory of G-d) to the world. It is not through any merit of our own that we are fed, but because we recognize that our food is coming from Hashem.

Another reason may be that our mere bentsching and thanking Hashem is itself the merit by which we get food in the first place. Like the Midrash (תהלים מזמור קיח) says:

"אין לישראל מה שישלמו להקב"ה אלא הודייה בלבד על כל טובה שעושה עמהם", we have no way to repay Hashem for what He does for us, aside from praising Him".

Moreover, we are stating that we need sustenance for the sake of Hashem's Name. We need food in order to live and perform mitzvos. This is very similar to what we say in Sh'mona Esrei during the ימים למען אלוקים חיים...למען אלוקים חיים - Remember us for life for Your Sake, O Living G-d". The only reason that we can ask for life is because we are going to use it for Your service.

And our recognition is...

Because He is the G-d who nourishes, sustains, and benefits all -כי הוא א-ל זן ומפרנס לכל ומטיב לכל

There are three different expressions used here. The עין יוסף explains them as follows:

זן-nourishes: refers to the food that Hashem gives us.

מפרנס לכל -sustains: this refers to the clothing and skin that Hashem covers and protects us

כִּי לְעוֹלָם חֲסָדוֹ. וּבִטּוֹבוֹ הַגָּדוֹל תִּמְיֵד לֹא חָסַר לָנוּ, וְאֵל יִחְסַר לָנוּ מְזוֹן לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד. בְּעֵבֹר שְׁמוֹ הַגָּדוֹל, כִּי הוּא אֵל

comments that this posuk is not merely the last of the praises, but is the culmination and crescendo of this whole song. The greatest of all the praises that we can possibly offer Hashem is that he feeds us all. The Midrash (תהילים רמז תתפג) says that the feat of providing all humankind with food overshadows the miracle of Krias Yam Suf (the splitting of the Red Sea). Just look at the production of bread for example. Rabbi Avigdor Miller zt"l explains (אור עולם ח"ה עמ' 88) that Krias Yam Suf incorporated a total of 250 miracles, whereas the production of bread consists of millions of miraculous processes and components. Wheat grows from the combination of air, sunlight and chlorophyll, with the soil giving a minimal contribution. The wheat takes the carbon dioxide in the air and chemically converts it into nutrients it requires. When the supply of carbon dioxide in its immediate environment is depleted, the wheat should wither and die, but Hashem brings the wind, and with it, a new supply of carbon dioxide for it to live. This is why the gemorah says that nothing could exist without the wind.

This perek consists of 26 praises, which correspond to the 26 generations that lived prior to Matan Torah (the Revelation) by the loving kindness of Hashem. Without the Torah, the world has no reason to be existing. Nevertheless, Hashem, in his loving-kindness, kept the world going, in anticipation of Matan Torah.

The עין יוסף says that the initials of the words "ל"חם ל"כל ב"שר" are an anagram of "לנבל", a despised person". Which means to say that Hashem provides food even to a wicked, despicable person.

and through His great goodness -ובטובו הגדול

Through Hashem's tremendous goodness and mercy, He gives sustenance to everyone, even the wicked and the undeserving.

we were never lacking -תמיד לא חסר לנו

According to many commentators, this is a reference to when Hashem sustained the Jews in the desert, prior to entering Eretz Yisrael. However, we can understand this verse on a personal level. Hashem has always fed us and provided for us up until now; he has never let us down. Besides for our food, we should also think of the many times when we struggled with problems or lacked things, and how Hashem solved our issues and met our needs. Even something as simple as recovering from a cold or wearing a warm coat should lead us to thank Hashem for sustaining and providing for us.

Since Hashem has helped us until now, we then ask:

sustains, and benefits all, and does good to all, and He prepares food for all His creations that He created. (As it says: Open up your hand and satiate every living being with its want)

Blessed are You Hashem who feeds all!

We thank You Hashem our G-d that You bequeathed Eretz Yisroel to our forefathers. the cherished land (which is) good and

The Rishonim (Early Commentators) say that while the Jews were in the desert, they also thanked Hashem for Eretz Yisroel and the בית מקדש (the holy Temple), but each individual composed his own bracha (in fulfillment of the biblical command to Bentch). The question is raised why didn't משה compose a standardized נוסח (formalized liturgy) for the bentching, as we have nowadays? The Chazon Ish (חזו"א אור"ח כ"ח-ה) explains that had Moshe done so, he would have had to compose it in the future tense, which would later require emendation into the past tense, for historical accuracy. To avoid necessitating a change in the נוסח, Moshe preferred not to institute a standard נוסח for the bentching. (אלשיך דברים ח' ל' שנוסח של יהושע היה על שהנחלת לנו, וזה חולק על הפ' שכתבנו שם מר' יעקב עמודין)

נודיה לך ה' אלקינו - *We thank you Hashem our G-d...* for the following:

על שהנחלת לאבותינו – *That you bequeathed Eretz Yisroel to our forefathers*

In this verse, we first thank Hashem for ארץ ישראל and then we thank Hashem for Yetzias Mitzrayim and מתן תורה. Isn't this chronologically inaccurate? The reason we begin with Eretz Yisrael is because we are thanking Hashem for promising the Land to our forefathers (the Patriarchs), which occurred prior to Yetzias Mitzrayim. Hashem cherished the Avos, because they strove mightily to serve Him. He thus gave them the land that He chose to be His dwelling. A servant best serves his master in his closest proximity – his home, and Hashem's Home, so to speak is Eretz Yisrael.

The אבודרהם writes that it is a mitzvah to elaborate on the praises of Eretz Yisroel to increase our yearning for it. Therefore, we thank Hashem for the Land both at the beginning and conclusion of the bracha.

ארץ חמדה – *The cherished land*

Yehoshua coined this term to characterize Eretz Yisrael, because he witnessed how much his teacher, Moshe Rabbeinu desired to enter it. Additionally, Eretz Yisrael was the place where the Avos preferred to be buried.

It is a marvel how much of world history revolves around this tiny piece of real estate, the size of the state of New Jersey! It has been the cause of multiple military campaigns throughout the the millenia. The city of Yerushalayim alone was conquered and resettled numerous

זן ומפרנס לכל ומטיב לכל, ומכין מזון לכל בריותיו אשר ברא. (פאמור: פותח את ידך, ומשביע לכל חי רצון.) ברוך

אתה יי, הזן את הכל:

נודה לך, יי אלהינו, על שהנחלת לאבותינו ארץ

with. We can see how Hashem designed the bodies of various animals with the necessary protection from the climate that they live in. Hashem gave the reindeer in the Arctic a special coat of hollow hairs, which insulates it more than solid hairs, keeping them warm (that's why the Eskimos use these furs too...). Hashem gave the camel special padding and protection for its feet, because it has to walk through harsh and rocky desert.

ומטיב לכל - *and does good to all: this refers to shelter and protection from the elements.*

ומכין מזון לכל בראותיו אשר ברא - *And He prepares food for all His creations that He fashioned*

According to the עץ יוסף, this means that Hashem prepares food for his creations long in advance. Let's think about this a minute.

We know that this world is set up as an ecological food pyramid. Vegetation gets eaten by small animals, which in turn get eaten by bigger animals, which get eaten by larger predators, and so on. Hashem gives sunlight to the plant so that it can grow. Why? So it can be eaten by an insect. But why was the insect created? To become food for the bird. But why was the bird created? To nourish the cat, and the cat for the wolf and the wolf for the bear, and the bear for its fur, which can be used by a human. In order to get this person his fur coat, Hashem had to make sunshine years ago, so the grass could grow, to feed the bug, so the bird would have nourishment, which would nourish the cat... Hashem orchestrated this long tortuous preparation process just for us to keep warm in the winter months!

Now that we have finished thinking about all of this, we can conclude this bracha with a much richer and profound understanding...

ברוך אתה ד' הזן את הכל - *How blessed are you Hashem who feeds everything!*

נודה לך

When the Jews entered Eretz Yisroel, יהושע composed this second bracha to thank Hashem for bequeathing the Land to us and for being privileged to eat of its wondrous fruits (Brachos 48b).

spacious, and that You Hashem our G-d took us out of Egypt; and for redeeming us from the house of slavery; and for the covenant that You sealed in our flesh;

רמב"ן דברים י"א-י"א עה"פ לא כארץ מצרים היא, וז"ל, "ויש בו סוד עמוק כי הארץ הזאת נדרשת בכל והיא הכל, וכל הארצות מתפנסות) To quote Rashi: "Since all the lands grew out of Eretz Yisroel, they all have their roots there. שלמה המלך knew the routes of all these roots, therefore when he wanted to plant peppers he planted them on their roots in Eretz Yisroel, the same with Carob..." (קהלת) ב' ה' בד"ה עין כל פרי - שהיה שלמה מכיר בחכמתו את גידי הארץ איזה גיד הולך אל כוש ונטע בו פלפלין איזה הולך לארץ חרובי ונטע בו (חרובין שכל גידי הארצות באים לציון שמשם משתיתו של עולם שנאמר (תהלים נ') מציון מכלל יופי לכך נאמר עין כל פרי במדרש תנחומא

spacious-ורחבה

Eretz Yisrael feels like a spacious land, even though geographically, it is quite small. It is called Eretz Tzvi, the land of the deer. A deer's skin looks too small to be able to contain the deer's entire body, yet it stretches to cover the deer completely. Likewise, Eretz Yisrael stretches until it is roomy enough to hold all of Klal Yisrael.

Pirkei Avos (Ethics of our Fathers, 5:5) says: "מעולם לא אמר אדם צר לי המקום בירושלים", "No man ever complained, "The place is too cramped (lit: painful) for me to reside in Jerusalem". There are three interpretations of this verse: The most commonly understood translation is that of Rabbeinu Yona, that there was room for everyone. Rashi explains that Hashem arranged a lucrative livelihood for everyone who resided in Jerusalem. Even though it was densely populated, there was no competition in seeking a livelihood. The רוקח has a third interpretation, that the air was never stuffy. Jerusalem was a city teeming with crowds, yet the air was pure and fresh, just like the suburbs.

Today, Eretz Yisrael is but a shadow of its former glory. Our national ownership of this land is internationally contested, and we can't dwell here in peace. Yet, all of the aforementioned qualities of Eretz Yisrael are still ours (נ' אב"ג יו"ד לפני הל רביית שכל ישראל יש היום ד"א בא"י) – they are like a treasure in a bank vault waiting for us. Because of that, we have to thank Hashem for these benefits even nowadays.

The next favor Hashem did for us is:

and that you Hashem our G-d took us out of Egypt - ועל שהוצאתנו ד' אלוקינו מארץ מצרים

In Mitzrayim, we were poor slaves, the dregs of Egyptian society. We had no independence, no ability to do anything on our own. And You Hashem took us out of this situation.

