



Praying Alive: Standing Before God

Barechenu / Barech Aleinu – The Blessing of Livelihood

Based on a Shiur by Rabbi Shlomo Farhi

Dedications

This learning is lovingly dedicated by the **Daniel S. Loeb Torah Center Silver Donors, David A. and Joseph A. Cohen**, in memory of their beloved sister **Rochelle (Shelley) Dweck – Rahel bat Chaya**, and by **Susan Buckler** for the complete recovery of her brother **Keith Buckler – Yitzchak ben Tzipporah**, and for the elevation of the soul of **Yissachar Beresh ben Yisrael**.

May these words of Torah bring blessing to all who study them and light to all who seek God's presence in their daily work.

1. Orientation: Where We Are in the Amidah

We arrive at the ninth blessing of the weekday *Amidah* — *Barechenu* (summer, Sefarad) or *Barech Aleinu* (winter, Sefarad; all year Ashkenaz).

This is the central prayer for *Parnassah* — livelihood.

Historically, the language centers on rain, dew, and produce because ancient economies were agricultural: livestock needed pasture, farms needed rain, and harvests depended entirely on the right weather at the right time.

Even though our livelihoods today are in offices, shops, and services, the Torah's imagery remains the ideal language for asking God to “grow” our outcomes in healthy, timely ways.

Every *Amidah* blessing has a structure:

- **A request**

- A personal insertion
 - A statement of faith and closing blessing
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2. Text Mapping: Summer vs. Winter (Sefarad) and Ashkenaz

Summer (Sefarad): Begins *Barechenu Hashem Elokeinu* — “Bless us, Hashem our God.”
Focus: blessing our actions and the year with the right “dews.”

Winter (Sefarad): Begins *Barech Aleinu* — “Bless on us, Hashem our God, this year, and all its produce.”
Focus: rain, crops, and protection from calamity.

Ashkenaz: Uses the winter form all year (*Barech Aleinu*) but adds or removes *Tal / Matar* depending on season.

Where to add your own words:

Insert your personal *Parnassah* requests right before the closing — after the line “*ke’shanim hatovot*” (“as the good years”).

Shared core ideas in both versions:

- Bless the work of our hands
 - Let the year end with *chayim* (life), *savah* (satisfaction), and *shalom* (peace)
 - End with faith: God is *tov u’metiv* — good and desiring to do good
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3. Why “Bless on Us” (ברך עלינו) vs. “Bless Us” (ברכנו)?

In other blessings we say “Forgive **us**,” “Heal **us**,” “Redeem **us**.”
But only here do we say “Bless **on** us.” Why?

Because forgiveness and healing happen *within* me.

Livelihood happens *around* me. It’s not part of who I am — it rests *upon* me.

When we say “*Barech Aleinu*,” we’re saying: “Let blessing rest on me — but not define me.”
My income is a jacket, not my identity.

Rabbi Farhi tells the story of the **Brisker Rav** who asked a man, “How are you?”
The man replied, “Business is good, the market’s strong...”
The Rav stopped him: “I didn’t ask how your business is. I asked how **you** are.”

That is *Barech Aleinu*: keeping the self distinct from the bank account.

4. Timing: Why Tie Livelihood to “the Year”?

The blessing ends: “*Blessed are You, Hashem, Who blesses the years.*”
Why “years”? Because *livelihood is cyclical*.

Each Rosh Hashanah, the Talmud says, a person’s income is decreed — except what’s spent on Shabbat and Yom Tov.
In the ancient world, drought or flood decided survival for an entire year. Even today, our fiscal lives move in yearly rhythms.

The blessing asks not only for prosperity, but for **balance across the year** — enough to live, to feel enough, and to live at peace.

Year-End Trio	Meaning
Chayim (Life)	A viable livelihood; the ability to live and provide.
Savah (Satisfaction)	A sense of contentment and sufficiency.
Shalom (Peace)	Harmony in relationships; no conflict over money.

5. Agricultural Imagery That Still Fits Office Life

Rain vs. Dew. Soil and harvest. It might sound ancient, but it still fits.

Rain symbolizes *effort*: plowing, sowing, faith that the rain will come.
Dew symbolizes *grace*: blessing that comes even when we don’t toil.

Winter represents *doing*; summer represents *trusting*.
In spiritual language, “winter energy” is for planting — new ideas, ventures, beginnings.
“Summer energy” is for harvesting — gratitude, patience, reflection.

