



{A GUIDE TO  
THE BIRTH OF  
YOUR CHILD  
AT EMANUEL  
SYNAGOGUE}



עמנואל  
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Enriching Jewish life

## WELCOME

The birth of a child is a moment for celebration, both in your family and our community. It is the joy in the fulfillment of the promise of the next generation. As with many moments in our lives, we use a ritual to add meaning and context to celebrate and to sanctify this great occasion. Through this guide, we hope to answer some of the questions you may have and offer some suggestions about ways you may choose to celebrate the birth of your child.

## THE BIRTH OF A BOY

When a boy is born in Judaism we welcome him and bring him into the covenant with the ritual of circumcision. This moment and ceremony connects him to the generations

who have come before and is one of the first steps linking him to the community and his people. At the same time as the circumcision, there is also a naming ceremony when he is given his Hebrew name.

## CIRCUMCISION/BRIT MILAH

Circumcision is a commandment which derives from the Torah and the story of Abraham where he makes a covenant with God and is commanded to circumcise himself, his household and then the generations of boys to follow on the 8th day after their birth. We conduct the circumcision with a ceremony and blessings which acknowledge and celebrate the covenantal relationship.



## WHEN DOES THE CIRCUMCISION TAKE PLACE?

Circumcision ceremonies occur on or after the 8th day following the birth of a boy, depending on the availability of the doctor and the health of the baby. Sometimes the circumcision is delayed if a baby is born prematurely, has jaundice or is recommended by the doctor.

## WHO DOES THE CIRCUMCISION?

A doctor or surgeon will conduct the circumcision procedure. There are a number of mohelim (doctors who perform the ceremony) within the community as well as some pediatric surgeons who are able to do the circumcision. We have a list of doctors and their contacts at the synagogue and can

offer recommendations. The mohel knows how to do all the appropriate rituals for Brit Milah, and your rabbis are happy to be present as well. When a doctor a surgeon who is not an authorised mohel performs the circumcision, a member of our clergy team will be there to recite those blessings and conduct the ceremonial aspects of the brit milah.

## WHERE DOES THE CIRCUMCISION TAKE PLACE?

The circumcision can take place in a number of different locations. It can be at the doctor's surgery or rooms, in your home or at the synagogue. Most people choose the surgery or their home.



## WHO ATTENDS THE CIRCUMCISION?

It is up to you who and how many people attend the circumcision ceremony. The doctor's surgeries have limited space so you may need to take that into account when inviting guests.

## THE CEREMONY

The brit milah ceremony has two parts. The first is the circumcision and the second is the naming ceremony. If you choose to do a more private circumcision we can do a ceremony confirming the name in the community: either in the synagogue or in your home. (see naming ceremonies further down this booklet)

## ROLES IN THE CEREMONY

There are a number of roles for family and friends in the circumcision ceremony.

***Kvatter:*** The person who carries the baby into the room

***Sandaklet:*** a “godparent” who holds the baby during the ceremony. Traditionally, this person has a special responsibility to the child, to guide the upbringing of the child, roughly akin to a god parent.

## HOW DO I ORGANIZE A BRIT MILAH?

First you need to choose the doctor or mohel and location for the brit milah. Call the doctor and check their availability. Then call the synagogue to book the clergy to come and be with you at the ceremony.



If you need any assistance with making any of these decisions, please call our wonderful executive assistants and they would be happy to guide you and offer all the help you need.

## SEUDAH MITZVAH

It is traditional to conclude the circumcision ceremony with a meal of celebration. This can be very simple and is a lovely way to include community, family and friends in your celebration.



## THE BIRTH OF A GIRL

The birth of a girl has been celebrated in many different ways throughout history. Historically, the girl's father attended synagogue for a special blessing the Shabbat after the baby was born. There are records of special ceremonies which took place amongst women for the birth of a girl. Today there are a number of options to celebrate the birth of your daughter and the ceremony is sometimes known as Simchat HaBat (the joy of the daughter) or Brit HaBat (the covenant of the daughter), and can have a variety of rituals around the naming ceremony designed by you and one of the members of our clergy.