And You redeemed us from the house of slavery - ופדיתנו מבית עבדים

Physically leaving Egypt was not sufficient to emancipate us. In the perception of the Egyptians and the rest of the world, we were still branded as former slaves. A slave is never truly free as long as his master, a remnant of his past, is still alive. Only when Hashem

חַמְדָּה טוֹבָה וְרַחֲבָה, וְעַל שֶׁהוֹצֵאתָנוּ, יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם, וּפְדִיתָנוּ מִבֵּית עֲבָדִים, וְעַל בְּרִיתְךָ שֶׁחֶתַמְתָּ

times. Historically, Eretz Yisrael was coveted because it was the crossroads for the trade routes between Asia and Africa. There are no trade routes in modern times, yet Eretz Yisrael is still coveted. Why is there so much controversy about such a small piece of land? The Arabs are so agitated that we now have Eretz Yisrael that they can't get over it. They don't need it - they have hundreds of times this amount of land. Why should sprawling Saudi Arabia, for example, be concerned that we have Eretz Yisrael, even when we let them come pray in their mosques located here? We definitely didn't take this land from the Saudis! Precisely because this is the land that everyone wants, it pains all the Arabs that they don't have it. This is where it's at.

good – טובה

The Meraglim (scouts that Moshe sent to spy out Eretz Yisrael) originally used this adjective to characterize Eretz Yisrael: "טובה הארץ מאד מאד".

Among the luscious fruits the Meraglim brought back from Eretz Yisrael was a cluster of dates. Each individual date was larger than a watermelon. Imagine a whole family sitting down to a meal of one tremendous juicy date. At the end of the meal, everyone is satisfied, yet only half the date is eaten!

The Gemora (Brachos 42a) says that one who eats bread together with fruits from Ginnosar (an ancient town in the northern Galilee region of Eretz Yisrael, on the banks of the Kinneret), only recites a bracha on the fruit, not the bread. The fruit is the main course and the bread only serves to enhance the fruit. The fruits of Ginnosar were so sweet that they needed to be eaten together with bread to dilute their intense sweetness. Only in Israel!

The מהר"ל and the רוקח say that טובה is referring to the fact that the climate in Eretz Yisrael has healing qualities. Even nowadays, people from all over the world visit portions of Eretz Yisrael, such as the Dead Sea, the city of Arad, and the springs of Tiverya, for health reasons.

Another reason that ארץ ישראל is described as טובה is because² of all the extra Mitzvos that can only be performed in Eretz Yisrael. In this land, we have greater opportunity to get closer to Hashem. (ר' יהושע אבן שועיב תלמיד הרשב"א הובא בשלל רב על ברכת המזון עמ' קס"ה)

All the good that there is in the world is contained in Eretz Yisrael, as the פסוק tells us (דברים פ"ה ה' פסוק ט'). "לא תקצר כל כָּה" – there is nothing missing from it. Eretz Yisrael contains every type of grain, fruit and vegetable. It may seem that there are certain types of crops that don't grow in Eretz Yisrael, but this Land is the source from which everything grows.

and for the Torah that You taught us; and for the commandments that You informed us; And for the life, grace and loving-kindness that You bestowed on us. And for the nourishment by which You sustain

בבשרנו, ועל תורתך שלמדנו, ועל חקיך שהודעתנו, ועל חיים חן וחסד שחוננתנו, ועל אכילת מזון שאתה זן

ועל חקיך שהודעתנו – *and for the commandments that you informed us.*

A חוק is a particular commandment for which a reason was not divulged to us. We do it just because we are told to do so, "נעשה ונשמע". This demonstrates the strength of our bond. We thank Hashem for giving us the opportunity of closeness to him, such that we can serve him blindly. Faith begins where wisdom ends. When one concedes that his intelligence is limited, and willingly follows a higher authority, that shows where his true allegiance lies. By serving Hashem unhindered by reason, we are vividly demonstrating that we are Hashem's People. We thank Hashem for the opportunity to draw close to him even on this level.

Mentioning the Torah and the bris are integral to fulfilling the mitzva of bentching. Why is that so, when these things do not directly relate to bentching or to the meal one just completed? We mention מילה ברית and יציאת מצרים specifically in the second bracha of bentching because we are about to ask Hashem to provide for our sustenance. To demonstrate our worthiness, we tell Hashem that You took us out of מצרים so that we may be Your servants. Additionally, we have your emblem, the bris mila, stamped into us. Furthermore, we conduct our life by the tenets of Your Torah, by Your commands. Moreover, we hearken to your will and perform the חוקים even when we can't understand the reasons behind them, merely because you commanded us to do so. Therefore, in those merits, we ask that You provide us with the food we need.

This concept can be further illustrated with an allegory. Two different types of people eat their meals at a restaurant: the guests, and the restaurant workers. The guests are there for their own pleasure, and they have to pay the price for anything they order from the kitchen. The workers, on the other hand, eat from the kitchen for free, besides for having permission to freely enter the kitchen. Their privilege comes because they are a part of the restaurant staff and are needed for the smooth operation of the business.

Likewise, when we demonstrate that we are indeed Hashem's servants, and not just guests looking to indulge ourselves here, then we are entitled to the privileges which the job brings.

Now that we finished thanking Hashem for the ruchniyus (spiritual) kindnesses that he bestowed on us, we proceed to itemize the גשמיות (mundane) blessings. Likewise, we start from the basics.

Thus, we say:

annihilated our former masters at the Red Sea, was our redemption truly complete. That is why the Jews sang the Song of the Sea only after they crossed the Red Sea and saw the Egyptians dead on the shore. Only then were they truly redeemed, because they finally felt free.

Besides for our physical enslavement, there was a spiritual enslavement. We were enslaved by the decadent Egyptian culture, just as we are currently influenced by the prevailing values and culture of the Western world. We thank Hashem for liberating us from the mindset of that culture, a danger which may have been more subtle, yet was more pernicious.

The next favor that Hashem did for us is:

ועל בריתך שחתמת בבשרינו – *and for the covenant that You sealed in our flesh.*

This refers to the Bris Milah (Jewish circumcision). The Bris is what a male ger tzedek (proselyte) requires to join the Jewish faith. This irrevocable stamp of Hashem, permanently carved into our beings, proclaims that "I am the property of Hashem!". Not only did Hashem liberate us from our Egyptian masters, but He acquired us as His People, through the institution of Bris Milah.

Even though women don't have the mitzvah of Bris Milah they are still obligated to recite this phrase in bentching, for two reasons. Firstly, the גמרא says that women don't need the spiritual elevation of Bris Milah, because they are on a naturally higher spiritual level as if they already had the ערלה removed. דאשה כמאן דמהילא דמיא. ועי' שו"ת. "ולמ"ד המול ימול - איכא, דאשה כמאן דמהילא דמיא. ועי' שו"ת. "ולמ"ד המול ימול - איכא, דאשה כמאן דמהילא דמיא... משום שתכלית המילה היא הסרת הערלה, ואשה שאין לה ערלה הרי היא שרידי אש ח"ב ס' ס"ז ע' תקלג "דאשה כמאן דמהילא דמיא... משום שתכלית המילה היא הסרת הערלה, ואשה שאין לה ערלה הרי היא שרידי אש ח"ב ס' ס"ז ע' תקלג" That is why women are obligated to thank Hashem (in the morning blessings) "she'aseni K'retzono - who created me perfectly, according to His Will", in contrast to men who must have a bris performed to perfect themselves. Secondly, once they are married, they are considered to be fulfilling the mitzvah of bris mila, because, they are considered as one entity with their husbands (ishto kegufo). (שאיין נקרא אדם אלא כשיש לו אשה ואם כן ה"ל שניהם גוף א' עכ"ל)

The next level is:

ועל תורתך שלמדנו – *and for the Torah that you taught us.*

Not only did Hashem choose us as His nation, but He also gave us his treasure, the Torah, which serves to deepen our relationship with Him. Through learning the Torah and performing the mitzvos, we are able to draw close to Him.

The next level is:

and support us, constantly, every day and at all times and at every hour .

of the kindnesses He has done for us, that itself increases the quality of our gratitude. Therefore, הרי זה משובח, the actual praise itself is better. The more we express our gratitude to Hashem, the better the quality of the praise itself becomes.

And, so we continue:

תמיד- constantly.

Hashem constantly supplies our bodies with all its needs, without even the break of a second. We don't realize how dependent we are on Hashem's continued maintenance of our bodies. What if the heart decided to take a short 15 minute coffee break? After all, it has to pump constantly for seventy years! What if our lungs were to decide that they feel overworked? After all, we breathe in and out 15 times per minute, which adds up to 27,000 times for a single month! No human being could work so hard and so constantly. But Hashem never takes a break- תמיד!

בכל יום – Every day

This refers to our daily food

עַתָּה - And at all times

This refers to our seasonal needs (עיין תפילה).

וּבְכָל שָׁעָה - and at every hour at specific times.

It is specifically here that we insert the על הנסים prayer because we are now thanking Hashem for bestowing chessed on us in specific situations.

Incidentally, as we study this bracha, we can observe many parallels between this bracha and the bracha of מודים (thanks) in Shmoneh Esrei:

1. This bracha of נודה and the מודים of Shmoneh Esrei both commence with the word "thanks".
2. Both ברכות itemize the חסדים that Hashem does for us.
3. At the end of both lists, we insert the על הנסים prayer.
4. After we finish listing the חסדים, we say "ועל הכל" or "ועל כולם", "and for all the various חסדים that you do we will thank you forever".

וּמְפָרְנֵס אוֹתָנוּ תָּמִיד, בְּכָל יוֹם וּבְכָל עֵת וּבְכָל שָׁעָה.

Please find על הנסים in complete bentching on Page 2.

ועל חיים הן וחסד שחוננתנו *For the life, grace and loving-kindness that you bestowed on us.*

We thank Hashem that we are:

1. חיים- Alive.
2. With חן, grace. Hashem makes living pleasurable to the degree that we want to stay alive at all costs, despite all the difficulties that life brings.
3. וחסד- with kindness. This refers to the many extra pleasures in life that Hashem gives us. Hashem has filled our world with so many "extras" that are not essential to life: vibrant colors, pleasant scents and appetizing tastes. He also gave us the senses to appreciate the world around us. Imagine if we lived in a world that was only black and white! Take a deep breath and think about the ease and pleasure of breathing. Hashem could have made breathing an act that requires conscious involvement (like eating), but instead we do it so naturally, we never notice. There's a story told of someone who came to visit Rabbi Avigdor Miller zt"l and found him with his head immersed in a bucket of water. After a few seconds, Rabbi Miller lifted his head out of the bucket and breathed in deeply. When pressed for an explanation, Rabbi Miller answered that he had just been walking in the street, and someone complained to him about how polluted the air in New York city was. Rabbi Miller was apprehensive that he would not appreciate air like he used to, so he did this exercise to rebuild his appreciation for air.

