

Shoel U'Mashiv

Saying HaGomel on an Accident

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Q - Having experienced a very severe accident and coming out with only one or two moderate scratches, I was asked whether or not the person should *Bentch Gomel* in shul?

A - What would be the reason to say *Birchas HaGomel* for an accident?

The *Gemara Brachos* says in the name of Rebbe Yehuda that there are four people who need to give thanks to *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* (meaning, they need to say *Birchas HaGomel*). They are one who traveled the sea, one who traversed the desert, one who was sick and was healed and one who was released from prison. The *Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim* 219:1 starts by listing the four situations from the *Gemara* as those who are required to say *Birchas HaGomel*. Later in 219:9 he says that it is not only these four categories, but anyone who experiences a miracle should say *Birchas HaGomel*.

What would be the reason NOT to say *Brachas HaGomel* for an accident?

The *Shulchan Aruch* in 219:9 right after saying that any person who experiences a miracle should say *Birchas HaGomel* backtracks and says *Birchas HaGomel* is only made for the four situations that the *Gemara* lists. He concludes that in such a case it is best for one to make the *Bracha* without saying *Hashem's* name. However, the *Mishnah Berurah* 219:32 says that the custom is like the first opinion that anyone who experiences a miracle says *Birchas HaGomel*. The *Taz* 219:7 explains that all forms of danger are included in the category of one who traverses the desert.

What is considered a miracle?

The *Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim* 218:9 says that a miracle is anything that is outside the natural order of the world. The *Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim* 219:9 when saying that someone who experiences a miracle says *Birchas HaGomel* gives examples of a wall falling on someone or them getting stomped on by an animal and the person surviving. The *Piskei Teshuvos* 218 footnote 58 says that we make the *Birchas HaGomel* whether they were saved in an overtly miraculous way or in a way that appears to be “natural.”

What should the person who experienced the accident do?

Based on the above discussion it seems as though not only should the person make a *Birchas HaGomel*, but they are encouraged to do so. The only exception would be that a parent does not say on behalf of their child who is under *Bar* or *Bat Mitzvah* (*Sha'arei Teshuvah* 219:1).