

# Values Curriculum:

## *Blessings/Brachot*

<b>OVERVIEW</b>	This session explores Jewish blessings/ <i>brachot</i> as a practice of gratitude. Children will become familiar with traditional Jewish blessings through stories, activities and games. By exploring the practice of offering 100 blessings a day, children will begin to consider the many things in their lives for which they are grateful.
<b>OBJECTIVE</b>	To understand that each of us is awash <sup>1</sup> in blessings and that we can draw attention to our blessings by putting our appreciation into words.
<b>VALUE(S)</b>	<i>Brachot</i> (Blessings)
<b>STORY</b>	"I Say <i>Shehechyanu</i> " by Joanne Rocklin
<b>MATERIALS</b>	100 Blessings materials, Blessing Card supplies
<b>AT HOME CHALLENGE</b>	Students will take home a blessing card of their choosing to support their practice of that blessing. Families will be invited to practice the <i>Shehechyanu</i> blessing and to explore a daily gratitude practice.

<sup>1</sup> The word "awash" is intentional and could be an opportunity to speak about the connection between "awash in blessings" as the Hebrew words for blessing and swimming pool/pond have the same root word: ברכה

# Materials List

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## Activity One

- No materials required

## Activity Two

- Two sets of “*Bracha Cards*” (included at the end of this lesson) printed on cardstock
- Objects the blessings can be matched with: different kinds of fruit, vegetables, spices, pictures of beautiful places like mountains or sunsets, oceans, and rivers
- Markers, crayons, or colored pencils

## Gathering Activity

- Index cards numbered from 1 to 100
- Markers, crayons, or colored pencils

## Opening/Closing Circle

- Book: “I Say Shehechyanu” by Joanne Rocklin
- Big pad of paper and markers
- At Home Challenge Sheet

# Gathering Activity: 100 Blessings (15 Minutes)

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**Children will work together to identify 100 things that they are grateful for.**

1. Gather children around a table with materials laid out.
2. Tell the children that Jewish tradition teaches us that each day we should say 100 blessings to help us notice just how many good things are in our lives.
3. A blessing is a way of saying, “Wow, I am so glad this is a part of the world, or a part of my life. I’m so thankful.”
4. Let the children know we have 100 cards to fill in with blessings. Children will draw or write one example of gratitude—something they are grateful for—on each paper, with no repeats.
5. Generate a few examples together, such as parents, pets, trees, hands, and feet.
6. When a child has an idea they should say it out loud and then take a paper and write or draw their word/idea.
7. Place completed papers on a table or an area of the floor in order by number. They don’t have to be completed in proper numeric order but they should be laid out that way.
8. Stick to a time limit. Warn the children when the time is short.
9. Did we get to 100?

# Opening Circle (10 Minutes)

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**Gather everyone into a circle, bringing their Shabbat mats with them, and begin with a melody, a *niggun* or a greeting song such as *Hineh Ma Tov*.**

**Tell about today’s theme:**

- Today we are going to learn about blessings.
- Take a look together at your 100 blessings.
- Does it seem like a lot? Does it seem like if we had more time, we could come up with a lot more?
- Do some of these blessings feel like a bigger deal than others? Which ones? Or do they all seem equally important?
- What do we already know about blessings?

### Introduce today's Hebrew words — *Bracha & Shehechiyanu*:

- Everyone hold your hands in front of you, palms up and open like you are holding a ball in each hand. Say "Bra."
- Bring your hands onto your heart and say "Cha."
- Put it together. Hands out and open "Bra" to your heart "Cha." Bra-cha.  
*Bracha* means blessing.  
A blessing is a gift from the world to each of us.
- Everyone touch your toes and say "Sheh."
- Touch your knees and say "Heh."
- Touch your hips and say "Chee."
- Touch your shoulders and say "YAH."
- Touch your head and say "Noo."
- Put them all together and do them fast ... She-Heh-Chee-Yah-Noo.  
*Shehechiyanu* means "Who has kept us alive."  
It's the name of a blessing for new things, a blessing we will learn today.

