

This **What is ... Brachot** program was designed by input from several Shluchim/os and developed by the Shluchim Office Hebrew School Dept. It was designed to address the topic of Brachot for students with little or no exposure to its observance. It is presented on a deeper level so that there is something new for students who have already learned about the topic of Brachot.

The essence of this program is that Brachot help us stop and then focus and appreciate everything that happens in our lives. Everything in our lives is a gift from Hashem, and stopping several times through our day to appreciate the wonderfulness of that gift from Hashem helps us better connect with Him, and thus helps us become more G-d centered and better people.

This unit is designed to be used together with the accompanying Student Book which includes interactive activities around the topic and theme.

This program can be completed as one unit over the course of a number of weeks. The lessons lend themselves to an incredible amount of hands-on activities, speakers, demonstrations, and activities will bring the concept of Brachot alive and engage all types of learners.

Be creative! This is an aspect of Judaism that, though factual, synthesizes so many different layers that appeal to a wide range of interests. With proper preparation and enthusiasm, this curriculum will serve to engage your students and bring color to your classroom.

TOPICS COVERED:

1. Hashem's Wonderful World
2. Everything in this world is a gift from Hashem
3. Gratitude and Appreciation
4. Stopping and Noticing the details of Hashem's world
5. The words of a Bracha
6. Different Categories of Brachot
7. Brachot on Food
8. After-Eating Brachot
9. Brachot of Praise and Thanks
10. Brachot for Mitzvot
11. Brachot for Special Occasions
12. How to Say a Bracha

The Lesson:

Hashem's Wonderful World

It is important that the students understand that the world itself and everything in it is a gift to us from Hashem. This is an important concept to solidify in their minds – as this is the basis of the entire concept of Brachot, and many other concepts in Judaism.

- The very world we live in is a gift from Hashem. This world is full of miracles. We just have to stop and pay attention to the details to recognize them as the miracles that they are.
- 'מה רבו מעשיו ה' Hashem created everything in this world – not only the physical world, but also the way humans work, the way of the world, everything! That includes strength, clothing, shoes, sight, morning/ night, freedom, rainbows, fragrances, beautiful mountains, oceans, etc.
- What we see as nature is really Hashem. He did this as a gift to us, so we are able to rely on things working in a certain way - the sun will rise in the morning, set at night, seasonal changes, the way the body works, etc. We should not allow familiarity to blind us to the fact that everything is indeed a miracle from Hashem. (Even if we don't think that we see Hashem, we really do see His work – in everything in this world.)
- Proper enjoyment of Hashem's world is a Mitzvah as we acknowledge the grandeur of Hashem's creation.
- When Avraham studied the world around him, he discovered order, purpose, design and intelligence. He concluded that there must be a great intelligence responsible for it all. And then he 'discovered' Hashem.

There is no lab in the world that can come up with anything as complex as a human cell – and Hashem created a whole complex world – 100 billion to 100 trillion galaxies. Each galaxy has approximately 100 suns.

WORDS TO KNOW:







- Hashem
- Miracle
- Mitzvah



The Activities: Choose from these activities.















1. EVERYTHING IN THIS WORLD IS A GIFT

Objective: Students should be able to acknowledge and relate to the fact that this world and everything inside of it is a gift to us from Hashem. **This is an important concept to solidify in their minds – as this is the basis of the entire concept of Brachot, and many other concepts in Judaism.**

	TREASURE HUNT	Students will follow clues to discover the “treasure” of our world.	
	PASS THE GIFT	Pass the Parcel game while uncovering “clues” describing what a gift is.	
	GIFT HUNT	Hunt for items which have a connection to different categories of Brachot.	

2. WHAT IS NATURE IS REALLY HASHEM

Objective: To highlight for the students the many things that make our world wonderful, beautiful and enjoyable and to give them a taste of what the world would be like without them.

	DISCUSSION: WHAT IS A GIFT	Discuss what a gift truly is, and how the world is a gift from Hashem.	
	COLOR MY WORLD	By focusing on the different colors of Hashem’s world, students will concentrate on the nuances and details of Hashem’s creation.	
	THE GIFTS IN MY LIFE	Students will focus on what they have in their lives and discuss how each thing is a gift from Hashem.	
	IF AND THEN	Students write if/ then statements about the world—if we didn’t have ___ then ___.	
	MIRACLES OF THIS WORLD	Students will compile a list of ‘miracles’ in the world.	
	DISCUSSION: NATURE IS REALLY HASHEM	Students should understand that what we see as nature is really Hashem.	
	SONG: IT HAD TO BE HASHEM	Song that describes a lot of what Hashem has created.	

