



BLESSINGS ON PLEASURE

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Birkhot Hanehenin are blessings recited before pleasurable experiences including, and limited, to food, drink, and fragrances.

B. Talmud Berakhot 35a-b

Our Rabbis have taught: It is forbidden for a person to enjoy anything of this world without a benediction, and if anyone enjoys anything of this world without a benediction, he commits sacrilege. What is his remedy? He should consult a wise man. What will the wise man do for him? He has already committed the offence! — Said Raba: What it means is that he should consult a wise man beforehand, so that he should teach him blessings and he should not commit sacrilege. Rab Judah said in the name of Samuel: To enjoy anything of this world without a benediction is like making personal use of things consecrated to heaven, since it says. The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof. R. Levi contrasted two texts. It is written, 'The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof', and it is also written, The heavens are the heavens of the Lord, but the earth hath He given to the children of men! There is no contradiction: in the one case it is before a blessing has been said in the other case after. R. Hanina b. Papa said: To enjoy this world without a benediction is like robbing the Holy One, blessed be He, and the community of Israel, as it says. Whoso robbeth his father or his mother and saith, It is no transgression, the same is the companion of a destroyer; and 'father' is none other but the Holy One, blessed be He, as it says. Is not He thy father that hath gotten thee; and 'mother' is none other than the community of Israel, as it says, Hear, my son, the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the teaching of thy mother. What is the meaning of 'he is the companion of a destroyer'? — R. Hanina b. Papa answered: He is the companion of Jeroboam son of Nebat who destroyed Israel's [faith in] their Father in heaven.

Blessings on Food

6 "Food Groups"

1. Fruits of the Tree
2. General Produce
3. Grains (but not bread)
4. Bread
5. Wine
6. Miscellaneous

All Birkhot Hanehanin start with the following opening:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם

Baruch ata ad-onay, elo-heinu melech haolam

Blessed are you Hashem, our Lord, King of the world

For fruits from trees: בוֹרָא פְּרֵי הָעֵץ Boreiy pree ha'etz Who creates the fruit of the trees	For vegetables and other fruits: בוֹרָא פְּרֵי הָאֲדָמָה Boreiy pree ha'adamah Who creates the fruits of the ground
For bread: הַמוֹצִיא לֶחֶם מִן הָאָרֶץ Hamotzie lechem myn ha'aretz Who brings forth bread from the ground	For cakes & cookies etc.: בוֹרָא מִיְּנֵי מִזֻּנוֹת Boreiy minei mezonot Who creates various types of foods
For wine and grape juice: בוֹרָא פְּרֵי הַגָּפֶן Boreiy pree hagafen Who creates the fruit of the wine	For drinks, meat, fish, cheese: שֶׁהַכֹּל נִהְיָה בְּדַבְּרוֹ Shehakol niyah bidvaro Everything was created through His word

General Rules

- Say a Bracha on ANY amount of food/drink.
- Look at the food/drink before reciting the Bracha. Make sure it's fit for a Bracha.
- Customary to hold the food/drink in your right hand, or left hand if you're a lefty.
- Before you begin the Bracha, know which Bracha is the appropriate one.
- Don't talk between the Bracha and the eating/drinking.
- If you forgot to say a Bracha before eating, as long as you still have some food left you still have to say the Bracha.

Oddities/Exceptions

- **Raw vs. Cooked** - Fruits and vegetables which are normally eaten cooked but not raw – would receive their ideal bracha (He'eitz or Ha'adoma) when cooked, and only shehakol when eaten raw. (Think peanuts which are always roasted). Fruits and vegetables which are normally eaten raw and not cooked – receive their ideal bracha in their raw state, and a shehakol when cooked (E.g, cooked watermelon). Fruits and vegetables which are normally eaten either raw or cooked, receive their ideal bracha both when raw or cooked (e.g., carrots). There is some relativity to this.
- **Identifiability** – Can you recognize it? Finely chopped fruits and vegetables retain their ideal bracha. If however, there were blended to a puree - then it is a medieval dispute. The halachic consensus is that one should make a shehakol on fruits and vegetables that are mashed or blended so much that they are no longer recognizable. (Does apple sauce resemble an apple?) Of course cake made with wheat flour is mezonot despite the fact you can't recognize the wheat in the cake. This
- **Do I really intend to eat/drink this?** – Complicated issue. Essentially, what do I do when two different food groups are present as one culinary experience? Cracker under caviar. Cone under ice-cream. Milk in cereal. Sushi. Water for a pill.
- **Order** – Whole fruit before cut fruit. Large fruit before small fruit. Fruit from the land of Israel first. Preference trumps mostly everything.
- **Miscellaneous** – Non-kosher food, hydroponics, papaya, hearts of palm, gum, lemons,

If both are cut (not whole) you should say the Bracha over the larger one.

Blessing on Fragrance

B. Talmud Berakhot 43a-43b

R. Zutra b. Tobiah said in the name of Rab: Whence do we learn that a blessing should be said over sweet odours? Because it says, Let every soul praise the Lord. What is that which gives enjoyment to the soul and not to the body? — You must say that this is fragrant smell.

5 “Smell Groups”

1. Tree
2. Grasses/Herbs
3. Miscellaneous
4. Oil
5. Fruit

Upon smelling fragrant shrubs and trees, or their flowers (e.g., roses): בּוֹרָא עֵצֵי בְשָׁמִים Boreiy atzei besamim Who creates the trees of fragrance	Upon smelling fragrant herbs, grasses or flowers: בּוֹרָא עֵשְׂבֵי בְשָׁמִים Boreiy issibeiy besamim Who creates the grasses of fragrance
Upon entering a perfumery or upon smelling fragrances of (a) non-vegetable origin (e.g., musk); (b) undetermined origin; or (c) a blend of spices of different origins: בּוֹרָא מִיְי בְשָׁמִים Boreiy mineiy besamim Who creates the types of fragrance	Upon smelling fragrant oils: בּוֹרָא שְׁמֵן עֵרֵב Boreiy shemen areiv Who creates stirring (sweet) oil
Upon smelling fragrant edible fruit or nuts: הַנּוֹתֵן רֵיחַ טוֹב בַּפְּרוֹת Hanotein reiyach tov ba'peiros Who gives a good scent in fruit	