

יגדל—(The Thirteen Principles of Faith) (1) There exists a perfect God Who created everything. (2) God is One—there is only one God. (3) God cannot be viewed in bodily terms. (4) God is Eternal. (5) Jews pray directly to God with no intermediaries. (6) The prophets are true. (7) Moshe was the greatest prophet. (8) The entire Torah was given to Moshe. (9) The Torah is eternal and unchanging. (10) God knows what we do. (11) God rewards and punishes according to our actions. (12) Mashiach will come. (13) There will be Techiyas Hameisim.

יגדל אלהים חי וישתבח, נמצא ואין עת אל מציאותו: אחד ואין יחיד ביהודו, נעלם וגם אין סוף לאחדותו: אין לו דמות הגוף ואינו גוף, לא נערך אליו קדשתו: קדמון לכל דבר אשר נברא, ראשון ואין ראשית לראשיתו: הנו אדון עולם לכל נוצר, יורה גדלתו ומלכותו: שפע נבואתו נתנו, אל אנשי סגלתו ותפארתו: לא קם בישראל כמשה עוד, נביא ומביט את תמונתו: תורת אמת נתן לעמו אל, על יד נביאו נאמן ביתו: לא יחליף האל ולא ימיר דתו, לעולמים לזולתו: צופה ויודע סתריו, מבית לסוף דבר בקדמתו: גומל לאיש חסד כמפעלו, נותן לרשע רע כרשעתו: ישלח לקץ הימין משיחנו, לפדות מחכי קץ ישועתו: מתים יחיה אל ברב חסדו, ברוך עדי עד שם תהלתו:

But First—Fifteen Thank-Yous!

ברכות השחר

FAQ:
Thank you?
For what? My life stinks!

ANSWER:
Good point! See Appendix 2

—אשר נתן לשכוי בינה
Thank You—for You
give us the ability to
understand the dif-
ference between day
and night—meaning:
good and bad, right
and wrong.

ברוך אתה יהוה אלהינו
מלך העולם, אשר נתן
לשכוי בינה להבחין בין
יום ובין לילה:

Instant Insight: Literally, שכוי could be translated as a rooster. The uniqueness of the rooster is that it starts to crow right before the light of dawn. Night/darkness represents a lack of clarity and a sense of hopelessness. In the morning light, we see that all is really not so bad. The rooster teaches us that even in the darkest time of night, we can see the light if we use the “ability to understand” that Hashem gave us! We thank Him for that ability.

שְׁלֹא עָשִׂינִי גוֹי—Thank You—
for You did not create
me a member of another
nation (*who have to go
through an entire process
if they want to join the Chosen People. I was given that as a gift at
birth—thank You!*).

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ הוֹה אֱלֹהֵינוּ
מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שְׁלֹא עָשִׂינִי
גוֹי:

שְׁלֹא עָשִׂינִי עֶבֶד—Thank You
—for You did not create
me a servant (*rather, I am
free to make my own choices,
be held responsible for them,
and thus earn reward—thank You!*).

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ הוֹה אֱלֹהֵינוּ
מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שְׁלֹא עָשִׂינִי
עֶבֶד:

For men:

שְׁלֹא עָשִׂינִי אִשָּׁה—Thank You
—for You did not create me
a woman (*and I am happy to
have all those extra mitzvos!*).

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ הוֹה אֱלֹהֵינוּ
מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שְׁלֹא עָשִׂינִי
אִשָּׁה:

For women:

שֶׁעָשִׂינִי כְּרִצּוֹנִי—Thank You
—for You created me
according to Your will (*and
thus I have a unique and
crucial role to play, even
though at times it seems unclear*).

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ הוֹה אֱלֹהֵינוּ
מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁעָשִׂינִי
כְּרִצּוֹנִי:

פּוֹקֵחַ עֵינַיִם—Thank You
—for You open the
eyes of the blind (*and
thus I am asking You to
remove my blindness to the
spiritual world*).

