

## **Conclusion**

We share your joy at this happy time in your lives. This booklet is intended to provide some basic information, not to be an exhaustive description of traditional customs or to explain customs as they may be observed in other Synagogues. As always, if you have any questions the synagogue staff is ready to serve you.

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# ***Naming a Baby***



The prospect of new life brings a time of great joy and anticipation. At some point, parents must decide what the baby's Hebrew name will be. Giving a child a Hebrew name reflects a commitment to our Jewish heritage. Just as with an English name, it is important to spend some time selecting the name.

## ***Choosing a Hebrew Name***

There are many customs for choosing a Hebrew name. The prevalent custom among *Ashkenazic* Jews is to name the child after a deceased relative. Among *Sephardim*, it is considered a great honor for a child to be named after a living great-grandparent, grandparent, or other relative of those generations. It is extremely unusual for a child to be named after a living parent.

A child can be named after either a man or a woman. The name chosen can be based on a direct translation of the name, a similar meaning or a similar sound. There is no requirement that the Hebrew and English names sound alike, although many parents do that.

If a child is to be named after a relative, try to find out that person's Hebrew or Yiddish name. It has become the custom in many congregations to use Hebrew equivalents if the person being remembered had a Yiddish name. There are very few English names which have an absolute Hebrew equivalent. There are people with the English name Paul who have the Hebrew names *Pesach*, *Pinhas*, *Paltiel*, or *Shaul* among others, so it is nearly impossible to know what a person's Hebrew name was based only on the English name.

Parents may choose a Hebrew name for other reasons. Some people name their child because of the time of birth, such as *Aviva* for a girl born in spring. Names such as *Nahum* or *Nehama*, which mean consolation, are given if a child is born soon after a parent's relative has died. Children may be given a name from the Bible or because the parents liked the sound, just as with the child's English name!

Once the name's source has been decided, Rabbi Drazen will help you set the final choice for the name.

## ***Naming the Child***

The name is given at a festive ceremony to which family and friends are invited. Although the kind of ceremony held will depend on the sex of the child who has come into the family, for both boys and girls, it is a time for all to celebrate as the child becomes part of the family and the Jewish people. Speak to the rabbi for details. As well, it is appropriate to celebrate the naming with gifts to institutions which help insure the Jewish education of the child.

## ***Naming a Boy***

A boy is named at a *Brit Milah* (also known as a *Bris*). This ritual circumcision is held when the boy is eight days old even on Shabbat or holidays, unless he is sick. (In that case, speak to the rabbi to determine the proper time to have the *Brit Milah*.) The circumcision is performed by a *Mohel* or a Jewish physician with a rabbi present. The time of the service is set with the rabbi and the person performing the circumcision. If you have a boy, be sure to tell the hospital and the doctor **you do not want him circumcised** until the appropriate ceremony.

After the circumcision is completed, a prayer is read to announce the boy's name. Most congregations have a number of service formats for the ceremony, to allow parents, grandparents and those attending to participate. Parents may choose which service they wish to use and work with the rabbi to add selections of their choice to it.

If the circumcision takes place at a hospital, the celebration afterwards can be held at home, in the Synagogue or at the hospital. Speak to the rabbi or Executive Director for further information.

## ***Naming a Girl***

A girl is named at a Synagogue service during the Torah reading. The Torah is read Saturday, Monday, Thursday, *Rosh Hodesh* (beginning of a new Hebrew Month) and holiday mornings and Saturday afternoon. The parents come forward for an aliyah with the child, after which a prayer is read giving the name. Although there is no set time after the birth that the naming must take place, it has become traditional to give the name within a month of birth. Set the exact date and service for the naming with the rabbi.

Most congregations have a number of ceremonies which may be used in addition to the basic naming allowing parents, grandparents and friends to participate. Depending on the service in which the naming takes place, the ceremonies can be part of the service or held later at a reception in the Synagogue or at home. Of course, parents may write their own prayers, in consultation with the rabbi, to be part of the ceremony.