After we thank Hashem for life itself we again thank him for our sustenance.

ועל אכילת מזון שאתה זן ומפרנס אותנו *and for the nourishment by which you sustain and support us.*

When thanking Hashem, the more detailed we are in our thanks, the more appreciative we will feel, and consequently, the more internalized our gratitude will be.

Parenthetically, this explains the verse from the Pesach Haggadah: "כל המרבה לספר ביציאתנו ממצרים הרבה לזכותנו", whoever elaborates more on the account of the Exodus, this is praiseworthy". In general, if one performs more of a mitzvah, that does not necessarily make the mitzvah itself qualitatively better – e.g. putting on two pairs of tzitzis instead of one does not necessarily improve the actual mitzvah of tzitzis – it only adds to the quantity. However, when we elaborate on our gratitude to Hashem, by itemizing the specific details

And for everything Hashem, our G-d we thank You and praise You Your Name should be eternally blessed by the mouths of all living forever and ever. As it is written "Eat, be satiated, and bless Hashem for the good land that He gave you". Blessed are You Hashem, for the land and the food.

Yisrael? What is the connection between ownership of Eretz Yisrael and thanks to Hashem through bentsching?

The reason is because Eretz Yisrael is the central pipeline through which all of Hashem's blessing flows. (ע' זהר תרומה קנ"ז ע"ב הובא בסידור שער הרחמים (מתורגם שם בלשון הקודש) עמ' שפ"א שהנקודה האמצעית) של כל הארץ הקדושה היא בית קדש הקדשים ואע"פ שהיום אינו קיים בכותל העולם ניזון וכלכלה ומזון משם יוצא לכל צד הישוב. ומשום כך אע"פ שישראל אתה מחוץ לארץ הקדושה, עם כל זה, מכח זכות של הארץ נצמא מזון כלכלה ומזון לכל העולם וע"כ כתוב וברכת את ד' אלוקיך על הארץ הטובה אשר נתן לך. על הארץ הטובה ודא', שהרי, שהרי בשביל המזון וכלכלה מצוי עולם. עכת"ל Whenever Hashem sends His שפע, His sustenance and blessing to this world, it comes via Eretz Yisrael. Therefore, when we thank Hashem for Eretz Yisrael in bentsching, we are thanking Hashem not only for the food that He gave us, but also for the conduit for that food. (Originally, while the Bais Hamikdash stood, Hashem sent His sustenance to the world directly via the Bais Hamikdash. From there, it flowed to the rest of Eretz Yisrael, then spread throughout the world. That is why the Yidden in Eretz Yisrael were able to enjoy such prosperity and strength during the era of the Bais Hamikdash – because they were getting their sustenance directly from the source. However, now that the Bais Hamikdash has been destroyed, Hashem's sustenance only reaches the world indirectly, therefore is smaller in quality and quantity.)

אלוקיך and you will bless Hashem, your G-d - וברכת את ד' אלוקיך

The Gemora (Pesachim 22b) teaches that each time the Torah writes the word "את", it's amplifying the word following it. What does this particular את intend to add? The גליניו says that this teaches us that besides for thanking Hashem, we must also thank our host.

And now we sum it all up,

Blessed are you Hashem, for the land and the food! - ברוך אתה ד' על הארץ ועל המזון

ועל הכל, יי אלהינו, אנחנו מודים לך, ומברכים אותך, יתברך שמך בפי כל חי תמיד לעולם ועד. ככתוב, ואכלת ושבעת, וברכת את יי אלהיך על הארץ הטובה אשר נתן לך. ברוך אתה יי, על הארץ ועל המזון.

And for everything Hashem, our G-d - ועל הכל ד' אלוקינו

Many sidurim start a new paragraph by this bracha. However, it really is a continuation of the theme of Nodeh.

we thank you and praise you - אנחנו מודים לך ומברכים אותך

We are obligated to thank Hashem at the beginning and conclusion of each bracha, so we repeat our thanks to Hashem again here. (גמ' ברכות מ"ט: ר' אבא אמר צריך שיזכור הודאה תחילה וסוף.)

Your Name should be eternally blessed by the mouths of all the living, for all eternity - יתברך שמך בפי כל חי תמיד לעולם ועד

According to the עין יוסף, the word יתברך refers to the future Redemption, because it's written in the future tense. Only when Moshiach comes, will we be able to bless You completely, without reservation. Until then, our praise is incomplete because it is mixed with doubt and suffering.

However, explained simply, now that we appreciate all that Hashem has done for us, we will bless Hashem from now on.

We pray that Hashem be blessed in the greatest way possible:

- 1-By all living creatures,
- 2-Continually, without pause,
3. Forever.

As it is written "Eat, be satiated, and bless Hashem for the good land that He gave you". - ככתוב ואכלת... על הארץ הטובה אשר נתן לך

This quotes a verse from י - דברים ה', which is the source of our obligation to bentsch.

However, this requires clarification. Why is bentsching linked to thanking Hashem for Eretz

Have mercy (please) Hashem our G-d, on Yisrael Your People, and on Jerusalem Your City,

and pleasure are of prime value (as immortalized in the Declaration of Independence: "Life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness..."), and therefore our society pursues and values these things. To rob someone of his freedom is perceived as the ultimate injustice. This is in contrast to the Eastern societies, such as Asia, India or many Muslim countries, where the values are markedly different. Such cultures view unbridled freedom as a dangerous thing, because then everyone is free to run off in their own way, make mistakes, and ruin the things of real value.

In American society, a person's occupation and the prestige it carries, is viewed as being intrinsic to a person's value. The mere fact that one's name is followed by a couple of letters and acronyms is enough to engender recognition and respect. However, in our religious communities, one is judged by his knowledge of Torah and his pursuit of mitzvos, not by his occupation. The way a person is viewed depends on the prevailing values of his society, and since the values of a society are strongly influenced by its leaders, we pray for good leaders, particularly for the restoration of the House of David. Our spiritual health depends on it.

A true Jewish king needs to be on the highest spiritual plane possible. He serves as the foundation of his people, and if the foundation is not solid, it will corrupt the integrity of the structure. Since it is easy for a monarch with this kind of power to forget the One Whose above him, a Jewish king is given special mitzvos constantly remind him that he is always subject to Hashem's Will. For example, the Jewish king must write a Sefer Torah and keep it with him at all times. Additionally, when he davens Shmoneh Esrei, he must stay bowed the entire time. A society ruled by such a righteous monarch will have no other values, other than the ones that the Torah sets. Dovid Hamelech was the quintessential Jewish king. Indeed, anyone who studies Tehillim is witness to the profound self abnegation Dovid Hamelech displayed before Hashem.

Imagine the drastic changes there would be in Western society and its values if Dovid Hamelech and his Sanhedrin ruled the United States! Batei Din (Jewish courts of law) would replace the Federal courts, and all attorneys would be unemployed, because everyone would be able to get a fair and true judgment from the local Bais Din, without any expensive representation required. Advertisements focusing on physical pleasure and idle pursuits would be torn down, and instead, billboards would bear messages of chizuk and bitachon. Kohanim, Leviim and talmidei chachomim would receive the prestige they deserve. Machlokes and loшон hora would be strictly banned. Anyone speaking loшон hora would be sent into solitary confinement for a week, and could only leave his jail cell after he completes a thorough exam in Sefer Chofetz Chaim. Most newspapers and radio stations would be shuttered. Instead, divrei torah and kosher news, free of smut and gossip,

רַחֵם (נָא), יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, עַל יִשְׂרָאֵל עַמְּךָ, וְעַל יְרוּשָׁלַיִם עִירְךָ,

רַחֵם נָא

This blessing was composed by King David and his son, Solomon. This bracha builds on the theme of the previous one. We are asking Hashem to rebuild the Bais Hamikdash and reinstate the Davidic dynasty, so that Eretz Yisroel can finally return to its original tranquility (שיטה לר"א אלאשבילי).

Have mercy, Hashem, our G-d -רחם נא ד' אלוקינו

The blessing of Racheim consists almost entirely of requests. This is in accordance with the principle that whenever we thank Hashem, we are required to add a prayer, to demonstrate our continual dependence on Him. We derive this from the episode of Yehuda's birth. Subsequent to Leah's thanking Hashem for his birth, the verse records "וּתַעֲמוּד מִלְדֹת – and she stopped giving birth". Several commentators wonder why Leah stopped producing children just then? They explain that when one thanks someone for a favor done, in a sense, he is paying him back for that favor, and is ending the relationship. A Jew cannot afford to end his relationship with Hashem, so whenever he praises or expresses his gratitude to Hashem, he adds a prayer. This manifests the realization of our stark dependence on Hashem's constant and ongoing Providence. Through this, our prayer serves as an enhancement and continuation of our gratitude. In effect, we are saying: "Hashem, we thank You for having helped us so much until now, and because we will always need more of Your assistance, we now ask more of You".

We see this concept demonstrated many times throughout our prayers. For example, in Nishmas (Shabbos morning prayers), first we say, "עד הנה עזרונו רחמיך ולא עזבונו חסדיך" – until now Your mercy has supported us and Your kindness has never left us", thereupon we add, "ואל תטשנו ד' אלוקינו לנצח" – and Hashem, our G-d, do not forsake us, ever". We add this request to emphasize our continual, total dependence on Hashem, and through this request, we enhance our praise of Him.

In this blessing, we commence by asking Hashem for mercy for the Jewish nation, Jerusalem, Zion, the House of David, and the Bais Hamikdash. The classical commentators teach that the revelation of Hashem's kingship, the rebuilding of the Bais Hamikdash, and the restoration of the House of David are interrelated. Why is this so? Why is it so important for us to have the Kingdom of David back, to the extent that we daven for it every time we say Shmoneh Esrei and every time we bentch?

A ruler and his government are mandated to provide leadership and direction to a nation as a whole. (That may be why a king is called melech from the term "holech" – he leads the nation.) Through various legislation and policies, the government sanctions the moral climate and values that the nation lives by. For example, in Western society, freedom, money

and on Zion, dwelling place of Your glory, and on the kingship of Dovid Your anointed, and on the great and holy House that is called by Your Name. Our G-d our father, tend us, nourish us, sustain us, and support us with abundance. And relieve us Hashem our G-d from all of our

where we realize that His name is big and holy, and this is why it is called the house that is big and holy.

We then continue (based on עץ יוסף):

אלוקינו אבינו - *our G-d, our Father (please)*

רענו – *tend us*, give us our basic minimum needs, such as bread and water,

זוננו – *nourish us*, give us more than the minimum, like fruits and vegetables, that are not essential to life,

פרנתנו - *sustain us*, with a steady income (alternatively: provide us with clothing),

וּכְלָלְנוּ - *support us*,

וְהַרְוִיחֵנוּ - *support us with abundance*.

