

# BLESSING THE CHILDREN/BIRKAT HABANIM

## Introduction to Blessing the Children/Birkat HaBanim

The Blessing for the Children has two parts:

### 1. Introduction

For Boys: “*Yesimcha Eloh<sup>im</sup> k'Efraim v'chi'Menashe*”  
(May God make you like Ephraim and Menashe)

For Girls: “*Yesimeich Eloh<sup>im</sup> k'Sara, Rivka, Rachel, v'Leah*”  
(May God make you like Sara, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah)

**NOTE** The formula asks God to make the boys like Ephraim and Menashe but to make the girls like Sarah, Rivka/Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah. We might think that Sara, Rivka/Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah should be paired with their husbands, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob instead of with their grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Yet, while Isaac and Jacob had the advantage of growing up in religious homes and in Eretz Yisrael, all of the fore-mothers as well as Ephraim and Menashe lived righteous lives even though all grew up in bad environments outside of Eretz Yisrael.

### 2. Priestly Blessing/*Birkat Cohanim* (Numbers/Bamidbar 6:24-26)

This is the blessing that the priests (*cohanim*) use when blessing the Jewish people. For words to the blessing, please click here and scroll down to "*Birkat Cohanim*": <http://practicalhalacha.com/blessings#B>

## Blessing the Children: When To Bless

Bless children on:

- Friday night,
- Saturday night (this is so we start the new week with a blessing), and
- Jewish festival nights.

**NOTE** This is a non-binding custom, not a halacha.

## Blessing the Children: Who Should Bless

Who should bless the children:

- Anyone may bless children, but it is best for both parents to do so.
- Parents may ask any other adult to be their emissary to bless their children.

## Blessing the Children: How To Bless: How To Place Hands

You may use one or two hands when giving a blessing, such as when blessing children on Shabbat or Jewish festivals. You may hold your hands over the person's head or actually put your hands on their head--either is OK.

## Blessing the Children: How To Bless: From Afar

Parents may bless their children by telephone if not nearby. This is a non-binding custom, not a halacha.