



The Bracha of Seeing Newly Built Jewish Settlements

1. Some contemporary poskim hold that upon seeing a newly built Jewish homes in Israeli Yishuvim one should recite the bracha established by the Gemara of "Matziv Gevul Almanah," that Hashem establishes the borders of the widow. It's best that one do so from within the synagogue of the Yishuv, to fulfill the Rif's position, as well.²
2. At the same time, out of deference for Rashi, who holds this Beracha may only be recited when the Beit HaMikdash is built and in Eretz Yisrael, some, especially Sepharadim, prohibit one from reciting the Beracha with Shem uMalchut in any event.³

1. The Gemara (Berachot 58b) reports that one who sees "Batei Yisrael BeYishuvam" should recite the Beracha of "Matziv Gevul Almanah," that Hakadosh Baruch Hu establishes the borders of a widow and if they're in a destroyed state, he should recite Baruch Dayan HaEmmet. Similarly, one should recite certain negative and positive Pesukim when seeing the houses of idol worshipers in their glory and perdition, respectively.

The exact conditions for reciting this Beracha are subject to a Machaloket Rishonim. The Rambam (Hilchot Berachot 10:10) and the Tur (OC 224:10) do not put any limits on this Halacha and record the Gemara without any elucidation, which seems to allow for this Beracha to be recited without any further requirements. However, Rashi (s.v. Baruch) writes "כגון ביישוב בית שני", which implies that the Beracha may only be recited during the times of the Beit HaMikdash. It's a Beracha of gratitude to Hashem for restoring the land former glory after a period of destruction, hence the reference to Eretz Yisrael as an Almanah.

Interestingly, the Rif (43b) limits the Beracha to be recited only on "Batei Kenessiot," dazzling synagogues, seemingly anywhere in the world. Therefore, to the Rif, it's a beracha praising Hashem for the positive state of the Jewish nation, the Almanah, even in Galut.

The Beit Yosef clarifies Rashi's position further to refer specifically in the times of the Beit HaMikdash and in Eretz Yisrael. As such, in Shulchan Aruch, he includes "Like in the Yishuv of Bayit Sheni" as an example for when one could recite the Beracha. The Maharsha and Tzlach (ad loc.) concur with this interpretation of Rashi. Although the Maharshal thinks the beracha could even be recited on elegant homes, he testifies that the custom is to recite the Beracha upon seeing fine synagogues, in line with the Rif, and his position is echoed by many Ashkenazi Acharonim. Indeed, the Elyah Rabbah (224:7) argues that there is no difference between Eretz Yisrael and Chutz LaAretz on this point.

2. Rav Tzvi Yehudah Kook would recite it whenever he visited a new Yishuv, and, if he would be asked to speak at

the inauguration ceremony, he would recite it in middle of his speech on behalf of the audience. He was so convinced of the open Hand of Hashem restoring Eretz Yisrael to its former glory that he exclaimed that "Sometimes concern for Beracha levatala comes from a lack of Emunah!" In his wake, Rav Eliezer Melamed has penned a chapter in Pninei Halacha (Berachot 15:22) detailing when one may recite the Beracha. The regular rules of Birkot HaReiyah apply – as long as one hasn't seen the location in thirty days, he may recite the Beracha, which makes it irrelevant to local residents and more appropriate for tourists or visitors from another Yishuv. He recommends fulfilling the Rif's view and reciting it inside a synagogue; one who recites it on homes alone also has what to rely on. Among contemporary Talmidei Chachamim, [HaRav Hershel Schachter](#) recited the Beracha when visiting Yeshivat Elon Moreh as per Rav Levanon's instruction, and [Rav Eliezer Melamed](#), [Rav Dov Lior](#), and [Rav Chaim Druckman](#) have done so on similar occasions.

3. Pri Megadim (M"Z 224:2), Kaf HaChaim 224:38, (Mishnah Berurah mentions it but doesn't seem to pasken that way), Ma'amar Mordechai (Eliyahu) vol. 3 Kedushat HaAretz Siman 3, Halacha Berurah 224:21. However, Rav Chaim David HaLevi (Aseh Lecha Rav 4:5) writes that Rashi only requires we have Jewish sovereignty over the land, and he only used Bayit Sheni as an example because he had no other model of post Churban Bayit Rishon sovereignty to refer to. Therefore, the Beracha could even be relevant without a Beit HaMikdash, such as nowadays, according to Rashi and the Shulchan Aruch. Realizing this is quite novel, Rav HaLevi omitted this from Mekor Chaim (vol. 2 Perek 95 seif 8) where he writes to recite the Beracha without Shem uMalchut, as Mekor Chaim was intended for the masses and he didn't want to take the responsibility on his shoulders. Once he heard about Rav Tzvi Yehuda Kook's activities, he was reassured of the correctness of his position.