



# BAREKHU בָּרְכוּ

The בָּרְכוּ is the way the people in a synagogue become a congregation. It is the way that individuals become a prayer community. There are times for Jews to pray alone, but in our services we pray together.

The בָּרְכוּ is an invitation. It is a call and response. That means that the prayer leader asks a question and the congregation answers together. In answering they become a community.

The leader invites: בָּרְכוּ אֶת־יְיָ הַמְּבָרֵךְ.  
Are you ready to say "בְּרָכוֹת" to "י"?

When everyone says:  
בָּרוּךְ יְיָ הַמְּבָרֵךְ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד, the congregation is created and the community is formed.

The answer means: Yes, God deserves בְּרָכוֹת forever and always.

This pattern of call and response as an invitation is used two other times in Jewish life. The exact same words are used to begin the blessings before the reading of the Torah. And very similar words (and the same pattern) are used to begin *Birkat ha-Mazon*, the blessing after eating that is said only when a community (at least three people) eats together.

Why do you think these three events—praying, reading Torah, and the end of a meal—require a special way of forming community?

The בָּרְכוּ is said only if there is a minyan, a group of at least ten people praying together.



Can you see the three-letter root **ברך** in these words?  
It is found in every **בְּרָכָה**.

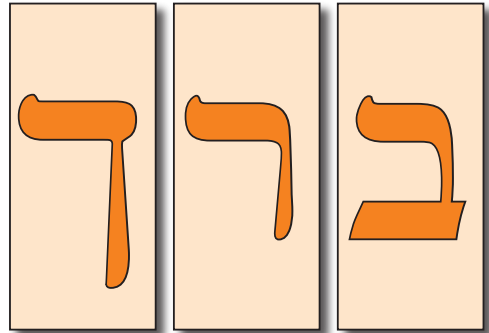
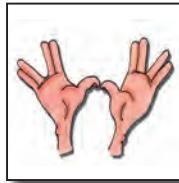
ROOT ANALYSIS

**בְּרוּךְ**      **בְּרָכּוֹ**      **הַמְּבָרָךְ**

blessed = **בְּרוּךְ**

bless (plural) = **בְּרָכּוֹ**

the One Who is blessed = **הַמְּבָרָךְ**



CLUE: **ב = כ = פ**

Practice these words and circle all the words that contain the root **ברך**.

1. **בְּרוּךְ**    **מַלְכוּתוֹ**    **כְּבוֹד**    **בְּרָכּוֹ**    **מֶלֶךְ**    **מַלְכֵי**

2. **הַמְּלָכִים**    **וְעַד**    **שָׁמַע**    **הַמְּבָרָךְ**    **מִלְּפָנָיו**    **בִּרְךְ**

3. **כְּבוֹד**    **מְבָרָךְ**    **אֵין**    **בְּרוּכִים**    **בְּרָא**    **לְבָרְכָה**

4. **בְּרוּךְ**    **אֶתָּה**    **בְּרַפְתָּ**    **מֶלֶךְ**    **הָעוֹלָם**    **בְּרָכוּנִי**

5. **כְּמִלְּפָנָיו**    **אֵין**    **בְּרָכוֹת**    **בְּרָכּוֹ**    **בְּמִצּוֹתָיו**

Write in the missing root letters.

8. **בְּרָ** \_\_\_\_\_ ו

7. **הַמְּ** \_\_\_\_\_ **רְךְ**

6. **בְּרוּ** \_\_\_\_\_ :

11. \_\_\_\_\_ **רוּכִים**

10. **בְּרָ** \_\_\_\_\_ **וֹת**

9. **בְּ** \_\_\_\_\_ **פַת**

Review the vocabulary and make your best guess at the meaning of the בְּרָכוּי.

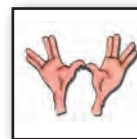


Take your best guess at these meanings. Your teacher will help you fill in the parts you don't yet know.

בְּרָכוּי אֶת-יְיָ הַמְּבָרָךְ.



