

**ברכת השנים**

**Content Goals:**

- Students will understand the placement of this ברכה with the פרנסה for ברכה following the one for רפואה.
- Students will understand that this ברכה asks for success with one's livelihood.
- Students will understand why we say this ברכה given that one's livelihood is determined on ראש השנה.
- Students will understand the significance of the term שנה and טובה in this ברכה.

**Hashkafic Goals:**

- Students will understand that while we need to put in effort, our success in פרנסה ultimately comes from ה'.
- Students will recognize that turning to ה' is a way of dealing with change.
- Students will internalize our belief that תפילה is real and works.

**Social/Emotional or Interpersonal Goals:**

- Students will reflect on the experience of going through changes.
- Students will reflect on the idea that we can be happy with what we have.

**Halachic/ Practical Goals:**

- Students will know when and what to insert into this ברכה regarding seasonal changes.

**Critical and Creative Thinking Skill Goals:**

- Students will recognize repetitive words in this ברכה and analyze their significance.

**JSAT Goals:**

- Students will be familiar with the rules of inserting ותן טל ומטר; see JSAT 8 Standards page 42.

**PUTTING THINGS IN PERSPECTIVE**

In the previous ברכה we asked ה' for רפואה. Why do you think the ברכה for פרנסה, for a livelihood, follows?

The משנה ברורה (קטו:א) explains that when someone is sick, they cannot focus on a livelihood. When a person is healed, they can once again resume their efforts to make a living. In addition, the food that one is able to bring home can continue to strengthen a person and keep them healthy.

Many raise a fundamental question about this ברכה based on the גמרא below:



**ביצה טז.**

כָּל מְזוֹנוֹתָיו שֶׁל אָדָם קְצוּבִים לוֹ מֵרֵאשׁ הַשָּׁנָה וְעַד יוֹם הַכְּפוּרִים, חוּץ מֵהוֹצָאת שְׂכָתוֹת וְהוֹצָאת יוֹם טוֹב וְהוֹצָאת בְּנֵי לְתִלְמוּד תּוֹרָה...

*A person's entire livelihood is determined for him during the days of ראש השנה to ראש השנה except for expenditures for שבת, expenditures for יום טוב, and expenditures for his childrens' תורה study...*

What question could you ask on the purpose of this ברכה based on the גמרא above? \_\_\_\_\_

Why do you think we daven for a livelihood if it has already been determined on ראש השנה? \_\_\_\_\_

ראש השנה explains that on the general amount of one's earnings is allotted. How that amount will be distributed – conveniently, proportionately, effectively, in the right time, how it will be used – is decided based on our daily תפילה.



בקשה


Imagine that it was determined on ראש השנה that someone would earn \$200,000 that year. What still needs to be determined daily? What still needs to happen to make sure that person can enjoy those earnings? What could happen to prevent him from using them?

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It is true that decisions are made on ראש השנה related to our פרנסה, but there is still lots to daven for each day!

 **THINK ABOUT IT**

If we daven for a livelihood, why do we need to work for it? If we work for a livelihood, why do we need to daven for it? The two concepts of בטחון, trust in ה', and השתדלות, putting in effort, need to be balanced. How do we balance these two ideas?

 **FROM THE HEART; TO THE HEART**

It is told that the holy Rama, Rav Moshe Isserles, זצ"ל, Rav of Cracow and author of the famous Ashkenazi commentary on the Shulchan Aruch, in his elder years, decided to retire from Rabbinical leadership... Despite the community's uproar, he was firm about his decision, and would not allow himself to be swayed. It seemed nothing could change his mind, not even the promise of money — a rare commodity for a community rabbi. It was thus with great surprise that, just weeks before the scheduled date of retirement, the rabbinical lay-committee, whose job it had been to find a replacement for the irreplaceable R' Moshe, now found themselves sitting across the table from him, listening to him say that he had changed his mind, and wished to remain Rabbi of Cracow— assuming they would still have him.



