

These Are a Few of My Favorite... Columns



One of my themes for this year will be "A Few of My Favorite..." Many congregants are studying with me as I review some of my favorite teachings and lessons.

With this issue of the Newsletter, I begin a series reprising some of my favorite Perspective Columns from the last thirty-five years. Of the many I have written, I had to choose six. Each one was chosen for a specific reason, and with each one, I will give a paragraph or two of introduction, explaining why I have chosen it.

This column is from November 17 and 24, 1978, shortly after I arrived at AJ. It is entitled "A Bris for a Girl?" When I came to AJ, women's participation in synagogue life was on the ascendancy. Women had just been accorded the right to take an aliyah, read Torah and count in a minyan. I wrote this article about expanding birth rituals for a girl, expecting it to be non-controversial. Instead, I vividly recall it stimulating a considerable degree of push-back, to the point of questioning who authorized me to write it.

I reprint it as a reminder of how far we have come. AJ had never had a woman president until 1993. And it was only last year that we included the Matriarchs in the Amidah as a matter of course. Today, women are fully involved religiously and organizationally in synagogue life. There is no role denied a woman just because she is a woman. From the perspective of history, these changes have taken place in the blink of an eye. We are all the better for it.

A Bris for a Girl

Have you ever been invited to a bris for a newborn baby girl?

Now, before you dismiss this question as nonsense, you should keep in mind that although we commonly identify the term bris with the circumcision ritual of a newborn boy, the word itself means *covenant*. Indeed, the circumcision ritual, performed on the eighth day of birth for a boy, is properly called a Brit Mikah, the Covenant of Circumcision. It is a ceremony by which the newborn boy is formally welcomed into the covenant of our people.

But shouldn't a girl also be ushered into the covenant of our people with the same degree of sanctity and celebration? True, a girl is named at the Torah. But, the baby herself is usually not present; often her mother is not able to be present; the warmth, joy and intimacy of a family simcha is missing.

Many families blessed with a newborn baby daughter would like to have a home ritual, celebrated with their family, that will express the happiness they feel and hopes they have for their child.

Such a service is available. It contains parts for a rabbi, both parents, grandparents and other close relatives. It is meaningful and appropriate.

If you are blessed with a newborn baby girl and this idea appeals to you, why not give me a call so we can discuss it further and set up this beautiful home ceremony to mark your daughter's entrance into the Brit, Covenant of our people.

CONGREGATION
ADATH JESHURUN



7763 Old York Road
Elkins Park, PA 19027
215.635.6611
www.adathjeshurun.info