



Simchat Bat Ceremony
for

אַסְתֵּר בִּיּוֹגַע בֵּת שָׂרָה וּמִילְטוֹן

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 וְצִוּנוּ
לְהַכְנִיסָהּ בְּבְרִית שְׁל אַבְרָהָם אֲבִינוּ וְשָׂרָה אִמָּנוּ.

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)