אֶת-יְיָ




words  
Adonai = יְיָ  
and more = וְעַד  
before = אֶת  
direct object

word parts  
the = הַ to = לְ

בְּרוּךְ יְיָ הַמְּבָרָךְ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד.

וְעַד. לְ יְיָ


How to Dance the בְּרָכוּי

We say the בְּרָכוּי with our bodies as well as with our mouths.

Take a breath and let it out slowly. It should make you feel alive. A good breath goes through your whole body. In Hebrew, one word for breath is connected to the word for soul. In Genesis we learned that we come alive when God breathes our soul into our body. The first secret to saying the בְּרָכוּי is breathing and feeling the breath run through your body, reminding you of the gift of life.

The second secret to saying the בְּרָכוּי is knowing that the Hebrew root בָּרַךְ is also the word for knees. We bow when we say the בְּרָכוּי. We bow deeply, just like a person who is

entering a room where a king or queen is waiting. We bow by first bending our knees and then bending our spine.

The last secret to saying the בְּרָכוּי is remembering that it is a call and response. We stand while the leader bows and says the first line, "בְּרָכוּי." We bend and bow when we say our line, "בְּרוּךְ יְיָ." We breathe out as we bend our knees and bow. We breathe back in as we come back up—unbending and unbowing.



# The First פְּרָכּוֹ



All Jews used to gather on a mountain in Jerusalem to worship and come close to God. Three times a year everyone would go to the Temple. At those times, Jews felt like they really belonged, and at those moments God felt very close. Then it was over. The Babylonians conquered Jerusalem, and the Temple was destroyed and left in ruins. The Jews were carried away as slaves, and the mountain where the Jews had gathered was empty. Israel was in exile.

It took seventy years to get permission to return. At first, only a few Jews left their new homes and their new businesses to become pioneers. They began to rebuild the Land of Israel and rebuild the Temple, but it did not go well. There were many problems. Finally, two new leaders came from Babylonia. They were Ezra and Nehemiah. To bring people together they held an eight-day festival in the center of the unfinished Temple courtyard. For three of those days, for the first time ever, the Torah was read from beginning to end. At the beginning of this gathering, when everyone was standing in the unfinished courtyard waiting to see what would happen, the Levites got up on the stage. The Levites were the singers and musicians who led services in the Temple. They broke the silence with words that were more or less the פְּרָכּוֹ. The people answered with their part. When this פְּרָכּוֹ ended, the exile was over. Israel was again one people, and they again had a home.

(Reuven Hammer's book, *Entering Jewish Prayer, A Guide to Personal Devotion and the Worship Service*)

## Questions

1. How did saying the פְּרָכּוֹ end the exile?
2. How can remembering this first פְּרָכּוֹ in the unfinished Temple help us to know where to point our hearts when we say the פְּרָכּוֹ?

Practice reciting these phrases that contain the root בָּרַךְ.

1. בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגֶּפֶן.

2. בָּרְכוּ אֶת־יְי הַמְּבַרֵךְ. בָּרוּךְ יי הַמְּבַרֵךְ לְעוֹלָם וָעַד.

3. בָּרְכוּנִי לְשָׁלוֹם מִלְּאֲכֵי הַשָּׁלוֹם מִלְּאֲכֵי עֲלִיּוֹן.

4. מִי שֶׁבֵּרַךְ אֲבוֹתֵינוּ אֲבָרְהָם יִצְחָק וְיַעֲקֹב, שָׂרָה רַבֵּקָה רַחֵל וְלֵאָה.

5. יִתְבָּרַךְ וְיִשְׁתַּבַּח וְיִתְפָּאֵר וְיִתְרוֹמֵם וְיִתְנַשֵּׂא.

## Being a Community

The בָּרְכוּ turns the group of people who have come to a service into a community.

