

Blessing Your Family

One inspirational and unique viewpoint of the Hebraic centered mindset is that Shabbat (the Sabbath) is an incredible gift given to mankind... Shabbat and Torah are treasures. Keeping Shabbat is in no way a burden; in fact we don't keep Shabbat... Shabbat keeps us and we love it!

It is the day the GREAT and MIGHTY God, El Shaddai, gave to us so that we could rest with him. We can leave the mundane and worrisome world behind us on late Friday afternoon and celebrate complete freedom for one whole twenty-four hour period. And we cherish every moment of it!

Erev Shabbat is the "evening of" Shabbat. Isn't it strange that man's way is always at odds with God's way? In Genesis 1, we are continuously reminded that "the evening and the morning made" a day, where the 1st through the 6th days are described. God has us begin each and every new day in darkness and then He brings light to it, just as it was when He founded this creation. Shabbat begins at dusk **after** the daylight that ends Friday. (This is a very significant reminder regarding God's sovereignty and the source of all enlightenment.)

We are instructed not to kindle a fire on Shabbat, so at least 18 minutes before the sunsets we may begin. It's nice to buffer the rush, the deadlines and worldly pressures from Shabbat by making the most of our weekly celebration with our Father. We dim the other lights of the room and in lighting the Shabbat lights; we leave the candles burning until they go out on their own or put them out at bedtime.

Moms usually light the candles but if Mom is not available, Dad can light the candles and recite the blessings, too. After they are lit, Mom or Dad stares into the flame to ponder the solemnity of the words about to be said. This sets the tone for the remainder of Shabbat. Still standing, focus on the glowing warmth and peace from the candles, as this is a symbolic glimpse at the essence of Shabbat. Then cover your eyes lightly with your fingers and with an outward sweeping motion encircle the flames three times bringing your fingertips back briefly to cover your eyes; then open your slightly uplifted arms in praise to recite the words of the blessing:

Baruch atah Adonai Eloheynu
melech ha-olam asher kidshanu
b'mitzvotav
v'tzivanu l'hadlik ner shel Shabbat.



Blessed are you Lord our God
Eternal King, who has made us holy
by giving us his commandments,
and has commanded us to kindle the
Shabbat lights.

You may add any additional blessing so here are some suggestions:

The Lord is our light and our salvation. In His name we kindle these Shabbat lights.

May the Shabbat lights bring into our home the beauty of truth and the radiance of God's love.

May the Lord bless us with Shabbat joy.

May the Lord bless us with Shabbat Holiness.

May the Lord bless us with Shabbat peace.

We look forward to this day because it is our Heavenly Father's gift of respite from the things we deal with daily. It is the end of the week for which we probably got up much too early. We rushed through breakfast, into traffic, off to places that want to mold us into "their perfect model", for their (im)perfect purpose. Then we rush home to deal with more. This kind of schedule can "knock the stuffings" right out of the peaceful life we seek and are meant for. A weekly respite and purposeful time for reflection is the flawless gift from a loving heavenly Father. Shabbat is our opportunity to reflect on who made us, to take stock of who we are today and evaluate if we are in "His perfect will" ...or are we **sacrificing His plan for us** by slipping into "His permissive will"?

A special cup, challis or wine glass is used from week to week in the blessing of the fruit of the vine. Usually, Dad says the blessing, but a son or anyone else might say it for him. It is your personal decision to use wine or juice in this blessing. The purpose is not the form, but the opportunity to connect with past and future blessings from our Father. Raise the cup and say:

Baruch atah Adonai Eloheynu
Melech ha'olam,
Boray pri ha'gafen.



Blessed are thou, Lord our God,
Eternal King,
who creates the fruit of the vine.

Two loaves are baked at once, covered and put on the Erev Shabbat table, until the blessings are said and the meal is about to start. The two loaves remind us of the double portion of manna that the Lord provided on Shabbat coming out of Egypt and He will provide for our every need today as well. We are also reminded of Yeshua who was born in Bethlehem, which means "house of bread" in Hebrew. He told us that He is the "Bread of Life" and we will never hunger when we allow Him to feed our spirit. Either of these traditional symbolic reminders and their significance can be discussed within the family during the Erev Shabbat dinner celebration. Some people feel that the blessings over the wine and challah are the appropriate time to remember his payment of our penalty for sin.

Uncover the Challah and say:

Baruch atah Adonai Eloheynu
melech ha-olam
ha-motzi lechen min ha-eretz



Blessed are You, Lord our God,
Eternal King,
who brings forth bread from the earth.

This braided loaf for the Shabbat and festivals is common among our Messianic for Shabbat and festivals.

Throughout the ages Jewish parents, most often the fathers have been blessing their sons and daughters every Shabbat when they are together. Is it any surprise that these children grow up to be doctors, lawyers and leaders of finance and industry?

Hearing your words week after week will convince them of your tenderhearted concern for their well being. These blessing will favor your children over the obvious harms this world means to offer and this will also be a buffer from the onslaught of criticism meant to tear them down. Give it purpose and make it deliberate; take each child individually onto your lap... especially the older ones! Place your right arm around them with your right hand upon their forehead. Hold them close, cheek to cheek and start by saying:

To the daughters:
Y'simcha Elohim ke'Sarah, Rivka,
Rachel, ve'Leah.

God make you like Sarah, Rebekah,
Rachel and Leah.

To the sons:
Y'simcha Elohim ke'Efraim
ve'Chimnashe.

God make you like Efraim
and Mannasheh.

You may continue the blessing by addressing specific needs for each child, but remember to spare their feelings. It's easy to embarrass them by spilling personal details in front of anyone else.