



Parshas Vayikra 5769

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Rav Sternbuch was not able to review the sheet this week.

What do we recite for thunder and lightning?

Hilchos B'rachos part XXVIII

B'rachos Upon Sight

Chazal instituted *b'rachos* to be recited when seeing various dimensions of creation that usually astound the beholder. Indeed the entire creation sings out 'מה רבו מעשיך ד' – how great are your deeds, *Hashem*, not only the unique and extraordinary creations, but it is through the uncommon that we perceive the grandeur of all His handiwork.

These *b'rachos* are called ברכות השבח – *b'rachos* of praise.

Should one stand when reciting ברכות השבח?

We find a *machlokes* in the matter. In Rav Yakov Emdin's siddur it says that one should stand while reciting ברכות השבח and thus is the opinion *l'chatchila* (where possible) of other *poskim*.¹ On the other hand the *P'ri Megadim*² writes that one may sit down. It is also evident from the *Rambam*³ who writes that one must stand for *Kiddush Levanah*, because it is likened to greeting the *Shechina*, and he does not say to stand for other ברכות השבח.⁴

Upon seeing lightning, one recites ברוך אתה ד' אלקינו מלך העולם עושה מעשה בראשית. The *b'racha* must be recited within approx. 3 seconds to seeing the end of the lightning blitz and one is not required to see the actual streak in the sky, it is suffice to see the sky light up.⁵ One does not recite this *b'racha* when the lightning is created from an electrical storm, which is common in certain parts of the world. One only recites it when associated with rain.

What if I missed the first lightning streak?

It is not a problem and one may recite on the succeeding ones. The *halacha* is that one may not recite a *b'racha* when occupied with an activity such as washing dishes, writing etc.⁶ so to recite the *b'racha* one must desist from all activities and only then recite the *b'racha*. It might happen that one will miss a *b'racha* on account of this *halacha* and in such circumstances the option for the *b'racha* will be the next lightning blitz.

Upon hearing thunder one recites (within approx. 3 seconds) ברוך אתה ד' אלקינו מלך העולם שכוה וגבורתו מלא עולם. One must be certain that indeed it is thunder and not the neighbor moving his couch or some other noise.

¹ See וזאת הברכה and תשובות והנהגות ח"ג ע"ו chap. 17.

² פתחה להלכות ברכות (אות יח).

³ הלכות ברכות פ"י ה"ז.

⁴ See וזאת הברכה chap. 17.

⁵ ז"ל. Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach and צ"ץ אליעזר.

⁶ See *Shulchan Aruch* 183:12 and 191:3 M"B 5.

How often is this b'racha recited?

For the same rain storm one *b'racha* is enough. In this case night follows day and if one recited a *b'racha* during the day, one will not recite a new *b'racha* during the night. The next day will require a new *b'racha* even though it is the same rainstorm as the previous day.⁷

If the clouds dispersed and a new rainstorm formed, one will recite a new *b'racha*.⁸

Birkas Ha'ilanos

Blossoming and budding of fruit trees is reason to praise *Hashem*. *Chazal* said that one who sees blossoming trees in the days of Nissan must recite a *b'racha*.⁹ The *nussach* is בא"י אלקינו מלך העולם שלא חיסר בעולמו כלום וברא בו בריות טובות ואילנות טובים ליהנות בהם בני אדם.

The month of Nissan is not essential and one may recite the *b'racha* during Adar as well.¹⁰

How many trees?

The *Kaf HaChaim* writes that based on *kabalah*, one should recite the *b'racha* in a place where there are many trees blossoming, but two trees suffice. The *Mishna Berura* did not mention a number as a criterion and one may recite the *b'racha* for one tree as well.

Birkas Hayamim – the b'racha over seas

One who sees the oceans (Atlantic, Pacific, Indian) recites the *b'racha* עושה הים

הגדול. There is doubt as to whether the *b'racha* over the Mediterranean sea is עושה הים הגדול – who made the big sea, and since there is doubt one recites the regular *b'racha* עושה מעשה בראשית.

This *b'racha* is only recited when one did not see the ocean or sea for thirty days. If one saw the ocean or sea and did not recite the *b'racha* and sees it again within thirty days, one does not recite the *b'racha*. This is because the *b'racha* is recited when one has התפעלות – inspired by what one sees, and seeing it again within thirty days lacks the inspiration *Chazal* were looking for.

Vort on the Parsha

אדם כי יקריב מכם קרבן לד' – this possuk is all too often translated as one sacrificing oneself for *Hashem*, which does not appeal too well to all people. A sacrifice is something one prefers not to surrender, but will do so when the consequence warrants it. But it still resonates with negativity.

I have heard that a *korban* can be an offering, not a sacrifice. If one realizes that doing something for *Hashem* brings one closer to *Hashem*, it becomes that much easier. It is easier to give an offering than a sacrifice.

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לזכר נשמת חנה בת ברוך

⁷ See 227:2.

⁸ Ibid and *M"B* 8. See also הברכה if several clouds remain in the sky.

⁹ *Siman* 226:1.

¹⁰ *M"B siman* 226:1.

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Note: The purpose of this series is intended solely for the clarification of the topics discussed and not to render halachic decisions. It is intended to heighten everyone's awareness of important practical questions which do arise on this topic. One must consult with a proper halachic authority in order to receive p'sak.