

סדר שמחת בת

Traditionally, a newborn baby girl is named soon after her birth with a special **מי שברך** recited during the Torah reading. Parents should be encouraged to come to the synagogue with the baby, receive an **עליה**, and name the baby according to the traditional ritual. In the case of a non-Jewish child, a naming ceremony must wait until after **טבילה במקוה כשר**. The appropriate **מי שברך** is recited at that time (page J-37). But the welcome of a baby girl into the Jewish people with a ceremony that deliberately affirms her inclusion in the covenant is a ritual that is barely a generation old and still evolving.

A ceremony is usually held within the first month after the baby's birth. Many models and ceremonies have been developed. Some use the structure, texts, and concepts of the **ברית מילה** as a starting point, augmented by various themes from additional Jewish sources. Some draw on the wording of the Sephardic **זבר הבת** or of the **שבע ברכות**. Other themes include water and washing, wine and **קידוש**, trees, **צדקה**, or Shabbat.

The following ceremony offers three options within a single structure. One invokes the symbolism of candles and light; a second involves Torah; and in the third, the baby is enfolded in the four corners of the **טלית**.

This multiple-choice arrangement has been provided to satisfy a range of liturgical and esthetic preferences, but more importantly, to reflect the reality that liturgical history is still being written. While it seems clear that the **שמחת בת** ceremony is here to stay, its final form has not yet been canonized. **זאת הקטנה גדולה תהיה**: All those who use these rituals are partners in their creation.

THE CEREMONY

*[As the baby is brought into the room,
all rise and say:]*

בְּרוּכָה הַבָּאָה

Blessed be the child who enters our presence
and the presence of God.

■ *The ceremony begins with the rabbi, parents, or other honorees reciting any combination of the following readings.*

1.

מִי־זֹאת הַנִּשְׁקָפָה כְּמוֹ שֶׁחַר, יָפָה כְּלַבְנָה, בָּרָה
בְּחֵמָה . . . ?

Who is she who shines through like the dawn,
Beautiful as the moon, radiant as the sun?
[Song of Songs 6:10]

2.

We have been blessed with the gift of new life.
We have shared love and pain and joy in bringing our daughter into this world and have been privileged to participate in the marvel and beauty of creation. Through our loving example, we hope to teach our daughter to become a caring and loving person with a sense of her own worth and respect for that of others. We dedicate ourselves to providing a home filled with the values and joys

of Torah and we hope that our daughter will grow to cherish and emulate these ideals.

3.

Help us raise a daughter, O God, whose heart will be clear, whose goals will be meaningful; one who will learn to laugh, yet never forget how to cry; one who will reach into the future, yet never lose touch with the past. Grant her the gifts of health, happiness, and wisdom. Then we, her parents, will be privileged to say, "We have been truly blessed and enriched."

4.

As our daughter grows, may we have the privilege of teaching her the meaning of Torah and of the *brit* which have guided our people for centuries. Through the example of our lives may we teach her to be caring and loving, with a sense of self-esteem and respect for others. May we guide her in the ways of Torah and the performance of *ma'asim tovim*, good deeds, as she becomes a committed member of *K'lal Yisrael* and of the world community.



5. *Prayer when the daughter is firstborn*

Our God and God of our ancestors, our Rock and our Redeemer, with gratitude for the gift of life we pray that our firstborn grow to accept joyfully her share in the tradition of our people. Bless her, Adonai, with health and full years, with happiness and moral strength. Bless us with understanding and wisdom, so that we may truly share in the creation of a life guided by Torah. May our firstborn daughter find favor before You, Adonai, and in the sight of all people. And let us say: Amen.



PRAYER BY THE GRANDPARENTS

Our God and God of all generations, we are grateful for new beginnings, for the bond of life that links one generation to the other. We are thankful for the blessings of family which bring meaning and happiness to our lives, and we rejoice with our children at the birth of their child, our granddaughter. May we all grow together as a family in health and in strength, in harmony and in love.

[The parents continue:]

We stand in awe before the miracle of birth, the mystery and majesty of life, our own fragility, and the power of God. We accept the responsibility of raising our daughter to maturity. We are overcome with a deep sense of love, joy, and happiness. We are grateful to You, God, for all that has transpired and for all that is yet to unfold.

[ברכת הגומל is recited by the mother:]

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, הַגּוֹמֵל
לְחַיִּים טוֹבוֹת, שְׂגַמְלָנִי כָּל-טוֹב.

Praised are You, Adonai our God, who rules the universe, granting favor even to the imperfect. Thank you, God, for granting mercy to me.

