

מַה טָבוֹ



Warmup
for Prayer

Morning
Blessings

P'sukei
D'zimra

What we
believe.

Shema &
Blessings

What we
ask for.

Amidah

Concluding
Prayers

Aleinu...



מַה טָבוֹ is a collection of 5 verses from the Bible which we recite when we enter the synagogue in the morning.

The first verse in מַה טָבוֹ is taken from בְּמִדְבָּר (Numbers) -- Chapter 24, verse 5. (בְּמִדְבָּר is the fourth book in the תּוֹרָה.) In this chapter we read about Baalam, an enemy of the Israelites. Baalam has been hired by the King of Moav to curse the Israelites, who are camped out in the desert. Balaam stands on a cliff overlooking the Israelite camp. Suddenly he is not able to utter his curse. Instead, Baalam blesses the Israelites. He says -- מַה טָבוֹ אֹהֶלְיָךְ יַעֲקֹב -- "How good are your tents, oh Jacob." The synagogue can be thought of as our modern tent -- where we meet, and pray and study.

מה טבו

מה
How

טבו
good

טבו
good

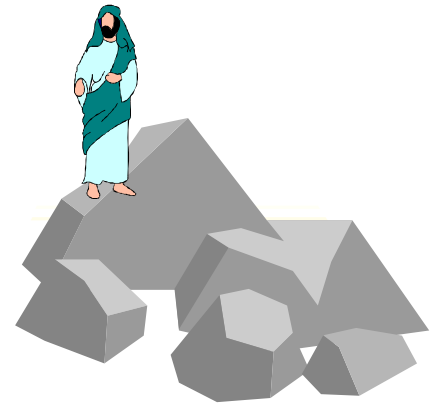
מה
How

אהליך
are your tents

אהליך
are your tents

יעקב
Oh Jacob

יעקב
O Jacob



מה טבו אהליך יעקב
How good are your
tents, O Jacob,

מה טבו אהליך יעקב
How good are your
tents, O Jacob,

משכנתיך
your dwelling places

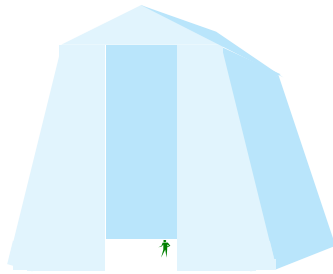
משכנתיך
your dwelling places

ישראל
O Israel.

ישראל
O Israel.

The second verse in **מה טובו** is taken from the book of Psalms (תהלים) (Psalm 5, verse 6). "With Your great kindness I will enter your **בית**, your house, and bow toward **היכל קדשך**, the palace of Your holiness." In these first two verses of **מה טובו**, the synagogue is referred to in four different ways. These descriptions build in majesty, beginning with **אהליך**, "your tent," then **משכנתיך**, "your dwelling place," then **ביתך** "your house" and finally **היכל קדשך**, "the palace of your holiness."

מה טובו אהליך יעקב, משכנתיך ישראל. ואני ברב
חסדך אבוא ביתך, אשתחווה אל היכל קדשך ביראתך.
יי אהבתי מעון ביתך, ומקום משכן כבודך.
ואני אשתחווה ואכרעה, אברכה לפני יי עשי.
ואני תפילתי לך יי, עת רצון, אלהים ברב חסדך,
ענני באמת ישעך.



How good are your tents, O Jacob, and your dwelling places, O Israel. With Your great kindness I will enter Your house and bow toward the palace of Your holiness. Adonai, I love the shelter of Your house, the place of Your glory. I will bow and kneel before Adonai, my Maker. May my prayer to You be at an appropriate time. With Your great kindness, Eternal One, answer me with the truth of Your deliverance.

מה טוב

Key Phrases:

מה טוב אהליך יַעֲקֹב, מִשְׁכְּנֹתֶיךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל.

How good are your tents, O Jacob,
your dwelling places, O Israel.

Key Words

ךְ	your
אהל	
אהליך	
בית	
ביתך	you
טבו	good
יעקב	Jacob
ישראל	Israel
מה	how, what
משכן	dwelling place
משכנותיך	your dwelling place

אַהֲלֵיךָ יַעֲקֹב

In the fifth verse of **מָה טָבוֹ** (taken from Psalm 69:14) we read, "May my prayer be at a good time." Make this a good time to study by practicing your new words and phrase on the previous page. Then translate into English, below.



