

Eclipse 2024 — blessings

When the disk of the sun is completely hidden, the sun’s corona is revealed. The moon ever so briefly “overpowers” the bright sun, but not the sun’s wing-like corona, so that the sun’s concealment becomes a revelation. During the brief moments of “totality”, the planets shine in midday. Some of the brighter stars and constellations visible only in fall will show themselves in a spring sky. Comet Pons-Brook will be visible on the same side of the sun as Jupiter, and on the opposite side of the sun from Venus.

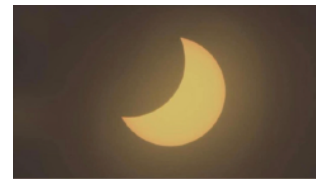
Our ancestors sometimes saw an eclipse as a bad omen for the world, so they did not prescribe a blessing for it. But we understand an eclipse as a natural marvel that shows us of the grandeur of Creation, so many now believe we should say a blessing.

There are two candidates for the blessing, but there are also two events: the eclipsing of the sun up until totality, and the revelation of the corona during totality. The corona or crown of the sun, in Hebrew, *atarah*, becomes revealed only in the total eclipse, looking like wings (reminiscent of Malachi 3:20). Totality is a unique experience, very different from witnessing a partial solar eclipse. It seems right to say an additional blessing when one is privileged to see it. Here is a suggestion for these blessings, followed by a longer prayer:

For the partial eclipse, when the sun’s light still fills the sky:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם עוֹשֶׂה מַעֲשֵׂה בְּרֵאשִׁית

*Barukh Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melekh Ha’olam
`oseh ma`aseh v`reishit*



Blessed be You YHVH/Adonai our God, Ruler of all space and time, maker of the work of Creation

For after totality, when the sun’s *atarah* becomes visible, *Shehechyanu* plus:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם שְׂכֹחוֹ וְגִבּוֹרְתוֹ וְזִיוו מְלֵא עוֹלָם

*Barukh Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melekh Ha`olam
shekocho ug`vurato v`zivo malei olam*

Blessed be You YHVH/Adonai our God, Ruler of all space and time, whose power and might and radiance fill the universe.

For all these times: Blessed be You, who makes the great lights —

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יוֹצֵר הַמְּאוֹרוֹת *Barukh Atah yotzer hame`orot*

Eclipse 2024 — reflections, Scripture and midrash

A prayer: May the revelation of the sun's wings bring us healing, as it says, וְזָרְחָה לְכֶם יְרֵאֵי שָׁמַיִם שְׁמֵשׁ צְדָקָה וּמִרְפָּא בְּכַנְפֶיהָ — “And the sun of righteousness will shine for you and will bring healing in its wings, and you will go out and gambol like stalled calves set free.” (Malachi 3:20/4:2) May we recognize with awe the grandeur of Your works, as it says, שָׂאוּ מְרוֹם עֵינֵיכֶם וּרְאוּ מִי בָרָא אֱלֹהִים — “Lift on high your eyes and see: Who created these?” (Isaiah 40:26) so that we may be filled with כַּח אֲמִיץ כֹּחַ courageous strength to heal the Earth from human destruction. May the union of sun and moon portend a time of union for all humanity. May the desire for peace eclipse the desire for war, may love eclipse hatred, may we see the light hidden within the light, the invisible within the visible. And may salvation arise for the heavens that shield us — יְקוּם פּוֹרְקוֹן לְשִׁמְיָא — so that the sun's rays shine for blessing and healing, for us and for all life. Blessed be You, who makes the great lights — בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ יוֹצֵר הַמְּאוֹרוֹת.

The eclipse of 2024 is the day before the beginning of the new moon of Nisan, one of the calendar's four New Years. An eclipse always immediately precedes a new moon, since the new moon is declared when the first sliver of the moon becomes visible. The following full moon will be the beginning of Passover.

Here are some verses from Psalm 136 about the heavens that connect the sun and moon with leaving Egypt:

הוֹדוּ לַאֲדֹנָי הָאֲדֹנִים כִּי לְעוֹלָם חֲסֵדוֹ: לַעֲשֵׂה נִפְלְאוֹת גְּדוֹלוֹת לְבַדּוֹ כִּי לְעוֹלָם חֲסֵדוֹ: לַעֲשֵׂה הַשָּׁמַיִם בְּתַבּוּנָה כִּי לְעוֹלָם חֲסֵדוֹ: לְרַקַּע הָאָרֶץ עַל-הַמַּיִם כִּי לְעוֹלָם חֲסֵדוֹ: לַעֲשֵׂה אוֹרִים גְּדוֹלִים כִּי לְעוֹלָם חֲסֵדוֹ: אֶת-הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ לְמַמְשֶׁלֶת בַּיּוֹם כִּי לְעוֹלָם חֲסֵדוֹ: אֶת-הַיָּרֵחַ וְכּוֹכְבֵים לְמַמְשֶׁלוֹת בַּלַּיְלָה כִּי לְעוֹלָם חֲסֵדוֹ: לְמַכָּה מִצְרַיִם בְּבִכּוּרֵיהֶם כִּי לְעוֹלָם חֲסֵדוֹ: וַיּוֹצֵא יִשְׂרָאֵל מִתּוֹכָם כִּי לְעוֹלָם חֲסֵדוֹ: בְּיַד חֲזָקָה וּבְזִרוּעַ נְטוּיָה כִּי לְעוֹלָם חֲסֵדוֹ: לְגַזֵּר יַם-סוּף לְגַזְרִים כִּי לְעוֹלָם חֲסֵדוֹ: וְהַעֲבִיר יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּתוֹכוֹ כִּי לְעוֹלָם חֲסֵדוֹ:

