

Environmental Activity for Shabbat - Brachot

Materials:

- Photocopy sheet of brachot for each madrich/a
- 1 bucket of water
- 1 drawing of a rainbow
- 1 bag of fruit
- 1 bag of leaves/branches from trees or shrubs
- 1 bag of non tree/shrub plants or herbs
- 1 picture book of animals /plants/flowers
- song sheets of Eli-Eli

} special props

Procedure

1. Divide Campers into small groups. Have one madrich sit w/ each group.
2. Pass around bread and say the bracha for bread all together.
3. Each madrich should have a special prop. Each madrich should then teach the appropriate bracha to his/her group. The madrich who teaches the bracha for rain should sprinkle water on campers when they say it. Or he/she could have the campers do the hand-rain game and say the bracha at the same time. The madrich who teaches the bracha for beautiful creatures should have the campers choose a creature/plant from the book they think is the most beautiful and say the bracha etc.
4. Rotate brachot stations
5. When campers have returned to their original brachot stations, discuss.
6. Teach kids Eli-Eli in separate groups. Then have them sing it too making hands w/ eyes closed etc.

•The blessing over fruit trees in bloom in Spring (this may be recited only once a year):

ברוך אתה ד' אלקינו מלך העולם שלא חסר בעולמו דבר וברא בו בריות טובות ואילנות טובים להנות בהם בני אדם.

Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheynu Melech Ha-olam, she'lo chiser ba'olamo davar, oobarah bo briyot tovot v'ee lanot tovim, l'hanot bahem b'nai adam.

Praise to You *Adonai*, our God and Universal Ruler, Who created a universe lacking in nothing, and who has fashioned goodly creatures and trees that give people pleasure.

Upon smelling fragrant spices:

ברוך אתה יהוה אלהינו מלך העולם, בורא מיני בשמים.

Baruch attah adonai eloheinu melekh ha-olam, bo-re minei v'samim.
Praised are You, Lord our God, King of the universe who creates various spices.

Upon smelling the fragrance of trees or shrubs:

ברוך אתה יהוה אלהינו מלך העולם, בורא עצי בשמים.

Baruch attah adonai eloheinu melekh ha-olam, bo-re atzei v'samim.
Praised are You, Lord our God, King of the universe who creates fragrant trees.

Upon smelling the fragrance of herbs or plants:

ברוך אתה יהוה אלהינו מלך העולם, בורא עשבי בשמים.

Baruch attah adonai eloheinu melekh ha-olam, bo-re isvei v'samim.
Praised are You, Lord our God, King of the universe who creates fragrant plants.

Upon smelling fragrant fruit:

ברוך אתה יהוה אלהינו מלך העולם, הנותן ריח טוב בפירות.

Baruch attah adonai eloheinu melekh ha-olam, ha-noten rei-ah tov ba-perot.

Praised are You, Lord our God, King of the universe who gives a pleasant fragrance to fruits.

Upon seeing the ocean:

ברוך אתה יהוה אלהינו מלך העולם, שעשה את הים הגדול.

Baruch attah adonai eloheinu melekh ha-olam, she-asah et-ha-yam ha-gadol.

Praised are You, Lord our God, King of the universe who has made the great sea.

Upon seeing trees or creatures of striking beauty:

ברוך אתה יהוה אלהינו מלך העולם, שפכה לו בעולמו.

Baruch attah adonai eloheinu melekh ha-olam, she-kakhah lo b'olamo.

Praised are You, Lord our God, King of the universe who has such beauty in His world.

Upon smelling fragrant oils:

ברוך אתה יהוה אלהינו מלך העולם, בורא שמן ערב.

Baruch attah adonai eloheinu melekh ha-olam, bo-re shemen arev.

Praised are You, Lord our God, King of the universe who creates fragrant oil.

Upon seeing wonders of nature, including lightning, shooting stars, vast deserts, high mountains, and a sunrise:

ברוך אתה יהוה אלהינו מלך העולם, עשה מעשה כראשית.

Baruch attah adonai eloheinu melekh ha-olam, oseh ma'aseh v'reshit.

Praised are You, Lord our God, King of the universe, Source of Creation.