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- In each paint spot, students should write (or draw) something in Hashem’s wonderful world that is of that color.
- On the bottom of the page, students should write different things in this world for each category.



Activities:

BRACHOT ON FOOD

Objective: Students should learn about the various food Brachot.

For this lesson, the students will learn about the different Brachot made on the different food categories. We are suggesting that you set up the room as a Brachot Expo – with several stations where the students learn about each food category and its bracha. The stations are: 1. HaMotzi & Mezonot 2. HaGafen 3. HaEitz & HaAdama 4. Shehakol. (We have paired some of the Brachot together to save time, and to help the students understand the difference between the Brachot, as they can seem similar.)

If you are doing this as a school-wide program, one teacher can man each station. Choose activities that are appropriate for each group. Students will be visiting each station, albeit in a different order. Some will start with HaGafen, others with HaMotzi, Mezonot, and so forth.

Plan that the Shehakol activity is done last – for all groups. The students should have learned about all the other Brachot before they are introduced to Shehakol. At Station 1, the teacher should teach how to say the Brachot. See below.

Things to think about as you determine if this should be done as a school wide project, or in the individual classrooms:

	Benefits	Drawbacks
School wide	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Added excitement• One teacher knows her station/ craft well• Saves on supplies, no need to bring in supplies for each room	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Can become noisy/ unwieldy• Teachers of other classes don't know the students well, so can't really target their discussion to the particular students
Individual classes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teachers know their students best• Can do different activities with each class• Can have deeper discussions with older students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Might need to bring in supplies for each room.

BRACHOT EXPO



Prepare

1. Work out a schedule of which class goes to which station at what time.

Sample schedule:

Introduction	3 minutes
Transition to Station 1	2 minutes
Station 1	8 minutes*
Transition to Station 2	2 minutes
Station 2	8 minutes*
Transition to Station 3	2 minutes
Station 3	8 minutes*
Transition to Shehakol	2 minutes
Shehakol	8 minutes



2. Students should pick up only the food pictures of their Bracha. Students should glue/ tape their pictures onto their poster.
3. There will still be several foods cards that have not been picked up (the Shehakol ones). At this point, ask the students to pick those up and spread them out on the teacher's table. All students should stand around the table.
4. Ask the students if they know which Bracha to make on the foods. (Teacher: check if the students missed any and the foods that really do belong to a Bracha other than Shehakol. Put it on the correct poster).
5. Explain: Any food that does not fit into the previous categories is in this category – of 'everything else'. And we make the Bracha Shehakol.
6. Ask the students to try to categorize the cards –dairy products, meat products, candies, drinks, etc. Label each category. Point out to the students that these are the types of food upon which we say a Shehakol.
7. Make mints or some other quick Shehakol snack.



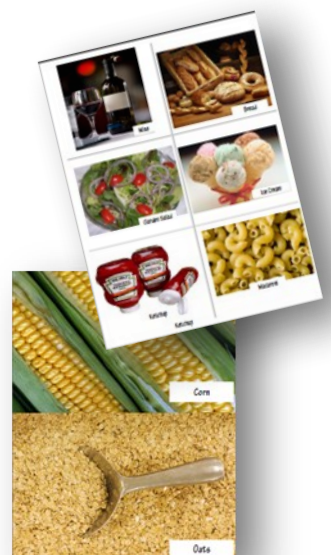
- 1.17.FoodCards
- Poster boards
- Tape/ glue
- Markers
- Ingredients and supplies for Shehakol food

FOOD BRACHA REVIEW 1

1. Print the Food Origins cards. Cut. Separate the larger 'food origins' from the smaller processed food cards.
2. Hang up the 'food origins' cards on the poster/ wall. Or place in the center of a large table or on the floor.

Activity

1. Give each student some of the food cards. They should place the cards near its food origin.



The Lesson:

Brachot for experiencing Nature & for other Occasions

- Another type of Bracha helps us recognize the beauty and greatness found within Hashem's wonderful world of nature— whether people, animals, or beautiful formations found in the earth, water, or sky.
- There are many different Brachot for so many unique experiences. These Brachot help us stop and focus on them, so we can really appreciate and enjoy them. (Many of these Brachot can be found in the siddur.)
- When we see something beautiful in nature and say wow!, we should think that Hashem made that too.

