

# Birkat Ha-chammah

## Blessing the Sun



וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יְהִי מְאֹרֶת בְּרָקִיעַ הַשָּׁמַיִם לְהַבְדִּיל בֵּין הַיּוֹם וּבֵין הַלַּיְלָה  
וְהָיוּ לְאֹתֹת וּלְמוֹעֲדִים וּלְיָמִים וּשְׁנָיִם:  
וְהָיוּ לְמְאֹרֶת בְּרָקִיעַ הַשָּׁמַיִם לְהָאִיר עַל-הָאָרֶץ וַיְהִי-כֵן:

And God said: Let there be lights in the vastness  
of sky to separate day from night...  
And they shall serve as lights in the  
vastness of space, to shine upon the earth.

And it was so.  
(Genesis 1:14 -15)

Every 28 years, the Jewish community celebrates the return of the sun  
to its original place in the heavens at the precise time and day of  
its creation.

"Anyone seeing the Sun at its turning point...should say,  
"Blessed is The One who makes the Creation!."

And when is this?

Abaye said: every 28th year ."

(Talmud, Berachot 59b.)

What is the 'turning point'?

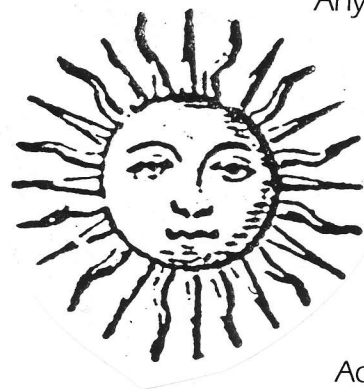
The first month of the Hebrew year

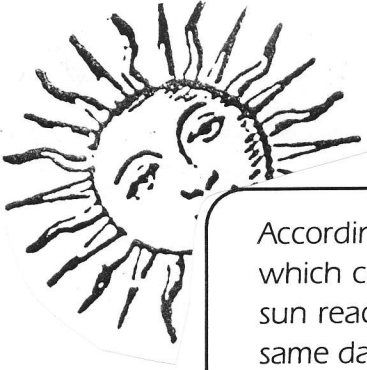
- Nissan -

begins at the time of the spring equinox.

According to Hebrew tradition, the Sun was placed  
at the spring equinox at the beginning of the fourth day of creation  
(Tuesday at 6:00pm.) The change of season from winter into spring  
is the 'turning point'. Whenever the Sun again reaches this starting  
point at 6:00pm on a Tuesday, then Birkat Hachama is said.

When do we say the Blessing? From the moment the upper arc of the Sun  
first appears until the full disc of the Sun is visible,  
which takes about 2 1/2 minutes.





According to tradition, the sun was created at the moment of the spring equinox which coincided with the first moment of the fourth day of creation. When the sun reaches this starting point again at the exact same time of day and on the same day of the week, we recite the Birkat Ha-chamah.

How is this time determined? According to the astronomical calculations of the 3rd century sage Shmuel, the length of a solar year is 365.25 days, or 52 weeks plus 1 1/4 days. It thus follows that precisely one year after creation, when the sun returned to its original position, it would be 1x days (one day and six hours) later in the week. After two years, it would be 2x days later in the week. Only after 28 years, would the sun return to that position at the same time—at the onset of the "fourth day," Wednesday.

We mark this moment today: at sunrise on April 8, 2009, 14 Nisan.

## The Birkat Hachama Prayers



PSALMS 90: 17

וַיְהִי נֹעַם אֲדֹנָי אֱלֹהֵינוּ עָלֵינוּ

May God's bliss be upon us and connect us to the work of our hands,

Vi'hi noam יהוה Eloheynu aleynu,

וּמַעֲשֵׂה יָדֵינוּ כּוֹנֵנָה עָלֵינוּ וּמַעֲשֵׂה יְדֵינוּ כּוֹנֵנָהּ.

as the work of our hands connects us to God.

u-ma'aseh yadeynu kon'nah aleynu; u-ma'aseh yadeynu kon'ney-hu.



## Tetragrammaton Acrostic

י רָאוּךְ עַם־שָׁמֶשׁ וְלִפְנֵי יָרֵחַ דּוֹר דּוֹרִים:

Let them be in awe of You as long as the sun shines,  
while the moon lasts, generations on end. (Psalm 72:5)  
Yira-u-cha im-shamesh v'lifney yareyach dor dorim.