How can we move on from requests for the Bais Hamikdash and Yerushalayim to our mundane needs? What is the connection?

We can answer this based on a powerful thought expounded by Rav Shimshon Pincus, zt"l, quoting the Rambam¹. During the period that Klal Yisroel dominated Eretz Yisroel, no gentile was allowed to live in or even pass through Eretz Yisroel. Why was this so? Since Klal Yisroel ruled Eretz Yisroel, and the Divine Presence was manifest, we were like a kallah together with her choson in the yichud room. Just as no one else is permitted entry into the yichud room, so too, no stranger was permitted entry into Eretz Yisrael. When Klal Yisrael resides in Eretz Yisroel, we are Hashem's bride, living in His home.

The two criteria the Jews had to meet for entry to Eretz Yisroel were: acceptance of the Torah and Bris Milah. This is easily understood by realizing that dwelling in Eretz Yisroel is like a marriage between us and Hashem. Every marriage needs to meet two conditions: first, the husband and wife need to share same life goals, and second, they need to form an actual bond; hence there is a chasuna, a wedding. Correspondingly, in our relationship with Hashem, we have the Torah, by which we share Hashem's goals, and the bris – the actual bond we make with Hashem.

When we ask Hashem to rebuild Yerushalayim, we remind Hashem that we are His bride—thus, we request that Hashem rebuild our original home with its original kedusha, so that we both can live together again. Then, we ask Hashem to sustain and provide for us, in words that echo the kesuba that every groom gives to his bride: “and I will work, honor,

וְעַל צִיּוֹן מְשֻׁכָּן כְּבוֹדְךָ, וְעַל מְלָכוֹת בֵּית דָּוִד מְשֻׁחָךְ, וְעַל הַבַּיִת הַגָּדוֹל וְהַקְּדוֹשׁ שֶׁנִּקְרָא שְׁמֶךָ עָלָיו. אֱלֹהֵינוּ, אָבִינוּ, רַעְנוּ, זֹנְנֵנוּ, פְּרַנְסֵנוּ, וְכֻלְלֵנוּ, וְהַרְוִיחֵנוּ, וְהַרְוֵנוּ לָנוּ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ

would be broadcast over the airwaves. Seats in shul will be assigned according to how many blatt one knows and how many perakim of mishnayos memorized.

The ברכה commences with a passionate plea: רחם – Have mercy! The word רחם is derived from the verse “כרחם אב על בנים” as a father has mercy on his children, so too may Hashem have mercy on us”.

We then proceed to detail what exactly Hashem should show mercy on:

1. על ישראל עמך - on Israel, Your People
2. ועל ירושלים עריך - and on Jerusalem, Your city
3. ועל ציון משכן כבודך - and on Zion, the dwelling place of Your glory. This refers to עיר דוד, the city of Dovid, where the governmental ministers of Israel lived.
4. ועל מלכות בית דוד משחך - and on the kingship of Dovid, Your anointed
5. ועל הבית הגדול והקדוש שנקרא שמך עליו - and on the great and holy House that is called by Your Name.

We emphasize that everything we are asking for mercy on is Yours, Hashem. This is to underscore that we are asking Hashem to have mercy on His own things. This parallels the phrase in the first bracha of bentching, “בעבור שמו הגדול” – we are asking You to have mercy on Your own possessions, for Your sake and Your glory. Our entire rationale is solely for the greater Glory of G-d.

We proceed in stages: Initially, we request the return of Klal Yisrael to its homeland, then the rebuilding of Yerushalayim and Zion, the re-coronation of the Davidic dynasty, which parallels that of Hashem, and finally, the rebuilding of the Bais Hamikdash.

The reason the Temple has the appellation “הגדול והקדוש” is because “שנקרא שמך עליו” your name is called on it”. How is your name called and sanctified on this house? Through the עבודה, the services of the kohanim, and the קרבנות, the sacrifices, that were offered for your name. The Bais Hamikdash was constructed almost solely to enable Korbonos to be offered (Rambam בית הבחירה פ”א הל’ א). The institution of korbonos exists to bring us closer to Hashem, by aiding us in our teshuvah. While the animal was being sacrificed on the altar, the penitent would think about how he sinned to Hashem with his body and soul, and that this procedure should really be performed on him, if not for Hashem's mercy and kindness (Ramban ט – ויקרא פרק א). We do teshuvah because of our recognition of Who Hashem is, our realization that it was a mistake to stray from his service. This is the place

problems. And please don't make us rely, oh Hashem our G-d, not on the gifts or loans of flesh and blood; rather only on Your hand, which is open, full, holy and wide, so that we shouldn't be ashamed or humiliated forever.

it has kedusha in it.

שלא נבוש ולא נכלם לעולם ועד - *so that we shouldn't be ashamed or humiliated forever.*

We are asking Hashem to sustain us, so that, "לא נבוש" - we won't feel ashamed in this world, and "ולא נכלם לעולם ועד" - we shouldn't be eternally humiliated in the Next World, because we had to steal in order to get food (עץ יוסף, ר' יעקב מעמדין).

רצה

On Shabbos, we insert the additional bracha of Retzei here. On Yomim Tovim and Rosh Chodesh, יעלה ויבא is inserted.

The individual characteristics of each insertion determines the reason it's placed here:

- The Bais Hamikdash (mentioned in the blessing of Racheim) and Shabbos (Retzei), both share the distinction of being kadosh (holy), thus they are put together (Maharal).

-Since יעלה ויבא is a tefillah, it is inserted here in the "requests" portion of bentching (Shabbos 24a).

Halachos regarding these insertions can be found on page 36.

As an introduction to Retzei, it is helpful to understand the meaning of Shabbos. We can do this by exploring one of the most integral concepts of Shabbos – menucha (cessation of labor).

Throughout the Shabbos tefillos why do we request for Hashem to be "ברצה במנוחתינו" - pleased with our rest? How can we make our rest pleasing to Hashem? Should we be careful not to snore or sleep too late? Obviously, achieving true menucha entails much more than having a relaxing meal or taking a luxurious nap.

When Hashem rested on Shabbos, He withdrew, as it were, from the physicality that was involved in creating the world. A person taking a vacation might go swimming, hiking or touring – all activities that are more physically strenuous than just sitting in front of a computer. He isn't necessarily taking a vacation because he's tired and wants to sleep. He just wants to recharge his batteries by doing more pleasurable activities. Likewise, with Shabbos, Hashem "rested" by separating from the physical world. To quote R' Pincus, zt"l, Hashem wasn't tired from the physical world, He was just sick and tired of it!

מְהֵרָה מִכָּל צְרוּתֵינוּ, וְנָא אֶל תִּצְרִיכֵנוּ, יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, לֹא לְיָדֵי מִתְנַת בְּשָׂר וְדָם, וְלֹא לְיָדֵי הַלְוָאָתָם, כִּי אִם לְיָדְךָ הַפְּלֵאָה, הַפְּתוּחָה, הַקְּדוּשָׁה וְהַרְחֵבָה, שְׁלֹא יִבּוֹשׁ וְלֹא נִכְלָם לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד.

feed, and support you, and give you your needs like the normal living standard of Jews".

So, in this bracha, we are not merely asking Hashem to provide for our needs, in the same manner He sustains everyone else. We are reminding Hashem that since we are His bride, we want to live together with Him in His Land, and we rely on Him for support and sustenance, just as every husband is responsible to provide for his wife. We are making our request for food from a very different angle than before.

This also explains why mentioning Eretz Yisrael is so central to bentching, even if we aren't eating from the food of Eretz Yisrael. Eretz Yisrael is a central part of our special claim to sustenance from Hashem, and therefore a central part of our thanks.

והרוח לנו ד' אלוקינו ממהרה מכל צרתינו - *And relieve us Hashem, our G-d, from all of our travail*

We are asking Hashem to provide relief from whatever problems we may have, whether they are spiritual, physical, or financial. There are advertisements everywhere for help hotlines. We have to remember that we have access to the only hotline that really works: 1-800-TEF-ILAH!

ונא אל תצרכינו ד' אלוקינו לא לידי מתנת בשר ודם ולא לידי הלואתם כי אם לידיך

And Hashem our G-d, please don't make us reliant on the gifts or loans of flesh and blood; rather only on Your hand.

Simply understood, we are requesting that we receive our needs directly from Hashem, without having to rely on anyone. However, this can be further understood in light of what we explained earlier. We are telling Hashem that we want to receive sustenance directly from Him, because we are His wife, and it is embarrassing for a couple if a wife gets sustenance from someone else, and not directly from her husband.

המלאה הפתוחה וקדושה והרחבה - *which is full, open, holy and wide*

It is understandable that we say that Hashem's hand is full, open, and wide. What is the relevance of asking to get from his hand because it is holy? When we receive nourishment directly from a source that is holy and pure, the quality of that nourishment will be much better and purer. Just think of the difference between drinking pure spring water and polluted city water. Additionally, money that comes from a pure source will last, because

On Shabbos: **Find favor in us** and encourage us Hashem, our G-d, in your mitzvos, and the mitzvah of the Seventh Day, this great and holy Shabbos because this day is great and holy

1. יניח - rest
2. ישמוט – to remove
3. יחליץ - to rescue
4. יזיין - to arm.

(ויקרא רבה לד, ט"ו וירד' שבת ט"ו- ב' וע' בס' תפלה למושה מפ' המהיג ואבודרהם שמפ' מילת והחלצינו ע"פ המדרשים האלו)

The אבודרהם explains that in the זכות of resting on שבת, we will be rescued from golus, removed to Eretz Yisroel, and then armed and fortified with delight. This is what we daven for when we say והחלצינו רצה.

י' השביעי – ד' אלוקינו במצוותיך ובמצות יום השביעי *Hashem, our G-d, in your mitzvos, and the mitzvah of the Seventh Day.*

Why do we need to include the other mitzvos here if we are specifically talking about the mitzvah of Shabbos? On Shabbos, we separate ourselves from over-involvement with the physical world, so that we can focus on our relationship with Hashem and reconnect with Him, by performing His mitzvos.

Truthfully, this is also the point of many other mitzvos. The Midrash teaches us that Hashem gave the Torah and mitzvos to the Jewish people so that they could gain merit for the World to Come. Hashem created everything in this world with a mitzvah associated with it. When a farmer tills his soil, he is mandated with many mitzvos, involved with the plowing and sowing through the harvesting. When a housewife makes bread, she has to separate some for Challah. When a person builds a house, he has to construct a guardrail for the roof. Mezuzos are affixed on our door posts and tzitzis are affixed to the corners of our clothing.

The concept behind all of these mitzvos is that we should remember Hashem in everything that we do. We need to maintain a constant attachment to Him, and not lose ourselves in our physical pursuits. So when we ask Hashem to be pleased with our rest on Shabbos, we also ask Him to find favor in the other mitzvos we do, because they are all meant to bring us close to Him.

