THE GREAT OUTDOORS

TEFILAT HADERECH

TEFILAT HADERECH: WHEN TO SAY

Tefilat HaDerech: When To Say: Leaving Your

Say *tefilat ha'derech* when leaving your "place," which may be a city, town, village, or even your home if you live in an isolated area. You may only say *tefilat ha'derech* if you will go at least 2.8 miles outside the inhabited area.

Tefilat HaDerech: When To Say: Starting Journey

If you will certainly leave the city limits at some point in your journey, you may say *tefilat ha'derech* as soon as you start your journey (when you leave your house or get in your car, etc.).

EXAMPLE You may say *tefilat ha'derech* when leaving your house for a flight, but the optimal time is when the plane begins to taxi.

Tefilat HaDerech: When To Say: City Limits

City limits for *tefilat ha'derech* means the last house before a gap of 2.8 miles, measured horizontally but not vertically.

Tefilat HaDerech: Boat

Say *tefilat ha'derech* in a boat that will be going at least 2.8 miles from shore.

TEFILAT HADERECH: HOW OFTEN

TEFILAT HADERECH: HOW OFTEN: ONCE A DAY/ONCE A TRIP

Tefilat HaDerech: How Often: Once a Day/Once a Trip: Vehicles

When riding in a vehicle on a trip, you should say *tefilat ha'derech* once each day, as long as:

- You have gone--or will go--at least 2.8 miles past any populated area, and
- You will be breaking your trip at night.

NOTE If you will be living in an RV or other vehicle, only say *tefilat ha'derech* once for the entire trip.

Tefilat HaDerech: How Often: Once a Day/Once a Trip: Boats

If you take a multi-day boat trip, such as a cruise, say *tefilat ha'derech* only once during the journey—not each day.

NOTE Any time you stay overnight (on land) along the journey, say *tefilat ha'derech* again when you resume your travel.

TEFILAT HADERECH: WHAT TO SAY

Tefilat HaDerech: What To Say: Main Blessing

You do not need to say other blessings before *tefilat ha'derech*. Since *tefilat ha'derech* begins without a blessing, some people like to say an unrelated blessing before it, but the custom is not to require saying another blessing first.

Tefilat HaDerech: What To Say: For Others

When saying *tefilat ha'derech*, even if you say it for other people traveling with you, always say "*titneini*" (in the singular) and not "*titneinu*" (plural).

NOTE This is different from most blessings, which are in the plural even when said by just one person for him/herself.

Tefilat HaDerech: What To Say: Phrases (Psukim)

After saying the main blessing of *tefilat ha'derech*, some people have the custom to say these phrases (*psukim)* three times each:

- *L'shuatcha kiviti...*
- *V'ya'akov halach l'darko...*
- *Yivarechecha...*
- *Hinei anochi sholei'ach lifanecha...*

AL NETILAT YADAYIM OR AL TEVILAT YADAYIM

Al Netilat Yadayim or Al Tevilat Yadayim: Water Fit or Not Fit

Say *al netilat yadayim* even if you wash your hands by immersing them in a river, ocean, or other natural body of water.

NOTE Say *al tevilat yadayim* if the water is not fit for *netilat yadayim* (if it smells bad, is salty, a dog would not drink it, etc.). This applies to washing before bread, after sleeping, etc.

BLESSINGS: SCENTS

Blessings: Scents: When To Say

Say the blessing if you intend to smell something fragrant; you may, but do not need to, say a blessing if you smell a scent in passing. If you are outdoors and a pleasant scent of flowers comes to you, even if you did not intend to smell the flowers, as long as you enjoy the scent, you may still say the appropriate blessing.

Blessings: Scents: The Four Blessings

Choose the correct smell blessing (Note that these blessings are not said on synthetic scents!):

- *Borei minei vesamim* Generic; this is the default blessing if you are not certain which category applies; also say this when smelling a mixture of scents;
- *Borei isvei vesamim* Plants which do not have stiff stems;
- *Borei atzei vesamim* Trees and stiff-stemmed plants (such as roses); and
- *Ha'notein rei'ach tov ba'peirot* Fragrant fruits, such as lemons and some *etrogs.*

Blessings: Scents: Minimum Scent

The minimum intensity of scent required to be permitted to say a scent blessing is anything you can smell and that you find pleasant.

Blessings: Scents: Sniffing First

SITUATION You see a flower but do not know whether it has a scent.
WHAT TO DO You may sniff the flower and, if it does have a nice scent, you may then say *borei minei* (or *atzei* or *isvei* as appropriate) *vesamim* and then take a big whiff.

Blessings: Scents: All Scents in that Category

SITUATION You are visiting a botanical garden or an outdoor area at which you will see many flowers and blossoms.
WHAT TO DO You may say the appropriate blessings on pleasant smells once for each category and intend for the blessing to apply to all flowers and blossoms you will smell during that day.

Blessings: Scents: Hesech Da'at

If you say *borei isvei vesamim* or *borei atzei vesamim*, you should say the blessing again once you have had a lapse of thought (*hesech da'at*); that is, once you have stopped thinking about smelling fragrances at that time.