ה וְדִינוּ לָךְ אֱלֹהִים הוֹדִינוּ וְקָרוֹב שְׁמֶךָ סִפְרוּ נִפְלְאוֹתֶיךָ:

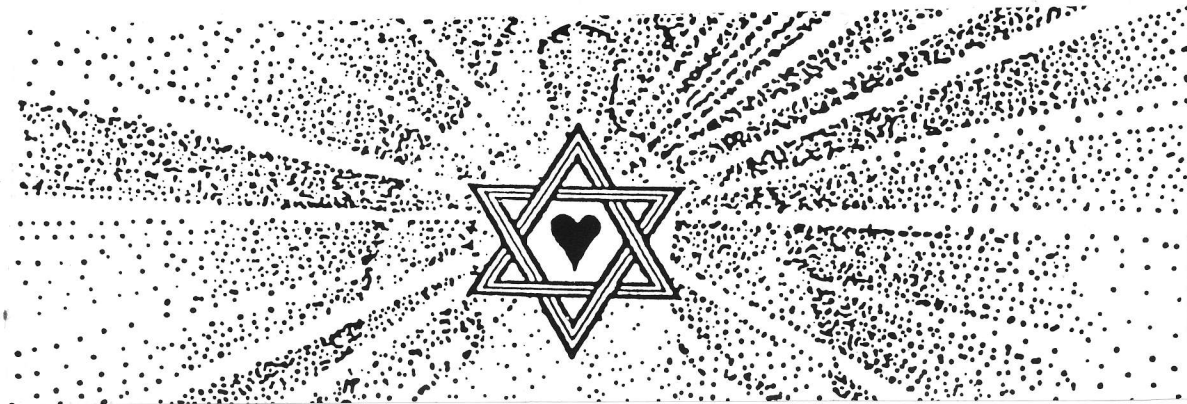
We praise You, O God; we praise You; Your presence is near;  
people tell of Your wondrous deeds. (Psalm 75:2)  
Hodinu l'cha Elohim, hodinu v'karov sh'mecha sippru nif'l'o-techa.

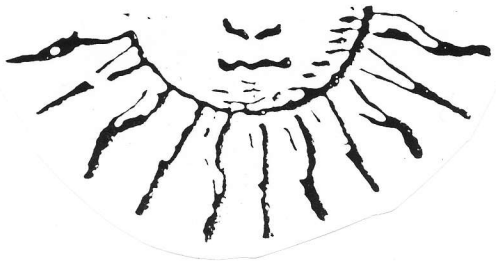
וּיֵצְאתֶם וּפְשָׁתֶם כְּעֶגְלֵי מִרְבֵּק: זָרְחָה לָכֶם יִרְאִי שְׁמִי שָׁמֶשׁ צְדָקָה וּמִרְפָּא בְּכִנְפֶיהָ

But for who revere My name a sun of victory shall rise to bring healing.  
You shall go forth and stamp like stall-fed calves. (Malachi 3:20)  
V'zar-chah la-chem, yir'ey sh'mi, shemesh tz'dakah u-marpey bich'nafe-hah,  
vi-tzaatem u- fish-tem k'egley mar'bek.

ה גִּידוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם צְדָקוֹ וְרָאוּ כָּל־הָעַמִּים כְּבוֹדוֹ:

The heavens proclaim God's righteousness,  
and all peoples see God's Glory. (Psalm 97:6)  
Higidu ha-shamayim tzid'ko, v'ra-u chol-ha-amim k'vodo.





## GENESIS 1: 14-19

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יְהִי מְאֹרֶת בְּרָקִיעַ הַשָּׁמַיִם

God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky

לְהַבְדִּיל בֵּין הַיּוֹם וּבֵין הַלַּיְלָה

to separate day from night

וְהָיוּ לְאֹתֹת וּלְמוֹעֲדִים וּלְיָמִים וּשָׁנִים:

they shall serve as signs for the set times—the days and the years;

וְהָיוּ לְמְאֹרֹת בְּרָקִיעַ הַשָּׁמַיִם לְהָאִיר עַל-הָאָרֶץ וַיְהִי-כֵן:

and they will serve as lights in the expanse of the sky to shine upon the earth." And it was so.