כי יום זה הגדול וקדוש הוא לפניך - *because this day is great and holy before you.*

This day is referred to as "גדול", because in the Psalm of the Day for Shabbos, we say "מה גדלו מעשיך ד', How great are Your works, Hashem!". On Shabbos, one of the things we are able to do is look around and marvel at the wondrous world Hashem created. This day is called גדול, it is the day we see the Big Creator (עיין תפלה).

Interestingly, we use the identical phraseology to describe the Bais Hamikdash: הבית הגדול

לשבת: **רצה** והחלצינו יי אלהינו במצותיך ובמצות יום השביעי השבת הגדול והקדוש הזה. כי יום זה גדול וקדוש

This is the type of menucha Hashem meant for us to have on Shabbos. He wants us to withdraw from the physical world and to concentrate on recharging our spiritual batteries. Shabbos is yom menucha – a day meant for the spirit. On Shabbos we rest from doing the 39 melachos just as Hashem rested after creating the world.

The concept of six periods of work followed by one period of spiritual rest is not limited to Shabbos. Hashem built this pattern into the world on the weekly, yearly, and cosmic levels. Every week, we are commanded to work six days then rest on the seventh – Shabbos. We are commanded to work the land of Eretz Yisrael for six years, and then let it lie fallow during the seventh year, as part of the Shmitta cycle. Additionally, the Gemara (Sanhedrin) teaches "אמר רב קטינא: שית אלפי שני הוו עלמא וחד חרוב" The world will last for 6 millenia, then lie destroyed for a thousand years, thereupon it will be rebuilt". After six millenia of physical activity, the world will have reached its goal, and it will shed its physical nature. A new spiritual era will begin, where it will be readily apparent that the only true joy is serving Hashem and bonding with His Divine Presence – the ultimate purpose of Creation.

This explains why Shabbos is referred to as "תכלית מעשה שמים וארץ", the purpose of the creation"- it represents the World to Come, when we will be attached to Hashem and derive pleasure from serving Him. That is why שבת is called "מעין עולם הבא", a slight taste of the World To Come", Shabbos is our preview of עולם הבא. It keeps our attention focused on why we are here, and what we have to do with ourselves in this world. It is our compass that keeps us "on course". No matter how involved we may become in this physical world, every seven days, we are forced to take a break and give time to think about where we are, and in which direction we are going. And through resting on Shabbos, we can get ourselves back onto the correct path.

This is also perhaps why Shabbos is sanctified- "ויקדש אותו". Kedusha results from the separation of the physical, which is what Hashem did on Shabbos, therefore he made it holy.

This is hardly an easy task; thus we pray to Hashem, רצה במנוחתינו. May it be Your Will that we be able to achieve a true spiritual menucha on Shabbos, through detaching ourselves from the physical and attaching ourselves to You.

Let us now proceed to the bracha itself:

רצה - *Find favor in us*

and encourage us - והחלצינו

The Midrash says that the word והחלצינו has four meanings:

before you to abstain from work in it and rest in it with love as commanded by Your Will. And may it be Your will, Hashem our G-d that there should not be any pain, anguish or sighing on our day of rest. And may You show us, Hashem our G-d, the consolation of Zion Your city, and the rebuilding of Yerushalayim your holy city, for you are the Master of salvations, and the Master of consolations.

consolation of Zion Your city.

What is the connection between Shabbos and the consolation of Zion? We just asked Hashem to protect us from any pain or anguish so that we can experience menucha on Shabbos. However, as long as we are in exile, we cannot achieve a state of true מנוחה. Therefore, we ask Hashem to bring us the Redemption, because only then will our מנוחה on Shabbos be whole and unfettered. Additionally, since Shabbos serves as a day of detachment from physicality, now is the proper time to ask for the Redemption – which will be the ultimate detachment of physicality (Rabbi Yaakov Emden).

Interestingly, we asked Hashem, in the previous bracha of רחם, to have mercy on Zion and the Bais Hamikdash. However, now we are asking Hashem for נחמה, consolation. What is the difference?

The root of the word נחמה comes from the verse describing Hashem's decision to send the Mabul: "וַיִּנְחַם ד' כִּי עָשָׂה אֶת הָאָדָם בְּאֶרֶץ", And Hashem regretted that He had created man on the earth". (בראשית פרק ו) Therefore, literally, the word נחמה means to have a change of heart. One who is comforted is given a change of heart – a fresh perspective on his suffering, and indeed, that is what we are meant to do when we go to be מנחם אבל, to console a mourner.

However, a person who is in the midst of suffering loses all ability to think beyond his present situation. He is only capable of crying out for rachamim, for a merciful alleviation of his suffering. Only those who come to console the bereaved are able to offer him comfort – because they, themselves are not suffering and are able to see the bigger picture and realize that there is an end to all suffering.

During the week, we are still in the midst of our suffering, therefore all we can do is cry out for rachamim – mercy, alleviation of our travail. However, on Shabbos, we are in a state of עולם הבא, and thus transcend the exile and suffering we are currently in. We feel connected to Hashem once again, and from that perspective, we are able to ask Hashem for nechama

הוא לְפָנֶיךָ, לְשֶׁבֶת בּוֹ וְלָנוּחַ בּוֹ בְּאַהֲבָה כְּמִצְוֹת רְצוֹנְךָ, וּבְרְצוֹנְךָ הַנִּיחַ לָנוּ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, שְׁלֹא תִהְיֶה צָרָה וְיָגוֹן וְאֲנָחָה בְּיוֹם מְנוּחָתֵנוּ. וְהִרְאֵנוּ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ בְּנִחְמַת צִיּוֹן עִירְךָ, וּבְבִנְיַן יְרוּשָׁלַיִם עִיר קִדְשְׁךָ, כִּי אַתָּה הוּא בֹעֵל הַיְשׁוּעוֹת וּבֹעֵל הַנְּחָמוֹת.

the great and holy House. Both Shabbos and the Bais Hamikdash teach us to see the world as Hashem's creation and to separate ourselves from over-involvement in the physical. (Shabbos was explained previously, and the Bais Hamikdash had 10 miracles that occurred in it daily.) Through both mitzvos, we receive a glimpse of the inner workings of how Hashem runs this world, of how physicality is merely a cloak for the spiritual forces through which Hashem maintains this world.

– to abstain from work in it and rest in it – לשבת בו ולנוח בו

Isn't this phrase repetitive? What is the difference between abstaining from work and resting? Perhaps the answer is: aside from just abstaining from the Melachos, the activities prohibited on Shabbos, we are also supposed to mentally relax and remove ourselves from the mindset of weekday work. This is one of the reasons that our Sages decreed certain laws, such as not moving muktza and not discussing business matters, to ensure that the tone of Shabbos will be one of true rest. Thus, on Shabbos we both abstain from work and rest.

with love as commanded by Your Will - באהבה כמצות רצונך

We observe the command to rest on Shabbos with love towards Hashem. If we view Shabbos as a burden, then it is like a marriage where one partner is not interested – it loses all its taste and zest. On the other hand, we stress that we are keeping Shabbos because You Hashem told us so, not because it is convenient for us, or because we could use the extra nap or the tasty meals.

and may it be Your will, Hashem our G-d that there should not be any pain, anguish or sighing on our day of rest.

We are telling Hashem that any problem we may have on Shabbos would be a direct interference with His will that we enjoy Shabbos. Therefore, we ask of Him to protect us from any pain or anguish so that we can observe Shabbos in the best manner.

And may You show us, Hashem our G-d, the

בר"ח, יו"ט, חול המועד, וראש השנה:

אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ, יַעֲלֶה וְיָבֵא, וְיַגִּיעַ, וְיִרְאֶה, וְיִרְצֶה, וְיִשְׁמַע, וְיִפְקֹד,
וְיִזְכֹּר זְכוּרֵינוּ וּפְקֻדוֹתֵינוּ, וְזָכְרוֹן אֲבוֹתֵינוּ, וְזָכְרוֹן מְשִׁיחַ בֶּן דָּוִד עַבְדְּךָ,
וְזָכְרוֹן יְרוּשָׁלַיִם עִיר קְדוֹשְׁךָ, וְזָכְרוֹן כָּל עַמְּךָ בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל לְפָנֶיךָ, לְפִלְיָתָה,
לְטוֹבָה, לְחַן וְלַחֲסֵד וְלִרְחָמִים, לְחַיִּים (טוֹבִים) וְלִשְׁלוֹם, בְּיוֹם
רֵאשִׁי הַחֹדֶשׁ | חַג הַמִּצּוֹת | חַג הַשְּׁבֻעוֹת | חַג הַסֻּכּוֹת | שְׁמִינִי עֶצְרַת הַחַג | הַזְכָּרוֹן
הַזֶּה. זְכָרְנוּ, יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, בּוֹ לְטוֹבָה, וּפְקֻדָּנוּ בּוֹ לְבִרְכָה, וְהוֹשִׁיעֵנוּ בּוֹ לְחַיִּים
טוֹבִים. וּבְדָבַר יְשׁוּעָה וְרַחֲמִים, חוֹס וְחַנּוּן, וְרַחֵם עָלֵינוּ וְהוֹשִׁיעֵנוּ, כִּי אֵלֶיךָ
עֵינֵינוּ, כִּי אֵל מְלֶכֶךְ חַנּוּן וְרַחוּם אַתָּה.

compensatory bracha (see end) is inserted before starting the next bracha. (ס' קפ"ח.)
(ס' ע"ו)

- If the omission was discovered after האל was recited in the next bracha, then he has to go back to the beginning of bentsching. (מ"ב שם סק"ג מחי"א.) If he doesn't remember the correct נוסח of at least the beginning and end of the specific compensatory bracha that he has to say, he goes back to the beginning of bentsching. (מ"ב שם סק"ז.)
The compensatory brachos are:

On Shabbos:

ברוך אתה ד' אלוקינו מלך העולם אשר שנתן שבתות למנוחה לעמו ישראל
באהבה לאות ולברית ברוך אתה ד' מקדש השבת

On Rosh Chodesh:

ברוך אתה ד' אלוקינו מלך העולם שנתן ראשי חדשים לעמך ישראל לזכרון.

On Yom Tov:

ברוך אתה ד' אלוקינו מלך העולם אשר נתן ימים טובים לעמו ישראל לששון
ולשמחה את יום חג (המצות \ השבועות \ הסוכות \ העצרת) הזה. ברוך אתה
ד' מקדש ישראל והזמנים

Shabbos and Yom Tov:

ברוך אתה ד' אלוקינו מלך העולם אשר שנתן שבתות למנוחה לעמו ישראל
באהבה לאות ולברית וימים טובים לששון ולשמחה את יום חג(המצות \
השבועות \ הסוכות \ העצרת) הזה. ברוך אתה ד' מקדש השבת ישראל
והזמנים

4. If one completely forgot רצה or יעלה ויבא, he is only obligated to repeat bentsching by the first two Shabbos meals, or any of the Yom Tov meals, because these meals are mandatory. However, if one forgot these insertions by שלש סעודות on Shabbos, or at any meal on ראש חודש or Chol Hamoed, he does not have to repeat bentsching, because these meals are not mandatory. (ש"ע שם סע' ח.)

