ברכת "עוטר ישראל בתפארה"

מד. ברכת "עוטר ישראל בתפארה", מברך על מה שמשים כובע או מצנפת בראשו. [ראה ש"ע סי' מו ס"א].
והוא הדין לכל כובע ולכל כיסוי. [תוס' ברכות שם]

מד. הזכיר "ישראל" בשתי ברכות אלו: "אוזר ישראל בגבורה", "עוטר ישראל בתפארה", מה שאין כן באחרות, והטעם הוא מפני שכל ההנאות הנזכרים הם שייכים בכל אדם ואפילו בגוים, אך שתי ברכות אלו אינם שייכים כי אם בישראל לחוד, כי רק ישראל שיש להם תורה ודבר קדושה נתחייבו באזור כדי להפסיק בין לבם לערוה, מה שאין כן הגוים שלא שייך בהם זה, כי על מה הם צריכים לאזור ?!

Day 13

Oter Yisrael Betif'ara

The gift of head coverings

44) With this blessing we thank God for providing us hats, turbans, and other head coverings.[34]

The gift of an exalted status

45) These two blessings – *ozer Yisrael bigvura* and *oter Yisrael betif'ara* – are unique among the morning blessings since they specify the exalted status of Yisrael. All the other physical benefits described in the other blessings apply to all the world's people, but the benefits described in these two blessings are spiritual, and only the people of Yisrael have these privileges. The people of Yisrael have been commanded to study the Torah and to pray to God, and therefore they must wear garments that symbolize a barrier between their hearts and their genitals by wearing pants or a belt. Other peoples have no such need; they may pray to God even without such a barrier.

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34. The Talmud (*Berakhot* 60b) teaches: "When someone puts on his head covering, he must recite the blessing of *oter Yisrael*. The *Bet Yosef* cited Rabbenu David Abudarham testifying that the Jewish residents of Arab countries all recite this blessing since their practice is to wear a turban or fez, which is similar to a crown. In Spain, however, people do not wear a turban or a fez, and therefore the Jews residing there do not recite this blessing. Tosafot (ibid.), however, ruled that this blessing must be recited for the benefit of wearing any sort of hat or head covering. The *Peri Hadash* (46:1) likewise insisted that this blessing applies to all head coverings, pointing out that [even in Arab countries] only people in high social positions wore the type of head covering called *sudar*. Our Sages taught (*Kiddushin* 29b) that even an esteemed Torah scholar in the Talmudic era did not wear a *sudar* unless he was married. Yet, no one suggests that the blessing is to be recited only by those who wear that particular type of head covering. The blessing was instituted for the benefit of head coverings of all types, without distinction.

Maran added that the reason for reciting a separate blessing for head coverings besides the blessing recited for all garments is that it is forbidden to go about bareheaded, and that this reasoning is supported by the Talmud in *Shabbat* 118b. Even those *Poskim* who ruled that it is not forbidden to go about bareheaded agreed that it is preferable from a halachic viewpoint to wear a head covering constantly. See the discussion on this topic above in *Siman* 2. The *Zohar* (*Naso* page 122b) states unequivocally that one must keep one's head covered at all times. Since this applies to Jewish people only, and the practice of wearing a head covering assists one in developing the fear for Heaven, we recite this blessing to thank God for crowning us with glory.

וכן ישראל שהשכינה שורה למעלה מראשיהם, מחוייבים הם לכסות ראשם בעבור כבוד השכינה, אך אומות העולם אין עליהם השראת שכינה ח"ו, ולכן תמצא כי אדרבא רובם דרכם לגלות ראשם ללכת פרועי ראש, כדי לגלות שראשם חפוי ואין עליהם השראת קדושה. [מקבציאל פ' וישב הי"ח. וכ"ה באבודרהם ובט"ז ס"ק ב ועוד. וע"ע בב"י]

מו. יש נוהגים להתעטף בציצית קודם ברכת "אוזר ישראל בגבורה". [שיירי כנה"ג סי' ח אות א]. והרא"ש היה מסדר הברכות עד "עוטר ישראל בתפארה", ואז היה מניח תפילין ומברך "עוטר ישראל בתפארה" [ש"ע סי' כה ס"ג], וטעמו, לפי שהתפילין נקראין פאר, שנאמר [יחזקאל כד, יז] "פְּאֵרְךָ חֲבוֹשׁ עָלֶיךָ". [טור שם]. **אולם** העולם לא נהגו כן, אלא מברכים כל ברכות השחר, כולל ברכות התורה, ואחר כך מתעטפים בטלית ומניחים תפילין. וכפי מנהג האר"י והרש"ש. ונתבאר לעיל בסימן כ"ה הלכה כ'.

Likewise, since the Shekhina hovers above the heads of the people of Yisrael to protect them, they are expected to cover their heads in respect of the Shekhina. Since non-Jews are not connected to the Shekhina, there are very few non-Jewish societies, if any, where religious dogma requires one to keep one's head covered.