Brachot on Nature

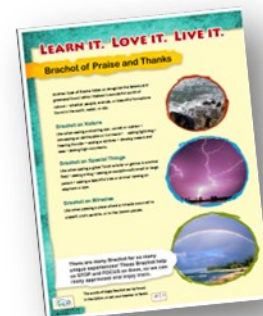
- There are different Brachot for different natural phenomena. These make us stop and focus and make us aware that this phenomenon is from Hashem.
- Like when seeing a shooting star, comet or meteor • viewing an earthquake or hurricane • seeing lightning • hearing thunder • seeing a rainbow • viewing oceans and seas • seeing high mountains.
- In the Appendix 8, there are many examples of Hashem's wonderful world of Nature.

Brachot on Special Things

- Like when seeing a great Torah scholar or genius in another field • seeing a king • seeing an exceptionally small or large person • seeing a beautiful tree or animal • seeing an elephant or ape.

Brachot on Miracles













- Like when passing a place where a miracle occurred to oneself, one's parents, or to the Jewish people.



The Activities: Choose from these activities.

1. BRACHOT ON NATURE

Objective: Students should know that there are special Brachot to be said on different natural phenomena. Through activities in which they observe pictures of nature, they will become more aware of the details of Hashem's world.

	HASHEM'S AWESOME WORLD	Students pass around an envelope with a description of Hashem's world (ex: wetness). They add something of nature that it describes.	
	COLORFUL AS A RAINBOW	Students find different things of nature that are of the colors of the rainbow.	
	DISCUSSION: NOTICING THE DETAILS	A discussion using pictures of nature as discussion starters.	
	SPOT THE DIFFERENCE	Students compare 2 pictures of nature to become more aware of the details of Hashem's world.	
	FIND THE WORDS—FROM FRIENDS	Students ask their friends for words to describe the picture of nature that they are holding.	
	FIND THE WORDS—TABOO STYLE	Working in pairs, students describe the picture of nature, without using the word to actually describe the item.	

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1. On the easels, the students should write (or draw) some things upon which we say a Bracha of Praise and Thanks.
2. They can describe it in the space on the upper part of the easel.



Activities:

BRACHOT FOR SPECIAL OCCASIONS



GAME OF LIFE



Prepare

1. This game comes with pieces for teaching **שהחיינו** and can also be used as a review for other Brachot. Determine how you want to use the game; use only those game board cards.
2. Print. Cut the game board pieces.
3. Set them up as a large game board on the floor or on the table. See sample board on the CD.

Introduce the Topic

1. Discuss: There is a special Bracha said when you're happy. We say thanks to Hashem for bringing us to this day so you could experience this particular moment of joy. So what would be a joyous occasion – special moments in a person's life? Some examples that the rabbis have given are: the birth of a new baby, a new house, seeing a special friend after a long period of time. And anything that makes you really really happy. (* If one feels like it may be a 'שהחיינו moment', but is unsure, he can always eat a new fruit and have in mind both the fruit and the occasion.)
2. The Jewish holidays are also a source of much joy and therefore we say this same Bracha on holidays and on doing a Mitzvah for the first time in a year.
3. This Bracha is called the **שהחיינו** Bracha. This Bracha is also said when eating a fruit for the first time in the season (like on Rosh Hashana or Tu B'Shvat).

As you discuss the various occasions ('שהחיינו moments' and holidays and Mitzvot) upon which we say **שהחיינו** write them on the board.

Activity

Ways to play the game: 1. Group that reaches the end first wins. 2. Group that has the most cards first wins. 3. Set a time goal and see if the class can travel through life in the allotted amount of time.

1. Divide the class into groups of 2-3.
2. Group 1 rolls the die and moves that amount of spaces on the board.



The Lesson:

How to Say a Bracha

- The Rabbis have written how we should say the Brachot. These Halachot (laws) help us accomplish the 'objective' of saying Brachot – to stop, focus and appreciate Hashem throughout the day.