_____ מָה טָבוֹ _____

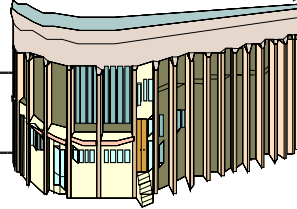
_____ מָה טָבוֹ _____

_____ אַהֲלֵיךָ _____ אַהֲלֵיךָ _____

_____ מָה טָבוֹ אַהֲלֵיךָ _____

_____ יַעֲקֹב _____

_____ מָה טָבוֹ אַהֲלֵיךָ _____



_____ מִשְׁכַּנְתֶּיךָ _____ מִשְׁכָּן _____

_____ יִשְׂרָאֵל _____

_____ מִשְׁכַּנְתֶּיךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל _____



_____ בֵּית _____ בֵּיתְךָ _____

מָה טָבוֹ אַהֲלֵיךָ יַעֲקֹב, מִשְׁכַּנְתֶּיךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל.

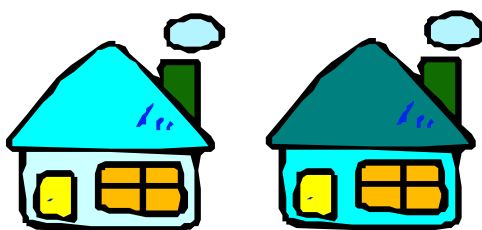
משכנתיך

In Judaism, we try to pray with other people whenever possible. For some prayers, such as the בְּרָכוּ or the קְדִישׁ, at least **ten adults** are required. Ten people present for prayer is called a **מִנְיָן**.

The second verse in **מָה טָבוּ** contains ten words. The ten words of this verse are sometimes used as a way of counting to see if there is a **מִנְיָן** present. Instead of going 1, 2, 3, we go - **וְאָנִי - חֲסִדֶיךָ, בְּרַב**...

Class reading game: Memorize the ten words in the **second sentence** of **מָה טָבוּ**, or get really comfortable reading them. Then use them to count -- people in your class, objects, pencils, erasers...

1. מָה טָבוּ אֱהָלֶיךָ יַעֲקֹב, מִשְׁכְּנֹתֶיךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל. וְאָנִי בְּרַב
2. חֲסִדֶיךָ אָבוּא בֵיתְךָ, אֲשֶׁתְּחֹה אֶל הַיְכָל קִדְשְׁךָ בִּירְאָתְךָ.
3. יְיָ אֶהְבֵּתִי מְעֹן בֵּיתְךָ, וּמְקוֹם מִשְׁכַּן כְּבוֹדְךָ.
4. וְאָנִי אֲשֶׁתְּחֹה וְאֶכְרַעָה, אֲבָרְכָה לְפָנָי יְיָ עֲשֵׂי.
5. וְאָנִי, תִּפְלְתִי לְךָ יְיָ, עֵת רְצוֹן, אֱלֹהִים בְּרַב חֲסִדֶיךָ,
6. עֲנֵנִי בְּאֵמַת יִשְׁעֶךָ.



יִשְׂרָאֵל

In the third verse of **מָה טָבוֹ** (Psalm 5:8), we again find the word **בֵּיתְךָ**, your house. On your way to the synagogue from **בֵּיתְךָ**, your own house, prepare to say **מָה טָבוֹ** by rehearsing the meanings of some of the prayer's key words. Try the four different paths below with a partner. Read and translate each word you pass. Translate Hebrew words into English, and English words into Hebrew. Have your partner check your answers on page 4 as you travel.



Reading Drill

Just after reciting **מה טבו**, those who wear a **טלית**
now put it on with the following **בְּרָכָה**:

1. **בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ**
2. **בְּמִצְוֹתָיו, וְצִוָּנוּ לְהִתְעַטֵּף בְּצִיצִית.**

Praised are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the universe, who has sanctified us with Your mitzvot, commanding us to wrap ourselves in Tzitzit.

This **בְּרָכָה** is often followed by these verses from Psalm 36, which speak of God's love and the riches of God's house.
Can you find the word for "Your house" in this prayer?

1. **מִה יָקָר חֲסִדְךָ, אֱלֹהִים וּבְנֵי אָדָם**
2. **בְּצֵל כְּנָפֶיךָ יִחְסִיוּ. יְרוּיַן מִדֶּשֶׁן בֵּיתְךָ,**
3. **וְנַחַל עֲדָנֶיךָ תִּשְׁקֶם. כִּי עֲמֹךְ מְקוֹר חַיִּים,**
4. **בְּאוֹרְךָ נִרְאָה אֹר. מִשֶׁךְ חֲסִדְךָ לְיַדְעֶיךָ,**
5. **וְצַדִּיקְתְּךָ לְיִשְׂרָאֵל.**

When you have completed this chapter, and have all **מה טבו** reading lines checked off, your teacher will give you a sticker!

I have mastered
מה טבו