

Temple Beth Rishon Life Cycle Events

Baby Naming for a Girl

What is the Hebrew name for this ceremony?

It is referred to by several names: *Simchat Bat*, *Brit Kedushah*, *Brit Bat*, *Brit Bat Tziyon*, *Brit B'not Yisrael*, *Brit Haneinot*, *Brit Sarah*, *Brit r'chitzah*, and *Brit Mikvah*.

Where is the baby naming performed?

The baby naming takes place in the synagogue.

When does the ceremony take place?

At Temple Beth Rishon, the ceremony takes place as soon as the mother and baby girl are physically able to attend. This is usually during the child's first two months. It is most often performed during the Family *Shabbat* service that usually occurs on the first Friday of every month. However, Rabbi Emert can choose to perform a baby naming during other services. Traditionally, Orthodox and many Conservative Jews have the naming ceremony during the first service following the birth at which the Torah is read (Monday, Tuesday, Saturday, *Rosh Hodesh*, and any festival).

Why is it important to give a daughter a Hebrew name?

Bestowing a Hebrew name upon your child is a way of preserving Jewish heritage. Giving your daughter a Hebrew name is cause for great joy and happiness because another precious child has been born into the Jewish community and has entered into a sacred covenant with God. There is a *midrash* that states that one reason Jews were deemed by God to be worthy of liberation from slavery is that they retained their Hebrew names through four centuries of captivity.

How do you arrange for a baby naming?

You should contact the secretary in the temple office who will mail out the appropriate forms. After you have filled them out and returned them to the office, a date will be set.

What is the general format for the baby naming service?

In our synagogue, the baby and her parents, siblings, and grandparents are called to the *bima* where the rabbi and cantor bless the child and her family and welcome the child to the congregation of Israel with prayers and songs. The ceremony usually takes place after the chanting of the *V'ahavtah*, during which the parents are commanded to instruct their children about Judaism and to impart to them the importance of devotion. The child's Hebrew name is announced by the rabbi. In some Orthodox and Conservative congregations, the father is given an *aliyah* and the rabbi recites a prayer in which the child is named. However, this tradition is changing in response to the needs of observant Jewish feminists with the development of welcoming ceremonies.

What are the laws guiding us in the choice of a name for a girl?

There are no laws regulating the choice of a name for a boy or a girl. There are, however, long-held customs. Traditionally, there is a connection between a child's Hebrew and English name; however, some people choose otherwise. The customs differ between Sephardim and Ashkenazim. Sephardic customs call for naming a child after a living relative. The guidelines are as follows: the first female child is named after her paternal grandmother; the second female child is named after her maternal grandmother. Ashkenazic Jews name their children after a deceased relative, either with the same name or with a name that closely resembles the relative's name.

How is a daughter's Hebrew name expressed?

Traditionally, the baby girl's name is expressed as a derivation from her father's name, for example, Dina bat Ya'akov. In more liberal congregations, like our own, the girl's name is expressed using both parent's names, for example, Dina Bat Ya'akov v'Malka. Therefore, the Rabbi needs to know the Hebrew names of both the mother and father.

If the baby's mother is not Jewish, are there any other requirements for the baby to be accepted into the Jewish faith?

Initially, the Rabbi should be contacted to assist in making the arrangements for conversion. Prior to the naming ceremony, the Rabbi will accompany the parents and the baby to the *mikvah*. The father will immerse the child in the water in the presence of three rabbis who serve as witnesses and who then sign the conversion certificate.