



DEAR TORAH TIDBITS FAMILY

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There is something uniquely powerful about the moment a parent places their hands on a child's head and gives them a *beracha*. It is a tradition that goes back to Yaakov Avinu in this week's *parsha*, who took the time to bless his children and grandchildren. The beautiful custom we have as the Jewish people to continue giving *berachot* to our children every Friday night is clearly a message that is much, much deeper than just the actual words we are saying.

As the Executive Director of OU Israel, I often have to take trips around the world to advocate for OU Israel, to fundraise, and to spread the word of the work we are doing here in Israel. Being away from home is so, so hard. Therefore, I make it a policy never to fly for more than one Shabbat at a time. To maximize my trip, I usually leave on a *Motzei Shabbat* and come back the

following Friday, so that I am gone for twelve or thirteen days but never more than one Shabbat.

The hardest part about being away for Shabbat is Friday night after saying *Shalom Aleichem* and *Eishet Chayil*, when suddenly I realize that my children are not with me and therefore I cannot give them the traditional *berachot* parents say on a Friday night. That is why I make it a priority that no matter where I am, I set aside time early Friday morning to call each and every one of my children and spend about five minutes on the phone with them, not just to catch up and ask them about their week and their plans for Shabbat, but also to give them a *beracha*. Although it's obviously not the same, it's something that is so important to me.

The *beracha* for sons goes, "Yesimcha Elokim k'Ephraim v'chi'Menashe," may *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* make you like Ephraim and Menashe. Many ask, why reference Ephraim and Menashe, and not any other Torah character? Why not ask Hashem to make our children like Avraham, Yitzchak, Yosef, David, or Shlomo?

There are a number of wonderful reasons offered. For example, many point out that these are the first siblings in the Torah where there was no fighting between them. Every parent wants their children to get along, to love each other and not to fight - fighting between children is probably one of the most painful things for parents.

Similarly, the *beracha* for daughters is "Yesimeich Elokim k'Sarah, Rivka, Rachel, v'Leah." With Rachel and Leah, Chazal tell us of Rachel's willingness to lose her future husband in order to make sure that her sister wasn't

In loving memory of
לעילו נשמת
my dearly beloved
and sorely missed husband

Zvi (Hershel) Faier z"l
צבי בן שלמה ז"ל
ushra batat -

Dr. Faier's books:
A Day Is A Thousand Years
and Movements In A Dance
can be accessed at the
"Hebrew Books" website

ה' זכרו ברוך

Chaya Faier and Family

embarrassed. For every one of the *imahot*, looking out for each other was a big part of who they were, especially Rachel.

I heard another reason as well. Sarah, Rivka, Rachel, and Leah, as well as Ephraim and Menashe, all grew up in environments that were not Jewish. They did not grow up in a home or community where Torah was the value of everyone around them. Unlike Yitzchak, who grew up in the home of Avraham, or Yaakov, who grew up in the home of Yitzchak, Ephraim and Menashe grew up in Egypt. The only connection to the Jewish people was their father, Yosef. The same was true for Sarah, Rivka, Rachel, and Leah. Therefore, the *beracha* is saying that just as *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* gave them the strength not to be influenced by the negative community around them, He should make sure that negative influences do not affect our children.

Beyond the specific message, the situation which puts parents together with children, requiring them to get close, allowing them to express their hopes and wishes in such a way - it creates a moment. During the week, there can sometimes be friction between parents and children. It's natural and part of every relationship. But when the week ends, and there is an opportunity for a hug, and an opportunity to describe how much we love each other, it helps put everything into a perspective.

On my most recent trip to New York, I met with a number of *rabbanim* in the Five Towns. One of them told me that he once had Rabbi Moshe Hauer zt"l over for Shabbat. On Friday night, after *davening* was over, he saw Rabbi Hauer standing in the corner of the *shul*, talking to himself. He walked up to Rabbi Hauer and asked, "Rabbi Hauer, is everything okay?" Rabbi Hauer replied, "Yes, I'm just giving my kids their *berachot* now." His children were not there. I



do not know if his children even knew that their father was standing in the corner of a *shul* giving them *berachot*. But it is clear to me that they felt the *beracha* their father gave them.

When I was first married and living in Shilo, learning at the *yeshiva* there, we had the *zechut* of being invited by the *mashgiach* of the *yeshiva*, Rabbi Aryeh Mendelcorn and his Rebbetzin Nurit, for a Friday night dinner. It was fascinating to see the amount of time it took Rabbi Mendelcorn to give *berachot* to his children. He had this intense concentration on every word, slowly expressing each one. It was an eye-opener to see a *rav* who clearly knows the words, who clearly does not need to read them, go to each child and give the *beracha*.

**May the Torah learned
from this issue of Torah Tidbits
be in loving memory of and
לע"ג**

**Miriam Ansel a'h
מרימ' בת חי'ם ע"ה
ט"ז טבת - 2nd Yahrzeit**

**Dearly missed and always
in the thoughts of
her children, grandchildren
and great-grandchildren**

with such endless *kavanah*. That was 27 years ago, before my wife and I had our first child. I took it upon myself then to make sure that when I have children, when I would give them a *beracha*, I would try to have as much *kavanah* as possible. *Baruch Hashem*, 27 years later, I still try every single Friday when giving my children *berachot* to have *kavanah* in each and every word, to make the hug meaningful, and to make the words as meaningful as possible. My children should know that I mean every single word - not because these are words that Yaakov Avinu said or because these are the words written in the Torah, but because these are the words that *Chazal* tell us represent the most important things we want for our children.

I know that many of our readers are at a stage of life where they ask themselves: How many more years will I, *be'ezrat Hashem*, be able to stand and give my children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren *berachot* before *Kiddush* on Friday night? Whether in person, or calling them from Los Angeles or New York before Shabbat, or standing aside and giving them a *beracha* from afar - it is a question many of us are thinking about.

Whenever I think about that question, I think about my grandparents. My Bubby and Zaidy made aliyah in 1989. My Grandma and Grandpa lived in Brooklyn, and yet they still made a point

of coming to visit us in Israel every year. I used to think those visits were simply about seeing family. Today I understand they were also about transmitting values. They were showing us what deserves time, effort, and commitment. And that is really the question we all face at some point: how do we make sure the next generation does not only feel our love and our *berachot*, but also knows what we wanted those *berachot* to build?

It is for that reason that we are putting together an event focused on legacy giving, to help ensure that when people are planning their future giving - whether during the years of their retirement or after their passing - it goes to the causes that are most important to them. On January 14th, we will be hosting a lunch with an expert from the United States who leads the OU's planned giving initiative. You will be able to enjoy a meal and a deep discussion about the legal ramifications and tremendous benefits of planned giving. *Be'ezrat Hashem*, this is another way you can pass on to the next generation support for those helping your family and your community after your 120.

I give us all a *beracha* that the *berachot* our parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents gave us on *Erev Shabbat* and *Erev Yom Kippur* should, *be'ezrat Hashem*, come to fruition in each and every one of us, in our children, our grandchildren, and our great-grandchildren. May we continue knowing and focusing on what is truly important in this world.

With that, I wish you all a long life full of health, happiness, and lots of *Yiddishe nachas*, and an uplifting and inspiring Shabbat,



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The OU Israel Family
sends heartfelt condolences
to Susi Appel and family
on the passing of her sister

**Cheryl Zelenietz
Gluckman a”h**

המקום ינוח אתכם בתונך שאור אבלי ציון וירושלים