

# Blessings for Children

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One of the most moving *Shabbat* (Jewish Sabbath) traditions is the blessing over the children given on Friday night.

There are many variations on how the blessing is made. The most common custom is for a parent to put his/her hands on the child's head and recite the blessing. In some homes each child gets up at the table and stands before the parent to receive the blessing, and in other homes the parent walks around the table and blesses each seated child. Whatever method is followed, the blessing is sure to make the child feel special and loved, boost the child's self-esteem and give the child fond memories of Shabbat-family-together time.

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## ***The Blessing for a Son***

English: May God make you like Ephraim and Menashe.

Transliteration: *Ye'simcha Elohim ke-Ephraim ve'chi-Menashe.*

Why? Just before he dies, Jacob blesses his two grandsons, Ephraim and Menashe. He says they should become role models for the Jewish people in the future. On the day Jacob blessed them, he said, "In times to come, the people of Israel will use you as a blessing. They will say, 'May God make you like Ephraim and Menashe.'" (Genesis 48:20)

Ephraim and Menashe did in fact become role models worthy of emulation. Unlike those before them, including Cain and Abel, Isaac and Ishmael, Jacob and Esau, and Joseph and his brothers, Ephraim and Menashe were not rivals. Rather, Ephraim and Menashe were brothers united by their drive to perform good deeds.

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## ***The Blessing for a Daughter***

English: May God make you like Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah.

Transliteration: *Ye'simech Elohim ke-Sarah, Rivka, Ra-chel ve-Lay'ah.*

Why? Each of the matriarchs has qualities that qualify them to be role models. The matriarchs were strong and laudable women. They endured difficult home lives, hardships in marriage, infertility, abduction, envy from other women and difficult children. Nevertheless, these righteous women, through their individual passion, their partnerships with the patriarchs and their loyalty to God, succeeded to build a nation.

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## ***The Blessing for Children***

After the above blessing is recited for a son or daughter, some people continue with this blessing for both boys and girls.

English:

May God bless you and watch over you.

May God shine His face toward you and show you favor.

May God be favorably disposed toward you and grant you peace.

Transliteration:

*Ye'varech'echa Adonoy ve'yish'merecha.*

*Ya'ir Adonoy panav eilecha viy-chuneka.*

*Yisa Adonoy panav eilecha, ve'yasim lecha shalom.*