



Simchat Bat Ceremony
for

אַסְתֵּר בִּיָּגַע בֵּת שָׂרָה וּמִלְטֹן

Esther

Daughter of Wendy (Sarah) and Milton

Madison Faye S

Simcha סמחה means Joy

Bat בת means Daughter

A Simchat Bat is a celebration of the joy of having a daughter!

Welcome! Shalom! שלום!

*Light shine upon us
Our people have increased
And our joy is made great
For we have borne a child
May there be no end of peace*



Simchat Bat: Who, What, Why, How?

The religious purpose of this ceremony is to bring our daughter into the covenant with God, in parallel with the "bris" for a boy (brit milah), the covenant of circumcision. There is no "physical ritual" for a girl. The highlights of this ceremony are the announcement of the baby's Hebrew name, blessings, prayers, readings, and candlelighting, with participation by relatives and special friends--you. Many of you have come a very long way to be here today; others have set aside this time in honor of our daughter. We are delighted and honored to have you all help us celebrate this event.

Today was chosen as the day of our daughter's Simchat Bat because it is the first day of the Hebrew month Elul. The first day of the Hebrew month is called Rosh Chodesh, literally "head of the month", which starts with the new moon. This day is especially set aside for women and is widely celebrated by Jewish women's groups. The monthly celebration of Rosh Chodesh has special meaning for women because it emphasizes the cyclical nature of life, and the monthly cycle which makes life possible. Today, the Jewish Women's Center of Pittsburgh is here to help celebrate this Simchat Bat and bring our daughter into the community of Jewish women.

In ancient times, there was a special celebration for the birth of a girl, though in recent centuries the male bris has been more emphasized. Celebration of the birth of daughters has become much more popular in conservative, reform, and orthodox circles. Our daughter's ceremony follows the main elements of a male bris with traditional roles assigned to honored relatives and friends, and incorporates ancient prayers as well as modern poems.

The four elements of the celebration are:

- I. Welcoming the new baby with introductory prayers, and Rosh Chodesh blessings
- II. Covenant prayers and candlelighting
- III. Announcement of our daughter's name and remembering the women after whom she is named
- IV. Celebratory meal

I. *Welcome, baby girl !!*

All say: "Brucha Haba'Ah!" בְּרוּכָה הַבָּאָה!
"Blessed is she who enters."

Noel Yaskulka (maternal great-uncle):

The baby daughter is brought into the ceremony by Katherine Y , a longtime friend, accompanied by the baby's father, Milton S , and her big brother, Danny S. Kathy is the "Kvatterin" קוואטערין, who carries the baby into the bris celebration. For a very traditional male bris, this would be the one formal honor bestowed upon a woman.

(point to chair:)

This is the Throne of Elijah the prophet, who is remembered for the good.

זֶה הַכִּסֵּא שֶׁל אֱלִיָּהוּ הַנָּבִיא זְכוּר לְטוֹב.

We set aside a chair for Elijah the prophet, and rekindle our faith that every human life has the potential to bring about an era of peace and harmony for all people.

The baby daughter is presented to the celebrants and handed to her maternal grandmother, Marilyn R , the "Sandak" סנדק. The Sandak holds the baby during the bris, which is the highest honor at a bris. The baby is placed upon the tallis (prayer shawl) used by her late maternal great-grandfather Moshe Chaim Y : (father of Marilyn, Noel, and Charlotte; husband of Faye). This tallis was used as the chuppah (marriage canopy) of the baby's parents, Wendy and Milton.

Parents:

Under the wings of the Shechinah, the female aspect of the Divine Presence, we present our daughter to her family, to the community, and to the Jewish people. We are prepared and ready to perform the mitzvah of entering our daughter into the Covenant with God.

Bestow a sacred soul to this child and may Elijah the Prophet, angel of the Covenant, guard the covenant of this child, that she never sin. Grant us the privilege of rearing her to the study of Torah so that she may understand how to perform mitzvos (good deeds); that she be wise, pious, of exemplary character and good fortune. May we rejoice in her and may we bring her to the marriage canopy.

Mother:

For the Naming of a Girl-Child

Between a boy-child and a girl-child,
only the latter has the soul's shape.

For he will grow up,
huffing and thrusting,
with a plate of armor
'round his life-breath,
and, if fortunate, will watch
this outer veil grow limber
and translucent, to reveal
his true shape with advancing age.
If not for circumcision,
he would suffocate.

But she
was husked in heaven from the start.
Her natural radiance will be
tempered by the world.
And she, more conscious of her exile,
will accept the ring someday
beneath the canopy, as if
in willful diminution of her light
(as once, of old, the moon),
and she will take the future
in her womb, as if in trust.
And she, the nurse and blueprint
of the universe, is Israel
and the Presence quite enough,
and so the contour of the soul,
right from the first day of her life.
No sign of covenant is made in her:
she is a sign herself already,
for, waxing and waning with the moon,
she is the imprint of a world
that breathes--her own small breath
a tiny metronome by which
the world is tuned.