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ הוֹה אֱלֹהֵינוּ
מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, פּוֹקֵחַ
עֵינַיִם:

מַלְבִּישׁ עֲרֻמִּים—Thank You
—for You provide
clothing for the naked (*we
worry about the label and
style—but we need to be
happy that we have clothes to wear!*).

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ הוֹה אֱלֹהֵינוּ
מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, מַלְבִּישׁ
עֲרֻמִּים:

FAQ:

Chosen People?
Doesn't this brachah
sound racist? I
mean, I know a lot
of really nice non-
Jews—and some
“not-so-great” Jews!
Is there really such a
difference?

ANSWER:

Common
misconception!
See Appendix 4.

FAQ:

This is not simply a
FAQ—it is **the** FAQ.
Is it so bad to be a
woman that men
thank Hashem that
“You did not create
me a woman”?
And were men **not**
created “according
to Your will”?!

ANSWER:

Crucial question!
The complexity of
these two brachos
touch on the
understanding of
each person's role
as a contributing
member of this
great mission to
the world called
Am Yisrael. See
Appendix 11—but
read it all and read it
slowly.

מַתִּיר אֲסוּרִים—Thank You—
—for You free those im-
prisoned ((1) *imprisoned*
in our bodies while sleeping,
with no control over our ac-
tions and thoughts—by You waking us up we now have the ability to
move about and make choices—thank You; (2) imprisoned in physical
prisons; or (3) imprisoned in the “prisons” we create for ourselves by
our own insecurities).

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ
מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, מַתִּיר
אֲסוּרִים:

FAQ:

But I can't “stand
up straight”! I've
tried, but I keep
falling back down.
All the stuff in my
life is crushing me!

ANSWER:

OY! Difficult
question! See
Appendix 3.

זוֹקֵף כְּפוּפִים—Thank You—
for You give those who are
bent over (*whether because*
of physical issues or from the
difficulties and hardships
in their lives) the ability to stand up straight (and deal with their
struggles).

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ
מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, זוֹקֵף
כְּפוּפִים:

רוֹקֵעַ הָאָרֶץ עַל הַמַּיִם—Thank
You—for You establish
solid ground over the
waters of the deep (*so we*
have “solid ground” upon
which to build our lives).

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ
מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, רוֹקֵעַ
הָאָרֶץ עַל הַמַּיִם:

FAQ:

If that is true, then
why should we ask
Hashem for stuff?
עָשָׂה לִי כָּל צָרָתִי—He
gave me all I need!

ANSWER:

Good thinking! See
Appendix 1.

שְׁעָשָׂה לִי כָּל צָרָתִי—Thank
You—for You have
provided me with all my
needs (*whatever You have*
given me must be what I
need—not more and not less—even though sometimes that is hard
to understand).

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ
מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שְׁעָשָׂה לִי
כָּל צָרָתִי:

Instant Insight: This brachah is in the singular—specifically about me (gave **me** all **my** needs), unlike so many other brachos. Why? Because I need to feel satisfied with what I have. But regarding others, my job is not to tell them, “Don’t worry—you have all you need,” but to go help them!

Instant Insight: This brachah can also be understood in the following manner:
שְׁעָשָׂה לִי כָּל צָרָתִי—all the “stuff” in life that You have “given” to me, all the things that
I am going through, as difficult as they may seem, I believe they are all צָרָתִי—things
that I need to deal with in order to be the best “me” I can be (even if now I cannot
see how). Thank You!

Thank You—for You (1) direct our steps; and (2) support every step we choose to take. (Sometimes

You set our path and direct us into certain circumstances that are growth opportunities for us, in order to help us fulfill our ultimate mission—thank You! And when we make our own free will choice/step when responding to those circumstances, You support and allow us to make those steps, for better or worse—thank You!)

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ
מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, הַמְכִּין
מַצְעָדֵי גֵבֶר:

FAQ:

Which “steps” does Hashem decide and set for us, and which do we choose on our own?

ANSWER:

That is a complex issue!
See Appendix 5.

Thank You—for You give us courage and strength (to utilize our talents for the good).