## Story (20 Minutes)

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### Introduce the Story — "I Say *Shehechiyanu*"

- Have you ever done something for the first time? What kinds of things were a big deal the first time you did them?
- Have you ever gotten something new and special? What kinds of special things were really meaningful to you?
- Have you ever gotten excited about something that you haven't seen or experienced in a while? Like a visit from your grandparents or a chance to go swimming?
- The story we are going to read is about a child who has a blessing they say every time something new or special comes along. Let's find out about the blessing.

## Read the Story. Ask some good Questions.

- **Check for Understanding**

- ◇ What were some of the holidays this child said *Shehechianu* for?
- ◇ What were some of the “once in a lifetime” things this child made a blessing for?
- ◇ What were some of the “could happen any day” things this child was excited enough to say a blessing for?

- **Get Curious**

- ◇ What are kids wondering about the story?
- ◇ Encourage kids to wonder about WHY something happened in the story, WHAT might happen next, or HOW someone did something.
- ◇ Record these questions on the big pad of paper.
- ◇ These questions don’t have to have answers—though kids are welcome to try and answer each other’s questions.
- ◇ Have kids respond to each other’s questions with “good question!” and a thumbs up.

- **Give one more Question to Ponder**

- ◇ I’m wondering: Which blessings surprised you? And what surprising blessings do you have in your life?

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## 10 Minute Break

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### Activity One: *Shehechianu* Moments (20 Minutes)

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**Children will learn the *Shehechianu* and then do a step in/step out activity to help them think about when to use the *Shehechianu* blessing.**

#### **Introduce the Activity: Learning the Blessing**

In our story we learned that there is a special blessing we say any time we do something new or for the first time in a long time. We are going to learn that blessing together right now, so that you can use it when new things come into your life. Saying the blessing out loud helps us to notice and appreciate the new thing and how special it is. It reminds us to pause and say, “Wow” and “Thanks.”

## Shehechyanu:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁהַחַיִּינוּ וְקִיַּמְנוּ וְהִגִּיעָנוּ לְזֶמַן הַזֶּה.

Ba--ruch A-ta A--do--nai, E--lo--hay--noo Meh--lech Ha--O--Lam, Sheh--Heh--Chee--Yah--Noo Veh--Key--Uh--Mah--Noo Veh--Hig--Ee--Yah--Noo La-Zman Ha-Zeh.

Blessed are You, Adonai our G-d, Ruler of the Universe, who has enlivened us, sustained us, and enabled us to reach this moment.

1. Read the blessing out loud.
2. Then read each word slowly and have the children repeat each word back to you.
3. Now say a few words at a time and have the children repeat them back to you.
4. Say the whole blessing aloud together.

## Introduce the Activity: *Shehechyanu* Step In/Step Back

**The child in our story had LOTS of things she said the *Shehechyanu* for. Let's see what kinds of things we can say the *Shehechyanu* for.**

1. Have the group stand in a circle.
2. Explain the activity:
  - ◇ I am going to call out activities or events that you may or may not have done before.
  - ◇ If what I say is something you have never done before, you will take one step in and say "*Shehechyanu*." If you have done it, you stay where you are.
  - ◇ Then everyone steps back and we call out another activity.
3. Call out activities by saying "When I \_\_\_\_\_ for the first time, I can say...". Children step forward into the center of the circle if they have never done that activity before and finish your sentence with, "*Shehechyanu*."
  - ◇ Some possibilities are: Ride a bike. See snow. Bake challah. Do a card trick. Walk a dog. Climb a tree. Go ice skating.
4. After a few rounds, see if the children want to offer some ideas.
5. The final round includes the following activities as examples of activities we likely have done before but because they are new and special each time, we say "*Shehechyanu*." Invite everyone to step into the circle together and finish the sentence with "*Shehechyanu*."

