

Dear Bayit Family Member,

Besha'ah tovah (may the birth come in the right time)/Mazal tov on the arrival of your daughter! A naming/simhat bat is an emotional, powerful and meaningful experience. The flexibility of the ceremony provides families with many options of how to shape it. It can also be a little overwhelming preparing for a ritual and celebration taking place soon after having delivered a baby! Our rabbinic team is here to facilitate, personalize and enhance that experience however we can.

Naming vs. Simhat Bat

For the purposes of this document, a “naming” refers to a simpler ceremony, typically done after an aliyah to the Torah (Monday, Thursday or Shabbat morning, Shabbat Minhah, or other Torah reading occasions (Rosh Hodesh and other holidays)), and including the naming formula and perhaps a melody and a couple of short blessings. A “Simhat Bat” refers to a more elaborate ceremony which includes the naming formula and also has more honors, liturgical components and speeches.

Some families will do a naming ceremony only, some will do a naming sooner and a separate Simhat Bat later, and others do only a Simhat Bat, incorporating the naming there. We are here to facilitate any of these options.

Please note: if your daughter is not halakhically Jewish by birth, but will be undergoing a conversion, a naming or Simhat Bat may be done prior to the conversion, or it may be done afterwards. Please feel free to reach out to a rabbinic team member to discuss.

This document focuses on the ritual options themselves. For a preparation letter on timing, location, reception, and Bayit staff contacts, please click [here](#).

Naming

1. Calling Name Aloud

In our typical service, at Torah reading, the baby's father is called to the Torah (let us know if you are a Kohen, Levi or Yisrael), and after his aliyah, the family present can join him at the Torah (the Torah readers and gabbaim will step off the bimah in that case), and the baby's name is sung aloud (usually using melodies – in the hope that the child's life always be filled with song – and the rabbinic team is happy to choose the melody or to use one(s) that are meaningful to your family) in the traditional naming formula. We request that families use both parents' Hebrew names in naming their daughter. There are multiple options of naming formulas. Two most commonly used are presented here:

א. מי שִׁבְרַךְ אֲמוֹתֵינוּ שָׂרָה רַבֵּקָה, רָחֵל וְלֵאָה, מְרִים הַנְּבִיאָה, אֲבִיגַיִל וְאֶסְתֵּר הַמַּלְכָּה בֵּת אֲבִיחַיִל הוּא יְבָרַךְ אֶת הַיְלָדָה הַנְּעִימָה הַזֹּאת, וַיִּקְרָא נְשָׂמָה בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל בֵּת _____ וְ_____! יְגַדְלוּהָ בְּבְרִיאוֹת, שְׁלוֹם וּמְנוּחָה, וַיִּזְכּוּ אֶת אֲבִיהָ וְאִמָּהּ לְרָאוֹת בְּשִׂמְחָתָהּ וּבְחִפְתָּהּ, בְּתוֹרָה וּבְמַעֲשֵׂים טוֹבִים, בְּבָנִים וּבְבָנוֹת, עוֹשֵׂר וְכָבוֹד. שְׂנַאֲמַר, עוֹד יִבּוֹבוּן בְּשִׂיבָה, דְּשָׁנִים וְרַעֲבָנִים יִהְיוּ, וְכֵן יִהְיֶה רְצוֹן וְנֹאמַר אָמֵן.

A. May the One who blessed our matriarchs, Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah, Miriam the Prophetess, Abigail, and Esther the Queen daughter of Avihayil, bless this dear girl, and may her name be called in Israel _____ daughter of _____ and _____. May they bring her up in health, peace and tranquility. May her parents merit to see her times of rejoicing and her marriage, Torah and good deeds, sons and daughters, wealth and honor. As is written, "May they yet flourish in old age, vigorous and fresh shall they be." So may it be God's will, and let us say Amen.

ב. מי שִׁבְרַךְ אֲבוֹתֵינוּ אַבְרָהָם יִצְחָק וְיַעֲקֹב, וְאֲמוֹתֵינוּ שָׂרָה רַבֵּקָה רָחֵל וְלֵאָה, הוּא יְבָרַךְ אֶת הָאִשָּׁה הַיּוֹלֶדֶת _____ וְאֶת בִּתָּהּ שֶׁנּוֹלְדָה לָּהּ בְּמִצְלָט טוֹב, וַיִּקְרָא נְשָׂמָה בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל בֵּת _____ וְ_____! אֲנָא בְּרַךְ אֶת אֲבִיהָ וְאִתְּ אִמָּהּ וְאֶת כָּל מְשִׁפְחָתָהּ וַיִּזְכּוּ לְגַדְלָהּ לְתוֹרָה וּלְחִפָּה וּלְמַעֲשֵׂים טוֹבִים. וְנֹאמַר אָמֵן:

B. May the One who blessed our patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and our matriarchs, Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah, bless the childbearing woman _____, and her newborn daughter born in favor, and may her name be called in Israel _____ daughter of _____ and _____. Bless, we pray to You, her parents and her family that they have the merit to raise her to the Torah, to the marriage canopy and to good deeds; and let us say: Amen.

The components that follow here are optional, but families generally include them (especially #2 and #3):

2. Birkat Hagomel (Thanksgiving Blessing)

After the naming, the mother is invited to say the Birkat Hagomel, the blessing of Thanksgiving, on surviving the travails and dangers of childbirth. She recites:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱ-לֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם. הַגּוֹמֵל לְחַיִּיבִים טוֹבוֹת. שְׂגַמְלֵנִי כָּל טוֹב:

[Note on transliteration: accent on last syllable except where noted with underlined syllable. Line over the o (ō) indicates a long vowel.]