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ
מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אוֹזֵר
יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּגִבּוּרָה:

עוֹטֵר יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּתִפְאָרָה—Thank You—for You crown Bnei Yisrael with glory (by giving us the tools to give meaning and beauty to our lives).

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ
מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, עוֹטֵר
יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּתִפְאָרָה:

Thank You—for You give strength and energy to those of us who are either physically, emotionally, or spiritually exhausted (so that we can keep going and make it through another day).

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ
מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, הַנוֹתֵן
לִיעָף כֹּחַ:

Do not answer Amen after this brachah, as it is one long brachah until the words עמו ישראל.

הַמַּעֲבִיר שְׁנָה מֵעֵינַי וּתְנוּמָה—Thank You—for You woke me up physically and spiritually (for the purpose of sending me out into the world to fulfill the task You assigned to me).

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ
מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, הַמַּעֲבִיר
שְׁנָה מֵעֵינַי וּתְנוּמָה
מֵעַפְעָפִי:

Now that I'm awake, with all the gifts and tools You have given me, I ask for help to conduct myself in a way that allows me to serve You to the utmost.

First: Bein Adam La'Makom

וְיִהְיֶה רְצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ—May it be Your will, Hashem—Who controls everything and has taken care of Bnei Yisrael throughout history—that You make Torah study something comfortable and familiar to us; and make us feel a closeness and attachment to Your mitzvos. Do not bring us into situations and challenges that could lead us to sin or to be disappointed with ourselves; and do not allow the yetzer hara to get the better of us. Keep us far away from

evil people and bad friends; and help us attach ourselves to our yetzer tov and to good friends. וְכַף אֶת יִצְרֵנו—Compel our creative powers to be used to serve You. And may we always find favor in Your eyes, and in the eyes of everyone we meet. And do for us good acts of kindness.

הַגּוֹמֵל אֶתְּהָּ—You, Hashem, are the Source of everything; הַסֹּדֵם טוֹבִים לַעֲמוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל—Who does good acts of kindness to His nation, Bnei Yisrael.

Second: Bein Adam L'chavero

וְיִהְיֶה רְצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ—May it be Your will, Hashem—Who controls everything and has taken care of Bnei Yisrael throughout history—that You protect me today and every day from arrogant and overbearing people (*and from being like that myself!*). Keep evil people, bad friends, and evil neighbors far away from me. (*And may my dealings with people not impede my spiritual growth.*)

וְיִהְיֶה רְצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ שֶׁתְּרַגְּלֵנוּ בְּתוֹרָתְךָ, וְדַבְּקֵנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתֶיךָ, וְאַל תְּבִיאֵנוּ לֹא לְיָדֵי חָטָא, וְלֹא לְיָדֵי עֲבָרָה וְעוֹן, וְלֹא לְיָדֵי נִסְיוֹן, וְלֹא לְיָדֵי בְּזִיוֹן, וְאַל תִּשְׁלַט בָּנוּ יֵצֶר הָרָע: וְהִרְחִיקֵנוּ מֵאָדָם רָע וּמִחֶבֶר רָע, וְדַבְּקֵנוּ בְּיֵצֶר הַטּוֹב וּבְמַעֲשֵׂים טוֹבִים, וְכַף אֶת יִצְרֵנוּ לְהִשְׁתַּעֲבֹד לָךְ: וְתִנְנוּ הַיּוֹם וּבְכָל יוֹם לַחֵן וּלְחֶסֶד וּלְרַחֲמִים בְּעֵינֶיךָ וּבְעֵינֵי כָל רוֹאֵינוּ, וְתִגְמַלְנוּ חֲסָדִים טוֹבִים: בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה, הַגּוֹמֵל חֲסָדִים טוֹבִים לַעֲמוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל:

FAQ:

We say, "Do not allow the yetzer hara to get the better of us," and "Compel our creative powers to be used to serve You." But I thought we had free will? This sounds like we are asking Hashem to eliminate our free will choices!

ANSWER:

Great question! See Appendix 6.

FAQ:

"Do for us good acts of kindness"—What does that mean? Are there "bad" acts of kindness?

ANSWER:

Clever thinking! See Appendix 7.