

THE PRACTICE OF BLESSING OF ONE ANOTHER

In the Jewish tradition, words have creative power. Because humans are God's image bearers, human curses and blessing shape the world, much like God's Word calls reality into existence.

With that in mind, you are encouraged to bless each person around the table while you're eating or when you're finished. This can be done in a variety of ways. You can place hands on people, or you can simply raise your hands over them. (You can even raise a glass and toast someone.) You can also go around the circle and have each person bless the person next to him/her. Parents, you are encouraged to go to each child around the table and speak good words over them. If you're on your own, you can simply pray blessings for people who come to mind.

You can speak your own words, but you're also free to use the blessings provided below.

✚ May you be like Ephraim and Manasseh, like Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah:

May the Lord bless you and keep you.

May the Lord cause the light of his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you.

May the Lord look on you with favour and give you peace. —Numbers 6:24-26

✚ May the Lord answered you and deliver you from all my fears. Those who look to him are radiant, and their faces shall never be ashamed. —Psalm 34:4-5

✚ May the Lord, your refuge—the Most High, your dwelling place—let no evil befall you, no harm come near your home.

God's angels guard you in all your ways;

God be present to protect and honour you in times of trouble.

May the Lord satisfy you with a long drink of salvation,

and the gift of a long life rich in saving power. —Psalm 91:9-16

✚ God strengthen you; God help you; God uphold you with God's righteous right hand.

—Isaiah 41:10

✚ May you be like a tree replanted beside the streams of Eden, with roots that reach down to the water, and with leaves that are always green; never afraid through the hottest of summers, serene and calm through droughts, bearing fresh fruit every season. —Jeremiah 17:8

✚ May the Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from death, live in you, and do the same thing in you: reviving you, and giving strength to your body, making you as alive to God as King Jesus. —Romans 8:11

- ✚ May you fix your attention on God, and let God transform you completely from the inside out by the renewing of your mind, so that you will readily recognize and quickly respond to what is good, pleasing and perfect. May God bring the best out of you, and develop well-formed maturity in you. –*Romans 12:2*

- ✚ May the God of hope strengthen you with wisdom and peace, so that your life, filled with the Holy Spirit, will brim over with joy! –*Romans 15:13*

- ✚ May you experience and embrace the amazing grace of the Master, Jesus Christ, the extravagant love of God, and the intimate friendship of the Spirit. –2 *Corinthians 13:14*

- ✚ May what our Master Jesus Christ gives freely be deeply and personally yours. –*Galatians 6:18*

- ✚ We give thanks for you, and pray that the glorious God will make you intelligent and discerning in knowing Jesus personally, your eyes focused and clear, so that you can see exactly what it is he is calling you to do, grasp the immensity of this rich way of life he has for you, and experience the immeasurable greatness of his power at work in you. –*Ephesians 1:16-19*

- ✚ Although it can never be fully known, may you have the power to understand how broad and long, how high and deep, is Christ's love, so that you live a full life, completely filled with the very nature of God. –*Ephesians 3:18-19*

- ✚ May your love abound and overflow more and more with knowledge and depth of insight, so that you are able to discern what is best and make wise choices, enabling your life to produce a harvest of righteousness. –*Philippians 1:9-11*

- ✚ May you receive and experience the amazing grace of the Master, Jesus Christ, deep, deep within yourself, and may God fully satisfy every need of yours according to the riches of glory that pours from Jesus. –*Philippians 4:19, 23*

- ✚ May God give you a wise mind and soul attuned to Jesus' will so that you acquire a thorough understanding of the ways in which God works. And with all the wisdom and understanding that his Spirit gives, may your life produce all kinds of good deeds. May the glorious power of God make you strong enough to take part in everything bright and beautiful that God has for us, so that your life overflows with joy. –*Colossians 1:9-12*

- ✚ May you be infused with strength and purity, and may the Master pour on the love so it fills your life and spills over on everyone around you. –1 *Thessalonians 3:12-13*

- ✚ May the God who makes everything holy and whole put you together more fully and completely, so that you experience in spirit, soul, and body the deep peace of our coming Master, Jesus Christ. –1 *Thessalonians 5:23*

- ✚ May God make you fit for what you've been called to be—a fully alive and whole person! May God fulfill all your desires for goodness, and fill every act of faith

with the power of the Spirit, so that the name of Jesus is glorified in you, and you in him.

–2 Thessalonians 1:11-12

✚ Now may the God of peace, who puts all things together, makes all things whole, work in you what is pleasing to God, and provide you with every good thing you need, so that you might experience and contribute to wholeness yourself. –Hebrews 13:20

✚ May you grow in grace and peace and understanding many times over as you deepen in your experience with God and Jesus, our Master and Saviour. –2 Peter 1:2, 3:18

✚ May God the Father and Jesus Christ, God's Son, together with the Spirit, give you grace, mercy, and peace in truth and love. –2 John 3

GRACE AFTER THE MEAL

*Many faiths and cultures have a grace before meals; not quite as many have a grace after meals. The blessing after the meal is based on Deuteronomy 8:10, where God's people are given this command:
"When you have eaten and are satisfied, bless."*

End the time together by blessing God with these words:

**Blessed are You, O Lord our God, Merciful One,
who sustains us with bread.
We are blessed with compassion by you,
and your blessing flows through us.
Teach us to remember that it is not by bread alone that we live.
Grant us evermore to feed on Him who is the true bread from heaven,
even Jesus Christ our Lord.
Blessed are you, O Lord our God, Merciful One,
and look with favour upon the homes of your people.
Defend us against evil
and supply all our needs according to the riches of your wonderful
grace.
Make us sanctuaries of peace, love, blessing and joy
for stranger and neighbour, friend and enemy.
Help us to follow you every step of our daily lives.
May we always abide under the safe shadows of your love,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.**

BENEDICTION ~ *Unto the Least of These*

When you visit a friend
And take hold of her hand,
And you show her a smile,
Ease the pain for awhile;
When a stranger walks by
And you look in his eyes,
See the Saviour is there
For a heart of despair;

When you do it unto the least of these,
You do it unto me;
You do it unto me;
You do it unto me.
When you do it unto the least of these,
You do it unto me;
You do it unto me;
You do it unto me.

When you give of your heart
To the ones set apart
In a moment of grief,
You can be their relief,
Bring a laugh, shed at a tear,
Knowing Jesus is near.
When you step out in faith
You are never too late.

—*Steve Bell*