Joel Rosenberg

Mitchell *maternal uncle:*

The Hebrew word for foreskin, "orlah" ערלה means "barrier", and symbolizes a barrier to holiness. However, removal of the physical barrier to holiness is only one step. There is also the "orlah of the heart; orlah ha-lev" ערלה הלב which bars the way to holiness, and which must be removed to achieve holiness. Males and females alike must overcome this barrier.

Ken *maternal uncle:*

"You are to circumcise the orlah of your heart."

(Deuteronomy 10:16)

We ourselves must remove from our hearts the impediments to goodness.

"And the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring."

(Deuteronomy 30:6)

When God brings the final redemption, He will complete the removal of the thin barrier of all hearts and return humankind to the state of creation.

Parents:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ

לְהִכְנִיסָהּ בְּבְרִית שְׁל אַבְרָהָם אֲבִינוּ וְשָׂרָה אִמֵּנוּ.

Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the universe, Who has sanctified us with His commandments, and has commanded us to bring her into the covenant of Abraham, our father and Sarah, our mother.

All: Amen

Candlelighting

Parents:

There is a new light in our hearts and in our home
These candles celebrate the birth of our child
Out of the creative darkness she has come
These candles celebrate her emergence into light
These candles celebrate the warmth of the love
out of which this child was created.

Light a candle, and say:

Emily and Marshall

with Robin and Mitch:

Your word is a lamp unto my feet, a light for my path. *(Psalms 119:105)*

Jessica, Sarah and Julie

with Karen and Ken:

You are the One who kindles my lamp: the Lord my God lights up my darkness.

(Psalms 18:29)

Sandak (Marilyn):

Brucha Haba'Ah--Blessed She Comes

Welcome Woman-Child

Newborn guardian
of the sacred gift
of cycles and seasons.

Within and all around you

Be witness to the rhythms of
surrender and renewal
faith and love

Awaken intuition and knowledge
to the indwelling presence--*Shechinah*

We welcome you

into the world
into your family
into your people

May you know from your early days
how we travel through the dance
of dark and light
slavery and freedom
wandering and revelation
planting and harvest
new moon and full moon
from the illumined place of now
the sanctuary in time--*Shabbat*.

Hanna Tiferet Siegel

Rosh Chodesh Blessings

Robin (maternal aunt, standing Sandak):

The cycle of the year has brought us to the month of Elul. In Elul we start to prepare for the New Year which takes place next month, Tishre. The New Moon of Tishre, Rosh Hashanah, is the day on which we celebrate the creation of the world. It is customary to think of the 25th of Elul as the beginning of the "week" of creation.

Karen (maternal aunt, standing Sandak):

"With each child, the world begins anew."

Midrash

All women say:

Blessed are you, Breath of Life, who made me a woman.

ברוכה את יה רוח העולם שעשתני אשה.

Brucha aht Yah, ruach ha-olam sheh-astani isha.

All:

We welcome Elul with great rejoicing.

ראש חדש אלול היום יום ראשון עלינו ועל כל ישראל לטובה.

תחדשהו השכינה עלינו ועל כל עמה בית ישראל לחיים ולשלום.

לששון ולשמחה לישועה ולנחמה. ונאמר אמן.

Rosh Chodesh Elul ha-yom yom rishon aleinu v'al kol Yisrael l'tovah.

Techadsheihu Shechinah aleinu v'al kol amah beit Yisrael l'cha'im, ul'shalom.

L'sason ul'simchah, li'shu'ah ul'nechamah. V'nomar Amen.

As we bless the source of life so are we blessed.

נברך את מעין חיינו שחיינו וקיימנו והגיענו לזמן הזה.

N'varekh et ma'yan hayyeinu, she'he'chianu, v'ki'amanu, v'hi'gi'anu laz'man ha'zeh.

Let us bless the flow of life that revives us, sustains us, and brings us to this joyous moment, this holy time.

Charlotte and Noel (maternal great-aunt and great-uncle):
Arise, shine, for your light has dawned, God's radiance shines upon you!
(Isaiah 60:1)

Gregg and Robyn (maternal first cousins once-removed):
For this child we have prayed.
(Samuel 1:27)

Mona, Mark, and Doug (colleague/friends):
Blessed is the woman who bears a child, for she knows how love covers pain.

Sam and Natalie (colleague/friends):
Blessed is the man who fathers a child, for he makes a bridge between earth and heaven.

Victor and family, Sally, Heather and Chris (colleague/friends):
May the Lord continue to shine upon you and God's brilliant presence surround you.
(Isaiah 60:2)

Katherine (friend):
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)

Gayle and Rick (friends):
May God be gracious to us and bless us. May God's face shine upon us.
(Psalms 67:2)

Susanne (colleague/friend):
This little child, may she grow big.
(from the daily prayerbook)

June (colleague/friend):
By the breath of children God sustains the world.
(Shabbat 119b)

Ann, Gregg, Jeffrey and Scott (friends):
And God said: 'Let there be light.' And there was light.
(Genesis 1:3)

Betsy (colleague/friend):
And God saw the light, that it was good; and God divided the light from the darkness.
(Genesis 1:4)

Fern

Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the universe, Who commands us to sanctify life.