HAGOMEL

HAGOMEL: FOR WHICH EVENTS

After What To Say HaGomel

Say *ha'gomel* after:

- Crossing the ocean (far enough away that you cannot see the shore);
- Crossing a desert by any means except flying;
- Getting out of jail; or
- Recovering from a serious illness.

In addition, say *ha'gomel* anytime a catastrophe has been avoided, such as a vehicle crash. Consult a competent *halachic* authority in these cases.

HAGOMEL: WHEN TO SAY

Saying HaGomel within 30 Days

Say *ha'gomel* within three days of the event; *b'di'avad*, it is OK to say it within 30 days.

Say HaGomel When You Can Walk Normally

You may say *ha'gomel* after recovering from a serious illness once you are able to walk around normally.

HAGOMEL: FOR WHOM TO SAY

For Whom To Say HaGomel

Don't say *ha'gomel* for anyone other than yourself (not even for your spouse or children). Likewise, one person may not exempt the entire congregation for *ha'gomel* except *b'di'avad*. But when an entire *congregation* says *ha'gomel*, use "*gemalanu*."

HAGOMEL: WOMEN

Women and HaGomel

Women customarily do not say *ha'gomel*. A woman does not say *ha'gomel* after childbirth.

BLESSINGS: NATURAL PHENOMENA

BLESSINGS: COMETS

Blessings: Comets: How Often

Say *oseh ma'aseh v'reishit* only once per comet.

BLESSINGS: EARTHQUAKES

Blessings: Earthquakes: Cycle of Earthquakes

Say *she'kocho u'gvurato malei olam* or *oseh ma'aseh v'reishit* (either is correct) once per earthquake. Don't say the blessing on aftershocks.

NOTE One cycle of quakes and aftershocks is still considered just one earthquake, even if it lasts more than one day.

BLESSING: ECLIPSES

Blessings: Eclipses: Solar and Lunar Eclipses

There is no blessing for eclipses.

BLESSINGS: METEORS

Blessings: Meteors: How Often

Say *oseh ma'aseh v'reishit* once per night**.**

BLESSINGS: MOUNTAINS

Blessings: Mountains Renown for Their Height

Say *oseh ma'aseh v'reishit* once per month on mountains, but only on very large mountains that are famous for their height and that you have not seen within 30 days.

BLESSINGS: OCEANS

Blessings:

Say *she'asa et ha'yam ha'gadol* when you can see an ocean or the Mediterranean sea, but only:

- While you are present, and
- After not having seen it for at least 30 days.

NOTE If you forgot to say it and returned the next day, you may not say the blessing.

BLESSINGS: RAINBOWS

Blessings: Rainbows: Looking and Blessing

The blessing over rainbows is *zocheir ha'brit v'ne'eman bi'vrito, v'kayam b'ma'amaro*.

NOTE You may not gaze at a rainbow, but you may look at it for up to 2.5 seconds, then look away, and then look back repeatedly an unlimited number of times.

NOTE Don't tell other people that a rainbow is visible. But if they see you looking or hear you saying the blessing, you may tell them that there is a rainbow and you may tell them the correct blessing to say.

BLESSINGS: STORMS

Blessings: Thunder

Say the blessing *she'kocho u'gvurato malei olam* if you hear thunder**.** (See Blessings: Thunder/Lightning: Which First)

Blessings: Lightning

Start saying the blessing *oseh ma'aseh v'reishit* within 2 ½ seconds of seeing a lightning flash; otherwise, do not say the blessing at all.

NOTE You do not need to see the actual lightning bolt--you must just see the light from lightning, even if reflected from something.

NOTE The lightning must be from a rainstorm, but you may say the blessing on lightning even if it is not raining where you are, as long as you can hear thunder first. (See Blessings: Thunder/Lightning: Which First and Blessings: Thunder/Lightning: How Often)

Blessings: Thunder/Lightning: Which First

Always say *she'kocho u'gvurato malei olam* (on thunder) before *oseh ma'aseh v'reishit* (on lightning.)
If you see lighting but don't hear thunder, do not say *oseh ma'aseh v'reishit* at all.

Blessings: Thunder/Lightning: How Often

Say *she'kocho u'gvurato malei olam* (on thunder) and *oseh ma'aseh v'reishit* (on lightning) only once per storm. If you hear thunder over telephone or microphone, you may not say kocho u'gvurato.

NOTE If the storm clouds clear and another storm comes along, you may say blessings again, even on the same day.

KIDDUSH LEVANA

INTRODUCTION TO KIDDUSH LEVANA

Introduction to Kiddush Levana: Thanksgiving

Kiddush levana expresses our thanks to God for having made the moon, which affects our lives (tides, weather, crops, biological clocks) and provides us benefits in many ways (light at night, basis for determining our calendar and our holidays).

KIDDUSH LEVANA: WHAT TO SEE

Kiddush Levana: What To See: How Clear the Moon

You do not need to see the moon completely clearly in order to say *kiddush levana*, but you must be able to see the outline of the moon.