Bah-rukḥ ah-ta A-dō-nye Eh-lō-hay-nu meh-lekh ha-ō-lahm ha-gō-mel li-kha-ya-veem tō-vōt sheg-ma-la-nee kōl tōv.

Blessed are you, Lord, our God, King of the Universe, who repays the indebted with goodness, for you have repaid me with all good.

[And the congregation responds: אָמֵן. מִי שֶׁגָּמְלָךְ כָּל טוֹב. הוּא יְגַמְלֶךְ כָּל טוֹב סְלָה: - Amen. May the One who repaid you with all good continue to repay you with all good. Selah!]

3. Birkat Hatov V'Hameitiv (Blessing over Good News)

We then invite both parents to recite the blessing over good news which affects more than just the hearer, but others as well:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱ-לֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, הַטוֹב וְהַמְטִיב:

Bah-ruk hah-ta A-dō-nye Eh-lō-hay-nu meh-lekh ha-ō-lahm ha-tōv vi-ha-may-teev.

Blessed are you, Lord, our God, King of the Universe, Who is good and does good.

4. Birkat Habat (Blessing of a Daughter)

Finally, parents and other family/close friends are invited to bless the baby. Place your hands on or near the baby's head and recite the traditional Friday night blessing for a daughter:

<i>יְשִׁימָךְ אֱ-לֹהִים כְּשָׂרָה רִבְקָה רָחֵל וְלֵאָה:</i>	<i>May God make you like Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah.</i>
<i>יְבָרְכֶךָ יי וְיִשְׁמְרֶךָ:</i>	<i>May the Lord bless you and guard you.</i>
<i>יָאֵר יי פְּנֵי אֱלֹהֶיךָ וְיַחַנְנֶךָ:</i>	<i>May the Lord's face be lit towards you and show you favor.</i>
<i>יִשָּׂא יי פְּנֵי אֱלֹהֶיךָ וְיַשֵּׁם לְךָ שְׁלוֹם:</i>	<i>May the Lord's face be lifted to you and grant you peace.</i>

Ye-see-maikh Eh-lō-heem ki-Sa-rah Riv-kah Rah-khayl vi-Lay-ah.

Yi-va-reh-khi-kha A-dō-nye vi-yish-mi-reh-kha.

Yah-air A-dō-nye pah-nahv ay-leh-kha vee-khu-neh-kah.

Yee-sa A-dō-nye pa-nav ay-leh-kha vi-ya-same li-kha sha-lōm.

At this time, or at the end of that morning's prayer service, family members may wish to say a few words about the name, and/or clergy and others present may offer brief blessings and good wishes for the new baby.

Simhat Bat

A Simhat Bat ceremony is a very flexible ceremony, allowing parents to craft a ceremony reflecting their values and liturgical/ritual vision. Because there is no one set historical practice, many different prayers and rituals have been incorporated, especially in recent decades.

Some overarching factors to give thought to:

- Whom do you want to include and honor in the ceremony?
- To what extent, if any, do you want to create a unique ceremony/ritual, vs using models that already exist (such as the Zeved Habat found in the Koren siddur), vs incorporating elements or modeling the ritual after the pattern of a brit milah?
- What role will melody and explanation have in the ceremony?
- Do you – the parents – want to play a more active facilitating role, or have a clergy (or someone else) facilitate/emcee/explain?
- How much participation do you want from your invited guests? This answer may inform the decision of whether you produce a program, enabling everyone to participate and/or follow along.

As you can see, a lot of thought can be put into crafting a ceremony. In light of that, we encourage parents to give some thought to these questions before the baby comes, so you are prepared to put together a ceremony more easily when the baby is born.

For a point of reference, many Simhat Bat ceremonies at the Bayit include the following, and the Bayit rabbinic team strongly encourages including these components:

- Welcoming everyone (usually including celebrating any older siblings)
- Bringing the baby in (often with melody) by loved ones
- Naming ceremony (see #1 in Naming section above) – even if a naming was already done, it can be reprised here
- Mother's Birkat Hagomel (Thanksgiving Blessing) (see #2 in Naming section above)
- Parents' Birkat Hatov V'Hameitiv (Blessing over Good News) (see #3 in Naming section above)
- Family's Birkat Habat (Blessing of a Daughter) (see #4 in Naming section above)
- Grandparents' Blessings or Readings
- Explanation of Name

In addition, many families of late have chosen to use the centuries-old Sephardic Zeved Habat ceremony (Koren Siddur on p. 1035 – and a pdf is in the Dropbox folder linked to in the next paragraph), which

incorporates many of the above components. It can be used as is, or used as a base and added to or subtracted from. We have one-page copies of the ceremony that we can distribute to guests.

To help you plan a ceremony, here are a few additional materials:

- 1) A [link to a Dropbox folder](#) with pdfs of a dozen Simhat Bat programs from these ceremonies in different communities in recent years. You don't need to hand out a program, but many people do since the liturgy and ceremony varies so much. These programs give you a sense of the components of the ceremony, the liturgy, roles for family, and the like.
- 2) The Dropbox folder above also has two other files in it from JOFA: one is a JOFA Journal on baby ceremonies, and one is a collection of articles on baby ceremonies and inclusion of women in them. In that vein, the JOFA website has a great collection of materials on Simhat Bat [here](#).
- 3) There is an amazing Israeli organization called ITIM which helps secular Israelis (and all Israelis) navigate the life cycle system which goes through the Israel Rabbinate. They have a great section on Simhat Bat. Right now they are redesigning the website, so the information is only available in Hebrew, but it's [here](#), and there are more links at the bottom of the page. They have tons of suggested texts for building a ceremony [here](#).