

Classical rabbinic Judaism includes a directive and formula for Jews to recite 100 blessings every day.

Given that the weekday Amida contains 19 blessings and given that the traditional Jew recites this prayer three times every day, that already gets you to 57.

Of course there are many additional blessings included in other daily prayers plus, since most of us eat every day, there are the blessings that precede and follow our meals and snacks.

One of the blessings is among the most popular of all within our faith – the blessing we recite before eating bread, the blessing we recite before most of our meals.

I know you know this blessing, so let me recite the beginning and when I pause, you finish the rest – B-A-A-E-M-H-H

Excellent – once again you don't let me down.

Now let's try it in English - blessed are you all Lord our God ruler of the universe but brings forth....

Really?

Not exactly – when was the last time you went out to your garden, and dug up a loaf of bread.

Many of our other blessings are more literarily accurate than is this blessing.

When we recite the blessing for fruit and say that God is Boray Peri Ha-Etz, the one who creates the fruit from the tree, that's pretty much what happens.

Or when we recite the blessing for vegetables and say that God is Boray Peri Ha-Adamah, the one who creates vegetables from the earth, that is pretty much what happens.

The blessing for bread is different – isn't it?

God doesn't bring forth **bread** from the Earth in the same way that God produces fruit from trees and vegetables from the ground.

The blessing we recite for bread indicates more of a process and more of a partnership between us and God.

Bread appears on our tables only after we and God work in tandem, gathering that which actually does grow from the Earth, adding other materials and then we use our talents to create a finished product, for which, I admit I have a great weakness.

Think of how many people and how much effort need to come together just to create a loaf of bread, in addition to God's part in the project.

How much has happened from the earth under our feet to the table in our homes.

One very well-known, popular and controversial minister, whose name is Rob Bell, points out the magic message hidden in between the lines and numbers of the weekly grocery store receipt you receive after your major purchases of food and other items necessary for life.

Study it one night and you will begin to apprehend the miracles and blessings that come from God's world, that are brought forth from God's earth and become accessible to us, usually not more than a mile or two away.

This little exercise of just reviewing your weekly grocery store receipt might help you focus on how significant, important and miraculous our partnership with God is throughout this world.

It begins with God but includes us.

It all ends up on our tables and in our homes – day after day, week after week, month after month and year after year.

Let's get back to that loaf of bread which appears on our table and which we declare as coming from God's earth.

Remember that it all begins when we take the time and put in the effort to plant a seed into God's glorious Earth.

And so my dear friends, we have a beautiful metaphor to keep in mind during this very first evening of our new year in life.

What are the seeds we might plant and nurture and grow and perhaps even bring to harvest in year 5778?

What are the crops we expect to enjoy again, and what are the new seeds, the new growth, the new blessings we might expect to enjoy in the coming year for the first time.

Before I conclude, let me ask one more very Jewish question – it is a question we ask at the end of Passover Seder along with several others.

Shisha Mee Yodea - who knows six?

Shisha Sidrei Mishnah - there are six sedarim - six volumes or orders to the Mishnah, the rabbinic texts which then prompts additional commentary called the Gemara, which together come to be known as the Talmud.

Six orders, and the name of the first order is – Zeraim – seeds.

What we study, what we learn in life, how we grow in life, depends upon the seeds we plant.

God is HaMotzee – the one who brings forth bread from the earth.

The seeds come from God, but the planting is processed by us.

So be careful and deliberate because you get what you plant.

Whatever you plant is what will be released and grow in your life.

May God strengthen our faith in the New Year so as to nourish the seeds we wish to plant.

May they bring forth an abundant harvest of blessings in 5778, and let us say Amen!!