

Celebrating Grandparenthood

AN INTERGENERATIONAL WATER-POURING CEREMONY

Whether you became a grandparent yesterday or years ago, it is likely that much has changed — including your own role in the family, your relationship with your children, and your view of your place in the world and your legacy. This ritual is a way to celebrate your status as a grandparent and affirm your place in the generations. You can also use it to mark the birth of each grandchild, as we are different people each time. The words can take on different meaning at different stages of grandparenting.

There are many ways to become a grandparent: through your children adopting or giving birth to a grandchild, being chosen as a surrogate grandparent, or any way that your status as “grandparent” has emerged. This ceremony is for grandparents within any family constellation.

WATER

Water is a central theme in Jewish life: from the primordial waters of creation to the blessings for rain and dew, to the traditional washing the hands at the Passover seder and full body immersion in a mikveh, the Jewish people recognize the power of water. This water-pouring ceremony invites you to pour from one vessel to another, affirming the constant movement of life forward.

Created by Mayyim Hayyim for the Jewish Grandparents Network



WHO TO INVITE

This water ceremony is designed to be intergenerational: for a grandparent, their child (the grandchild's parent[s]), and the grandchild. You may choose to have a celebration after the pouring or have each person come with a blessing to share as you celebrate and affirm your role of grandparent. We encourage you to welcome — and perhaps plan and co-host the ceremony with — the other grandparents who may be Jewish or of a different, or no, faith and are helping to raise your Jewish grandchild.

RITUAL PREPARATION

Decide where you want to conduct the ceremony. You might consider a space in your home that feels right for you and the family, a space outside that feels sacred, or inside the sanctuary of a synagogue.

Upon conclusion of the ceremony, celebrate with a festive snack or meal, toast one another with your favorite beverages, and/or share hugs or other demonstrations of affection. You may also like to share personal thoughts and expressions of gratitude with one another.

Each person participating in the ritual will bring a cup or vessel that holds meaning or significance to them. Some examples may be a Kiddush cup, an heirloom goblet, a cup from the participants' own wedding, or a gift purchased specially for this ceremony.

Both grandparents and parent(s) will fill their cup with water from any faucet or perhaps from a lovely pitcher on the table. The grandchild's cup should remain empty until the start of the ceremony, as it will be filled during the ceremony.

Have a towel ready.

Wash your hands with your favorite soap and water.

Take a moment to offer gratitude and care out loud to one another before you begin.



Ritual Steps

FIRST POUR: GRANDPARENT TO ADULT CHILD

Grandparent reads:

עֶטְרֵת זִקְנִים בְּנֵי בָנִים וְתַפְאֶרֶת בָּנִים אֲבוֹתָם: *Ateret z'kenim b'nai vanim, v'tiferet banim avotam.*

Grandchildren are the crown of their elders. Parents are the light to their children.¹

As I pour water into this vessel, I affirm and celebrate the transition of grandparenthood.

May I continue to discover new parts of myself and deepen my relationship with my children and grandchild[ren].

Parent reads:

Hineni.

I am here to provide love, support, and guidance as you, my parent, continue in this stage of life. I am proud to be alongside you as you mark this moment.

Grandparent:

I pour *meyyim hayyim*, living waters, into this vessel to acknowledge the wisdom that flows from one generation to the next.

Grandparent pours some of their water into their adult child's cup.

Option: Grandparent pours water over their child's hands. Let the water trickle over their fingers.



SECOND POUR: PARENT TO CHILD/GRANDCHILD

Grandparent:

Modim anachnu lach.

I thank the Abundance of the Universe for the good I know,
for the life I have, and for the gifts that are my daily portion:

For health and healing

For the ever-renewed beauty of earth and sky,

For thoughts of truth and justice which stir us from our ease

And move us to acts of goodness.²

Parent:

Hineni.

I am here to provide love, support, and guidance to this little one even as you, our parents, provided and continue to provide love, support, and guidance in this stage of our lives. I am proud to stand alongside you as together we mark this moment.

May the blessings and lessons of your experiences guide and sustain you as you continue your journey through life.³

I pour *mayyim hayyim*, living waters, into this vessel to bless us with waves of joy in the natural world and the charge to protect our earth.

Parent pours some of their water into the child's cup.

Option: Parent pours water over their child's hands. Let the water trickle over their fingers.



THIRD POUR: GRANDPARENT AND PARENT TOGETHER

Grandparent and parent read together:

(We suggest holding the grandchild or placing a hand lightly on them to affirm this intention.)

L'dor vador, I honor my ancestors who came before me, and I take my place in this legacy.

Holy One of Blessing, Your Presence fills creation.
You have kept us alive, You have sustained us,
You have brought us to this moment.⁴

May you live to see your world fulfilled,
May your destiny be for worlds still to come,
And may you trust in generations past and yet to be.⁵

*Grandparent and parent both pour water into the grandchild's cup, so it overflows.
Option: Grandparent and parent each pour water over the child's hands. Be generous
with the water so it runs over their fingers and hands completely.*

CLOSING KAVANAH

Grandparent recites and blesses parent and grandchild:

*Y'varech'cha Adonai v'yish-m'recha.
Ya-eir Adonai panav eilecha vichuneka.
Yisa Adonai panav eilecha v'yaseim l'cha
shalom.*

May the Source of All bless you and keep you.
May the Infinite One's presence shine upon you
and be gracious to you.
May the presence of the Divine be with you and
give you peace.

ATTRIBUTIONS

This ceremony was adapted by Rabbi Amalia Mark for Mayyim Hayyim Living Waters Community Mikveh and Paula Brody & Family Education Center and the Jewish Grandparents Network.

1: Proverbs 17:6

2: Adapted from Healing Service, Temple Israel Boston, 2000

3: Adapted from Mayyim Hayyim 70th birthday immersion ceremony

4: Adapted from Interpretive English translation by Matia Rania Angelou, Deborah Issokson, and Judith D. Kummer

5: Adapted from Talmud, Berachot 17a

6: Adapted from Birkat Cohanim Priestly Blessing, Numbers 6:24-27

