

Friday Night Blessing of the Children

Before any of the blessings of the meal, we bless our children. Each child receives an individual blessing. Place your hands on your child's head, and say the line for a boy or a girl, and then the second section.

For a boy:

May God make you

יְשִׁימְךָ אֱלֹהִים

Y'sim'cha Elohim

like Ephraim and like
Menashe.

כְּאֶפְרַיִם וְכִמְנַשֶּׁה

K'Efra-yim v'chi'Menashe

For a girl:

May God make you

יְשִׁימְךָ אֱלֹהִים

Y'sim'aych Elohim

like Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel,
and Leah.

כְּשָׂרָה, רִבְקָה, רָחֵל,
וְלֵאָה

*K'Sarah, Rivka, Rachayl,
V'Lay-ah*

For both:

May Adonai bless you and
protect you

יְבָרְכֶךָ ה' וְיִשְׁמְרֶךָ

*Y'va-rech'echa Adonai
V'yish'm'recha*

May Adonai's face
illuminate you with grace

יָאֵר ה' פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ וַיְחַנֶּךָ

*Ya-ayr Adonai Panav Ay-lecha
Vi-choo-neka*

May Adonai's face be lifted
to you

יִשָּׂא ה' פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ

Yisa Adonai Panav Ay-lecha

and may God give you
peace.

וַיְשַׁם לְךָ שְׁלוֹם

V'ya-saym L'cha Shalom

Where do these blessings come from?

The blessing for boys is in the Torah. Yaakov blessed his grandchildren Ephraim and Menashe before he died, and said that his words of blessing should be used forever after. The Talmud established the blessing for girls. Both of these blessings express the idea that on Shabbat we have a special connection to the lives and teachings of our ancestors, and to their relationship with God through the challenges and celebrations of their lives.

The three-fold blessing comes from the book of *B'midbar* (Numbers 6:24-26). It was and remains the blessing by the tribe of *Kohanim* to the entire nation. The Torah says that through this blessing, "God's name is placed" on the Jewish people. The medieval commentator Rabbi Ovadia Sforno teaches that this is an ascending blessing -- for basic material needs, and ultimately for the ability to live in awareness of God's presence and energy through our lives.

Why the laying on of hands?

In the Torah, a blessing is a very palpable thing. As you say the words, think about a specific blessing you hope to bring toward your child or into his life.

Is there an age when we stop blessing our children?

When a child is no longer in the house, some parents have the beautiful custom of calling before Shabbat to bless him or her. Generally, a parent gives the Shabbat evening blessing until the child is married.