*Consider ways to emphasize this idea for students practically. We mentioned earlier that students should balance studying for tests with asking ה' for help. Where else do students put in effort for something in their lives? Students who are on a team or preparing a play etc. could be encouraged to daven for success in addition to their hard work.*

“You may be wondering,” he told them, “what brought about my sudden, complete, and inexplicable change-of-heart (they were!). It was due to a case that came before me this morning, the details of which I will now tell you. “There is a talmid chacham in our community, R’ Efraim Mendel, who for many years earned an honest yet meager living selling bagels in the marketplace. Unbeknownst to me, R’ Efraim Mendel entered into a “Yisasschar-Zevulun” agreement with another gentleman, R’ Yitzchok, whereby R’ Yitzchok would support R’ Efraim Mendel in full, and R’ Efraim Mendel in turn would dedicate himself completely to Torah study, without having to worry about selling his bagels. R’ Efraim Mendel, it seems, has now decided the agreement is no longer to his liking, and wants to be released from the deal. R’ Yitzchok refuses to release him. He produced a signed document that entitles him to continue supporting R’ Efraim Mendel, in exchange for which he would be entitled to his portion of the reward for R’ Efraim Mendel’s Torah study. ‘We have an agreement,’ he said adamantly, ‘and I have no intention of terminating it!’

“I needed some background. Turning to R’ Efraim Mendel, I asked him how this agreement came about, especially since I knew R’ Efraim Mendel was exceptionally humble, and very few people knew of his vast knowledge of Torah and amazing diligence, let alone an outsider.”



“The Rav knows that every morning my wife and I would get up at four o’clock to begin making our bagels. After davening כותיקין (with sunrise), I would take a ספר תהלים in my hand, and pray as my rebbitzen began measuring the flour to mix with the water. As she kneaded the dough, I prayed to ה' that the dough be a consistent one. When she put the bagels in the oven, I would continue to pray that they would bake evenly and would be tasty. Finally, after the bagels were ready, I would pray to ה' as I walked to the market that I would quickly and easily find buyers for my wares, so that I could be finished with my work for the day, and be off to the בית מדרש to begin my day of Torah study. It was hard work, true, but every step of the way I would pray with all my heart, and ברוך ה' people liked our bagels, and we made a fine living.

## בקשה

“One morning I was standing in the market peddling my wares as always when this guest, R’ Yitzchok, happened to stop buy. He wanted to buy some bagels. He started talking to himself about whether the correct ברכה on the bagels would be המוציא or מזונות. I offered him my opinion, and when he disagreed, I proceeded to prove to him from Shas and poskim that I was indeed correct.’ “Frankly, I was flabbergasted,’ R’ Yitzchok continued. ‘Whoever heard of a bagel salesman who knew Shas and poskim with such clarity?!



On the spot, I made him an impulsive yet serious offer. He had no business selling bagels like a commoner. I would support him comfortably from now on, in exchange for the honor of backing such an erudite scholar, and having some small share in his learning. We drew up a contract with the terms, and I immediately began sending him a monthly stipend. And now, I cannot fathom why, he wants out. Have I not given to him generously enough?’

“Of course not!,’ said R’ Efraim Moshe. ‘And that is exactly my problem. I feel like I no longer need ה'. I don't worry about the dough, or the flour, or the customers. No more heart-felt תהלים for an easy day. It's all so cozy and comfortable—but where's my relationship with ה'!? That's why I want out.



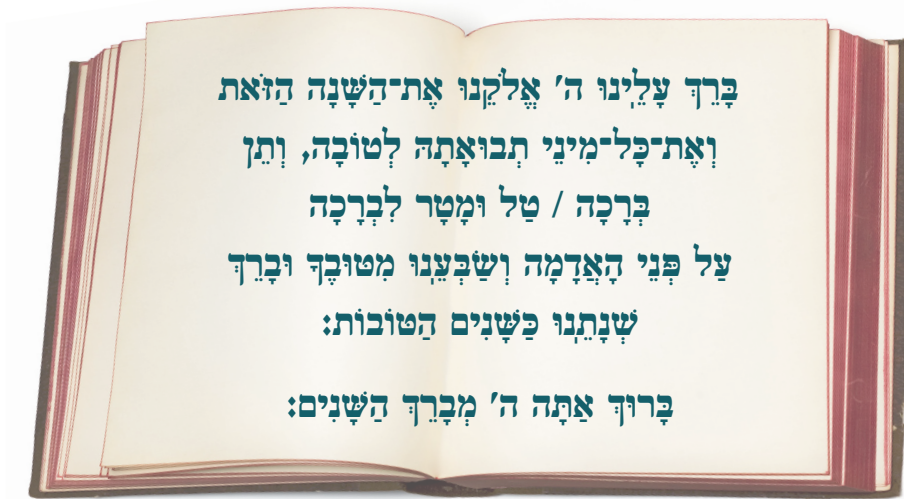
I'm not willing to give up those heart-felt prayers— and our need to ask ה' to give us sustenance every day—for any money in the world!’