[Those present respond:]

מִי שְׂגַמְלָךְ כָּל-טוֹב, הוּא יִגְמְלָךְ כָּל-טוֹב, סְלָה.

May God, who has been gracious to you, continue to favor you with all that is good.

■ Continue with either the candle ceremony (page A-35), the Torah ceremony (page A-38), or the טלית ceremony (page A-42).

CANDLE CEREMONY

■ *Several participants—grandparents, aunts, uncles, special friends, etc.—are given candles and form two lines facing each other. The parents, or other honored guests, carry the baby in between the two rows. The candles may be already lit as they are given to the participants or progressively lit, one candle lighting another, as the baby is brought through. Another possibility is to light the candles one by one as the following six verses, corresponding to the six days of Creation, are read. The candles are then placed in candlesticks that have been previously arranged on a table. It would be especially significant to use cherished family candlesticks.*

1.

נֵר־לְרַגְלֵי דְבַרְךָ, וְאוֹר לְנִתְיָבְתִי.

Your word is a lamp unto my feet, a light for my path.

[Psalm 119:105]

2.

כִּי־אַתָּה תִּאֲדֹר נְרִי, יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יְגִיָּה חֹשֶׁכִי.

You are the One who kindles my lamp; Adonai, my God, lights up my darkness. [Psalm 18:29]

3.

קוֹמִי, אֹרִי, כִּי בָא אֹרֶךְ, וּכְבוֹד יְהוָה עָלֶיךָ זָרַח.

Arise, shine, for your light has dawned; God's radiance shines upon you! [Isaiah 60:1]

4.

וְעָלֶיךָ יִזְרַח יְהוָה, וּכְבוֹדוֹ עָלֶיךָ יִרְאֶה.

May Adonai continue to shine upon you and God's brilliant Presence surround you. [Isaiah 60:2b]

5.

שְׂאֵי־סָבִיב עֵינֶיךָ וּרְאֵי כָל־מְקַבְּצֶיךָ בְּאוֹרְךָ
בְּנֵיךָ, מִרְחוֹק יָבֹאוּ, וּבְנֹתֶיךָ עַל־צַד תֵּאֱמָנָה.

Lift up your eyes all about you and behold: they have all gathered around you. Your sons shall be brought from afar, your daughters like babes on your shoulders. [Isaiah 60:4]

6.

אֱלֹהִים יַחַנְנוּ וַיְבָרְכֵנוּ, יָאֵר פָּנָיו אֶתְנוּ, סֵלָה.

May God be gracious to us and bless us.
May God's radiance shine upon us. *Selah*.
[Psalm 67:2]



*[The parents lift up the baby
so she is facing the lit candles.]*

[The rabbi or parents continue:]

Light was the first of God's creations. As light appeared, it brought with it the potential for wondrous things to follow. We, too, kindle lights—of hope, of understanding, of celebration, of countless new possibilities. This little daughter with whom (_____ and _____ / we) have been blessed has already brought light into (their / our) lives. May God's radiance continue to shine upon (them / us). May (their / our) daughter grow to be a source of light to all those around her. May her radiance illuminate the world. May the light of Torah and *mitzvot* be reflected in her shining deeds. And may she help bring the light of redemption to the world.

■ *Continue with קריאת שם, page A-44.*

TORAH CEREMONY

■ *This ceremony can be done at any time, though it is well suited for those times when the Torah is read, particularly on Shabbat mornings.*

[The following verses may be recited by the rabbi or participants:]

לְכוּ וְנַעֲלֶה אֶל־הַר־יְהוָה וְאֶל־בַּיִת אֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב,
וְיִזְכְּנוּ מִדְרָכָיו, וְנִלְכֶה בְּאַרְחֹתָיו, כִּי מִצִּיּוֹן תֵּצֵא
תּוֹרָה, וּדְבַר־יְהוָה מִירוּשָׁלַיִם.

Come and let us go up
to the mountain of Adonai,
To the House of the God of Jacob.
And God will teach us,
That we may walk in divine paths.
For the Torah shall go forth from Zion
And the word of Adonai from Jerusalem.

[Isaiah 2:3; Micah 4:2]

תּוֹרַת יְהוָה תְּמִימָה, מְשִׁיבַת נֶפֶשׁ. עֲדוֹת יְהוָה
נְאֻמָּה, מַחְכִּימַת פֶּתִי. פְּקוּדֵי יְהוָה יִשְׂרִים,
מְשַׁמְחֵי־לֵב. מִצְוֹת יְהוָה בְּרָה, מְאִירַת עֵינָיִם.