5. On a day when both רצה and יעלה ויבא have to be said (i.e. if Rosh Chodesh or Yom Tov occur on Shabbos), and one forgot either one, the halachos are as follows:

-If it is a Shabbos Rosh Chodesh, and one forgot יעלה ויבא, but remembered to say רצה, he does not have to repeat bentsching, because we don't repeat bentsching for Rosh Chodesh.

-If only רצה was forgotten- if it was remembered at a place that only the special bracha has to be said, then only the Shabbos part is said. However if he has to "Re-bentsch" from the beginning then he says everything over again. (מ"ב שם סק"ט כיון שנתבטל בהמ"ז.)
(הראשון לגמרי)

Some of the pertinent halachos regarding the insertions רצה and יעלה ויבא of are:

1. Even if one began a Shabbos or Rosh Chodesh meal while it was still daytime and continues eating past sunset into the next day, he still recites רצה or יעלה ויבא when he bentsches.
2. If Rosh Chodesh immediately follows Shabbos (i.e. on Motzei Shabbos and Sunday), one should either eat Shalosh Seudos earlier in the day, or refrain from eating bread after sunset. (מ"ב שם סק"ג, ש"כ פני"ז סע' י"ג.) If he is not careful to finish his meal before sunset, there's a dispute whether he should recite רצה or יעלה ויבא. On the one hand, רצה should be recited, because the meal commenced on Shabbos. On the other hand, יעלה ויבא should be recited because it is now past sunset and it is already Rosh Chodesh. Both cannot be recited together, as it cannot be both Shabbos and Sunday simultaneously. (If one does indeed find himself in such a situation, then only רצה is recited. (כיון שלכולא עלמא חייב להזכיר של ר"ח) ושל שבת הוא מח' מוטב לומר של ר"ח ולא של שבת, כ"כ במ"ב שם. ודע שכ"ז בר"ח אבל לא בחנוכה או פורים שהלים ביום א' כיון שאינו חייב לומר על הניסים בברכת המזון ממילא ודאי יאמר רצה ולא על הניסים, מ"ב שם. ור' כהן שליט"א אמר לי שלמעשה יאמר רק רצה ולא יעלה ויבא כיון שיש חולקים על המ"ב בזה, וכן מנהג העולם. ובנוסף לזה יש ספק מתי הוא בין השמשות ובפרט בחו"ל.)
Note: There are Poskim who maintain that both רצה and יעלה ויבא can be recited together, and there are others who hold that only יעלה ויבא is said.)
3. If one forgot to insert רצה or יעלה ויבא, then the Halacha depends on where he is up to in bentsching:
 - If the omission was discovered before saying 'ברוך אתה ד' in the bracha "boneh Yerushalayim", then one goes back and recites רצה or יעלה ויבא.
 - If one remembered right after saying ברוך אתה ד', then he recites "למדני חוקיך", and goes back to רצה or יעלה ויבא.
 - If the word בונה was already recited, then that bracha is finished and a special

And build Yerushalayim the holy city quickly in our days. Blessed are
You Hashem, who builds Yerushalayim in His mercy. Amen.

Blessed are you Hashem our G-d King of the world our Almighty,
our Father, our King, our Power, our Creator, our Redeemer, our Molder,

fragmented, and the Satan was able to "grab" many neshamos away from his big neshama. To resist any chance of these neshamos being rescued, he secreted them in the places of the strongest טומא (spiritual darkness). Part of our job as Klal Yisroel is to recapture those lost neshamos and return them to their rightful place.

Hashem manipulates world events in a manner that ensures that Klal Yisroel can rescue these neshamos, each in its proper time. The various hardships Klal Yisroel endures serve, in part, to reconnect these neshamos to their Source, Hashem. This is one of the reasons why the Jewish nation has been dispersed throughout every country on the globe.

As a result of Dina's abduction, the neshama of the Tanna, ר' חנינא בן תרדיון, was redeemed from the shackles of the Satan. An allusion to this may be found in one of the verses in the episode of Dina, (בראשית ל"ד - כ"א) והארץ הנה רחבת ידים לפנינו, where the word רחבת is the acronym for רבי חנינא בן תרדיון. Look at the amount of Torah that was able to be taught, millenia later, because of Dina's ordeal!

Our national travails are all part of Hashem's constant building process. We are not just suffering here in golus for nothing; there is very important work that is going on, which G-d willing, will be made clear to us very soon! Through our suffering in galus, Hashem IS, in fact, constructing the Bais Hamikdash!

אמן - Amen

Why do we insert Amen here after our own bracha? The gemorah (ברכות מ"ה ע"ב) explains that it is showing that we concluded the first part, which is דאורייתא (Biblically mandated), and that the bentching from here on is דרבנן (by Rabbinic decree).

Since the word amen is not a part of the corpus of the bracha, one should pause slightly between the words ברחמינו and אמן. (עבודת ישראל סידור)

FOOTNOTES

1 הל' ע"כום פ"י הל' ו'... אבל בזמן שיד ישראל תקיפה עליהם אסור לנו להניח ע"כום בינינו, ואפילו יושב ישיבת עראי או עובר ממקום למקום בסחורה לא יעבור בארצנו אלא עד שיקבל עליו שבע מצות שנצטוו בני נח שנאמר לא ישבו בארץ אפי' לפי שעה.

ברוך אתה... האל, אבינו...

This blessing is known as the bracha of Hatov v'Hameitev. Rabban Gamliel composed this bracha about sixty years after the churban of the Bais Hamikdash (destruction of

ובנה ירושלים עיר הקדש במהרה בימינו. ברוך אתה יי,
בונה ברחמינו ירושלים. אמן.

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם, האל, אבינו, מלכנו,

– for comfort. And we also ask Hashem to please continue the present restful state by rebuilding the Bais Hamikdash.

ובנה ירושלים

and build Yerushalayim, the holy city

At the conclusion of a long bracha, we summarize it at the end. Therefore we mention Yerushalayim again.

– במהרה בימינו – *quickly, in our days*

We know that Hashem will rebuild Yerushalayim, but we ask that He rebuild it quickly in our days – so that we merit to actually see it with our own eyes. This parallels what we say in Shmoneh Esrei, "ותחזנה עינינו", and let our eyes behold You rebuild Yerushalayim".

Blessed are You Hashem, who builds Yerushalayim in His mercy.

Why is the word בונה – builds – in the present tense? And why are we blessing Hashem now for building Yerushalayim, if He has no done so yet?

A simple explanation is that Hashem is currently building the Bais Hamikdash up in Heaven, even though we don't see it. When the Final Redemption comes, the Bais Hamikdash will descend onto the Temple Mount, complete and ready. Rav Naftali of Ropshitz says that we are helping Hashem construct the Bais Hamikdash through our mitzvos – each mitzvah we perform is another brick in the celestial Bais Hamikdash.

R' Zaidel Epstein, quoting the Ohr Hachaim (Bereishis 49-3), offers a profound interpretation. The various travails that the Jewish nation experiences in exile are part of the tremendous job that we are mandated to accomplish. The suffering endured by the Jewish nation, aside from the inherent cleansing it performs, proactively achieves many genuine accomplishments.

As an illustration: The episode of Dina's abduction appears to us as a heinous crime that earned Shechem his just punishment. However, it goes a lot further, and has a much greater cosmic import than appears on the surface. The Ohr Hachaim explains it as follows:

Hashem created Adam Harishon's neshama (soul) in a manner that it encompassed the neshamos of anyone who was subsequently born. This may be analogous to a thick torch wick that is braided from many thinner strands. As a result of Adam Harishon's failure to withstand the temptation of eating from the Eitz Hadas, his once perfect neshama became

Who made us holy (ריקה), Who makes Yaakov holy, our Shepherd, Who sustains all of Israel, the good King, and Who does good to all. For every single day He was good to us, is good to us and will do good to us; He

and hits one wolf. A branch thrown out of the tree breaks the foot of a second wolf. A third wolf falls into a hole that the shepherd dug beforehand. And a few more wolves are lured into a baited trap. These occurrences may seem random to a casual observer, yet we know that the shepherd hidden in the tree is actively protecting his sheep.

That is how we can view Hashem's protection while we are in exile. In fact, if we are willing to look closely, we can see Hashem's care and love much more now, than in times of peace and plenty. A country's strength is most apparent, not in a time of peace, but in a time of war. Similarly a mother's love is most obvious, not when her child is well, but when he is sick in the hospital and she refuses to leave his bedside.

The first part of this bracha enumerates the many facets of Hashem's attributes towards us: האל, אבינו, מלכנו, אדיקנו, בוראנו, גואלנו, יוצרנו, קדושנו

קדוש יעקב - who makes Yaakov holy

Hashem lets us sanctify Him (מלבי"ם)

our Shepherd - רוענו

who sustains us

the good King - המלך הטוב

Even when Hashem rules over us with His attribute of Judgment and tries us for our sins, he still shows us goodness. This refers to the fact that although the Jews of Beitar were punished by not being given a timely burial, their bodies didn't decay.

and does good to all - והמטיב לכל

This refers to the kindness that Hashem showed by enabling the victims of Beitar to be eventually buried. Normally, we take burial for granted, but truthfully, we should not be taking anything for granted, and we should thank Hashem for everything – even the most basic of human dignities.

In the next part of this bracha, we declare how much Hashem has already done and is doing for us.

for every single day - שבכל יום ויום

He was good to us in the past, is good to us now, and will do good to us in the future

אדירנו, בוראנו, גואלנו, יוצרנו, קדושנו יעקב, רוענו רועה ישראל, המלך הטוב והמטיב לכל, שבכל יום ויום הוא הטיב, הוא מטיב, הוא יטיב לנו. הוא גמלנו, הוא

the Holy Temple), when the victims of Beitar were finally buried. When Hadrian and the Romans destroyed the city of Beitar, after the rebellion of Bar Kochva, they massacred tens of millions of Jews (a tragedy that dwarfs the Holocaust!). They then refused to allow the corpses to be buried. Miraculously, these bodies did not decay and stayed fresh until Hadrian's successor finally gave permission for their burial. This episode referred to in the words of this bracha: hatov – for having preserved the bodies, and hametiev – for letting them be brought to burial.

