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Birchot HaShachar: Recognizing Hashem's Gifts (Part III)

In this issue, we will continue exploring the meaning and significance of Birchot HaShachar, the morning blessings, and the profound messages they contain.

**ברוך אתה ה' אלוֹקינוּ מֶלֶךְ
הָעוֹלָם רוֹקֵעַ הָאָרֶץ עַל הַמַּיִם**

Blessed are You, Hashem, our God, King of the universe, Who spreads the earth over the waters.

Rav Elihayu Munk in Olam HaTefillot explainss that in this bracha, we thank Hashem for spreading the earth over the waters. The fact that land and water can coexist without the water flooding the land or the land sinking beneath the water is truly remarkable. Every morning, we wake up and step onto solid ground, rarely stopping

to appreciate what an incredible gift this is.

As the **Olat Tamid** points out, the earth

rests above the water, supporting millions of people, enormous buildings, and entire cities, all while remaining stable beneath our feet. We walk around feeling grounded and secure, taking this remarkable reality for granted.



Rabbi Shimon Schwab zt"l

Rabbi Shimon Schwab explains that we can begin to appreciate the stability of the ground beneath us when

we experience something that disrupts our usual sense of security, such as an earthquake or the feeling of landing after a long airplane journey or stepping off a boat after a long voyage. Only then might we recognize just how extraordinary it is to have solid ground beneath our feet.

This bracha reminds us to pause each morning and appreciate something so fundamental to our lives that we rarely even notice it.

שַׁעֲשֵׂה לִי כָל צָרְכִי

ברוך אתה ה' אלוֹקינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם

Blessed are You, Hashem, our God, King of the universe, Who has provided me with

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all my needs.

Chazal originally instituted this bracha to be recited after putting on one's shoes (**Berachot 60b**). On a basic level, then, we thank Hashem for providing us with shoes. Without shoes, it would be difficult to go about our daily activities and provide for ourselves and our families. Shoes enable us to walk comfortably and take care of our needs (**Avudraham**).

On a deeper level, **Rabbi Shlomo Kluger**, in his sefer **Chochmat Shlomo**, explains that this bracha expresses our recognition that whatever Hashem does is ultimately for our good. We don't feel every day that Hashem is providing for our needs, there are some days that we really feel that things are not going right, our needs are not being provided for, and we are even suffering. Yet we recite this bracha every single day. When we thank Hashem for providing us with all our needs, even on days when we feel that something essential is missing, we are acknowledging that Hashem sees the bigger picture. He knows what we truly need, even when His plan is difficult for us to understand. Sometimes, a challenge may lead to personal growth, bring about something positive, or serve a purpose that we cannot yet see. Only Hashem, with His infinite wisdom, knows what we truly need and how each experience fits into His plan.

The **Olat Tamid** quotes a famous explanation of the **Kli Yakar** on the word **כל** (all). When Yaakov and Esav meet as Yaakov returns to Eretz Yisrael, Esav tells Yaakov, **יש**

לי רב, "I have plenty." Yaakov, by contrast, says, **יש לי כל**, "I have everything." The **Kli Yakar** explains that these statements reflect two very different outlooks on life. A person who constantly focuses on what is missing will never feel that he has enough, no matter how much he possesses. A **tzadik**, however, can recognize the blessings in his life and feel that he has everything he needs, even when he has relatively little.

When we recite **שעשה לי כל צרכי**, we remind ourselves to look at our lives through this lens of gratitude. Rather than constantly focusing on what we lack, we recognize the gifts Hashem has given us

Birchot HaShachar Part III

Some points to focus on as we make
the Brachot:

רוקע הארץ על המים – For giving us solid
ground beneath our feet.

We can feel secure and grounded,
appreciating the stability we often take for granted.

שעשה לי כל צרכי – For providing us with
all our needs.

Hashem gives each of us exactly what we need
to fulfill our unique mission in life.

המכין מצעדי גבר – For guiding our steps.

Hashem directs our paths, accompanying us
through every step and leading us toward
our purpose.

✂ Cut and paste into your siddur

and learn to appreciate what we have.

The **Alei Shur** shares a beautiful story that illustrates this idea. Rabbi Naftali Amsterdam once said to his rebbe, Rabbi Yisrael Salanter: "If I had the mind of the Shaagat Aryeh, the heart of the author of Yesod VeShoresch HaAvodah, and the middot of my rebbe, Rav Salanter, then I would be able to serve Hashem properly." Rav Salanter answered him that his task was to serve Hashem with *his own* mind, *his own* heart, and *his own* middot. That was how he could truly fulfill his purpose.

The message is powerful. Hashem does not expect us to be someone else. He gives each of us our own unique strengths, talents, challenges, and circumstances, with which we can fulfill our particular mission in this world. When we recite **לֵי כָל שְׁעָשָׂה**, we thank Hashem not only for our physical needs, but also for the individual gifts and abilities He has given us. Our task is to recognize those gifts and use them to serve Him to the best of our ability.

המכין מצעדי גבר

ברוך אתה ה' אלוֹקֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם

Blessed are You, Hashem, our God, King of the universe, Who directs the steps of man.

On a basic level, this bracha expresses gratitude for the remarkable way Hashem created our feet, enabling us to move, walk, and remain active throughout the day. Each foot contains 26 bones, 33 joints, and more than 100 muscles, tendons, and ligaments, all working together to provide movement, balance, and stability. The soles of our feet also have thicker skin than many other parts of the body, helping protect them from the pressure and friction of walking. The complexity of this system allows us to take thousands of steps each

day, often without giving any thought to the incredible coordination involved.

On a deeper level, **המכין מצעדי גבר** reminds us that Hashem guides our steps not only physically, but also throughout our lives. Every person has a unique path, and Hashem's hashgacha accompanies us along the way. We may not always understand why we are led in a particular direction or why certain opportunities and challenges arise, but we can trust that our steps are not insignificant.

As we recite this bracha each morning, we can remind ourselves that the day ahead is not simply a series of places to reach and tasks to complete. Each step offers an opportunity to fulfill our purpose, make meaningful choices, and move closer to the person Hashem created us to become. ■

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