

# LBT's From Light to Liberation: *Body*

Week of January 24, 2021 / 11 Shevat 5781

These texts are designed to be engaged in chevruta (with a partner), with a larger group, or on your own as part of your journey from Light to Liberation. As you approach these texts, you are invited to let the discussions and thoughts they foster live with you and be part of you. If you are reading these on your own or with others, we encourage you to read aloud.

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**Framing:** The Jewish tradition asks us to incorporate blessings into our everyday lives. Blessings allow us to elevate what we might otherwise consider a mundane moment to appreciate the wonders and the grandeur of the world and our existence. The rabbis want us to see every moment of our short precious lives as a gift of the divine. They teach us specific blessings for waking up, for washing our hands, for drinking wine and eating food, even for seeing a rainbow or the ocean, all to imbue our daily lives with a sense of purpose and grandeur beyond ourselves. This extends to seeing our bodies as beautiful and holy creations. While many of us have complicated relationships with our body, through warped societal constructs of what beauty is and is not, Judaism focuses our attention on the gift of life and miracle of our existence. The blessing below, *Asher Yatzar*, calls on us to appreciate our bodies. It is one of the first blessings said upon waking up in the morning and is traditionally said throughout the day after using the bathroom.

**סידור אשכנז, שחרית, אשר יצר**

(א) בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר יָצַר אֶת־הָאָדָם בְּחִכְמָה וּבָרָא בּוֹ נְקִיבִים נְקִיבִים חַלּוּלִים חַלּוּלִים גְּלוּי וַיְדוּעַ לְפָנֶי כִסֵּא כְבוֹדְךָ שָׂאָם יִפְתַּח אֶחָד מֵהֶם אוֹ יִסְתֵּם אֶחָד מֵהֶם אִי אֶפְשֶׁר לְהִתְקַיֵּם וְלַעֲמֹד לְפָנֶיךָ אֶפִּילוּ שָׂעָה אַחַת. בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי רֹפֵא כָּל־בָּשָׂר וּמְפַלֵּא לַעֲשׂוֹת:

## Morning/Shacharit Prayers, Asher Yatzar

Praise to You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the Universe, who formed the human body with skill, creating the body's many pathways and openings. It is well known before Your throne of glory that if one of them be wrongly opened or closed, it would be impossible to endure and stand before you.

Blessed are you, Adonai, who heals all flesh, working wondrously. (Translation from *Mishkan Tefillah*)

*Barukh atah, Adonai, eloheinu melekh ha'olam, asher yatzar et ha'adam b'kokhma u'vara vo n'kavim n'kavim, chalulim, chalulim. Galui v'yadua lifnei chisei ch'vodecha she-im yipatei-ach echad meihem, o yisateim echad meihem, i efshar l'hitkayeim v'laamod l'fanecha.*

*Barukh atah, Adonai, rofei chol basar umafli la'asot.*

## Questions for Reflection:

1. What do you think our tradition was hoping to encourage with the creation of a blessing to be said after going to the bathroom? In what ways do you bring appreciation for the daily miracle of your body, in the bathroom and beyond? In what ways are you oblivious?
2. What role does awareness of your body play in your meditation practice (such as sensations in your body or the rising and falling of your breath)? Do you think of your body as an ally or an enemy as you practice meditation and/or move through a normal day? How do you feel your body throughout your time meditating? What about at other times of the day?

### 3. **Practice invitation**

For three days, or more if you'd like, we invite you to say this blessing after using the bathroom. You can print out this page and post it outside your bathroom or carry it with you. Feel free to use the English, Hebrew or transliteration to say the blessing. The tradition encourages us to wait until we have washed hands (hygiene!) and exited the bathroom before saying the blessing. We invite you to check in with your study partner or write a couple sentences about the impact of the practice and share it with us!