וַיַּעַשׂ אֱלֹהִים אֶת-שְׁנֵי הַמְּאֹרֹת הַגְּדֹלִים אֶת-הַמָּאֹר הַגָּדֹל

God made the two great lights, the greater light

לְמַמְשֶׁלֶת הַיּוֹם וְאֶת-הַמָּאֹר הַקָּטָן לְמַמְשֶׁלֶת הַלַּיְלָה וְאֵת הַכּוֹכָבִים:

to dominate the day and the lesser light to dominate the night, and the stars.

וַיִּתֵּן אֹתָם אֱלֹהִים בְּרָקִיעַ הַשָּׁמַיִם לְהָאִיר עַל-הָאָרֶץ:

And God set them in the expanse of the sky to shine upon the earth,

וּלְמַשֵּׁל בַּיּוֹם וּבַלַּיְלָה וּלְהַבְדִּיל בֵּין הָאֹר וּבֵין הַחֹשֶׁךְ

to dominate the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness.

וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹהִים כִּי-טוֹב:

And God saw that this was good.

וַיְהִי-עֶרֶב וַיְהִי-בֹקֶר יוֹם רְבִיעִי:

And there was evening and there was morning, a fourth day.

## JEREMIAH 31:34-39

כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה נָתַן שֶׁמֶשׁ לְאֹר יוֹמָם

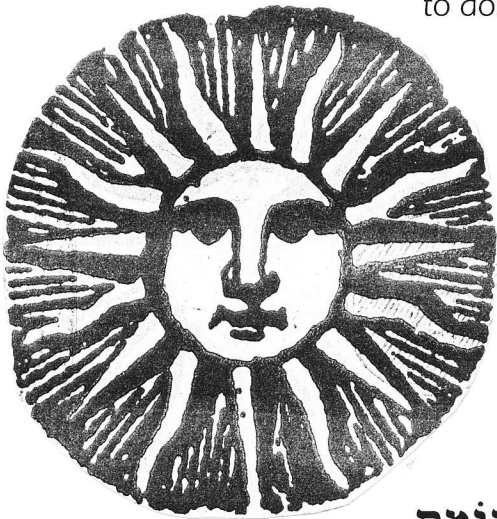
Thus said יְהוָה who gives the Sun for a light by day,

חֻקַּת יָרֵחַ וְכּוֹכָבִים לְאֹר לַיְלָה

the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for light by night,

רָגַע הַיָּם וַיִּפְּהֶמוּ גִלְיוֹ יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת שְׁמוֹ:

who split the sea and its waves roared; יְהוָה Tz'vaot is God's Name:



# PSALM 84:12

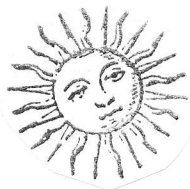
ספר תהילים פרק פד

כִּי שֶׁמֶשׁ וּמָגֵן יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים חַן וְכָבוֹד יִתֵּן

For יהוה Elohim is sun and shield; the One bestows grace and glory;  
Ki shemesh u-mageyn יהוה Elohim, cheyn v'kavod yiteyn

יְהוָה לֹא־יִמְנַע טוֹב לַהֲלֹכִים בְּתַמִּים:

יהוה does not withhold goodness from those who live without blame.  
יהוה lo yim'na tov la-hol'chim b'tamim



# PSALM 148:1-6.

ספר תהילים פרק קמח

הַלְלוּיָהּ הַלְלוּ אֶת־יְהוָה מִן־הַשָּׁמַיִם הַלְלוּהוּ בַּמְרוֹמִים:

HalleluYah. Praise the One from the heavens; praise God on high.

הַלְלוּהוּ כָּל־מַלְאָכָיו הַלְלוּהוּ כָּל־צַבָּאָיו:

Praise God, all the angels; praise God, all the hosts of heaven.

הַלְלוּהוּ שֶׁמֶשׁ וְיָרֵחַ הַלְלוּהוּ כָּל־כּוֹכְבֵי אֹר:

Praise God sun and moon; praise God, all bright stars.

הַלְלוּהוּ שָׁמַי הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהַמַּיִם אֲשֶׁר מַעַל הַשָּׁמַיִם:

Praise God highest heavens, and you waters above the heavens.