“And I say,” concluded the Rama, “that in a city in which such a דין תורה can take place... why, I'd be a fool to leave such a holy city!”

<https://torah.org/torah-portion/olas-shabbos-5766-devarim/>



**MAKING IT MEANINGFUL**



1. Look at the ברכה above. Circle the word “ברכה” each time it appears. Underline the word “שנה” each time it appears.

Why do you think this ברכה focuses so much on blessing our “year”? Why does the ברכה not focus on blessing our livelihood?

אליהו says that שנה refers not only to a year but to שנוי or change. We ask ה' that for every change and every “bump in the road” that we face, we will be blessed.

Have you ever experienced a change? Did you ever go through something unexpected? What was it and what could you have asked ה' for to help you through that experience?

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*Here is an opportunity to discuss challenges with students. Change can be difficult but can also make us stronger. This is an opportunity to describe how turning to ה' during these times is helpful. It is also an opportunity to encourage others to be supportive of peers going through changes or difficulty.*

**בקשה**

Perhaps, we could suggest another answer more in line with the simple translation, based on what we discussed earlier.

If everything is determined on ראש השנה but how it is distributed during the year still requires תפילה, what do you think we mean when we ask 'ה to bless our year?

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**2. וְאֶת־כָּל־מִינֵי תְבוּאֹתֶיהָ לְטוֹבָה.**

We ask 'ה that our sustenance be "for the good". Can you think of ways that our sustenance could be bad for us? Imagine 'ה determined that you deserve \$100 or a delicious cake.

How could those things turn out good, and how could they turn out bad?

לטובה	לרעה
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

**3. וְתַן טַל וּמָטָר לְבִרְכָה.**

מטר refers to rain. Can you think of another word for rain? \_\_\_\_\_

Why does the ברכה use the word מטר instead?

The גשמיות explains that גשם refers to physical or natural rain (גשמיות) as opposed to מטר which comes supernaturally from the השגחה of 'ה. We prefer מטר!



**DID YOU KNOW?**

From December 4th (and Dec. 5th in a leap year) until פסח we ask for rain by saying ותן טל ומטר לברכה. On פסח we start saying only ותן ברכה. We start in חוץ לארץ on December 4th because that was when rain in בבל was needed. The calculation is complicated. In ארץ ישראל they begin asking on ז' מרחשון. This gave the עולי הרגל enough time to get home after סוכות and not get caught in the rain.



**THINK ABOUT IT**



We really should start asking for rain on חז"ל but שמיני עצרת were concerned that those returning home from ירושלים would get caught in the rain. It is remarkable that there was a concern that if we would daven for rain it would actually start raining right away! That is how much חז"ל believed in our תפילה!

*The goal here is to emphasize that davening is REAL! It works. We need to believe it!*



**FROM THE HEART; TO THE HEART**

A young boy once accompanied his father to the כותל המערבי to a mass gathering of תפילה due to a serious drought in ארץ ישראל. The crowd recited תהילים with great fervor. At one point, the boy tugged on his fathers shirt and said "Abba, if we daven, will it rain?" The father turned to his son and said "Of course, sweetheart, if we daven real hard, it will rain!" A few minutes later, the boy asked again, "Abba, will it really rain if we daven heard?" and once again the fathered responded, "Yes, Yes, let's keep davening!" Finally, a few minutes later, the boy turned to his father and said, "Abba, if it's going to rain, why didn't anyone bring an umbrella?"



This young boy realized that our תפילות are real. Like חז"ל, we need to believe in the effectiveness of our תפילות. Our תפילה for rain has the ability to bring rain!

**TIE-INS תנ"ך**

Review here the story in פרק יב:טו where שמואל davens for rain during the harvest season which רש"י notes is a סימן קללה. סימן קללה does so even though the rain in this case would be damaging, to demonstrate that the request of בני"ב for a king was a sin. We ask here for the rain to be לברכה. Sometimes, rain is not a ברכה.