"When we: [Light Hanukkah candles on the first night. Have a birthday. See our family after a long separation. Have the first day of a new grade. Eat a food that we haven't eaten in a whole year, like a peach!], we can say, '*Shehechyanu*.' "

## Activity Two: *Bracha* Cards (20 Minutes)

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**Children will explore other Jewish blessings through blessing cards. They will match the blessing cards to objects and add drawings to identify what they are for. They will choose one blessing to take home.**

### **Introduce the Activity:**

The child in our story had one great blessing, the *Shehechyanu*, to use for lots of wonderful moments. At the start of our day we learned that our tradition teaches us to say 100 blessings a day. Many of those blessings have their own specific prayers. We are going to get to know some of them and you are going to get to pick one to take home and practice.

1. Gather the children around a table with the materials laid out. The table should include the cards and the objects they can match the cards with.
2. Have each child choose a card.
3. Their first task is to read it or get help reading it and find an object on the table that goes with their card.
4. Once they have their object, they can add drawings and decorations to their card that will help them remember what this blessing is for.
5. If a child completes their blessing card quickly, they may choose another another card.

## Closing Circle (10 Minutes)

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### **Gather everyone into a circle. Have each child bring their blessing card.**

Have each child take a turn showing their blessing card and saying what their blessing is for.

We each have so many blessings. You can practice some of the special blessings we have learned today at home, at school, on the playground, wherever you are. Sometimes we don't have special words, but we notice a special blessing. It's okay to stop without the words and just say, "Wow" or "Thanks." Those are blessings too.

### **Review the Hebrew Words of the Day:**

- Have the children practice the Hebrew words with their bodies: Hands out and open "Bra" to your heart "Cha." Bra-cha.
- Have the children say what *Bracha* means (blessing).
- Everyone touch your toes and say "Sheh."
- Touch your knees and say "Heh."
- Touch your hips and say "Chee."

- Touch your shoulders and say “YAH.”
- Touch your head and say “Noo.”
- Put them all together and do them fast ... She-Heh-Chee-Yah-Noo.
- Have the children say what the *Shehechyanu* blessing is for (things/experiences that are new).

**Pass out the At Home Challenge Sheet**

**Sing a goodbye song like *Shalom Chaverim* or *Oseh Shalom*.**

## At Home Challenge: Blessings/*Brachot*

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Today, we learned about *Brachot*/Blessings. We learned that we have so much to be grateful for and that our tradition has special prayers to help us notice and pay attention to all of the good things in our lives.

One of the blessings we learned today is the *Shehechyanu*, a blessing for marking doing something for the first time or celebrating something new. It goes like this:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁהַחַיִּינוּ וְקִיָּמָנוּ וְהִגִּיעָנוּ לְזֶמֶן הַזֶּה.

*Ba--ruch A-ta A--do--nai, E--lo--hay--noo Meh--lech Ha--O--Lam, Sheh--Heh--Chee--Yah--Noo  
Veh-- Key--Uh--Mah--Noo Veh--Hig--Ee--Yah--Noo La-Zman Ha-Zeh.*

**Blessed are You, Adonai our G-d, Ruler of the Universe, who has enlivened us, sustained us, and enabled us to reach this moment.**

Here are the next steps to take to practice *brachot*/blessings at home:

1. Look at the *Bracha*/Blessing card your child is bringing home. Find a place to put that card so that you can practice that blessing when the occasion arises.
2. See if you can find 5 new experiences this month that give you a chance to say the *Shehechyanu* together.
3. Consider crafting a daily gratitude practice with or without formal Jewish blessings. Here are some ideas:
  - ◇ Say a blessing for a shared meal, before or after you eat. It could be a traditional Jewish food blessing or a sentence of appreciation for all that is involved in making food appear at your table.
  - ◇ Reflect on the day, at bedtime or at dinner time, and see if you can each come up with three blessings you experienced today.
  - ◇ Reflect on the week, at Shabbat dinner or breakfast, and see if you can each come up with three blessings you experienced that week.
  - ◇ Practice pausing and saying a word of “Wow” or “Thanks” when you experience a moment of blessing.