יְהַלְלוּ אֶת־שֵׁם יְהוָה כִּי הוּא צִוָּה וְנִבְרָאוּ:

Let them praise the name of the One; Who commanded, and they were created!

וַיַּעֲמִידֵם לְעַד לְעוֹלָם חֻק־נֶתֶן וְלֹא יַעֲבוֹר:

And Who makes them endure forever, establishing an order that shall never change!



THE BRACHA

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם

עוֹשֶׂה מַעֲשֵׂה בִּרְאשִׁית:

A fountain of Blessings are You, יהוה Eloheynu, the Maker of Creation!

Baruch Ata יהוה Eloheynu Melech Ha-olam, oseh ma'asey v'reshit.



א לַמְנַצֵּחַ מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד:

For the Leader. A Psalm of David.  
la-m'natzey-ach, mizmor ledavid.

ב הַשָּׁמַיִם מְסַפְּרִים כְּבוֹד־אֵל וּמַעֲשֵׂה יָדָיו מְגִיד הֶרָקִיעַ:

The heavens declare the glory of God, the sky proclaims God's handiwork;  
ha-shamayim, m'sapp'rim k'vod-El; u-ma'aseh yadav, maggid ha-rakia'.

ג יוֹם לַיּוֹם יִבְיַע אֹמֶר וַלַּיְלָה לַלַּיְלָה יִתְּחַהֲדַעַת:

Day to day makes utterance, night to night speaks out.  
yom leyom yabbia' omer; v'laylah l'laylah, y'chaveh-da'at.

ד אֵין אֹמֶר וְאֵין דְּבָרִים בְּלִי נִשְׁמָע קוֹלָם:

There is no utterance, there are no words, their sound goes unheard.  
ein-omer ve'ein devarim; beli nishma kolam.

ה בְּכָל־הָאָרֶץ יֵצֵא קוֹם וּבִקְצֵה תֵּבֵל מְלִיָּהֶם לִשְׁמֶשׁ שָׁם אֹהֶל בָּהֶם:

Their voice carries throughout the earth, their words to the end of the world.  
God placed in them a tent for the sun,  
bechol- ha-aretz yatza kavam, u-vik'tzeh tevel milleyhem; la-shemesh, sam-ohel ba-hem.

ו וְהוּא כְּחַתָּן יֵצֵא מִחַפָּתוֹ יָשִׁישׁ כְּגִבּוֹר לְרוּץ אֶרֶח:

who is like a groom coming forth from his chuppah, like a hero, eager to run his course.  
vehu, k'chatan yotze mechuppato; yasis k'gibbor, la-rutz orach.

ז מְקִצֵּה הַשָּׁמַיִם מוֹצְאוֹ וְתִקּוּפָתוֹ עַל־קְצוֹתָם וְאֵין נִסְתָּר מִחַמָּתוֹ:

His rising-place is at one end heaven, and his circuit reaches the other;  
nothing escapes [the Sun's] heat.  
miktzeh ha-shamayim motza'o, u-t'kufato al-ketzotam; ve'eyn nistar, mechammato.

ח תּוֹרַת יְהוָה תְּמִימָה מְשִׁיבַת נֶפֶשׁ יְעֻדוֹת יְהוָה נֶאֱמָנָה מַחְכִּימַת פֶּתִי:

The Torah of יהוה is perfect, renewing life;  
The decrees of יהוה are enduring, making the simple wise;  
Torat יהוה temimah meshivat nafesh; Edut יהוה ne'emanah, machkimat peti.



ב פִּקּוּדֵי יְהוָה יִשְׂרִים מְשַׁמְחֵי־לֵב מִצְוֹת יְהוָה בְּרָה מְאִירַת עֵינָיִם:

The precepts of יהוה are just, rejoicing the heart;

The instruction of יהוה is lucid, making the eyes light up.

Pikkudey יהוה y'sharim m'sam'chey-lev; mitzvat יהוה barah, me'irat eynayim.

יִרְאַת יְהוָה טְהוֹרָה עוֹמֶדֶת לְעַד מְשַׁפְּטֵי־יְהוָה אֱמֶת צְדָקוֹ יַחְדָּו:

The awe of יהוה is pure, abiding forever; The judgments of יהוה are true, righteous altogether;

Yir'at יהוה t'horah omedet la'ad; mish'p'tey-יהוה emet; tzad'ku yach'dav.