Connection to tzitzit and tefillin

46) At one time, there were people who observed the practice of putting on a garment with tzitzit just before reciting the blessing of *ozer Yisrael bigvura*. Rabbenu Asher had the custom of reciting the morning blessings up to that of *oter Yisrael betif'ara* and then pausing to put on his tefillin before reciting that blessing. He reasoned that tefillin are the glory of the nation of Yisrael, based on the verse (*Yehezkel* 24:17), "פְּאֵרְךָ חֲבוֹשׁ עָלֶיךָ – fasten your glory upon you."[35] Therefore, he reasoned that this blessing refers to God's gift of the mitzvah of tefillin.

Nowadays, no one observes these customs. We recite the morning blessings all at once, including the blessings over the mitzvah of Torah study, and only afterward we put on our tallit and tefillin. This procedure follows the instructions of the Arizal and Harav Shalom Mizrahi Sharabi, as explained above in *Siman* 25:20.

35. The author of *Arba'a Turim* testified that this was the practice of his father, Rabbenu Asher, and this is cited in the *Shulhan Arukh* (25:3). The *Mishna Berura* explained that tefillin are the glory of the people of Yisrael as we are taught in *Berakhot* 6a: "All the nations will see that God's Name is called upon you and they will fear you," referring to the mitzvah of tefillin. Therefore, Rabbenu Asher used this blessing to express his thanks for this glory.

Rabbenu Asher was a proponent of the practice of first going to the synagogue and then reciting all the morning blessings. Apparently, the *Artzot Hahayim* (46:24) pointed out, it was his practice to put on his tefillin only after arriving in the synagogue, counter to the instructions given in the *Zohar* to put on the tefillin at home and then go to the synagogue. Apparently, Rabbenu Asher was unaware of the *Zohar's* existence.

ברכת "שלא עשני גוי, עבד, אשה"

מז. צריך לברך בכל יום: "שלא עשני גוי", "שלא עשני עבד", "שלא עשני אשה". [ש"ע ס"ד ע"פ מנחות מג ע"ב]
ומנהג הספרדים לברכן בסוף ברכות השחר קודם ברכת "המעביר חבלי שינה". [ראה בטור ובכה"ח ס"ק ח"י].
אולם האשכנזים מברכים אותן מיד אחר ברכת "הנותן לשכוי בינה" [טור שם. וראה בערוה"ש ס"א]

Shelo Asani Goy, Eved, Isha

The gift of being who we are

47) Every day, we are obligated to bless God for the fact that we are full-fledged Jews, that we do not have the inferior status of non-Jews[36] or non-Jewish slaves belonging to a Jew. Men are obligated to recite an additional blessing thanking God for the fact that they are male and not female.[37]

The custom of Sefardic Jews is to recite these blessings at the end of the list of short blessings, just before the blessing of *hama'avir hevle shena*. Ashkenazic Jews recite these three blessings at the start of the list, immediately after the blessing of *hanoten lasekhvi bina*.

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36. *Shelo asani goy*

The responsa *Zekher Yehosef* Stern (#13, cited in the *Sede Hemed Asifat Dinim ma'arekhet Herufin* #5) pointed out that there is a problem with using the term *goy* to refer to non-Jews. After all, the Jewish nation is also referred to as a *goy* many times in the Torah and the books of the Prophets, and the term is used in a positive, complimentary context. For example, the verse states (*Divre Hayamim I* 17:21): וּמִי כְעַמְּךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל גּוֹי אֶחָד בָּאָרֶץ – Who can be compared to Your nation Yisrael, one *goy* on earth?" He concluded that the term *goy* is indeed incorrect, but the Church's censor inserted that term so that the blessing would not be derogatory toward Christians.

Some *Poskim* substituted the term *nokhri* for the term *goy*. See Harav Zalman's *Shulhan Arukh Harav* and the *Torat Hayim* Sofer (46:11). The *Zekher Yehosef* rejected both these terms, explaining that the term *nokhri* means a stranger or someone who is not related, but not necessarily a non-Jew. The term *arel* (uncircumcised person) is not a choice either, since that is a physical distinction while we wish to mark a spiritual distinction.

There is a testimony (Harav S. Bloch) that *Hafetz Hayim* recited the blessing of *shelo asani oved kochavim umazalot* – Who did not make me an idol-worshipper. Many authorities rejected this text as well, since there are millions of non-Jews who do not worship idols.

The accepted and widespread custom is to recite the text of *shelo asani goy*. The *Aharonim* explained that although the Jewish nation is also referred to as a *goy*, when the term refers to a single individual it always means a non-Jew.