The Torah of Adonai is complete, reviving the spirit. The words of Adonai are sure, enlightening the simple. The precepts of Adonai are just, gladdening the heart. The *mitzvah* of Adonai is clear, opening the eyes. *[Psalm 19:8–9]*

[The participants face the open ark.
Holding the Torah, the rabbi faces the congregation
and recites the following verses:]

וַיִּקַּם יַעֲקֹב וַיִּתֵּן אֶת-תּוֹרַת יִשְׂרָאֵל, אֶל-בְּנָיו.
וַיִּשְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּשְׂכַּח מִעֲלֵי-אֵל.
וַיִּשְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּשְׂכַּח מִעֲלֵי-אֵל.
וַיִּשְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּשְׂכַּח מִעֲלֵי-אֵל.
וַיִּשְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּשְׂכַּח מִעֲלֵי-אֵל.
וַיִּשְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּשְׂכַּח מִעֲלֵי-אֵל.
וַיִּשְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּשְׂכַּח מִעֲלֵי-אֵל.
וַיִּשְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּשְׂכַּח מִעֲלֵי-אֵל.
וַיִּשְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּשְׂכַּח מִעֲלֵי-אֵל.
וַיִּשְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּשְׂכַּח מִעֲלֵי-אֵל.

God established a decree in Jacob
and appointed a teaching in Israel,
charging our ancestors
to make Torah known to their children.
So that future generations—
all the children yet to be born
who in turn will tell their children—
Will place their confidence in God,
not forget God's great deeds,
and keep God's *mitzvot*.
[Psalm 78:5–7]

[The mother recites:]

הוֹרֵנִי יְהוָה דְּרֹךְ חֻקֶיךָ, וְאֶצְרְנָה עִקְבֵךָ.

Teach me, Adonai, the way of Your laws and I shall
treasure them always. [Psalm 119:33]

[The father recites:]

הַבִּינְנִי וְאַצְרָה תּוֹרָתְךָ, וְאַשְׁמְרֶנָּה בְּכָל-לֵב.

Give me understanding and I shall treasure Your Torah; I shall keep it wholeheartedly. [Psalm 119:34]

[Together, the parents recite:]

יְדֵיךָ עָשׂוּנוּ וַיְכַוְּנוּנוּ, הַבִּינְנִי וְאַלְמְדָה מִצְוֹתֶיךָ.

Your hands have made us and fashioned us. Give us understanding that we may learn your *mitzvot*. [Psalm 119:73]

[Placing the baby's hands upon the Torah handle,
the parents (or the rabbi) recite:]

וְאַשְׂאֵא-כַפֵּי אֶל-מִצְוֹתֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר אֶהְבֵּתִי, וְאַשִּׁיחָה
בְּחֻקֶיךָ.

I will lift up my hands
and reach out to Your *mitzvot*, which I love;
Your laws will be on my lips.
[Psalm 119:48]

[The rabbi continues:]

As this little child has touched the Torah, so may the Torah touch her life, filling her mind with wisdom and her heart with understanding. May _____ and _____, who have brought her here today, always strive to bring her close to the ways of God and of our people. May they teach her Torah every day through their words and their deeds. May they be privileged to raise their child to womanhood and may _____ enjoy the blessings of Torah, *huppah*, and a life of *ma'asim tovim*, good deeds. And let us say: Amen.

■ Continue with קריאת שם, page A-44.

טלית CEREMONY

■ *The baby is placed at the center of a large טלית. Each of the four corners of the טלית is held by the parents or honored guests. As each corner is folded over or around the baby, enwrapping her, the rabbi or participants recite the following verses:*

מֵה־יָקָר חֶסֶדְךָ אֱלֹהִים, וּבְנֵי אָדָם בְּצֵל כְּנָפֶיךָ
יִחְסִיוּ.

How precious is Your constant love, O God;
You shelter us under Your wings.
[Psalm 36:8]

בְּרָכִי נַפְשִׁי אֶת־יְהוָה, יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי גְדֻלַּת מְאֹד,
הוֹד וְהָדָר לְבָשָׁתָּה. עֲטֵה־אֹר בְּשַׁלְמָה, נוֹטָה
שָׁמַיִם כִּי־רִיעָה. תִּשְׁלַח רוּחְךָ יִבְרָאוּן, וּתְחַדֵּשׁ
פְּנֵי אֲדָמָה.