List 3 groups to which you belong.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

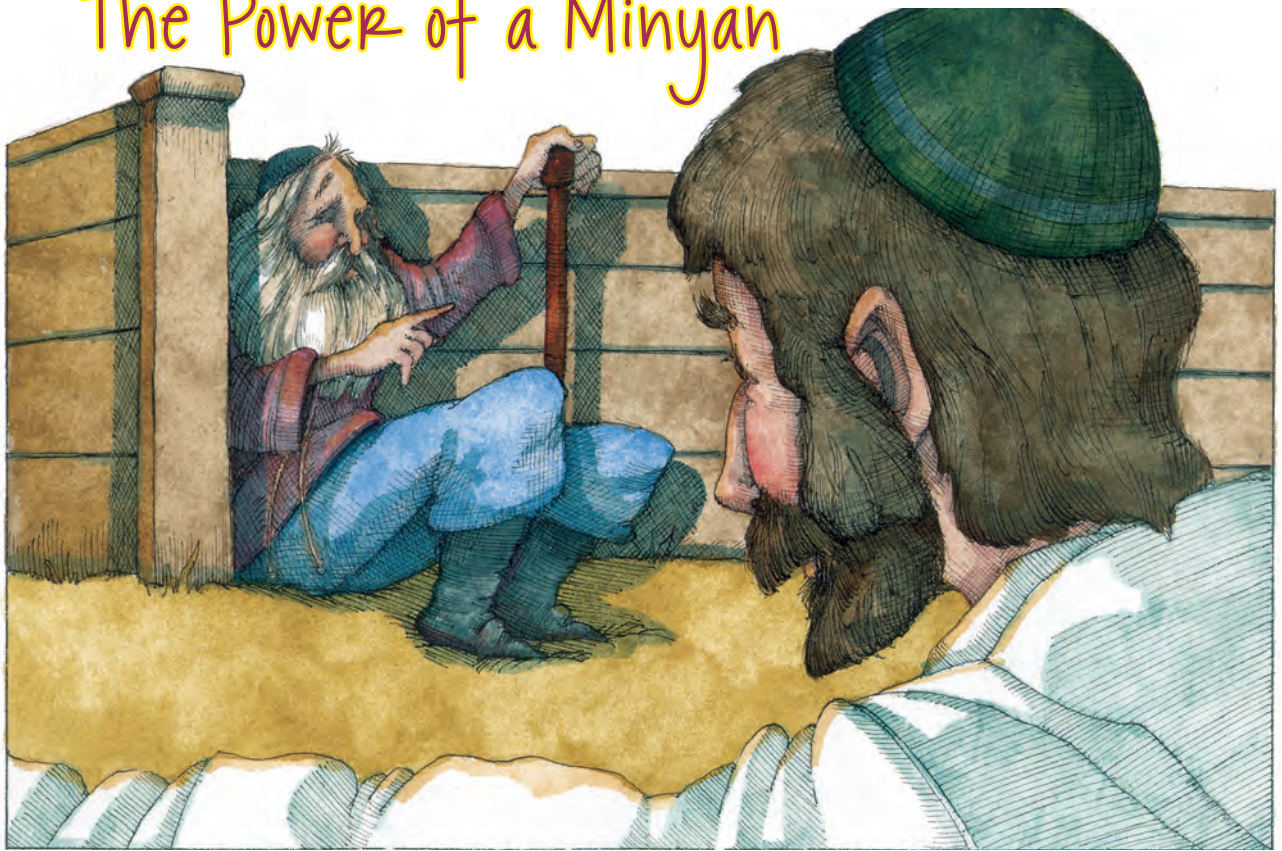
List 3 communities to which you belong.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

What is the difference between a group and a community?



# The Power of a Minyan



**T**he Midrash teaches that Abraham figured out that ten was the smallest number of people to make sure that prayers had a good chance of convincing God. Abraham realized this when he was trying to save Sodom. He argued with God that it was wrong to destroy Sodom if enough righteous people lived there. God agreed not to destroy the city if there were fifty good people. Then Abraham tried smaller numbers and stopped at ten. We've used ten ever since. Ten or more Jews praying together are a minyan. The Hasidim understood the power of a minyan and told this story.