The *Sede Hemed's* conclusion is that it is best to say *shelo asani goy kegoye ha'aratzot*. The *Orah Ne'eman* complained that people must not assume that they can change the text of our blessings as they please, and he ruled that one should think these extra words and not verbalize them. Despite this complaint, one may follow the advice of the *Sede Hemed*. In this case one is not necessarily adding to or changing the blessing. If the additional words *kegoye ha'aratzot* are a legitimate suffix to the blessing, it is fine to recite those words. If they should not be part of the blessing, then we can stipulate that they should not be considered part of the blessing, since the blessing ended with the word *goy* and the additional words can be considered a separate statement. This is similar to adding the words *ve'al hakalkala* to the end of the blessing of *me'en shalosh*, or adding the word *umatzli'ah* to the end of the final blessing at a wedding ceremony, as is commonly done.

37. Why not use more positive wording?

The *Bayit Hadash* pointed out that with all the other morning blessings, the text expresses thanks and describes things that God created for our benefit, saying that He gave our hearts the ability to discern, He gave us clothing, He enabled us to see, and so forth. We do not, however, bless God for creating us as Jews, reciting the words *she'asani Yisrael*. Rather, we bless Him for not creating us as non-Jews.

The *Bayit Hadash* cited several authorities who reconciled this by citing the Talmud (*Eruvin* 13b) declaring that man would have been better off if he had never been created. If so, it makes no sense to bless God for having

מה. שלושת ברכות אלו יברך דוקא על פי הסדר הנזכר, משום שבכל אחד יש תוספת שבח, מפני שהעבד עדיף יותר מגוי, והאשה עדיפה מעבד.

ואם טעה וקדם ובירך ברכת "שלא עשני אשה" קודם שיברך "שלא עשני גוי", ו"שלא עשני עבד". יש אומרים שלא יברך עוד שתי הברכות הנזכרות של עבד וגוי, אלא יהרהר שם ומלכות בליבו. [ראה באי"ח וישב הי"י, מקבציאל שם הי"ט, כה"ח ס"ק לד]. אולם להלכה רשאי לברך שתי ברכות אלו בשם ומלכות, ויש לו על מה שיסמוך. [הליכו"ע ח"א עמ' נד]

In the proper order

48) These three blessings must be recited in the proper order, since each blessing thanks God for a greater gift than that expressed in the preceding blessing. This is because the soul of a non-Jewish slave who belongs to a Jew is on a higher level than the soul of a non-Jew, and a Jewish woman's soul is on an even higher level.

Some *Poskim* ruled that if someone mistakenly recited the blessing of *shelo asani isha* before reciting that of *shelo asani goy* or that of *shelo asani aved*, he may no longer recite the blessing or blessings that he skipped. According to this opinion, he should recite those blessings while meditating on God's Names without pronouncing them. In practice, however, there is a sound basis to permit him to recite these blessings in full, and he may certainly rely on that opinion.[38]

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created us. When we recite these three blessings, it is as if we are saying, "I wish that I had not been created, but now that God has created me, I will bless Him for not creating me a non-Jew, a non-Jewish slave, or even a Jewish woman.

The *Bayit Hadash* did not consider this answer satisfactory, and therefore he offered his own resolution, as follows: If our Sages had instituted a blessing of *she'asani Yisrael*, it would not be possible to afterward recite blessings to thank God for being created as a free man and for being created as a male. Once a person says that God created him as a Yisrael, he has already stated that he is not a slave and that he is male, since a Jewish woman would not be called Yisrael but *Yisraelit*. The only way we can recite three separate blessings is by thanking God for not creating us with inferior human souls. We first thank God for not creating us as non-Jews, then for not creating us as non-Jewish slaves, and finally men thank Him for not creating them as females.

The *Ture Zahav* offered an alternative resolution: If we would simply recite a blessing of "for making me a Yisrael," it would suggest that the creation of non-Jews and of women is worthless. This is not true; Jewish woman are essential and occupy an honored place in both this world and in the World to Come. Furthermore, the world benefits from the creation of the non-Jews as well, especially since many of them convert and join the nation of Yisrael. The Talmud states (*Bava Kama* 38b) that God guaranteed the continued existence of the nations of Amon and Moab because He knew that in the future two righteous women, Ruth (of Moab) and Na'ama (of Amon), would convert and assume prominent positions in our history.

Who did not make me

The *Bayit Hadash* explained that these blessings are meant to thank God for the fact that we were not born as a different person. At the moment that a child is conceived, an angel is instructed to place a soul inside the embryo. Each person thanks God every day of his life that He did not decree for his soul to be deposited in the body of a non-Jew. According to this interpretation, a convert would not recite the blessing of *shelo asani goy* since his soul had originally been that of a non-Jew at the time of his conception and birth.

38. The *Magen Avraham* (46:9) and other *Aharonim* compared this set of blessings to the blessings of *matir asurim* and *zokef kefufim*. Just as someone who mistakenly recited *zokef kefufim* first cannot afterward recite the blessing of *matir asurim* (as explained above in halakha 31), the same halakha applies to someone who recited *shelo asani isha* before reciting the blessings of *shelo asani goy* or *shelo asani aved*. Likewise, if someone recited *shelo asani aved* before reciting the blessing of *shelo asani goy*, he may no longer recite the blessing that he skipped.