KIDDUSH LEVANA: WHEN TO SAY

Kiddush Levana: When To Say: Molad

Although the traditional time to say *kiddush levana* is after *Shabbat*, you may say *kiddush levana* from the third day (three periods of 24 hours) after the *molad* until 14 days and 18 hours after the *molad*. Ideal is after seven 24-hour periods.

Kiddush Levana: When To Say: Custom not To Say

It is customary not to say *kiddush levana:*

- During the *Nine Days* before and including *Tish'a b'Av*;
- On Friday night, and
- On the evening of a *Jewish festival.*

Many people also have the custom not to say *kiddush levana* during the first 10 days of *Tishrei*. However, you should do so if you do not expect to see the moon on any other night (due to weather or other factors), rather than miss the chance to say it that month. If you do say *kiddush levana* on Friday night or the after nightfall of a *Jewish festival*, say only the blessing, not the *Psalms* and other phrases that are normally said.

Kiddush Levana: When To Say: Night

You may say *kiddush levana* (blessing on the new moon) only at night, after dark/*tzeit ha'kochavim*.

Kiddush Levana: When To Say: When No Dark

At the high latitudes, you may say *kiddush levana* during any season when the sky gets dark but not during seasons when the sky does not get dark.

Kiddush Levana: When To Say: Shabbat

You may say *kiddush levana* on *Shabbat*, if needed.

EXAMPLES

- *Shabbat* is the last possible night that month to say *kiddush levana.*

- The forecast is for clouds for the other nights until it will be too late that month to say *kiddush levana*.

NOTE On *Shabbat*, say only the blessing of *kiddush levana*, not the *psalms* or other phrases (*psukim*).

KIDDUSH LEVANA: WHO SAYS

Kiddush Levana: Minyan

You do not need a *minyan* to say *kiddush levana*.

Kiddush Levana: Women

Women do not say *kiddush levana*.

KIDDUSH LEVANA: WHAT TO SAY

Kiddush Levana: Minimum Blessing

The minimum you may say of *kiddush levana* and fulfill the *mitzva* is the blessing. The *psalms* and other *psukim* are customary but are not required.

ASHER YATZAR

Asher Yatzar: Minimum

The minimum amount to urinate or defecate and be able to say *asher yatzar* is any quantity (*kolshehu*).

Asher Yatzar: Timing

If you did not say *asher yatzar* immediately after finishing, you may still say the blessing until the next time you feel the need to urinate or defecate.

Asher Yatzar with No Water

Say *asher yatzar*, even when you cannot wash your hands, such as when you do not have any water with you.

NOTE In any case, your hands must be clean; if they are not, you must wipe them off on something before saying the blessing.

Asher Yatzar: Saying for Someone Else

You may say *asher yatzar* for someone else if you need to say it also.

Asher Yatzar or After-Blessing

If you are eating and stopped to use the toilet, you may say either *asher yatzar* or the after-blessing on the food first.

Asher Yatzar Underwater

After urinating while scuba diving, say asher yatzar. The water is sufficient as a head covering or, better, you may cover your head with your wetsuit sleeve.

BLESSING THE CHILDREN/BIRKAT HABANIM

Introduction to Blessing the Children/Birkat HaBanim

The Blessing for the Children has two parts:

1. Introduction
   For Boys: "*Yesimcha Elohim k'Efraim v'chi'Menashe*"
   (May God make you like Ephraim and Menashe)

   For Girls: "*Yesimeich Elohim k'Sara, Rivka, Rachel, v'Leah*"
   (May God make you like Sara, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah)

NOTE The formula asks God to make the boys like Ephraim and Menashe but to make the girls like Sarah, Rivka/Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah. We might think that Sara, Rivka/Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah should be paired with their husbands, *Abraham*, Isaac, and Jacob instead of with their grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Yet, while Isaac and Jacob had the advantage of growing up in religious homes and in *Eretz Yisrael*, all of the fore-mothers as well as Ephraim and Menashe lived righteous lives even though all grew up in bad environments outside of *Eretz Yisrael*.

2. Priestly Blessing/*Birkat Cohanim* (Numbers/*Bamidbar* 6:24-26)
   This is the blessing that the priests (*cohanim*) use when blessing the Jewish people. For words to the blessing, please click here and scroll down to "*Birkat Cohanim*": http://practicalhalacha.com/blessings#B .

Blessing the Children: When To Bless

Bless children on:

- Friday night,
- Saturday night (this is so we start the new week with a blessing), and
- *Jewish festival* nights.

NOTE This is a non-binding custom, not a *halacha*.

Blessing the Children: Who Should Bless

Who should bless the children:

- Anyone may bless children, but it is best for both parents to do so.
- Parents may ask any other adult to be their emissary to bless their children.

Blessing the Children: How To Bless: How To Place Hands

You may use one or two hands when giving a blessing, such as when blessing children on *Shabbat* or *Jewish festivals*. You may hold your hands over the person's head or actually put your hands on their head--either is OK.

Blessing the Children: How To Bless: From Afar

Parents may bless their children by telephone if not nearby. This is a non-binding custom, not a *halacha*.

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