The obvious question is: Why the outpouring of praise to Hashem just for permitting the bodies of Beitar to be normally interred? What is the great kindness rendered? And why specifically during benching? The Meshech Chochma explains that the sequence of the brachos in bentching parallels our development as a nation. First, when Hashem took us out of Egypt, He acquired us as His servants and sustained us on manna in the desert – thus Moshe wrote the first bracha. In the second bracha, we thank Hashem for the next stage – bringing us to Eretz Yisrael, and in the third, we remind Hashem of the Bais Hamikdash waiting to be rebuilt. Now, however, we are in exile, so what do we have left to thank Hashem for? This is why our Sages composed this fourth bracha – to thank Hashem for enabling us to survive throughout our harsh exile. Just look at the resilience with which Hashem has blessed us! We have been without a homeland for over 2 millenia, forced to settle every country on the globe, harassed by nations who hated us, yet, we are still here because Hashem is constantly protecting us. Truly an immortal nation!

When the tragedy of the churban Bais Hamikdash befell Klal Yisrael, they thought they could never survive this titanic tragedy. Yet, after the burial of the victims of Beitar, they saw that the Jewish nation was very much alive and kicking. Thus was born their conviction that just as Hashem helped them to survive Hadrian and his devious decrees, so too Hashem would help them trump their other troubles. To commemorate this, our Sages instituted this bracha. This bracha according to some, could possibly be called the ברכת הגלות, the bracha of exile, thanking Hashem for the tremendous kindnesses He showed us through our exiles. It is thus evident why the bracha was composed with such overflowing terms of praise.

Klal Yisroel in golus is compared to a lone, vulnerable sheep among 70 vicious, bloodthirsty wolves. Imagine a flock of sheep roaming in a meadow, while their shepherd is sitting in a tree. Suddenly, a pack of wolves attack the defenseless sheep. A rock sails out of the tree

showed kindness to us, is kind to us and will show us kindness forever. To find favor, to do kindness, and to have mercy on us; with relief, rescue and success, blessing, and salvation, consolation, sustenance, and our daily needs, and mercy and life and peace and every type of good, and from all good we should never be lacking.

May the Merciful One reign over us forever

May the Merciful One be blessed in the heavens and the earth.

May the Merciful One be praised throughout all the generations, and be glorified through us forever and ever, and be honored in us forever throughout all the cosmos.

Bentching is completed after saying יחסרנו; the next part consists of personal Tefilos, similar to after שמונה עשרי when we say , אלקי נצור (ט). (ערוך השלחן טוס"י קפ"ט). This is another similarity between bentching and שמונה עשרי, as we have mentioned a number of times.) In fact in different siddurim there are different tefilos. Some of these tefilos date back to the times of the gaonim. Even though this paragraph is not really part of bentching, saying them is not considered a hefsek (interruption) between bentching and drinking from the cup of wine.

The first three Harachamons praise Hashem, just as whenever we pray, we first praise Hashem then add our requests: (עיון תפלה).

May the Merciful One reign over us forever - הרחמן הוא ימלוך עלינו לעולם ועד.

We ask that Hashem's Kingship be revealed and evident for all to see forever.

May the Merciful One be blessed in the heavens and the earth. - הרחמן הוא יתברך בשמים ובארץ.

Here we ask that Hashem be blessed by both the angels, inhabitants of heaven, and by all the dwellers of the earth.

הרחמן הוא ישתבח לדור דורים, ויתפאר בנו לעד ולנצח נצחים, ויתהדר בנו לעד ולעולמים - **May the Merciful One** be praised throughout all the generations, and be glorified through us forever and ever, and be honored in us forever throughout all the cosmos.

The commentators (מלבים) explain that we are praising Hashem on three levels. First we pray that Hashem be praised throughout generations for all the wondrous things he does. Then we ask that Hashem be glorified through the salvations He provides for us, and finally

גומלנו, הוא יגמלנו לעד, לחן ולחסד ולרחמים ולרוח הצלה והצלחה, ברכה וישועה, נחמה, פרנסה וכלכלה, ורחמים וחיים ושלוש וכל טוב, ומכל טוב לעולם אל יחסרנו.

הרחמן, הוא ימלוך עלינו לעולם ועד.

הרחמן, הוא יתברך בשמים ובארץ.

הרחמן, הוא ישתבח לדור דורים, ויתפאר בנו לעד ולנצח נצחים, ויתהדר בנו לעד ולעולמים עולמים.

Hatov is a term for the fact that he bestows good. Hameitiv takes his beneficence a step further: Hashem renders kindness even to the grossly undeserving.

He showed kindness to us in the past, is kind to us now and will show kindness in the future.

In this third and final part of this bracha, we add our requests to Hashem:

לחן - to find favor - This is our most desperate prayer and our ultimate goal in life, to find favor in Hashem's eyes.

with relief - Meaning financial relief - a livelihood (מהר"ש)

and consolation (after bad happens to us) - נחמה

and our other sustenance (the other upkeep needed for our bodies). (מהר"ש)

and our daily needs - וכלכלה (עץ יוסף)

and from all good we should never be lacking - ומכל טוב לעולם אל יחסרנו

We pray that we should always be able to enjoy the blessings Hashem bestows on us.

There are 15 terms here, corresponding to the 15 meals we eat in a week: 2 meals each of the six weekdays, plus 3 on Shabbos. A mnemonic for this is the phrase, "וּאֵנַחְנוּ נִבְרַךְ יְיָ", and we shall bless Hashem", the word יְיָ equals 15, corresponding to the 15 times we bless Hashem after each of our 15 meals.

The phrase לעולם אל יחסרנו, marks the conclusion of bentching; thus we answer Amen here. We then insert our own personal prayers in the form of the הרחמן verses. This is similar to ואלקי נצור, which is a personal prayer inserted after Shmoneh Esrei actually ends.

May the Merciful One support us with dignity.
May the Merciful One break the yoke (of Exile) from our necks and bring us upright to our land.
May the Merciful One send us abundant us blessing to this house and to this table that we ate upon.
May the Merciful One send us Eliyahu the Prophet, of blessed memory, and (may he) inform us of good tidings, salvations and consolations.
May the Merciful One bless (my father, my teacher) the owner of this house, and (my mother, my teacher) the mistress of the house, they and their wives and their children, and all that is theirs, (and my father/mother/wife/children) us and all that is ours. Just as our forefathers, Avrohom, Yitzchak and Yaakov were blessed, in

inform us of good tidings, salvations and consolations.

We learn that when Eliyahu Hanovi comes, he will bless us all individually by name, therefore, we mention the words זכור לנוטוב after Eliyahu's name, because he will remember us for good. (רוקה)

כמו שתנברכו אבותינו אברהם יצחק ויעקב, בכל, מכל, כל *just as our forefathers, Avrohom, Yitzchak and Yaakov were blessed, in everything from everything and with everything.*

The three versions of the term כל - everything - that we use here are taken straight from the verses in the Torah that describe how our forefathers were blessed:

With Avrohom it states: Hashem blessed Avrohom and בראשית פכ"ד-א' ויה' ברכ את אברהם בכל) in everything

Regarding Yitzchok, it says: בראשית פכ"ז-ל"ג (ואכל מכל) I have partaken in everything.

And for Yaakov: בראשית פל"ג - י"א (וכי יש לי כל) and I have everything.

The repeated use of כל - everything - means that our forefathers were not missing any goodness there is in this world (סידור עבודת ישראל)

Now, we continue with a prayer for peace as follows:

From on high, may they and may we be viewed with merit, to be given a safeguard of peace.

הַרְחֵמֵנו, הוא יִפְרֶנְסֵנוּ בְּכַבוֹד.
הַרְחֵמֵנו, הוא יִשְׁבֹּר עֲלֵנוּ מֵעַל צְוֹאֲרֵנוּ וְהוּא יוֹלִיכֵנוּ קוֹמְמֵיּוֹת לְאַרְצֵנוּ.
הַרְחֵמֵנו, הוא יִשְׁלַח לָנוּ בְּרָכָה מְרֻבָּה בַּבַּיִת הַזֶּה, וְעַל שְׁלַחַן זֶה שְׂאֵכְלֵנוּ עָלָיו.
הַרְחֵמֵנו, הוא יִשְׁלַח לָנוּ אֶת אֱלֹהֵי הַנְּבִיא זְכוֹר לְטוֹב, וַיִּבְשֹׂר לָנוּ בְּשׁוֹרוֹת טוֹבוֹת יְשׁוּעוֹת וְנַחֲמוֹת.
הַרְחֵמֵנו, הוא יְבָרֵךְ אֶת (אָבִי מוֹרֵי) בַּעַל הַבַּיִת הַזֶּה, וְאֶת (אִמִּי מוֹרְתִי) בַּעֲלַת הַבַּיִת הַזֶּה, אוֹתָם וְאֶת בֵּיתָם וְאֶת זֶרְעָם וְאֶת כָּל אֲשֶׁר לָהֶם, (וְאָבִי \ וְאִמִּי \ וְאִשְׁתִּי \ וְזָרְעִי \ וְאֶת כָּל אֲשֶׁר לִי) אוֹתָנוּ וְאֶת כָּל אֲשֶׁר לָנוּ, כְּמוֹ שְׁנֵתְבָרְכוּ אֲבוֹתֵינוּ, אֲבָרְהֵם יְצַחֵק וַיַּעֲקֹב, בְּכֹל, מְכֹל, כֹּל, כֵּן יְבָרֵךְ אוֹתָנוּ כְּלָנוּ יַחַד בְּבְרָכָה שְׁלֵמָה, וְנִאֲמַר אָמֵן.

we request that Hashem be praised by all of creation through revealing His majesty.

Now we start our personal prayers:

May the Merciful One support us with dignity. – הרחמן הוא יִפְרֶנְסֵנוּ בְּכַבוֹד

We ask that Hashem alone be the One to support us, and that we should not have to rely on people.

Another interpretation (רוקה) is that we request that we be able to earn our livelihood with dignity – through a respectable occupation.

הרחמן הוא יִשְׁלַח לָנוּ אֶת אֱלֹהֵי הַנְּבִיא זְכוֹר לְטוֹב וַיִּבְשֹׂר לָנוּ בְּשׁוֹרוֹת טוֹבוֹת יְשׁוּעוֹת וְנַחֲמוֹת – *May the Merciful One send us Eliyahu the Prophet, of blessed memory, and may Eliyahu*

everything, from everything, (and) with everything. So too may we be blessed, all together as one, with a complete blessing. And let us say Amen!

From on high, may they and we be viewed with merit, to be given a safeguard of peace. And may we bear blessing from Hashem, and kindness from the G-d of our salvation, and may we find favor and good understanding in the eyes of G-d and mankind.

May the Compassionate One cause us to merit the days of Moshiach and life in the World to Come. He who (on weekdays: makes great) (On Shabbos, Rosh Chodesh and Yom Tov: Is a tower of) the salvation of his king. (תהלים פי"ח-נ"א) and He who does kindness to His anointed, to David and his children, forever, and say amen.