Milton, Wendy, and Danny:

Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the universe, Who causes parents to rejoice with their children.

All others are welcome to light candles

The parents lift the baby to the light and say:

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

All: Amen

All: בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שְׁהַחַיְנוּ וְקִיְמַנו וְהַגִּיעַנוּ לַזְמַן הַזֶּה.
Bar-uch a-ta A-do-nai, Eh-lo-hei-nu meh-lech ha-o-lam, sheh-heh-cheh-ya-nu,
v'ki-y'ma-nu, v'hi-gi-a-nu, la-z'man ha-zeh.

Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the universe, Who has kept us alive, sustained us, and brought us to this season.

All: Amen

II. Covenant

Marilyn:

The Reader of the Blessings, M'varech, מְבָרֵךְ
for the ceremony is the baby's maternal grandfather, Seymour

Seymour:

"And I will establish My Covenant between Me and you and your seed after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto you and to your seed after you."

וְהִקְמַתִּי אֶת-בְּרִיתִי בֵּינִי וּבֵינְךָ וּבֵין זַרְעֶךָ אַחֲרָיִךָ
לְדֹרֹתָם לְבְרִית עוֹלָם לְהָיוֹת לְךָ לֵאלֹהִים וּלְזַרְעֶךָ אַחֲרָיִךָ

Genesis 17:7

The meaning is not that the Covenant is to consist in the rite of circumcision, but that circumcision is to be an external sign of the Covenant. "It shall be a token of a covenant", just as the rainbow was the token of the covenant with Noah.

Blessings after the Covenant

Baby is held by maternal aunt Robin

Robin elevates the cup of wine and recites the Blessing:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ הוֹהוּ, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגֶּפֶן.

Blessed are you, Lord our God, King of the universe, who creates the fruit of the vine.

All: Amen

Robin places a drop of wine on the baby's lips and drinks from the cup of wine.

Seymour:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ הוֹהוּ, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשׁ יְדִידָהּ מִבֶּטֶן וְצִאָצְאָהּ חֵתֶם בְּבְרִית

קִדְּשׁ.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ הוֹהוּ, בּוֹרֵאת הַבְּרִית.

Blessed are you, Lord our God, King of the universe, Who has sanctified the beloved one from the womb and sealed her offspring with the holy covenant. Blessed are You Lord, Who establishes the covenant.

All: Amen

III. Giving The Name קר'את השם

Baby is held by maternal aunt, Karen

Karen:

In life you discover that people are called by three names:

One is the name she is called by her parents: **Madison Faye S**

One is the name others usually call her: **Maddie**

The third, the name that means the most, is the name she acquires for herself.

(Midrash Tanhuma)

Seymour:

The Mishnah, the first part of the Talmud, says,

"The crown of a good name excels all other crowns, including the crown of learning, of priesthood and even of royalty."

Robin:

According to Proverbs, "A good name is better than great riches."

Marilyn:

Our God and the God of our forefathers, preserve this child for her father and mother, and may her name be called in Israel:

אֶסְתֵּר בִּי'גַע בַּת שָׂרָה וּמִ'לֵטֶן

Esther , daughter of Sarah and Milton.

May her parents rejoice in the fruit of their love and commitment, as it is written:

"May your father and mother rejoice and may the one who bore you exult". And it is said: "He remembered His covenant forever; the word of His command for a thousand generations".

All: הודו ליהוה כי טוב, כי לעולם חסדו.

Ho-du la-do-nai ki tov, ki l'o-lam chas-do.

Give thanks to the Lord for He is good; His kindness endures forever!

Charlotte (maternal great-aunt):

May this infant Esther Feige become great. Just as she has entered the covenant, so may she enter into the study of Torah, the marriage canopy, and the performance of good deeds.

Torah: May this child always love learning and pursue study.

Chuppah (Marriage): May this child be able to share love, grow, and be fulfilled.

Good Deeds: May this child pursue healing of the world, Tikkun Olam.
May she seek peace and justice and truth.
May she express love for all her fellow human beings.

Karen gives the baby to the Sandak (Marilyn)

Significance of the baby's name, Esther Faye אֶסְתֵּר פִּי'גֶע

Remembrances: Esther (maternal great-great-grandmother)
Faye (maternal great-grandmother)

All:

We wish you a life filled with light and joy, gladness and honor.

(Esther 8:16)

IV. The Festive Meal !! ס ע ו ד ת ה ב ר ' ת

Daniel (brother): Blessing over the challah, to begin the meal

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ, מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, הַמוֹצֵא לֶחֶם מִן הָאָרֶץ

Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the universe, who brings forth bread from the earth.

All: Amen