

The Joy of Reunion in the Age of Covid-19: Shehekheyahu

By Nechama Liss-Levinson



It has been a while since I have seen my children or grandchildren. Longer than I would like. It has also been a long time since I have seen some of my dear friends in person. Weeks, or when I actually count the days, I notice it is months. I miss them all.

I dream about seeing them again, even though we won't be able to physically embrace. The time of quarantine and even sheltering at home is finally beginning to shift. Small numbers of people will soon be able to meet together in outdoor venues with appropriate social distancing.

I desire a ritual, and fortunately, Judaism has one all ready for me, just waiting to be dusted off.

The [Talmud](#) (Brakhot 58b) states that one should recite the blessing of Shehekheyahu upon meeting a dear friend or relative who one hasn't seen for at least a month. This friend should be someone you are

especially close to, who brings you great happiness, someone who makes your heart sing.

Each of us knows in our soul who these people are.

And although this custom hasn't been widely followed in recent years, the Age of Covid calls out for celebrating the Joy of Reunion. When we are finally able to see those we love, we can acknowledge the joy of this reunion. We can each say to one another, either separately or in unison:

ברוך אתה אֱדוֹנָי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁחַיֵּינוּ וְקִיּוּמנוּ וְהַגִּיעָנוּ לְזֶמַן הַזֶּה

Barukh atah adonay eloheynu melekh ha-olam shehekheyanu vi-kimanu vi-higiyanu la-z'man ha-zeh

Blessed are You, God, Source of All Being, who has kept us alive, sustained us and brought us to this very moment

The Talmud goes on to state that the blessing *mekhayeh hameitim* (who revives the dead) should be recited when you meet someone you love whom you haven't seen for twelve months. Some say this is only if you haven't been in contact for the year and you don't know if they are still alive. However, during this time of Covid, it would seem appropriate to say the blessing of *mekhayeh hameitim* when first seeing someone you love who has recovered from the corona virus. Someone who has been snatched back from the arms of the Angel of Death.

**ברוך אתה ::
מחיה המתים**

Barukh atah adonay eloheynu melekh ha-olam mekhayeh hameitim

Blessed are You, God, Source of All Being, who revives the dead.

The Joy of Reunion can also include a one sentence acknowledgement of the special happiness that this other person brings to you. "Your kindness and your smile light up my life."

And then, let the joy fully enter your body and your soul.

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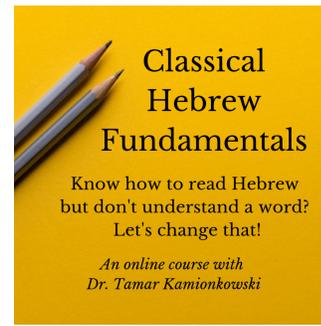
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