



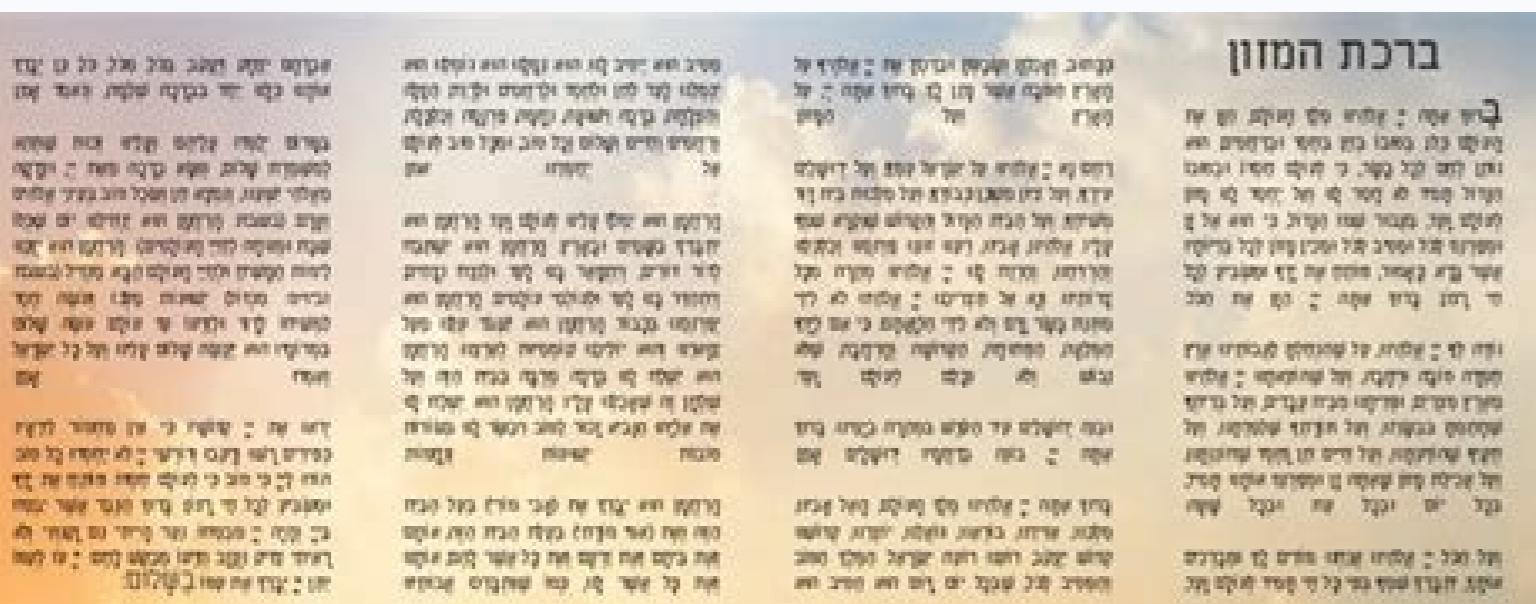
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עֲדָדְךָ תְּהִלָּתְךָ
כַּן אֶת נְבָלָךָ:
רַיְנָה עַל שְׁחַנְחַתְךָ
אֶרְץ חֶמְדָה טֻבָה
צָאָהָנוּ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ
יִתְנַסְבֵת עֲבָדִים,
מְתַת בְּבָשָׂרוּנוּ, וְלֹ
נָה, וְלֹעַל חֶקְדָה
חַיִם חַן וְחַסְדָה
וְלֹת מָעוֹן שָׁאָתָה וְ

On days when Tachanun is said, say: By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat, sat and wept, as we thought of Zion. There on the poplars we hung up our lyres, for our captors asked us...



על הכל ? יי אליהן, אנחנו מודים לך ומברכים אותך.
תזכיר שכך בפי-כל-ך, ומידי לעולם ועד, בכתוב:
אכלת ושבעת, ובברכת אות ? יי אליהך על הארץ בטובך
אשר נתנו לך. ברוך אתה יי על-הארץ ועל-הempo.

DEVELOPMENTS WITHIN THE STATUTORY TEXT OF THE *BIRKAT HA-MAZON* IN LIGHT OF ITS POETIC COUNTERPARTS

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The *birkat ha-mazon* prayer,¹ recited at the conclusion of every meal,² occupies a primary place within Judaism's liturgy for the home. It is therefore unsurprising that the manuscripts of the Cairo Geniza, representing daily Jewish life in the Mediterranean between the 10th and 13th centuries, abound with copies of this prayer. These documents are especially significant in light of the fact that Rabbinic sources, while specifying the prayer's overall structure, do not delineate a specific prayer text.³ Thus, the Geniza documents afford us an opportunity to examine the *birkat ha-mazon* at a relatively early point in its development.⁴

¹ The present study is based upon a corpus of 169 manuscripts from the Cairo Geniza, containing 100 different versions of the statutory text of the *birkat ha-mazon*, and 332 transcriptions of the prayer's poetic counterparts (single manuscript manuscripts, multiple transcriptions). I am currently preparing a critical edition of the full corpus of the poetic transcriptions as part of my doctoral dissertation, under the guidance of Prof. Ebrahim Hazan (Bar-Ilan University). In addition, the present collection of statutory transcriptions serves as a preliminary basis for a forthcoming critical edition of Geniza texts of the *birkat ha-mazon*, which I am preparing together with Dr. Uri Elhielk (Bar-Ilan University). The following section can be used to differentiate between statutory and poetic transcriptions, see below section II.

² Technically speaking, the prayer is confined to meat in which bread is consumed; its relevance at other meals is a matter of Talmudic debate (Ber 44a).

³ Rabbinic sources specify only the number of benedictions and the general themes which are to be contained within (see Tber 3:9, 6:1, p.Ber 1:3 3d; 7:1 11c; Ber 11a-19b).

⁴ The extent to which we can extrapolate information from these texts regarding the pre-Geniza state of the prayer will be considered below (section IV).

the \hat{A} and \hat{A}^* operators are related by the Heisenberg equation of motion