



TEMPLE
ISRAEL
CENTER

Shabbat Schmooze at the Nursery School



Va-y'chi for Tots: What are Your Traditions?

Questions and Ideas for Parents:

Do you have memories of any family rituals from your own childhood?

When your children are grown, what family rituals would you like them to remember?

How can you create or enhance your family's weekly Shabbat ritual?

Creating Family Memories

It is Friday night. The sun has fallen. You are about to have Shabbat dinner with your young children. The blessings have been said... you've listened to the jingly jangly sound of coins being added to the *tzedakah* box... the flames from the Shabbat candles flicker and dance... the juice in the *Kiddush* cup has been sipped... the braided challah has been tasted.

But wait, there is another blessing! Before you eat your Sabbath meal (chicken soup or chicken fingers or grilled cheese or pizza-no matter, as long as you are together!), Jewish tradition provides us with two blessings: one for boys and one for girls. This is a lovely, gentle blessing that invokes the merits of our ancestors and gives us the opportunity to ask God to bless our children and support them through their lives.

It is most common to say this blessing while your hands are resting gently on each child's head—just as we read in then our patriarch Jacob did so with his grandsons, Ephraim and Menasseh. One parent can say the blessing, or both parents can say the blessing together. You can say the words in Hebrew and then in English, just in Hebrew or just in English. The important thing is for your family to develop distinct rituals that keep you close together emotionally and spiritually and that also connect you to your past. These traditions shape and mold you as individuals, as families and as a people.

After the blessings are said, all exchange hugs and kisses. This is a wonderful family moment when each person can speak from the heart, sharing personal words of gratitude, hope, encouragement and praise for this Shabbat and for the week that lies ahead.

These blessings hold the promise of magical connections. They set the stage for a tender tradition that is certain to help your children feel special and that will provide your family with warm, lasting Shabbat memories.

For boys:

Y'simcha Elohim k'Efrayim v'chiM'nasheh.

May God make you like Ephraim and Menasseh.

For girls:

Y'simech Elohim k'Sarah, Rivkah, Rachel, v'Leah.

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

Conclude with the Priestly Blessing:

Y'varechecha Adonai V'yish'm'recha.

May God bless you and guard you.

Ya'er Adonai panav eilecha vichuneka.

May the light of God shine upon you, and may God be gracious to you.

Yisa Adonai panav eilecha v'yasem l'cha shalom.

May the presence of God be with you and give you peace.

BY :ELLEN AND PETER ALLARD