Practical cue: **Plant in winter, consolidate in summer.**

6. Halachic & Hashkafic Nuggets

- **Seasonal Text:** Sefarad shifts full text winter/summer; Ashkenaz keeps “Barech Aleinu” form year-round.
 - **Climate Note:** In regions where heavy rain causes harm, many communities emphasize *dew* over *rain*.
 - **Personal Insert:** Right before the closing line — mention salary, peace of mind, rent, serenity, etc.
 - **Focus on Role:** “Bless the work of our hands” means: *You do your effort; God provides the outcome.*
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7. Poverty Line & the 199 Zuz Insight

In Halachah, someone with 199 *zuz* is considered poor; 200 *zuz* disqualifies them from charity.

Even the word *Tzedakah* (צדקה) equals **199** in gematria.

The Torah encodes empathy in the very mathematics of giving.

Historically, 200 *zuz* bought a year's worth of food.

So *poverty* meant not having food for a year — not owning luxury, but lacking survival.

In today's world, we don't store food — we have *stores*. The anxiety shifted from survival to *status*.

The prayer reminds us to define “enough” honestly.

8. Anxiety, Control, and Bitachon

We often equate understanding with control.

But control is an illusion.

Some “little” efforts yield huge success.
Some “perfect” plans collapse.
Barech Aleinu trains us to detach outcome from worth.

It teaches:

“Do your best. Work honestly. Then release it. Let God bless the years.”

The healthiest understanding of *Parnassah* is to stop trying to control outcomes you never truly did.

9. Money & Identity — Protecting the Self

People often lose self-worth when careers shift or they retire.
This blessing acts as a spiritual firewall: “Your job is not your soul.”

Money is external; dignity is internal.
Pray not just for money, but for the grace to remain whole even when roles change.

Teach this to children early:

“What you do is how you serve — who you are is the image of God.”

10. Shalom Bayit and Wealth — The Double-Edged Sword

Money can unite or destroy.

Couples fight not about the number in the account, but about fear — fear of not having enough, or of being unseen.

The blessing's trifacta — *life, satisfaction, peace* — is the Torah's antidote.

Pray not just for income, but that **success never costs peace**.

“Hashem,” says Rabbi Farhi, “let abundance bring generosity and humility — not jealousy or strife.”

11. Where Do I Pray for What?

Request	Best Placement in the Amidah
More revenue / client stability	<i>Barechenu</i> / <i>Barech Aleinu</i> before the close
Wisdom or creativity	<i>Ata Chonen</i> (for insight), or here if work-related
Health to keep working	<i>Refa'einu</i> (healing blessing)
Debt relief or serenity	<i>Barech Aleinu</i> + <i>Sim Shalom</i>
Self-worth not tied to title	<i>Barech Aleinu</i> personal insert

12. Ask & Reflect — Write-In Prompts for Your Amidah

Before you close the blessing, pause and think:

- What exact expenses weigh on me this month?
- Who needs livelihood relief or job stability?
- What would true *satisfaction* feel like for me?
- Where is money threatening peace in my life?
- What part of my identity do I want God to shape beyond my career?

These reflections turn prayer from *recitation* into *conversation*.

13. Seasonal Timing Snapshot

Communities follow set times for mentioning *rain* or *dew* —
mashiv haruach, morid hageshem, v'ten tal u'matar.

If living in areas where heavy rain causes damage, many *Poskim* allow emphasizing *dew (tal)* over *rain (matar)*.

Follow your community's established *minhag*.

14. Glossary

Term	Meaning
Parnassah	Livelihood; sustenance
Tal / Matar	Dew / Rain — metaphors for blessing
Savah	Satisfaction; “enoughness”
Shalom	Peace; harmony within and between people
Hishtadlut	Diligent effort coupled with trust in God

15. Personal Nusach for Parnassah

Before the close of *Barechenu* / *Barech Aleinu*, you can whisper this personal version:

“Ribbono Shel Olam, please bless the work of my hands with honest success.
Bring steady income and remove anxiety.
Grant me *chayim*, *savah*, and *shalom* this year.
Provide for my family and others in need.
Let abundance deepen humility and generosity, not pride or fear.”

This short paragraph can be printed and kept in a siddur or shared at the Shabbat table.

Afterword

Barech Aleinu isn’t a prayer for money — it’s a prayer for balance.
It shapes how we view effort, trust, and identity.

May this year bring you **life**, **satisfaction**, and **peace** —
enough to live, enough to feel enough, and enough to share.