

ב"ה

Judaism at Home

WHEN THE ONLY PLACE
JUDAISM CAN THRIVE IS AT HOME

Food for Thought

SUMMARY



I. INTRODUCTION

- By providing guidance for how to eat, Jewish law helps us with:
 - o Self-discipline
 - o Our connection to Hashem
 - o Executing the Divine plan

II. TIMING

- “It is better to eat in order to pray than to pray in order to eat”

III. A PREREQUISITE—FEEDING ANIMALS

- We must feed our animals before eating our meal.
 - o Compassion
 - o “You save man in the merit of beast”
 - o Gradual elevation

IV. NETILAS YADAIM

- *When?*
 - o When consuming any amount of bread.
 - o Be sure that the bread is out and prepared for consumption. In this way, you will avoid any unnecessary delay between washing and eating.
- *Where?*
 - o Because this is a ritual wash, and a blessing will be recited, this should take place somewhere other than the bathroom.
 - o It is best that the washing take place as close as possible to the location of the eating, again, to avoid any unnecessary delays.

- *What?*
 - o Remove any removable objects from your hand, such as a ring (or dirt).
 - o Fill a washing cup with water. Best to use a lot of water; the Talmud quotes a tradition that being generous here can lead to blessings of wealth.
 - o Pour it over the right hand from wrist to finger tips.
 - o Repeat two more times. (There are different customs about the number of times; three per hand is the Chabad custom.)
 - o Repeat this procedure on the left hand.
 - o Those who are left-handed reverse the order, and begin with the left hand.
 - o Lift your hands chest-high and recite the blessing *Al Netilas Yadayim*.
 - o Rub your hands together. Run the palm of each hand over the back of the other and then dry them.
 - o Proceed to the table, hold the bread, and recite the *Hamotzi* blessing.
 - o Dip the bread into salt and then take your bite.
 - o From the time that you *begin* to wash, be careful not to speak or get involved in anything until you've swallowed some of the bread.
- *Why?*
 - o Sacred grain, Redemption, Mutual Responsibility
 - o Symbolic preparation for “battle”

V. THE PRE-BLESSINGS

- The sages legislated that we recite short blessings before we eat:
 - o Permission
 - o Thanks
 - o Benefit: mindfulness, happiness

Blessings Recited

before Eating Food

All food blessings begin with the same words:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם ...

Blessed are You, L-rd our G-d, King of the Universe ...

For fruit of a tree

בּוֹרָא פְּרֵי הָעֵץ ...

... Who creates the fruit of the tree.

For a vegetable or fruit of a plant

בּוֹרָא פְּרֵי הָאֲדָמָה ...

... Who creates the fruit of the earth.

For food made from wheat, barley, oat, spelt, or rye flour (besides bread)

בּוֹרָא מִיְּנֵי מִזֻּנוֹת ...

... Who creates various kinds of foods.

For bread or matzah

הַמוֹצִיא לֶחֶם מִן הָאָרֶץ ...

... Who brings forth bread from the earth.

For wine or grape juice

בּוֹרָא פְּרֵי הַגֶּפֶן ...

... Who creates the fruit of the vine.

For everything else, e.g. dairy, meat, beverages

שֶׁהַכֹּל נִהְיָה בְּדַבְּרוֹ ...

... by Whose word all things came to be.

Note: If you've said the blessing over bread, all other foods and drinks (other than wine) in that meal are included. There are also blessings recited when we finish eating, wherein we thank G-d for the food we ate. Refer to a prayer book for the texts of those blessings.



- There are six blessings to be aware of:
 - For fruit of a tree – *Ha'etz*
 - For vegetables or fruits that don't come from trees – *Ho'adamah*
 - For baked foods from wheat, barley, oat, spelt, or rye flour (besides bread) – *Mezonos*
 - For bread or matzah – *Hamotzi*
 - For wine or grape juice – *Hagafen*
 - For everything else, e.g., dairy, meat, beverages – *She'hakol*
- When we consume bread and recite *Hamotzi*, there is usually no need for further pre-blessings during the meal.
- If one is not consuming bread, each particular food category gets its own pre-blessing.
- *Practically:*
 - Ensure that the desired food is prepared and ready to be eaten.
 - Identify the proper blessing.
 - Recite the blessing in a language that you understand.
 - Immediately after reciting the blessing, take a bite from the food. Be sure not to cause any undue separation between the blessing and the commencement of the eating.
 - Recite each *berachah* only once during each sitting.
- For some foods, the proper *berachah* is subject to debate. The views and rulings of the Orthodox Union on these matters can be found at: <https://oukosher.org/guide-to-blessings/>.

VI. MEAT AND MILK

- Not only do we refrain from eating dairy and meat during the same meal; we also ensure that sufficient time elapses between consuming the two:
 - After meat, we refrain from dairy for six hours.

- o If we desire to eat meat after eating dairy, we must (a) ensure that no residue of dairy remains on our hands and (b) eat something *pareve* and take a drink—both of which serve to clean the mouth.
- o When consuming “hard and aged” cheese, it is preferable to wait the same amount of time that we wait after consuming meat. This applies to parmesan and Swiss cheese.
- o There is a widespread custom, rooted in the Zohar, to delay eating meat after *any* dairy for one hour.

VII. TABLE AS ALTAR—GUESTS, DVAR TORAH, SALT, WASHING CUP

- The Talmud compares our dining room tables to the Temple altar:
 - o Guests
 - o Torah study
 - o Elevating the physical
- This link explains the use of a washing cup
- This link explains the use of salt
 - o Endurance
 - o Tastiness
 - o Sufficient to place salt on the table; the custom is to dip the bread into the salt three times.

VIII. HEALTH HIGHLIGHTS

- The Talmud mentions a number of tips for healthy eating, as does the most famous Jewish physician, Maimonides.

IX. RESPECTING FOOD

- Judaism teaches us to be respectful of food. The Code of Jewish Law mentions a number of guidelines.

X. GRACE AFTER MEALS

- The Biblical obligation
- The rabbinic obligations
- The full text of Grace After Meals, in Hebrew and English, can be found and downloaded at: www.chabad.org/136676
- The order:
 - o Psalms 137 and 126
 - o The final wash
 - o Communal Grace
 - o The first blessing thanks G-d for sustaining us.
 - o The second blessing thanks G-d for the Torah, its commandments, and for the Land of Israel.
 - o The third blessing consists of a plea for Jerusalem.
 - o The fourth blessing is an additional blessing of thanks. It also contains a plea that G-d provide for us, protect us, and to restore us to our Holy Land.
- The sages also enacted that we recite a blessing after consuming all other foods:
 - o If the pre-blessing was *Mezonos* or *Hagafen*, we recite *Me'en Shalosh* ("Taste of Three"), a blessing that summarizes the blessing recited after bread.
 - o *Me'en Shalosh* is also recited after consuming five types of fruits:
 - ▶ grapes
 - ▶ figs
 - ▶ pomegranates
 - ▶ olives
 - ▶ dates
 - o For all other foods, a very brief after blessing is recited (*Borei Nefashos*).