

Adonai, on this Chanukah, commemorating the miracle of an unexpected victory and the astounding duration of lights for 8 days, we should give thanks for the victories over chronic disease and ill-health that have contributed to the remarkable increase in the duration of our own lives. We speak of living to “three score and ten, four score if granted strength...” Yes, too many people, even in our rich societies, still are not granted the three score and ten; but so many are granted strength even well beyond four score years that it is indeed a miracle of modern society.

In 1960 the average newborn white American baby girl could expect to live to 74; today she can expect to live to 81. Even men, the weaker sex, can now expect to live to 77 instead of 70 as in 1960. In the mid-1970s the leading American demographer of the day, Nathan Keyfitz, predicted that it would be impossible to increase longevity by more than 3 years. Yet since then we have well surpassed that in America. In many other rich countries the progress has been even more pronounced. And the increase has been accompanied by increasing good health in each year of old age too.

These changes are truly miracles, brought about by the inspirations You have given countless scientists, entrepreneurs and yes, even government officials. All have contributed to creating the public health, medical and social changes that have led to these improvements. In the face of these wondrous changes, a Yiddish approach might be ask: Lord, would it be too much to mix the thanks with a prayer?? Let us, as individuals and as a society, be granted the wisdom to use all this extra time sensibly, constructively and for good works. If we could do that, that would compound the miracles You have created, just as the continuing observance of Chanukah after 2000 years compounds the miracle of 8 days!

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Blessing theme: Prayer for December 4, 2010 Chanukah