Give thanks to the Foundation of all Foundations, for God's love is forever / *ki l'olam chasdo*. To the One who alone does great miracles, for God's love is forever. To the One who makes the heavens (embued) with understanding, for God's love is forever. To the One who hammered out the land (spread) over the seas, for God's love is forever. To the One who made the great lights, for God's love is forever. The sun to govern the day, for God's love is forever. The moon and stars to govern the night, for God's love is forever. To the One who struck Egypt through its firstborn, for God's love is forever. And brought Israel out from their midst, for God's love is forever. With a strong hand and arm stretched out, for God's love is forever. To the One who fractured the sea into straits, for God's love is forever. And who made Israel pass through in its midst, for God's love is forever.

Psalm 19:2-7: The heavens declare God's glory

הַשָּׁמַיִם מְסַפְּרִים כְּבוֹד אֱלֹהִים וּמַעֲשֵׂה יְדֵיו מְגִיד הַרְקִיעַ: יוֹם לְיוֹם יַבִּיעַ אִמְרָ וּלְלַיְלָה לְלַיְלָה יַחְוֶה דְּעֵת:
 אִין־אִמְרָ וְאִין דְּבָרִים בְּלִי נִשְׁמָע קוֹלָם: בְּכָל הָאָרֶץ יֵצֵא קוֹם וּבִקְצֵה תִבֵּל מְלִיָּהֶם לְשִׁמְשׁ
 שֵׁם־אֱהִל בְּהֶם: וְהוּא כְּחֶתֶן יֵצֵא מִחַפְּתוֹ יֵשִׁישׁ כְּגַבּוֹר לְרוּץ אֶרֶץ: מִקְצֵה הַשָּׁמַיִם מוֹצֵאוֹ
 וְתִקּוּפָתוֹ עַל־קְצוֹתָם וְאִין נִסְתָּר מִחַמְתּוֹ:

The heavens declare the glory of God, and the works of God's hands are retold by the sky. Day to day utters speech, and night to night gives life to knowledge. There is no speaking and there are no words — their voice (goes out) without being heard. In the all Earth their rays go out, and to the very edge of the world (reach) their words. For the sun God set up a tent in them. And he (the sun) goes out like a groom from his canopy, like a warrior to run his course. From the edge of the heavens, there is his going out, and his highest height (still shines) upon their edges, and there is none hidden from his heat.

Yalkut Shimoni 396: Why is it that Moses could not behold God's face?

ומה השמש, שהוא אחד מאלף אלפים ורבוא רבון ממשמשין שמשמשין לפניו — אין כל בריה יכולה להסתכל בו, הקב"ה שזיוו מלא עולם על אחת כמה וכמה. ואימתי הוא מגלה כבודו? כשיאבדו אלילים מן העולם.

Just as with the sun, which is just one among thousands of thousands and millions of millions of servants that serve before the One — no creature is able to stare at the sun, (so too) the Holy One blessed be, whose radiance fills the universe, is all the more so (impossible to see). But then when will the Holy One reveal this glory? When breathless (false) gods are purged from the world.

Baal Shem Tov, *Keter Shem Tov* 1, 246: Why is God called "sun and shield"?

It's written: "Sun and Shield are *YHVH Elohim*" (Ps 84:11). It's explained: the name *Havayah* (*YHVH*) is called sun/*shemesh*...and what's written, "sun and shield", means that there is something like a barrier protecting against the light of the sun. The sun is like an image of *Hashem* (*YHVH*), meaning to say, that it is impossible to look on the sun, because of the greatness of his light's brightness...Similarly so is the brightness of the name *Havayah*: its light is very great...therefore it was necessary to contract it and limit it within the name *Elohim* אֱלֹהִים — this is the same gematria (numerology) (=86) as Nature/*Hateva* הַטֵּבַע, which is the shield.

Maimonides (Rambam), *Guide for the Perplexed* 1:54: What did Moses see?

A last word: if Moses saw God's back but not God's face, what did he see? Or: we know God by knowing God's creation. Or: God's goodness = the goodness of Creation itself

When Moshe asked for knowledge of God's attributes, God told him: "I will make all My goodness / *kol tuvi* pass before you" (Ex 33:19) "All My goodness" means the display to Moshe of all existing beings of Creation, about which it says: "And God saw everything/*kol* that the One had made, and behold, it is very good." By their display, I mean that Moshe would be able to apprehend their nature and the way they are mutually connected, so that he will know how God governs them all in general and in detail.