הַנֶּחְמָדִים מִזָּהָב וּמִפָּז רָב וּמִתּוּקִים מִדְּבַשׁ וְנוֹפֶת צוּפִים:

More desirable than gold, than finest gold; sweeter than honey dripping from the comb.

Ha-nech'madim, mi-zahav u-mippaz rav; u-m'tukim mid'vash, v'nofet tzufim.

גַּם־עֲבֹדָה נִזְהָר בָּהֶם בְּשִׁמְרָם יֵקֵב רָב:

Your servant is careful with them; in obeying them there is much reward.

gam-avd'cha niz'har bahem; b'sham'ram, ekev rav.

הַשְּׂגִיאוֹת מִי־יָבִין מִנִּסְתָּרוֹת נִקְנִי:

Who can be aware of errors? Clear me from unperceived guilt!

shegi'ot mi-yavin; mi-nistarot nakkeni.

גַּם מִזֵּדִים חֲשׂוֹךְ עֲבֹדָה אֶל־יִמְשְׁלֻ־בִּי אֲזִ אֵיתָם וְנִקִּיתִי מִפֶּשַׁע רָב:

And keep Your servant; from willful sins! Let them not rule over me;

then shall I be blameless and clear of great offense.

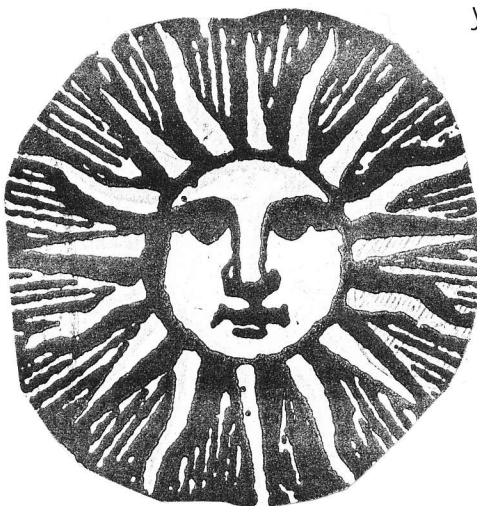
gam mi-zedim chasoch avdecha, al-yimshelu-vi az eytam; v'nikeyti, mi-pesha rav.

יְהִי לְרָצוֹן אִמְרֵי־פִי וְהִגְיוֹן לִבִּי לְפָנֶיךָ יְהוָה צוּרִי וְגֹאֲלִי:

May the words of my mouth and the prayer of my heart be acceptable to You,

יהוה, my Rock and Redeemer.

yih'yu l'ratzon imrey-fi v'hegyon libbi l'fanecha; יהוה tzuri v'go'ali.







## In Kabbalah we learn

That the Holy One,  
in creating the world,  
took some of it's fresh new light  
and poured it into each of the vessels  
of the spheres of the universe.

\*\*\*\*\*

But such powerful light was stronger than the vessels,  
and so they shattered and burst.  
The precious light spilled out,  
falling  
down  
and  
down  
through all the worlds,  
until they reached into the lowest world.  
Our own.

\*\*\*\*\*

As the sparks fell they took on form,  
embedding themselves in physical things:  
wood and water, plants and earth and living creatures.

\*\*\*\*\*

Always since that time,  
the sparks yearn to return to the Source of all light,  
to the single Holy Light from which they fell.

\*\*\*\*\*

And so when we do a *mitzvah*  
with food, or plants, or earth, or another person;  
when we praise our Source for each marvel we see, eat or use,  
we awaken the spark of light within!  
Suddenly its fire starts to grow.  
It rises, flaming  
higher and higher and higher,  
to be reunited with its Source.

\*\*\*\*\*

As we have the power, through each *mitzvah*,  
to redeem the holy sparks of light from the tyranny of matter,  
so too does the Holy One redeem us.

\*\*\*\*\*

The Holy Spark in each of us lies ready  
to soar upward to the light from which we sprang,  
and from which our being draws its breath.  
We pray that we may awaken every spark  
whose time has come to soar!