בקשה

**4. וְשִׂבְעָנוּ מִטּוֹבָךְ.**

We ask ה' to satisfy us. Even with a lot, a person can be unsatisfied. Even with a little, a person can be satisfied.

The משנה teaches us:



**אבות ד:א**

בן זומא אומר... איזהו עשיר, השמח בחלקו, שנאמר יגיע כפיך כי תאכל אשריך וטוב לך.  
 בן זומא: *Who is rich? One who is happy with their portion, as it says, "If you eat from the toil of your hands, it is fortunate for you, and it is good for you."*

How does the משנה relate to our ברכה?

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Can you think of a way that you can be satisfied with little?

*Unfortunately, we live in a world where people are obsessed with having what others have. Encouraging students to be happy with what they have and to appreciate the gifts they have is invaluable. Consider encouraging an "איזהו עשיר" project where students record what they are happy that they do have each day. This will help them focus on what they have; not what they do not have.*

**5. וּבִרְךְּ שָׁנֵינוּ כְּשָׁנִים הַטּוֹבוֹת.**

We ask ה' to bless us like in the "good years". What years do you think we are referring to?



שיח יצחק says it refers to good years in the past.

Rav Schwab says it refers to good years in the future.

What time periods do you think these words refer to? What made them good?

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כל הלומד תורה ואינו חוזר עליה, דומה לאדם שזורע ואינו קוצר (סנהדרין צט).



**REVIEWING AND REAPING**

**Understand the Words:**

בְּרַךְ עָלֵינוּ ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

אֶת הַשָּׁנָה הַזֹּאת \_\_\_\_\_

וְאֶת כָּל מִינֵי \_\_\_\_\_

תְּבוּאָתָהּ לְטוֹבָה. \_\_\_\_\_

וְתֵן \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ (בְּקִיץ) - בְּרֵכָה

\_\_\_\_\_ (בַּחֹרֶף) - טַל וּמָטָר לְבְרָכָה

עַל פְּנֵי הָאָדָמָה \_\_\_\_\_

וְשִׁבְעֵנוּ מִטּוֹבָךְ. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

וּבְרַךְ שְׁנַתְנוּ \_\_\_\_\_

כְּשָׁנִים הַטּוֹבוֹת. \_\_\_\_\_

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' \_\_\_\_\_

מְבָרַךְ הַשָּׁנִים \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



**UNDERSTAND THE IDEAS**

1. What do we ask for in the ברכה of ברכת השנים?

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2. Why does this ברכה follow the ברכה of רפואה?

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3. Why do we daven for פרנסה daily if it was already decided on ראש השנה?

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4. What do we mean when ask ה' to bless השנה הזאת?

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5. What do we mean when we ask ה' to make כל מיני תבואתה לטובה?

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6. What are we asking for when we say שבענו מטובך?

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7. What do the טובות השנים refer to?

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8. What words do we add to this ברכה? When?

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**MAKING IT PERSONAL**



Let us try to personalize what we learned!  
 What is one line or phrase from this ברכה that you  
 can focus on in the coming week?

*I want to try to focus on the words:*

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*When I do so I will think about:*

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*I think that doing this will help my תפילה because:*

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**BEYOND WORDS**

**ברכת השנים**

- Booraich by the Yeshiva Boys Choir: <http://www.viewpure.com/wA2Nv-gOQ2w?start=0&end=0>
- כותל המערבי for rain at the עזרת תפילה: [http://www.viewpure.com/oh\\_gehbQ83g?start=0&end=0](http://www.viewpure.com/oh_gehbQ83g?start=0&end=0)
- Miracle of rain in Richfield, UT: <http://www.viewpure.com/MRCFpotOMbw?start=0&end=0>

בקשה






**LET'S REVIEW!**

We have already learned nine of the ברכות in עשרה:




- Three are שבח to ה'.
- Three are personal בקשות related to spiritual matters and
- Three are personal בקשות related to physical matters.

What are they and what are they about?




**שבח**

	1.	
	2.	
	3.	

**בקשה (PERSONAL/SPIRITUAL REQUESTS)**

	4.	
	5.	
	6.	

**בקשה (PERSONAL/PHYSICAL REQUESTS)**

	7.	
	8.	
	9.	