He who makes peace in the heavens, may He make peace upon us and upon all of Yisrael.

that the Redemption is like a rising sun – in the beginning, the dawn comes gradually, slowly dispelling the darkness, and then the sun rises in all of its glory, like a shining tower. So too, during the week, when we are in a state of exile, we can only praise Hashem for preparing the salvation of Moshiach, just as dawn prepares the world for the sun. However, on Shabbos and Yom Tov, we are in a state of redemption, similar to the times of Moshiach, therefore we can thank Hashem for being a tower of salvation to his king.

עושה שלום במרומו הוא יעשה שלום עלינו ועל כל ישראל ואמרו אמן.

He who makes peace in the heavens, may He make peace upon us and upon all of Yisrael.

How does Hashem make peace in the heavens? Who fights in heaven? There is a mystic concept that angels are composed of fire and water. In order for angels to exist, Hashem has to make peace between two opposing forces – fire and water – so that the water does not extinguish the fire, nor does the fire dry out the water. The Torah begins with the word בראשית, which can be understood as an acronym for ברית אש – a covenant of fire – a covenant was formed that the fire of the angels would not be extinguished by the water and vice versa. Therefore we pray that He who made peace in the heavens should

בְּמָרוֹם יִלְמְדוּ עֲלֵיהֶם וְעַלֵּינוּ זְכוּת, שֶׁתִּהְיֶה לְמִשְׁמַרְתִּי שְׁלוֹם, וְנִשְׂא בְרַכָּה מֵאֵת יי, וְצִדְקָה מֵאֱלֹהֵי יִשְׁעֵנוּ, וְנִמְצָא חַן וְשִׁכְל טוֹב בְּעֵינֵי אֱלֹהִים וְאָדָם.

לשבת: הַרְחֵמוּ, הוא יְנַחֵלנו יום שְׁכָלוּ שְׁבַת וּמְנוּחָה לְחַיֵּי הָעוֹלָמִים.

לר"ח: הַרְחֵמוּ, הוא יַחְדֵּשׁ עֲלֵינוּ אֶת הַחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה לְטוֹבָה וְלְבְרָכָה.

ליום טוב: הַרְחֵמוּ, הוא יְנַחֵלנו יום שְׁכָלוּ טוֹב.

לר"ה: הַרְחֵמוּ, הוא יַחְדֵּשׁ עֲלֵינוּ אֶת הַשָּׁנָה הַזֹּאת לְטוֹבָה וְלְבְרָכָה.

לסוכות: הַרְחֵמוּ, הוא יְקִים לָנוּ אֶת סֶכֶת דָּוִד הַנוֹכַלִּת.

הַרְחֵמוּ, הוא יְזַכְּנוּ לַיְמֹת הַמְּשִׁיחַ וְלַחַיֵּי הָעוֹלָם הַבָּא.

בחול: מְגִדִּיל (בשבת ור"ח ויו"ט וחול המועד וראש השנה: מְגִדִּיל) יְשׁוּעוֹת מְלָכּוֹ, וְעֹשֶׂה חֶסֶד לְמִשִּׁיחוֹ לְדָוִד וּלְזַרְעוֹ עַד עוֹלָם. עֹשֶׂה שְׁלוֹם בְּמָרוֹמָיו, הוּא יַעֲשֶׂה שְׁלוֹם עֲלֵינוּ וְעַל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל, וְאָמְרוּ אָמֵן.

We ask for peace first for the host, and then for all of us. The Midrash teaches that even if a person has plenty of food and drink, if he has no peace, then it is as if he possesses nothing. Therefore, we ask for peace during bentching. (עיון תפלה)

and may we find favor and good understanding in the eyes of G-d and mankind.

Obviously, we want to find favor in the eyes of Hashem, but why do we pray to find favor in the eyes of people? We cannot have peace, and the blessing that comes with peace, without finding favor in the eyes of people.

תהלים פי"ח-נ"א: **He who makes great the salvation of his king.** מְגִדִּיל יְשׁוּעַת מְלָכּוֹ

On Shabbos and holidays, we alter this verse slightly and say: He who is a tower of salvation for his king (שמואל ב' פכ"ב-נ"א) מְגִדִּיל יְשׁוּעַת מְלָכּוֹ.

Both of these verses refer to the Moshiach, and were written by King David. We learn

Fear Hashem, his holy ones, because there is no lack for those who fear Him. Young lions may become weak and hungry, but those who seek Hashem will never lack any good. Praise to Hashem because he is good, because his kindness is eternal. Open up your hand and satiate every living being with its want. Blessed is the man who trusts in Hashem, for then Hashem will be his trust. I have been both young and then elderly, and yet I never saw a righteous person forlorn, nor his children begging for bread. May Hashem give strength to His nation, may Hashem bless His people with peace.

והיה ד' מבטחו - Blessed is the man who trusts in Hashem, for then Hashem will be his trust.

The more trust we have in Hashem, the more Divine providence He will give us. The verse says, ד' צלך (Tehillim, Ch. 121) - while literally this means that Hashem is our shade, protecting us from evil, it can also be understood allegorically to mean: Hashem is our shadow. Just as the shadow reacts to the movements of a person, so too, the way we act towards Hashem, He will act to us.

I have been both young and then elderly, and yet I never saw a righteous person forlorn, nor his children begging for bread.

Rashi says (Tehillim 37-25) this posuk was not said by Dovid, because he didn't live long enough to make this statement, rather the שר העולם, a very lofty angel said it.

May Hashem give strength to His nation, may Hashem bless His people with peace.

Although this verse is not related to trust in Hashem, we add it here, because we always end with a request for peace whenever we finish a blessing, because without peace, we have nothing.

ברוך רחמנא דסייען

יִרְאוּ אֶת יי קְדוֹשׁוֹ, כִּי אֵין מַחְסוֹר לִירְאוֹ. כְּפִירִים רָשׁוּ וְרַעֲבוּ, וְדוֹרְשֵׁי יי לֹא יַחְסְרוּ כָּל טוֹב. הוֹדוּ לֵיי כִּי טוֹב, כִּי לְעוֹלָם חֶסֶדּוֹ. פּוֹתַח אֶת יָדְךָ, וּמִשְׂבִּיעַ לְכָל חַי רְצוֹן. בְּרוּךְ הַגִּבֹּר אֲשֶׁר יִבְטַח בֵּיי, וְהָיָה יי מִבְּטָחוֹ. נֶעַר הֵייתִי גַם זְקֵנְתִי, וְלֹא רָאִיתִי צַדִּיק נֶעְזֵב, וְזָרְעוֹ מִבְּקֶשׁ לֶחֶם. יי עוֹז לְעַמּוֹ יִתֵּן, יי יְבָרֵךְ אֶת עַמּוֹ בְּשָׁלוֹם.

also make peace on earth. (רוקה)

and say amen. - ואמרו אמן

Who are we talking to? The יעב"ץ says we are talking to the מלאכים who accompany us!

We then conclude with verses of trust, to remind us that it is Hashem who provides us with everything;

יִרְאוּ

Fear, Hashem, his holy ones, because there is no lack for those who fear Him.

The nature of a person is to always want more than what he has. However, those who truly fear Hashem will always be content with their lot, because they know that Hashem has decreed what is truly best for them.

Young lions may become weak and hungry, but those who seek Hashem will never lack any good.

The Vilna Gaon says that this doesn't mean that a person with yiras shomayim will always have every good, but they will not be lacking the ultimate good- Torah and Mitzvos.

and the plant now has food! If bug contains proteins the plant excretes enzymes which digest it.

The Portuguese sundew has leaves with glue on them which catches bugs that land on it. Then the edges of the leaves fold in and it is digested.

The pitcher plant, which grows in Southeast Asia, has the shape of a pitcher with a lid. It has a bright color which is given by nectar it excretes around its lid, but is very slippery. An insect which lands on it, slips down and gets digested.

The human is only one that has work hard and makes his food himself, in a long process that extends six months, from plowing until baking. Why is this? This is because of the sin of eating from the Tree of knowledge.

Continuation #2

Just consider milk for example.....

A calf needs its mother's milk within the first 12 hours after birth, and it will drink six liters of it. The first colostrum contains maternal antibodies. Therefore the intestines will only allow its mother's milk and after 16 hours the intestines can not receive these antibodies anymore. The milk contains many different things; solids, water, fat, protein, vitamins, minerals, plus lactose. It has vitamin A, B Complex, C, D, and K, potassium, amino acids, chlorine, and sodium. All this is produced from one single ingredient- grass! Milk is mostly made of blood. This is all just in the cow.

Human milk is even better. Certain proteins in the milk protect from infection that can enter the bloodstream. The composition of the mother's milk changes as the baby matures, becoming gradually more concentrated, as the baby's digestion improves. The colostrums contain leucocytes, white blood cells against infection, and are high in protein. The mother also can produce new antibodies against organisms that challenge the baby. The affecting organism is transferred from the baby to the mother, in ways not yet understood; the mother then produces the necessary antibodies and sends it through the milk to the baby! And both don't have the faintest idea of what happened!

Extras taken out of first Bracha

Continuation #1

There are many animals with special needs and Hashem provides each one with special tools so it can survive. Here are some examples: The giraffe eats acacia leaves that have thorns, therefore, Hashem gave it an 18" tongue with hairs to protect it.

A hawk can see its prey 1.5 miles away, and an eagle 3 miles away. Then it dives deep and catches its food.

The African Egg-Eating Snake does have elasticized jaws that can stretch to twice the width of its body. Like us swallowing a fridge! Its skin is also flexible so the egg can get through. It cracks the egg via a row of 30 teeth along the roof of its stomach. After it swallows the egg it lifts its head which causes the teeth to saw a hole in the shell and the egg comes pouring out. He gets rid of the shell by tightening his muscles which crush the now broken shell, and he neatly spits them out; and the whole process takes 15 minutes! (Our Amazing World, pg 147)

The camel travels through the desert where there is no water to drink. It can drink up to 32 gallons (121 liters) and it also converts its food into fat, so that when it journeys it doesn't have to eat, it is all stored up already! It eats dry horny grass of the desert. To help him with this, his lips are covered with thick coarse hair. (Our Amazing World, pg 226)

The Reindeer live in the freezing north, are very big and have to eat a lot, but where are they going to find food in the freezing ice? Hashem takes care of them and gave them a sharp edge at the end of their split hooves that can break almost any hard ice, this way they can get beneath the ice to the vegetation there and eat!

A polar bear also lives in the Arctic Circle and needs to eat. Hashem provided him with a strong sense of smell and he can smell seal blubber from 20 miles away! Also he gets the seals out from their ice holes, with very sharp claws that he can stick into these holes so he can eat. (Our amazing world pg 227)

We also see how Hashem feeds all vegetation, even those who need special tools:

The Venus fly trap has two leaves that are hinged together, with bristles coming out of them, when a fly lands on it, it activates the two sides to snap together in fifth of a second

