ברכת "רוקע הארץ על המים"

לו. בברכת "רוקע הארץ על המים", אנו נותנים הודאה לה' יתברך, כי הפליא בחסדו ברקיעת הארץ על פני המים, הוא מי התהום, הפך הטבע, כי כפי הטבע העפר ישקע במים והמים יהיו למעלה ממנו, ככל דבר כבד שנשקע בתוך המים, ואם היה כן איך היה אפשר לבני אדם לדור וללכת על פני המים. והטיב ה' חסדו ברחמיו על ברואיו לשנות את הטבע, והרקיע הארץ על המים, לתת מקום לדור עליה ברואיו, ועל זה נאמר [תהלים קלו, ו] "לְרֹקַע הָאָרֶץ עַל הַמָּיִם כִּי לְעוֹלָם חַסְדּוֹ". [לבוש סי' מו ס"ב, מקבציאל פ' וישב הי"ד בשם השלמי צבור, ערוה"ש ס"ד]

Roka Ha'aretz al Hamayim

Day 11

The gift of dry land

36) The blessing of *roka ha'aretz al hamayim* expresses our gratitude to God for providing us dry land on which we can live. The existence of the continents cannot be taken for granted, since rock and soil are heavier than water, and the natural state of the planet should be a rocky core completely covered by one continuous ocean. (The planet Saturn's moon Titan is exactly that – a rocky core surrounded by several layers of liquids and ice.)

On the second day of Creation, God remolded the earth's shape, so that the continents and islands rise above the oceans' surface. This made it possible for man to survive. The text of this blessing is based on the verse (*Tehillim* 136:6), "לְרֹקַע הָאָרֶץ עַל הַמָּיִם כִּי לְעוֹלָם חַסְדּוֹ" – To He Who raised the earth above the waters, for His kindness endures forever.[27]

Vayeshev halakha 13), based on the *Sha'ar Hakavanot*. The *Tehilla leDavid* (#101) challenged this explanation, arguing that if it was true we would not be able to recite the blessing of *hanoten laya'ef ko'ah* after reciting that of *malbish arumim*. Once we have blessed God for providing us entirely new garments, it would be superfluous for us to bless Him again for simply repairing our existing garments.

The fact is that Harav Shalom Mizrahi Sharabi listed the blessing of *hanoten laya'ef ko'ah* before that of *malbish arumim*. Nevertheless, the *Tehilla leDavid* reconciled the order of the blessings that we are accustomed to following. He explained that we recite the blessing of *malbish arumim* to thank God for His kindness toward one group of people (those who have lost their spiritual garments altogether) and we recite the blessing of *hanoten laya'ef ko'ah* to thank God for His kindness toward those people whose spiritual garments have been weakened. Since each blessing refers to a different group of people, one blessing does not cover the intent of the other. The *Tehilla leDavid* concluded by testifying that the common custom in Yerushalayim was to recite the blessing of *malbish arumim* and afterward that of *hanoten laya'ef ko'ah*. The *Kaf Hahayim* Palachi (9:10) and the *Yafe Lalev* (46:100-102 in the HaKeter edition) concurred with this system.

27. This explanation appears in the *Levush*, the *Shalme Tzibbur*, and the *Arokh Hashulhan* Epstein. In *Sefer Mikabtze'el*, Harav Yosef Hayim posed a question: Why do we have to recite this blessing every day? We recite all the other morning blessings to thank God for things that are renewed each day, but the existence of the continents is continuous day and night. It should be sufficient to recite this blessing once in a lifetime.

The answer, he explained, is that on the contrary, we should have to recite this blessing every hour of the day and night. The continued existence of the continents is precarious, since the oceans threaten to flood the continents and erode the mountains until they are no longer visible above the water's surface. In fact, this almost occurred while King David laid the foundations for the *Bet Hamikdash*. King David resorted to using practical Kabbalah to stop this from happening, as our Sages taught in *Sukkah* (53a). If not for the power of God's Name that King David employed to stop it, such a catastrophe would be liable to occur at any moment.

Thus, by rights we should recite this blessing constantly all day long. Of course, this is not very practical, and so our Sages instituted to recite it once a day.

ברכת "המכין מצעדי גבר"

לז. בברכת "המכין מצעדי גבר", נותן הודאה לה' על בריאת האדם ברגל ישרה, ומהלך בקומה זקופה, נבדל משאר בעלי חיים שאין להם קומה, זקופה. [מקבציאל וישב הט"ו בשם שלמי צבור. וכ"ה בערוה"ש ס"ד]

לח. יש נוהגים לברך "אשר הכין מצעדי גבר". אולם מנהגנו לומר "המכין מצעדי גבר". [כה"ח ס"ק יט]. מיהו אם שינה ואמר "אשר הכין", לא עיכב. [שם]

ומנהגינו לומר בברכת המכין מצעדי "גָּבֶר" הגימ"ל בקמ"ץ.

Hamekhin Mitz'ade Gaver

Walking on two legs

37) The blessing of *hamekin mitz'ade gaver* – Who directs man's footsteps – is intended to thank God for creating man upright so that we walk naturally on two legs, unlike all other mammals.[28]

Hamekhin* vs. *asher hekhin

38) In some communities, the text used for this blessing is *asher hekhin mitz'ade gaver*. The custom in all Sefardic communities is to say *hamekhin mitz'ade gaver*. Likewise, our custom is to pronounce the final word as *gaver* with a *kamatz* under the letter *gimel* (גָּ), and not *gever* with a *segol* (גֶ).[29]

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28. Several *Aharonim* offered this explanation for this blessing. Harav Yehezkel of Kozhmir wrote (*Ma'amar Yehezkel* page 214, cited in the *Derekh Emuna* page 97) that every single occurrence in this world, even the flight of each bit of straw in the wind, is under the direct control of God. God has a purpose for the straw to be where it is until the moment it is blown elsewhere, and He causes it to land precisely in the spot where He needs it to be next. Likewise, God plans each of man's footsteps, so that if he needs 10,000 footsteps to reach his destination, God gives his legs the ability to walk each of those steps on an individual basis. This, he explained, is the intent of the blessing of *hamekhin mitz'ade gaver*, and if someone recites this blessing while he does not believe in this concept, he is guilty of reciting it in vain.

