

הקשר היהודי שלך

Your Jewish Connection

Brought to you by the Lifelong Learning Committee – *Written by Linda S Trapasso*

The Once-in-28-Years Mitzvah

When the sun returns to the same position, at the same time of the week, that it occupied at the time of its creation, we recite a special blessing: *Birkat Hachamah*, Blessing of the Sun.

**This mitzvah was last performed on April 8, 2009.
Its next occurrence will be, God willing, April 8, 2037.**



Birkat Hachamah is a special blessing made on the “anniversary” of the Sun’s apparent motion from the Earth. It is a rare and special blessing as it is made only once every 28 years and one normally only has two or so chances in a lifetime to perform.

On this day, we set aside time to appreciate the gift of the Sun and all life that comes from its energy. Tradition states that the confluence of these dates, this particular ar-

range of the cosmos, has happened only twice before: first, when the Israelites emerged from the bondage of Egypt to become a People; and second, when they were saved from the evils of persecution under Haman.

The blessing is “Blessed are you, Eternal our God, Source of the Universe, who does the works of creation.”

Since Talmudical times, this simple blessing has grown into a more complex liturgical order. The earliest printed order of blessing for *Birkat Hachamah* comes from the Sephardic world, published in Leghorn (Livorno), Italy, in a prayer book entitled *Tefilah zakah*, compiled by Rabbi Abraham Isaac Castello (Castilho) in 1789. The Library of Hebrew Union College, in their rare book collections, possesses an attractive hand-colored illustrated pamphlet of this liturgy. Images of the pamphlet are at [this web site](#).

To learn how the date is calculated, refer to [Wikipedia](#) and the [Berachot Site](#). A [less detailed description](#) is at MyJewishLearning.

Chabad.org has an [overview page](#) that includes a short Sun video and additional pages, such as [Multimedia articles](#) and [Study and insights](#). Some ways to observe are at [MyJewishLearning](#). See supplementary prayers at [ritualwell](#). And a music video by Rabbi Shawn Zevit is at [YouTube](#).

Though this blessing is once every 28 years, I would prefer to think of blessings for all God’s creations as being part of every day. As spring is here, I am thankful to end the winter and receive the Sun’s warmth.



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