Upon hearing thunder (or upon seeing a storm):

ברוך אתה יהוה אלהינו מלך העולם, שכחו וגבורתו מלא עולם.

Baruch attah adonai eloheinu melekh ha-olam, she-koho u-g'vurato ma-le olam.

Praised are You, Lord our God, King of the universe whose power and might fill the whole world.

Upon seeing a rainbow:

ברוך אתה יהוה אלהינו מלך העולם, זוכר הבְּרִית וְנֹאֲמָן בְּבְרִיתוֹ וְקִים בְּמֵאֲמוֹרוֹ.

Baruch attah adonai eloheinu melekh ha-olam, zokher ha-b'rit v'ne'eman bi-v'rito v'kayam b'ma'amaro.

Praised are You, Lord our God, King of the universe who remembers His covenant, is faithful to it, and keeps His promise.

D. Over rain and over good news, one says:

ברוך אתה ד' אלקינו מלך העולם הטוב והמטיב.

Baruch... ha-tov v'ha-mateev.

Praise to You... Who is Good and does Goodness.

Our busy lives, our need or desire to get ahead—all of our seemingly important obligations—often pull us away from life's simple daily miracles. Staying aware of the purpose and meaning of things, remembering their interconnections and knowing that all of our actions have consequences is not easy. Yet these may be our most important tasks in becoming *shomrei adamah*. If we do not remember who we are and what our place is, the human tendency to become masters and controllers of our universe can get the better of us.

It takes practice to learn to "see" and value all of life, just as it takes practice to become a good athlete, musician, artist, doctor or student. Judaism provides us with a multitude of practices to help us remember our place in the web of nature. Our rabbis understood the human condition and the tendency toward arrogance. They provided us with a wide range of practices to keep us on track, in harmony with God's creation. Reciting *brachot* (blessings) is one such practice. *Brachot* remind us that ultimately we humans are not the ones in charge. *Brachot* remind us to stop and pay attention to the world around us at times when we might otherwise take things for granted. In this way, *brachot* can train our eyes and our minds and enrich our lives.

There is a whole set of *brachot* which are less familiar to many Jews. These *brachot* are recited when a person experiences various natural phenomena.

After the Bible was written, the early rabbis interpreted and expanded upon the biblical laws. Around 200 C.E., Rabbi Judah the Prince collected all the Rabbis' discussions and interpretations of the Bible's laws and wrote them down in a book called the *Mishnah*.

It is in the *Mishnah* that we will find the roots of the *brachot* we say today.

POINTS TO EMPHASIZE

By giving us these *brachot* to recite, the *Mishnah* is training us to appreciate the wonders of the daily world that have become commonplace to most of us.

Through the *brachot*, the *Mishnah* is teaching us of God's presence in nature—even in the frightening, powerful aspects of nature.

Many people feel closest to God outdoors; that is why we have a custom of putting windows in our synagogues. For some of us, praying indoors feels unnatural; we prefer the mountains for our temples.

Athletes, artists and musicians all exercise to improve their skills. *Brachot* are spiritual exercises that we can do to help us remember the source and the Eternal in everything. Reciting *brachot* can expand our appreciation and joy in life. With an expanded awareness of the inherent value of all life, can we still exploit the earth?

connected with God we are less likely to mistreat or destroy it. Rabbi Meir said that "it is a *mizvah* (commandment) to recite 100 blessings every day" (Babylonian *Talmud, Menahot* 43b). Could this help you in your life today? Is it appropriate to expect people to do this? Would it make a difference in the world if people did this? Try to notice the number of times a day you feel appreciation for anything. How do you feel when you are appreciative? What does it feel like on a day when you forget to appreciate things? It takes work to be conscious of your world and to be appreciative of it. Try over the next week to bless things in whatever way is comfortable to you. Compare notes next time and see if the work pays off.

Blessings and Praise

Your Own *Brachot* and Praises: Rabbi Nachman's Prayer

Reading

Master of the Universe, grant me the ability to be alone:

May it be my custom to go outdoors each day, among the trees and grasses, among all growing things, there to be alone and enter into prayer.

There may I express all that is in my heart, talking with You, to Whom I belong.

And may all grasses, trees and plants awake at my coming.

Send the power of their life into my prayer, making whole my heart and my speech through the life and spirit of growing things.