

Blessing the Children

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Source: Aish.com; Illustration: REMBRANDT Harmenszoon van Rijn, Jacob Blessing the Children of Joseph



Leader:

The beautiful custom of blessing one's children originates in the Bible. Just before Jacob died, he called all of his sons for a final blessing. As a special reward to Joseph, who remained righteous throughout his exile, he called forward Joseph's two sons, Ephraim and Menashe, to give them a special blessing. Jacob's blessing was that they should be a blessing, an example to the Jewish people for all time, for they were united in their quest for the good of all, and possessed the strength of character to maintain Jewish values in a non - Jewish environment, thus becoming the benchmark for raising Jewish children. When we bless our daughters, we ask G-d to endow them with the qualities of our foremothers: insightfulness, generosity of spirit, sensitivity, and the ability to lead and inspire others.

We now invite all parents to bless their children. It is customary for parents to place their open hands on each child's head and recite the following blessing:

For boys, the introductory line is:

May you be like Ephraim and Menashe.

יְשִׁימְךָ אֱלֹהִים כְּאַפְרַיִם וְכַמְנַשֶּׁה.

For girls, the introductory line is:

May you be like Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah.

יְשִׁימְךָ אֱלֹהִים כְּשָׂרָה רַבֵּקָה רַחֵל וְלֵאָה.

For both boys and girls, the rest of the blessing is:

May God bless you and guard you.

יְבָרְכֶךָ יְהוָה וְיִשְׁמְרֶכָּךָ.

May God show you favor and be gracious to you.

יְאָר יְהוָה פְּנֵי אֱלֹהֶיךָ וְיִחַנְּךָ.

May God show you kindness and grant you peace.

יְשֵׂא יְהוָה פְּנֵי אֱלֹהֶיךָ וְיִשֶּׂם לְךָ שְׁלוֹם.