There was a blind rebbe who was called the Seer of Lublin. The Seer could not see things through his eyes but he saw in other ways. One of the students of the Seer was a man who lived in a town where there were no other Jews. One week a year the student would leave his farm, ride almost two days on his horse, and then spend a week studying with, praying with, and being part of the Seer's community.

Once he rode into Lublin late on a Thursday afternoon. He went to put his horse away in the stable and found the Seer waiting for him. Almost magically, the blind Seer called him by name and said, "Go home."

The man said, "But—"

The Seer said, "Go home and get there before Shabbat starts."

The man said, "But it is Thursday afternoon, and my farm is two days away."

The Seer said, "Go," and the man had no choice. He got on his tired horse and rode through the night.

Near morning he came to an inn. The man said, "I am tired. My horse is tired. We will stop for food and water and then we will rush on." In the inn were nine other Jews. They begged the man to stay with them and be the tenth person in their minyan for Shabbat. He explained that the Seer had told him to go home, and he said, "Sorry, but no."

The man ate and drank, but fell asleep and woke just before Shabbat. He panicked when he realized that he was stuck. He became the tenth in their minyan.

It was an amazing Shabbat. When the group sang together it was as if angels were singing with them. When they danced together, it was as if they were dancing in the air. When they studied together, walls of fire surrounded them.

As soon as Shabbat was over, the man got back on his horse and rode through the night to get back to Lublin to apologize. When he got there the Seer was waiting. The Seer called him by name, and said, "You were supposed to die this Shabbat. That is why I wanted you to return home."

The man said, "I am still alive."

The Seer explained, "Sometimes a minyan has more power than a miracle-working rebbe." (From Martin Buber's *Tales of the Hasidim*)



## Questions

1. What do you think this story means?
2. Why is ten the right number for a minyan?
3. How does a minyan work miracles?
4. How can this story help you know where to point your heart when you say the **פְּרֻכֵּי**?

Practice these words and phrases from the בָּרְכוּ.

1. בָּרוּךְ לְעוֹלָם הַמְּבָרָךְ יי בָּרְכוּ אֶת וְעַד

2. בָּרוּךְ בָּרְכוּ אֶת הַמְּבָרָךְ עוֹלָם לְעוֹלָם וְעַד

3. בָּרוּךְ יי וְעַד הַמְּבָרָךְ בָּרוּךְ וְעַד בָּרְכוּ

4. בָּרְכוּ אֶת יי הַמְּבָרָךְ לְעוֹלָם וְעַד

5. בָּרוּךְ יי הַמְּבָרָךְ אֶת יי הַמְּבָרָךְ

6. הַמְּבָרָךְ לְעוֹלָם וְעַד בָּרוּךְ הַמְּבָרָךְ לְעוֹלָם וְעַד

And now practice these phrases with the root בָּרַךְ.

7. בָּרְכוּ אֶת יי הַמְּבָרָךְ בָּרוּךְ יי הַמְּבָרָךְ לְעוֹלָם וְעַד

8. וַיְבָרֶךְ אֱלֹהִים אֶת-יוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי וַיְקַדְּשׁ אֹתוֹ

9. בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם הַזֶּה אֶת-הָעוֹלָם כֹּלּוֹ בְּטוֹבוֹ

10. וְעַל כָּלֵם יִתְפָּרֵךְ וַיִּתְרוֹמַם שְׂמֵךְ מִלִּבְנוֹ תִּמְיֵד לְעוֹלָם וְעַד

11. כִּן יִבָּרֵךְ אוֹתָנוּ כִּלְנוּ יַחַד בְּבִרְכָה שְׁלֵמָה וְנֹאמַר אָמֵן

12. בָּרְכֵנוּ אָבִינוּ כִּלְנוּ כְּאַחַד בְּאוֹר פְּנִיָּךְ, כִּי בְּאוֹר פְּנִיָּךְ נִתְּתָ לָנוּ

13. כִּמוֹ שְׁנֵת בָּרְכוּ אָבוֹתֵינוּ אֲבָרְהָם יִצְחָק וַיַּעֲקֹב בְּכָל מְכַל כָּל