This surprising and extreme conclusion calls for research and verification, since there are a number of reasons to disagree with it. See the comments of Harav Shelomo Zalman Auerbach (*Halikhot Shelomo Tefilla* page 50).

29. The rule in Hebrew grammar regarding many of the words that are stressed on the next-to-last syllable calls for them to be pronounced one way in the middle of a phrase and another way at the end of a phrase. See the comment of Rabbenu Nissim to *Nedarim* 37b. In this case, since the final word of the blessing is *gever*, it is switched to *gaver*. For the same reason, we recite the blessing of *shelo asani aved*, and not *eved*.

We seem to contradict this rule with the blessing over wine. It should be pronounced *bore peri hagafen* with a *kamatz* under the *gimel* (גָּ), but instead our practice is to pronounce it *hagefen* with a *segol* under the *gimel* (גֶ).

Maran the Rishon Letziyon (*Hazon Ovadya Pesach* page 193) noted this deviation and cited Harav Yaakov Goldman who reconciled it, explaining that when someone recites a blessing and others respond Amen, the word Amen becomes the final word of the blessing. In fact, the person who recites the blessing is supposed to listen to the Amen in order to fulfill his obligation of reciting the blessing in its entirety. This being the case, the word *hagefen* is not really the final word of the blessing and therefore it does not change to *hagafen*.

Usually, people drink wine while in the company of others. Therefore, there is usually someone to respond Amen to the blessing. Thus, the regular text of the blessing is *hagefen*. The blessings of *hamekhin mitz'ade gaver* and *shelo asani aved*, in contrast, are usually recited by someone who is at home alone as explained above in halakha 11, without anyone next to him to respond Amen. This might be the reason, therefore, that these blessings end with the words *gaver* and *aved*. See the *Yalkut Yosef Berakhot English Edition* 217:7.

ברכת "שעשה לי כל צרכי"

לט. ברכת "שעשה לי כל צרכי" תקנוה על נעילת מנעלים, כי היחף אינו יכול לעשות צרכיו וצרכי ביתו. וכיון שלבש מנעליו, כאילו נעשו לו כל צרכיו, שהרי אז הוא מוכן ללכת לכל אשר ירצה.

[בא"ח וישב ה"ט בשם הש"צ, וכ"ה בלבוש ס"ב]

ויש שכתבו הטעם שמברך על המנעלים, משום שאין לך מגונה מההולך ערום ויחף, ולכן מקודם בירך "מלביש ערומים", ועתה מברך "שעשה לי כל צרכי", כלומר דבמנעלים השלים לי כל צרכי הלבישה. [ערוך השלחן ס"ד]

מ. מנהגינו לברך ברכת "שעשה לי כל צרכי", אחר שבירך "המכין מצעדי גבר". [ראה תפלה לדוד אות קג. וע"ע עוד יוסף חי וישב ה"י, מקבציאל הלכה טו-טז, כה"ח ס"ק ח"י בשם הרש"ש]

מא. בברכת שעשה לי כל "צָרְכִּי" יש לומר הכ"ף בחיריק ודגושה. [כה"ח פאלאג'י סי' ט סי"א, כה"ח סופר ס"ק טז]. וכן מנהג מרן הראש"ל זצ"ל. [אורחות מרן ח"א עמ' קמח]

She'asa Li Kol Tzorki

For the gift of footwear

39) This blessing refers specifically to the gift of having shoes to protect the feet and enable a person to walk, run, kick, and climb without injuring them. The words of the blessing mean "Who has made for me everything I need." When someone has proper footwear and is able to go about his business freely and get to wherever he wishes to arrive, it is as if he has everything he needs.[30]

Another interpretation is that it is undignified to go about underdressed or barefoot. First, we thank God for our clothes with the blessing of *malbish arumim*, but we are fully dressed only when we put on our shoes. Therefore, we recite the blessing of *she'asa li kol tzorki* at that time, thanking God for providing all we need to be fully dressed.

Order of the blessings

40) Our custom is to recite the blessing of *she'asa li kol tzorki* after that of *hamekhin mitz'ade gaver*.

Tzorki* vs. *Tzerakhai

41) Maran the Rishon Letziyon taught that the proper text of this blessing includes the word *tzorki*, with a *dagesh* inside the letter *kaf* and a *hirik* underneath it (כִּ), rather than the word *tzerakhai* (צָרְכָי).

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30. This explanation appears in the *Ben Ish Hai* (*parashat Vayeshev* halakha 9). In the *Od Yosef Hai* (ibid., halakha 8), he asked why we consider the gift of shoes to be so important that it should warrant its own blessing. The other blessings thank God for things that are infinitely more important, such as the ability to see, to reason, and to move. If there were no shoes in the world, things would be more difficult, but it would not affect the world critically. In fact, in many societies it is normal for people to go about barefoot even while engaged in hard labor. Furthermore, everyone needs the ability to see, to reason, and to move even if he remains confined to his home all day long, but he would not need his shoes at all in that case, especially if his home has a paved or tiled floor.

For all these reasons, the *Od Yosef Hai* concluded that the real benefit for which this blessing is recited is a spiritual benefit beyond our conception.