What to think about when saying a Bracha

- **Saying Brachot expresses our gratitude to Hashem for the food.** The sages declare that it is 'forbidden to enjoy anything in this world without a bracha'. (Rabbeinu Bachaya – Shulchan Shel Arba – 1)
So many in this world do not have enough food to eat, and you have food in your hand. (It is not that Hashem does not create enough food for every person/ animal on this planet; somehow, humans have managed to distribute the food unevenly). When we make a Bracha, we should focus on the good we have in our lives, and not the pain or unpleasantness or inconveniences. **Work on an attitude of gratitude and positivity.**
- By saying brachot, **we are acknowledging that everything on this earth is from Hashem.**
- The Chinuch states that **כי תברך אתה** means not 'You are blessed', but rather 'You are the source of all blessings'. The Bracha is not a praise to Hashem, but rather a testimony to the fact that we are reliant on Hashem.

Saying Brachot on Food

- **Even when eating a small bit of food, we make a Bracha.** Even a small bit of food is enough to stop and appreciate the food, and what Hashem does for us.
- We should be respectful of what we are doing when making the Bracha. When making the Bracha, **the mouth should be empty.** Firstly, we don't talk with food in our mouth, and it is not respectful to Hashem. Secondly, we really should make the Bracha before eating, because we are asking permission for the food.
- **No interruptions.** Because the Bracha helps us focus on the food we are about to eat, there should be no interruption between reciting the Bracha and the actual eating the food. **The food should be all ready to eat.** The food should be right in front of you. Oranges should be peeled, nuts should be unshelled, etc. The food should not be too hot to eat.



- Polar Bears have longer legs than other bears. They also have large furry feet. These big feet help to distribute their weight as they walk on thin ice in the arctic waters.
- Polar bears are strong swimmers and can stay submerged (under water) for two minutes at a time.
- Their fur is made of hollow hairs which trap air and help to insulate them (keep in the warmth) in the frigid waters.



Barn Owl:

- The Barn Owl's reddish-brown coloration blends in well with trees. This camouflage helps keep the bird from being discovered during the day.
- The feathers the Barn Owl uses to fly are serrated at their tips. This muffles the noise the bird makes when it flaps its wings, enabling it to sneak up on prey quietly.
- The Barn Owl's strong talons and sharp beak enable it to firmly grasp and tear the mammals and small birds it catches.

Chinstrap Penguin:

- The Chinstrap Penguin is able to withstand swimming in freezing waters due to its tightly packed feathers which provide a waterproof coat. Thick blubber deposits provide insulation as well.
- The Chinstrap Penguin's black-and-white feathers helps camouflage it in the water from predators, such as seals. When seen from above, the bird's black back blends into the dark water below, while the bird's underside blends into the sunshine above when seen from below.



Red Knot:

- Long, thin legs help the Red Knot to easily wade through the water.

Duck:

- Ducks have webbed feet (webs of skin connecting their toes). The webbing enables the birds to use their feet like paddles when they swim.

Tawny Frogmouth:

- The Tawny Frogmouth's gray feathers help it blend in with the bark of its forested home.

Box Turtle:

- Thick scales on the Box Turtle's head and limbs protect against injury.
- The Box Turtle's sharp beak acts like shears for slicing vegetation.
- The Box Turtle's long claws help in crawling through the underbrush and digging nest holes or winter shelter.
- The Box Turtle's colors help camouflage against possible predators.

Dyeing Poison Arrow Frog:

- The Poison Frog is brightly colored to warn enemies of lethal nerve toxins.
- The Poison Frog's finger and toe tips have glandular adhesive (sticky) mucus that enable the animal to climb.

Snow Leopard:

- The Snow Leopard's coat is a white and black mottled spot pattern. This camouflages the animal in dark, alpine forest snow cover.
- The Snow Leopard can wrap its furry tail around its face to keep it warm.
- The Snow Leopard's loose belly skins allows it to be pulled by prey with little chance of injury.
- The Snow Leopard's paws are covered by a cushion of hair; this provides warmth.

Tiger:

- The Tiger's striped coat makes it difficult for prey to find it in dense cover.
- The Tiger's hind legs are longer than its front legs; this helps the Tiger jump.
- The Tiger's paws are have long, retractile claws to help grab and hold prey.

Camel:

- The Camel has two rows of long eye lashes. This protects its eyes against blowing sand and the sun.
- The Camel's nostril can be closed, keeping out the blowing sand.
- The Camel has broad, flat, leathery pads at the bottom of their hooves. These prevent the Camel from sinking in the sand.
- The Camel has long legs. These help keep the Camel's body away from the hot sand.

