



SETTING THE TABLE WITH HAKARAT HATOV

Judaism ritualizes mundanity. From how Jews should get dressed in the morning to how we spend our weekends, prescribed procedures direct every piece of the human experience. Our religion sees every action we take as meaningful and a chance to learn something, and how we eat is no different.

According to Jewish law, brachot (blessings) acknowledging the Creator of our food need to be recited before we eat anything. Furthermore, there are specific blessings thanking God that are required both before and after eating specific categories of foods, like grain-based foods, fruits, vegetables, and more. While an entire system of blessings for food may seem unnecessarily complex, it can engender a high level of mindfulness about what we are putting into our bodies and can be a useful tool for someone struggling with disordered eating ([See our Brachot and Disordered Eating resource.](#)). Brachot recitation can also nurture our sense of gratitude, hakarat hatov, in a moment when we can focus so easily on ourselves.





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Eating can be a self-centered activity, wherein we fixate on our own needs and appetites. Of course, that doesn't mean eating is a bad thing, but we should acknowledge how often our stomachs take on lives of their own, letting us forget about everything outside of our plate. This risk is especially relevant when we eat with other people, who may not have gotten food when we are on our second course or who may have cooked the food we rush to put on our plates before thanking them. Jewish tradition's system of blessings reflects its understanding of that aspect of human psychology and equally recognizes the benefits of gratitude for our mental health and wellness. While the blessings directly reference God as the ultimate source of our food, this system nonetheless invites us to see beyond our self-interest, so we can think more broadly about where our food comes from and feel grateful for it and the person who made it for us.





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A talmudic sage named Ben Zoma often meditated on the gratitude he felt for the food and clothes he had, all of which were made by others. Regularly, he would look out at the crowds of people in Jerusalem and say, “**Blessed is the Creator who knows all secrets and the Creator who made all that serve me,**” expressing gratitude for his good fortune of living in a society with people who work hard to create his basic necessities, contrary to Adam who had to do it all on his own.

He also used to say:



A good guest, what do they say? How much effort did the host expend on my behalf, how much meat did the host bring before me? How much wine did they bring before me? How many loaves did they bring before me? All the effort that they expended, they expended only for me. However, a bad guest, what do they say? What effort did the host expend? I ate only one piece of bread, I ate only one piece of meat, and I drank only one cup of wine. All the effort that the homeowner expended was only for their family. (Talmud Berachot 58a)

A good guest at a table notices and appreciates the work that went into the food prepared for them, while a bad guest only sees the food prepared for the meal.

Sharing a meal with others can be a deeply meaningful experience if we can nurture the gratitude necessary to make it so. The next time you sit down to eat with other people, consider adding Ben Zoma’s bracha to the repertoire of blessings you might recite when you eat ([Check out our downloadable Brachot page.](#)). Try to make a habit of expressing your gratitude for the food in front of you and the people who made it. You can also let them know how grateful you are for them, and what you are grateful for, with [our printable Hakarat hatov cards](#) and [digital gratitude e-cards](#). Taking the time both to feel grateful and to express your gratitude can do wonders for your mental health and theirs, improving your community one todah rabah (thank you) at a time.



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Before eating, one should hold the food in their hand or on their fork, and recite one of the following:

When Eating Vegetables:



**Baruch atah A-donay, Elo-heinu Melech
Ha'Olam borei pri ha-adamah.**

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך
העולם בורא פרי האדמה.

Blessed are You, A-donay our God, Ruler of the universe who creates the fruit of the earth.

When Eating Fruit:



**Baruch atah A-donay, Elo-heinu Melech
Ha'Olam borei pri ha-aitz.**

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך
העולם בורא פרי העץ.

Blessed are You, A-donay our God, Ruler of the universe, who creates the fruit of the tree.

When Eating Bread:



**Baruch atah A-donay, Elo-heinu Melech
Ha'Olam Hamotzi lechem min haaretz.**

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך
העולם המוציא לחם מן הארץ.

Blessed are You, A-donay our God, Ruler of the Universe, Who brings forth bread from the earth.

When Drinking Wine or Grape Juice:

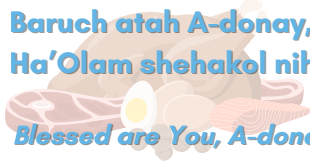


**Baruch atah A-donay, Elo-heinu Melech
Ha'Olam borei pri hagafen.**

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך
העולם בורא פרי הגפן.

Blessed are You, A-donay our God, Ruler of the universe, who creates the fruit of the vine.

When Eating or Drinking Miscellaneous Food (meat, poultry, eggs, fish, dairy products, candy):

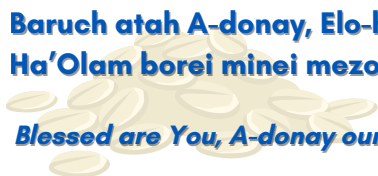


**Baruch atah A-donay, Elo-heinu Melech
Ha'Olam shehakol nihiyah bed'varo.**

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך
העולם שהכל נהיה בדברו.

Blessed are You, A-donay our God, Ruler of the universe, by Whose word all things came to be.

When Eating Grain Products:



**Baruch atah A-donay, Elo-heinu Melech
Ha'Olam borei minei mezonot.**

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך
העולם בורא מיני מזונות.

Blessed are You, A-donay our God, Ruler of the universe, Who creates various kinds of sustenance.



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I'M SO GRATEFUL FOR
YOUR FRIENDSHIP

TO _____
FROM _____



Check out the full
resource by clicking
here or using the QR
Code Below



I'M SO GRATEFUL FOR
YOUR LOVE

TO _____
FROM _____



I'M SO GRATEFUL FOR
YOUR SUPPORT

TO _____
FROM _____





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TO _____

FROM _____



Make
Your
Own



TO _____

FROM _____



TO _____

FROM _____





SETTING THE TABLE WITH HAKARAT HATOV

Have everyone at your table select a card describing something they feel grateful for or have them make their own!

I am feeling
Hakarat Hatov for

FAMILY משפחה



I am feeling
Hakarat Hatov for

FRIENDS חברים



I am feeling
Hakarat Hatov for

HEALTH בריאות



I am feeling
Hakarat Hatov for

JOY שמחה



I am feeling
Hakarat Hatov for

COMMUNITY קהילה



I am feeling
Hakarat Hatov for

HOME בית





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**I am feeling
Hakarat Hatov for**



**I am feeling
Hakarat Hatov for**



**I am feeling
Hakarat Hatov for**



**I am feeling
Hakarat Hatov for**



**I am feeling
Hakarat Hatov for**



**I am feeling
Hakarat Hatov for**

