

Blessing the flowering fruit trees / *Birkat Ha'ilanot*

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מִלְּךָ הָעוֹלָם שְׁלֹא חָסַר בְּעוֹלָמוֹ כְּלָיִם
וּבְרָא בּוֹ בְּרִיּוֹת טוֹבוֹת וְאֵילָנוֹת טוֹבִים לְהַנּוֹת * בְּהֵם בְּנֵי אָדָם

Blessed be You, Yah/Adonai our God ruler of all space-and-time,
who left nothing lacking in this world, and created in it good creatures
and good trees, giving pleasure through them to the children of humanity.

*Barukh Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melekh ha'olam shelo chisar ba'olamo klum
uvara' vo briyot tovot v'ialnot tovim leihanot bahem b'nei Adam*

Halakhah

1) The time for blessing is during the months of *Nisan* and *Iyyar*. If fruit trees have not yet flowered where one lives, or one hasn't seen them, one can say the blessing any time until the fruit starts to grow. The blessing is said only one time each year.



2) One should have in view two fruit trees in flower. Two trees together remind that trees fertilize each other, and are interdependent upon each other.

3) The trees should not be grafted one species onto another. They should be trees able to bear edible fruit, not trees bred strictly to be ornamental.

4) There is debate about whether to bless over flowering trees that are less than three years old, since their fruits are *orlah* and we would not be permitted to eat them. But if one is giving thanks for trees to create beauty and fragrance, as well as the *capacity* to create fruit, then such trees are appropriate for blessing.

Some verses and rabbinic teachings about fruit trees

In the time-to-come, each and every tree is destined to put forth fruit...as it is said: "And the land will give her produce and the tree of the field will give his fruit." (Lev. 26:4) (*Midrash Alpha Beta, Batey Midrashot*, 430)

"When you besiege a city many days...you shall not destroy her tree...for from him (the fruit tree) you may eat...For is the tree of the field human, to withdraw from before you?" (Deut. 20:19) R' Yishma'el said: The compassion of the Place/*Makom* (God) is on the fruit of the tree...For if scripture cautions you about the tree that makes fruit, all the more so the fruits themselves. (*Sifrey D'varim, Pisqa* 203)

* some versions of the blessing have לְהַנּוֹת *l'hitna'ot*

Come my beloved, let us go out to the field, we will awake early, to the vineyards, we will see if the vine flowered, the blossom opened, whether the pomegranates are sparkling with flowers – there will I give my caresses to you. (Song of Songs 7:12-13)

Drash – is anything lacking in God's world?

In the prayer after eating that can be used for any type of food called *Borei N'fashot*, we say, "Blessed be You...who creates many souls and everything that they lack, for everything that You created" *borei n'fashot rabot v'chesronan* – implying that part of the essence of each creature is that it lacks something. The blessing continues, "to bring to life through them" *l'hachayot bahem* – through all those things that are lacking – "to the soul of all Life" *nefesh kol chai*. The fruit tree blessing says that the world lacks nothing, while *Borei N'fashot* teaches that everything in the world is lacking something. It is only because what one creature lacks another provides that we can say that the world "lacks nothing". Together, all the creatures weave the web of Life.

Sod – a fruit tree is a symbol of God

Just as a tree unifies the heavens and the Earth, the word *Ilan*, meaning tree, hints at the unification of *YHVH* and *Adonai*, because the gematria of the letters of *Ilan* or tree adds up to 91, which is *YHVH* (26) + *Adonai* (65).

A Kabbalistic Prayer – based on P'ri Eits Hadar, the original Tu Bishvat seder

O God, who makes, forms, creates, and emanates the highest worlds! You made the trees and grasses grow from the ground in the pattern of these highest worlds. May it be Your will that our blessing over the trees and enjoyment of their flowers and meditating on the fruits to come will strengthen the flow of love and blessing over the trees, to make them grow and bloom, for good life, for blessing and for peace, for us and for the bees and birds and all the creatures that depend upon them. May all Creation return to its original strength, and may we see the rainbow rejoicing in its colors. And may all the sparks of divine energy, whether scattered by our hands or by the hands of our ancestors or by the sin of the first human against the fruit of the tree, be returned and included in the majestic might of the Tree of Life.

One more blessing – for the sweet smell of flowers on trees

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Barukh Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melekh ha'olam borei atsei b'samim

תפילת הארץ

Hebrew interpretatn., Rabbi David Seidenberg

אל עליון, האל הגדול והגבור
אתה הוא מלא כל הארץ
וכבודך מלא עולם
וכל הכריות עד הקטן שבהן
אתה מחזיק ומחסה
כל הנמצאים בקמלה

שפוך עלינו כח אהבתך
למען נשמר על החיים ונועם תפארתם
מלאנו בשלום, ושום שלום עלינו
שנשב יחד כאחים ואחיות
שלא ירע אף אחד

אלהי הדלים והגר
והיתום והאלמנה
תן כח בידינו להציל העזובים
והפליטים בארץ תבל
שהם יקרים בעיניך

שלה רפואה לנפשנו בחיים
ואז נגן העולם
ולא נדלק בעולם
ואז נזרע תפארת החיים
ולא השחיתה והשמידה

פתח ללב כל בוצע
לחטוף העני והאדמה
למדנו לגלות
מעלת הבורא בכל הנבראים
להיות מלא יראה והתבוננות
להפיר שנעשו אגדה אחת
עם כל הכריות, בדרךנו
להגיע אל אור האין סוף

נודה לה השוכן בתוכנו
שאתה עמנו תמיד בכל יום
אנא תומכנו
לעשות רצונך בלבב שלם
ולרדוף צדק בהתמודדות
בעד משפט ואהבה ושלום

A Prayer for Our Earth

adapted from Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*

All-powerful God, great and mighty
You are present in the whole universe,
and Your glory fills the world,
even unto the smallest of Your creatures.
You embrace and shelter
with Your tenderness all that exists.

Pour out upon us the power of Your love,
that we may protect life and its beauty.
Fill us with peace, and settle peace upon us
that we may live together as brothers and sisters,
harming no one.

O God of the poor, and the stranger,
the orphan, and the widow,
help us to rescue the abandoned
and the refugees of this earth,
so precious in Your eyes.

Bring healing to our lives,
that we may protect the world
and not prey on it,
that we may sow life's beauty,
not pollution and destruction.

Touch the hearts of those who look for gain
at the expense of the poor and the earth.
Teach us to discover
the divine worth of each thing,
to be filled with awe and contemplation,
to recognize that we are profoundly united
with every creature, as we journey
towards Your infinite light.

We thank You who dwells within us
for being with us each day.
Encourage us, we pray,
to do Your will with a whole heart
and to pursue righteousness in the struggle
for justice, love and peace.