

Laws of Brachos (Blessings) – Review Sheet #1

1. The purpose of a Brocha is to:
 - praise God as the source of all goodness
 - ask permission to eat God's food, and say "thank you"
 - bring God's blessing into the world

Notes from Rabbi Michalowicz' new class on Brachos given on Tuesday nights @ 8 pm. Class may be downloaded from www.westmountshul.com

Text & Meaning of Brachos:

2. There are four basic necessary components to every bracha:
 - the word "baruch"
 - the name of God
 - a reference to God's kingship over the world
 - the subject of the particular bracha
3. As long as these four are included, the bracha is valid even if some of the words are missing. If any one of these four is missing, however, the bracha is invalid.
4. It is proper to understand the bracha that you're saying, but not necessary as long as it is being recited in Hebrew. You may say brachos in any language, but the authentic Hebrew text is preferred.
5. A good alternative might be to say the bracha together along with someone else, or to find a transliteration of the Hebrew text.
6. It is important to understand the names of God that appear in the brachos:
 - **Adonoy** - Master and Owner of all creation
 - **YHVH** - refers to God's transcendence of any limitations, including time and space
 - **Eloheinu** - the Source of all power

When is a bracha required?

7. As a rule, any time you eat or drink, a bracha must be said. It doesn't matter how much is being consumed -- even the smallest morsel or droplet requires a bracha.
8. Only pleasant-tasting foods require a bracha.
9. If a food is in a state where it is not fit for human consumption, it does not require a bracha because it is not considered food. A few examples:
 - raw potatoes, raw rice, raw peppercorns
 - fruits that are [bitter or sour and] completely unripe
 - spoiled or burned foods
10. The general rule is: If most people would not eat such a food even if they were really hungry, then no bracha is required.
11. Food eaten only for health reasons that are not pleasurable to eat, require no bracha.
12. Bitter medications require no bracha. Sweet medications depends: if the medication **tastes so good** [e.g. cough drops] that you would consider eating it even if you were not sick, then a bracha is required.
13. Most pleasant-tasting medications, however, only add **flavoring** to counteract the bitter taste of the medicine. No one would think of eating them as a food or drink (i.e. one who has no cough would not drink cough medicine). In such a case, some authorities rule that a bracha is not recited, while others are of the opinion that a bracha is required, since the pleasant taste provides pleasure. So what should we do? The elegant solution is to comply with both opinions, by saying the bracha Shehakol another food before taking such medicines.
14. Water: When drunk to quench thirst, a bracha is required. If you are not thirsty, however, then you get no pleasure from drinking water and no bracha is said.
15. All other drinks require a bracha, even if you are not thirsty. This is because the drink either has a "taste pleasure" or a "nutritional pleasure."
16. Tasting food: If you don't swallow, no bracha is required. If you swallow -- subject to dispute. So if you want to taste a food and swallow it, the best approach is to either:
 - Eat at least a kezayis (approx. 15 grams - 1 fluid ounce) or drink at least a revi'is (approx. 98cc - 3.3 oz). In this case, a bracha is certainly required.

- Eat with the intention of enjoying the food as well, not only to taste. Again, a bracha is required.
 - First say a bracha on another food, which is being eaten for enjoyment.
17. Prohibited food: You may not say a bracha on food that is prohibited by the Torah, unless circumstances permit the consumption of such food.