**On eating foods which grow in or on the ground, like potatoes:**

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הָאֲדָמָה.

*Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech Ha'olam, borei p'ree ha'adamah.*

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the Universe, who creates the fruit of the ground/earth.

**On eating fruit from a tree:**

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הָעֵץ.

*Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech Ha'olam, borei p'ree ha'eitz.*

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the Universe, who creates the fruit of the tree.

**On eating bread:**

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם הַמוֹצִיא לֶחֶם מִן הָאָרֶץ.

*Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech Ha'olam, hamotzi lechem min ha'aretz.*

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the Universe, who brings forth bread from the earth.

**On eating foods other than bread prepared from wheat, barely, rye, oats, or spelt (such as cakes and cookies):**

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא מִיְּנֵי מֵזוֹנוֹת.

*Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech Ha'olam, borei meenay mezonot.*

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the Universe, who creates different kinds of nourishment.

### On drinking wine:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגֶּפֶן.

*Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech Ha'olam, borei p'ree hagafen.*

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the Universe, who creates the fruit of the vine.

### On smelling fragrant spices:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא מִיְּנֵי בְשָׁמִים.

*Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech Ha'olam, borei meenay be'samim.*

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the Universe, who creates different kinds of spices.

### On seeing trees blossoming for the first time in the year:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם שֶׁלֹּא חִסַּר בְּעוֹלָמוֹ דָּבָר וּבָרָא בּוֹ בְּרִיּוֹת טוֹבוֹת  
וְאֵילָנוֹת טוֹבִים לְהֵנוֹת בָּהֶם בְּנֵי אָדָם.

*Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech Ha'olam, shelo chisar b'olamo davar uvara vo b'riyot tovot  
v'eelanot tovim l'hanot bahem b'nai adam.*

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the Universe, who has withheld nothing from the world, and has created lovely creatures and beautiful trees for people to enjoy.

### On smelling fragrant fruit:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם הַנוֹתֵן רֵיחַ טוֹב בַּפִּירוֹת.

*Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech Ha'olam, hanotein rayach tov bapeirot.*

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the Universe, who gives a pleasant fragrance to fruits.

### On smelling the fragrance of plants and herbs:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא עֲשָׂבִי בְשָׁמִים.

*Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech Ha'olam, borei issvei be'samim.*

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the Universe, who creates fragrant plants.

### On seeing the ocean:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם שֶׁעָשָׂה אֶת הַיָּם הַגָּדוֹל.

*Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech Ha'olam, she'asah et hayam hagadol.*

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the Universe, who made the great sea.

### On seeing lightning, shooting stars, mountains, or sunrises/sets:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם עוֹשֶׂה מַעֲשֵׂה בְּרֵאשִׁית.

*Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech Ha'olam, oseh ma'aseh b'reisheet.*

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the Universe, Source of creation.

### On seeing a rainbow:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם זוֹכֵר הַבְּרִית וְנֹאֶמָן בְּבְרִיתוֹ וְקָיָם בְּמַאֲמָרוֹ.

*Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech Ha'olam, zocheir habreet v'ne'eman b'vreeto v'kayam b'ma'amaro.*

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the Universe, who remembers the covenant and is faithful in keeping promises.

**On seeing a person who knows lots of things about lots of things:**

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם שֶׁנָּתַן מַחְכְּמָתוֹ לְבָשָׂר וָדָם.

*Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech Ha'olam, shenatan mei'chochmato l'vasar vadam.*

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the Universe, who has given wisdom to human beings.

**On seeing trees or creatures of unusual beauty:**

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם שֶׁכָּכָה לוֹ בְּעוֹלָמוֹ.

*Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech Ha'olam, shekacha lo b'olamo.*

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the Universe, who has such beauty in the world.

**On seeing interesting or strange-looking creatures:**

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם מְשַׁנֶּה הַבְּרִיּוֹת.

*Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech Ha'olam, m'shaneh habriyot.*

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the Universe, who makes creatures different.