Let all my being praise Adonai, who is clothed in
splendor and majesty. Wrapped in light like a gar-
ment, You unfold the heavens like a curtain. You
send forth Your spirit and there is creation; You
renew the face of the earth. [Psalm 104:1–2, 30]

יֵשֵׁב בְּסִתְרֵךָ עֲלִיוֹן, בְּצֵל שְׁדֵי יִתְלוֹנֵן. אִמַּר
לְיְהוָה, מִחֲסִי וּמְצוּדָתִי, אֱלֹהֵי אֲבֹתֵינוּ...
בְּאִבְרָתוֹ יִסָּךְ לָךְ, וְתַחַת־כְּנָפָיו תִּחְסֶה, צְנָה
וּסְחָרָה אֲמָתוֹ.

For you who dwell in the shelter
 of the Most High
 And abide in the protection of *Shaddai*—
 I say of Adonai, my refuge and stronghold,
 My God in whom I trust . . .
 God will shelter you.
 You will find refuge,
 For God's fidelity is an encircling shield.
 [After Psalm 91:1–2, 4]

יהוה ישמרך מכל־רע, ישמר את־נפשך.
 יהוה ישמר־צאתך ובואך, מעתה ועד־עולם.

Adonai is your protection,
 a guardian at your right hand.
 Adonai will guard you from all harm;
 and guard your life.
 Adonai guards your going and coming,
 now and forever.
 [Psalm 121:5, 7–8]

[The rabbi or parents continue:]

Our God and God of our ancestors, we thank you for the gift of (this child / our daughter). May she grow to maturity embraced by God's love and the love of all who know her. May the *Shekhinah*, God's sheltering presence, be with her always. May the words of Torah surround her. Clothed in majesty and honor, may she always look to the future with joy.

■ Continue with קריאת שם, page A-44.

קריאת שם

■ Please note that where only the mother is Jewish, only the mother's name is used for _____ בת. Add בגן עדן if the parent is deceased.

אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ, קִיַּם אֶת־הַיְלָדָה הַזֹּאת
 לְאֲבִיהָ וּלְאִמָּהּ, וַיִּקְרָא שְׁמָהּ בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל _____
 בַּת _____. יִשְׁמַח הָאֵב (בְּגֵן עֵדֶן) בְּיוֹצֵא
 חֲלָצִיו וְתִגַּל אִמָּה (בְּגֵן עֵדֶן) בְּפָרִי בִטְנָה,
 כְּכַתוּב: אֵל הַנֶּעַר הַזֶּה הִתְפַּלֵּלְתִּי וַיִּתֵּן יְהוָה
 לִי אֶת שְׂאֵלְתִּי אֲשֶׁר שְׂאֵלְתִּי מֵעַמוֹ וְקִיַּם־לָהּ,
 יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ, מִה שְׁכַתוּב: פִּיהָ פִּתְחָה בְּחַכְמָה
 וְתוֹרַת חֻסֵּד עַל לְשׁוֹנָהּ.

[The rabbi asks those present to repeat
 the following words:]

הוֹדוּ לַיהוָה כִּי־טוֹב, כִּי לְעוֹלָם חֻסֵּדוֹ.

זאת הַקְטָנָה _____ גְּדוּלָה תְהִיָּהּ. יְהִי רָצוֹן
 (שְׂיֻזְכוּ הוֹרִיָּה / שְׂתֻזְכָּה אִמָּה) לְגְדוּלָה לְתוֹרָה
 וּלְחִפָּה וּלְמַעֲשִׂים טוֹבִים, אָמֵן.

Our God and God of our ancestors, sustain this child. Let her be known among the people Israel as _____, daughter of _____ and _____. May her mother be blessed with renewed strength and may both parents find joy in their child, as it is written: "It was this child I prayed for; and Adonai has granted me what I have sought" [*I Samuel 1:27*]. Fulfill for her, Adonai our God, that which is written: "She opens her mouth with wisdom, and the Torah of lovingkindness is upon her tongue" [*Proverbs 31:26*]. Let us give thanks to Adonai for Adonai is good; God's lovingkindness is forever. May this child, (first name only), grow into greatness as a blessing to her family, to the Jewish people, and to all humanity. May her (parents/mother) be privileged to raise (their/her) child to womanhood and may _____ enjoy the blessings of *Torah*, *huppah*, and *ma'asim tovim*, good deeds. And let us say: Amen.

■ *Verses related to the child's Hebrew name or names may be recited here, after a brief explanation of their significance. See page N-57. Psalm 8, found on page A-25, may also be recited.*

יְבָרֶכֶךָ יְהוָה וַיִּשְׁמְרֶכָּהּ,
 יָאֵר יְהוָה פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ וַיַּחַנְּךָ,
 יִשָּׂא יְהוָה פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ וַיִּשֶׂם לְךָ שְׁלוֹם.

May Adonai bless you and protect you.

May Adonai show you favor
 and be gracious to you.

May Adonai show you kindness
 and grant you peace.

[Numbers 6: 24–26]