

*zeh
hayom*

this is
the day

זֶה הַיּוֹם עָשָׂה יי

this is the day the
Creator made
-- Psalm 118:24

blessings, prayers and
prompts for the Jewish
day, inside and out

Zeh Hayom is a monthly publication of
**Matir Asurim: Jewish Care Network
for Incarcerated People**

birchot hashachar **the morning blessings**

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ
הָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר נָתַן לַשֶּׁכּוֹי בִּינָה
לְהַבְחִין בֵּין יוֹם וּבֵין לַיְלָה:

*Baruch atah adonai eloheinu
melech haolam asher natan
lasechvi vinah bein yom uvein
leilah.*

Blessed are You, Adonoy our G-d,
Ruler of the Universe, Who gives
the rooster understanding to
distinguish between day and
night.

Birkot HaShachar, or Morning
Blessings, are a collection of daily
prayers of gratitude. They remind us to
not take for granted the way we are
made and the many small certainties of
day to day life that support us.

In the traditional text, upon waking in
the morning:

we focus ourselves **first** on the
presence of our own soul dwelling
within. We express gratitude for our
senses, which we use to navigate the
world. **Next**, for the material goods
which keep us safe and warm.

Then, for the ways we get to connect
regularly with something bigger than
ourselves. Finally, we plead for God's
assistance to keep us on a good path.

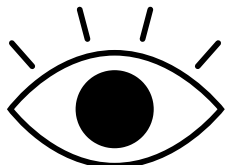
Some of us keep routines of prayer
and meditation. Some of us make a
habit of living up to our spirit's desire
for holiness in other ways- be it
gratitude at meal times, caring for
one's body and appearance in the
washroom, or doing one good deed
every day.

Prompt: In the morning, try this
meditation: Notice that you are awake.
Breathe in slowly and deeply, filling your
body with your consciousness. Breathe
out slowly and hold this in your mind:

***A sacred piece of creation dwells right
here inside me.***

Spend a little time reflecting on what
you are grateful for, working from the
body outward.

Author: Yonah Mibeit Avraham /
Andy Anderson



When does the Jewish day begin? It is written in the Torah in Genesis 1: *va-y'hi erev va-y'hi boker*, "and there was evening and there was morning: a first day."

So according to the Torah, each new day begins in the evening when the sun sets. This is why all Jewish holidays begin at sunset. But it's never that simple, right? Jewish tradition also teaches us that the question "what day is it today?" is a different question than "is it morning yet?"

The rabbis of the Mishna ask: how do you know it is time to recite the morning Shema? When the sun rises? When we can see a difference between the blue of the sky and the green of a vegetable? [Mishna Berakhot 1:2].

How do you know it is morning? This month's Zeh HaYom is the beginning of our three-part exploration of the morning. What does Jewish tradition ask of us right when emerge from sleep? What tools does it offer for accepting the new day? We hope the teachings in this mailing inspire you to share some of your own wisdom with us. Please write to us at the address below, we would love to hear from you.

shalom u'vracha, peace and blessing,

Rabbi Eli DeWitt

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d'var torah
words of torah
each edition of *Zeh HaYom* includes some thoughts on a recent Torah portion.

Words have power, to hurt and to repair. Many Jewish teachings stress this.

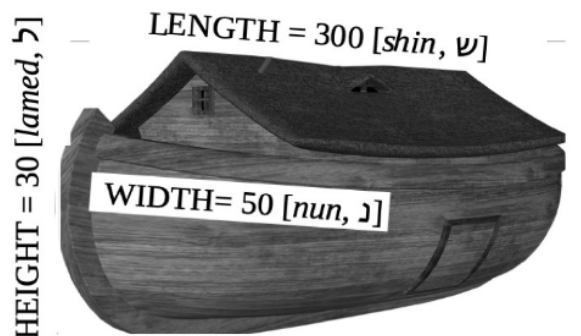
For example: "Just as a hand can kill, so can a tongue" (Babylonian Talmud, Arachin 15b). "A healing tongue is a tree of life" (Proverbs 15:4).

One 18th Century teaching even imagines Noah's ark as a tongue:

Genesis 6:15 gives the dimensions of Noah's ark:

- Height = 30 = ל [lamed]
- Length = 300 = ש [shin]
- Width = 50 = נ [nun]

Lamed-Shin-Nun spells LaSHoN, Hebrew for "language" and "tongue."



lamed + shin + nun spells lashon = language

This odd math lessons hints that our survival depends on words.

In relationships and in the wider society, words can get us into trouble and harm others. We hurt ourselves, too, with words, in speech and in thought. But the power of words can also support healing, for ourselves and those we have hurt.

Morning prayers include a meditation, asking for divine assistance in choosing words: "Guard my tongue from evil and my lips from lying speech." And this image from the Noah story can remind us: "Death and life are in the power of the tongue" (Proverbs 18:21).

Author: Virginia Avniel Spatz

kehillah community
the Matir Asurim community welcomes requests for prayer and blessing. Please indicate if you would like us to publish the requests in the upcoming mailer.
we offer blessings of *refuah shleimah*, complete healing, to all in our community who are in pain. We also pray for your care and comfort as you heal.