(adapted by MP from *Wings of Awe*)





א שִׁיר לַמַּעֲלוֹת אֲשָׁא עֵינַי אֶל־הַהָרִים מֵאֵין יבֹא עֲזָרִי:

A song for Ascents. I lift my eyes up to the mountains; from where will my help come?

Shir la-ma'alot essa 'enai el heh-harim, me'ayin yavo 'ezri.

ב עֲזָרִי מֵעַם יְהוָה עֹשֶׂה שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ:

My help comes from the One, maker of heaven and earth.

'Ezri me'im יהוה 'Oseh shamayim va-aretz.

ג אֶל־יִתֵּן לַמּוֹט רַגְלְךָ אֶל־יָנוּם שֹׁמְרְךָ:

The One will not let your foot give way; your guardian will not slumber;

Al yitten lamot raglecha, al yanoom shomrecha.

ד הִנֵּה לֹא יָנוּם וְלֹא יִישָׁן שׁוֹמֵר יִשְׂרָאֵל:

See, the guardian of Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps!

Hineh lo yanoom velo yishan, Shomer Yisrael.

ה יְהוָה שֹׁמְרְךָ יְהוָה צִלְךָ עַל־יָד יְמִינְךָ:

יהוה is your guardian; יהוה is your protection at your right hand.

יהוה shomrecha, יהוה tzilcha 'al yad y'minecha.

ו יוֹמָם הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ לֹא־יַכְכָּה וַיָּרַח בַּלַּיְלָה:

The sun will not strike you by day, nor the moon by night.

Yomam ha-shemesh lo yakkekka v'yarey-ach ba-layla.

ז יְהוָה יִשְׁמְרְךָ מִכָּל־רָע יִשְׁמַר אֶת־נַפְשְׁךָ:

יהוה will guard you from all harm; יהוה will guard your life.

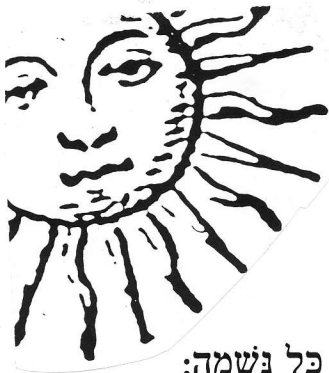
יהוה yishmorcha mikkol ra', yishmor et nafshecha.

ח יְהוָה יִשְׁמַר־צֵאתְךָ וּבֹאֶךָ מֵעַתָּה וְעַד־עוֹלָם:

יהוה will guard your going out and your coming in, now and forever.

יהוה yishmor tzetcha u-vo-echa, me'ata ve'ad 'olam.





## El Adon

בְּרוּךְ וּמְבָרָךְ בְּפִי כָּל נִשְׁמָה:

דַּעַת וּתְבוּנָה סִבְבִּים אוֹתוֹ:

וְנִהְדָּר בְּכָבוֹד עַל הַמְרַפָּה:

חֶסֶד וְרַחֲמִים לְפָנֵי כְבוֹדוֹ:

יִצְרָם בְּדַעַת בְּבִינָה וּבְהַשְׁכֵּל

לְהִיּוֹת מוֹשְׁלִים בְּקָרֵב תֵּבֵל:

נֶאֱדָה זִיּוֹם בְּכָל הָעוֹלָם:

שְׂמִיחִים בִּיצְאָתָם וְשִׁשִּׁים בְּבוֹאָם עֲשִׂים בְּאִמָּה רִצּוֹן קוֹנֵם:

צִהְלָה וְרִנָּה לְזִכָּר מַלְכוּתוֹ:

רָאָה וְהִתְקִין צוּרֵת הַלְבָנָה:

אֵל אֲדוֹן עַל כָּל הַמַּעֲשִׂים

גָּדְלוֹ וְטוֹבוֹ מְלֵא עוֹלָם

הַמִּתְגַּאֵה עַל חַיּוֹת הַקֶּדֶשׁ

זְכוּת וּמִישׁוֹר לְפָנֵי כֶסֶאֱוֹ

טוֹבִים מְאֻרוֹת שֶׁפָּרָא אֱלֹהֵינוּ

כָּח וּגְבוּרָה נָתַן בָּהֶם

מְלֵאִים זִיּוֹ וּמְפִיקִים נִגְוָה

פָּאֵר וְכָבוֹד נוֹתְנִים לְשִׁמּוֹ

קָרָא לְשִׁמְשׁ וַיִּזְרַח אוֹר

שִׁבַּח נוֹתְנִים לוֹ כָּל צָבָא מְרוֹם

תַּפְאֶרֶת וּגְדֻלָּה שְׂרָפִים וְאוֹפָנִים וְחַיּוֹת הַקֶּדֶשׁ:

*Ayl Adon al kol ha-ma'asim.*

*Baruch u'm'vorach b'fi kol n'shama.*

*Gad'lo v'tuvo maley olam.*

*Daat ut'vunah sov'vim oto.*

*Ha-mit'ga-eh al chayot ha-kodesh.*

*V'Neh'dar b'chavod al ha-mer'kavah.*

*Zchut u-mishor lif'ney chis'oh.*

*Chesed v'rachamim lif'ney ch'vo-doh.*

*Tovim m'orot sheh-bara Eloheynu.*

*Ytzar-am b'daat b'vina uv'has'keyl.*

*Ko-ach ug'vurah natan ba-heyim.*

*Lih'yot mosh'lim b'kerev teyveyl.*

*Mley-im ziv, u-m'fikim nogah.*

*Na-eh zivam b'chol ha-olam.*

*Smey-chim b'tzey-tam v'sasim b'vo-am.*

*Osim b'eymah r'tzon konam.*

*P'ehr v'chavod notnim lee-shmo.*

*Tza-hala v'rina l'zeycher malchuto.*

*Kara la-shemesh, va-yiz'rach or.*

*Ra-a v'hit'kin tzurat hal'vanah.*

*Shevach notnim lo, kol tz'vah marom.*

*Tiferet u-g'dulah, s'rafim v'ofanim.*

*v'chayot ha-kodesh.*

A gentle Lord of all that is.

Blessed and loved by each soul alive.

Great and good You fill all space.

Delight there is in knowing You!

How You transcend all holy life,

Which bears You high above any throne.

Z'khut and equity radiate from You.

Hesed and compassion the worlds reflect.

The stars and the planets You made to give light.

You formed them all conscious,

all worthy and wise.

Knowledge and power You gave them to shine.

Like powerful assistants, they serve You in space.

Much light and energy they radiate forth.

No place is untouched by their gentle rays.

So joyful their path is, so happy their course,

Enroute to fulfill their Creator's command.

Praising Your glory, they honor Your Name,

Singing Your Majesty's anthem of joy.

Quietly suns shine to answer Your call.

Reflections of moonlight

change size at Your word.

Seraphim, angels, and all heavenly hosts,

They praise You in concert with S'firot on high!

All elements mingle their harmonious tune

Nature and humans in rhythm provide.

-Reb Zalman



From Babylonian Talmud, Berachot 59b  
ברכות דף נט.ב.

**תנו רבנן: הרואה חמה בתקופתה לבנה בגבורתה וכוכבים במסילותם ומזלות כסדרן אומר ברוך עושה בראשית. ואימת הוי? -אמר אביי: כל עשרים ושמונה שנים והדר מחזור ונפלה תקופת ניסן בשבתאי באורתא דתלת נגהי ארבע.**

THE RABBIS TEACH: Anyone who sees the sun in its 'tekufah/season' the moon at its strength, the stars in their paths and the constellations of the sodiac in their order says: 'A Fountain of Blessings is the Maker of Creation!' When is this? Abaye said: "Every 28 years the cycle begins again and the Nissan equinox falls in Saturn, on the evening of Tuesday, the night before Wednesday."  
(Berachot 59)

## My Thoughts Awaken Me to See You

By Rabbi Moses ibn Ezra  
Translated by Raymond Sheindlin

My thoughts awaken me to see You;  
They show me in my heart's eye Your deeds;  
They teach me to tell Your wonders,  
"When I behold Your heavens,  
The work Your fingers made."

Around its course the disk of heaven walks,  
A potter's wheel enwhirling the world;  
It has no lips, and yet it tells Your glory  
To earth, unmoved within its orbit,  
Suspended in the void,  
By cords of Your love stayed.

Thither the sun yearns, and there burns,  
And of its light some to the moon lends.  
While heaven's sphere is spread out like a tent,  
With stars blooming on it, a garden,  
Proclaiming how profound  
The plans that You have laid.