### NAMING IN THE SYNAGOGUE

You can choose a naming ceremony in the synagogue. During the Shabbat service we invite you and your family to come forward, there is a small ceremony with some beautiful readings and blessings for your new daughter, including the announcement of her name. On a Friday night service, this takes place just before kiddush. On a Saturday morning, you can combine the naming with an aliyah to the Torah.

To book a naming ceremony at the synagogue just call and speak with our wonderful staff.

### NAMING AT HOME

We can conduct a naming ceremony and welcome blessing for your daughter in your home. You can invite friends and family to gather and we will recite some blessings and readings. Family members can be involved

and together, we can craft a ceremony which is unique and meaningful. When we do the ceremony in your home, we have more time and can create something which is personal to you and your new daughter.

### WHEN DOES THE NAMING TAKE PLACE?

The naming ceremony can take place anytime after the baby is born. Some people choose to celebrate close to the 8th day to mirror the brit milah service, others prefer to wait a few weeks after the baby is born and everyone is more settled into a routine. It is up to you.

### HOW DO I BOOK A NAMING?

To book your naming ceremony, just call the synagogue and let our wonderful executive assistants know what kind of service you would like, dates you would prefer, and they can make a booking with one of our clergy.

## HEBREW NAMES

### WHAT IS A HEBREW NAME?

In Judaism, as in life, names are important and significant and giving a child their name is one of the first gifts you bestow upon them. A Hebrew name is given by parents to their child and is used during Jewish rituals. A Hebrew name is expressed as the name of the child, son or daughter of, and then the Hebrew names of the parents. Eg: Yitzhak ben Avraham ve Sarah (Yitzhak son of Avraham and Sarah)

### HOW DO I CHOOSE A HEBREW NAME FOR MY CHILD?

There are many traditions for choosing a Hebrew name.

#### ***1. Name after a relative in their honour.***

Sometimes a person will receive a name to honour or remember a grandparent, beloved



relative or significant person in the parent's life. In Sephardi tradition, it is considered a great honour to have a child named after you when you are alive. By contrast, Ashkenazi tradition is only to name after people who have died.

If the relative has a name you like and connect with, that is wonderful, if you want to honour the relative but would like to choose a different name, you may wish to select a name beginning with the same letter as the relative.

### ***2. Name after a figure in the Torah or tradition you admire***

Some people choose to name their child after a biblical or historical Jewish figure who has traits which they wish their child to emulate or receive as a blessing.

### ***3. Name with a meaning you like***

There are many Hebrew names with beautiful meanings and a Hebrew name could be chosen because the parents like the meaning.

### ***4. Name connected to their English name***

Sometimes parents will choose a name which has a link to their child's English name; it may sound similar, have the same meaning as their English name or is the Hebrew equivalent.

### ***5. Name because you like it***

A name may be chosen simply because the parents like the name

## PIDYON HABEN

The tradition of Pidyon Haben is an ancient ritual derived from the Torah where every first-born male is dedicated to the service of the Temple. Pidyon Haben is the ritual where the child is redeemed from that service. It only applies if your first born child is a male (There are certain circumstances when even for a first born male child this ritual is not performed; one of the members of clergy can guide you through this.) The ritual takes place 30 days after your son is born. It is a short series of prayers and blessings, and another opportunity to rejoice with your first born son. Today this tradition is not frequently observed because of the legal restrictions regarding first born and other reasons; however, we are happy to speak with you further about this.

## PATRILINEAL DESCENT

Keeping with the pluralistic and egalitarian nature of our community, we also welcome children whose father is Jewish and mother not. Provided the baby's parents have committed to raise their child exclusively as a Jew, we have celebrations for welcoming and naming the baby and through associate membership, those who are not Jews may join our community as well. At some point before your child's bar/bat mitzvah, your child will need to be immersed in the Mikva to formalise their Jewish Status.

## OUR TEAM

We would be delighted to help guide you through any of the services or rituals in which you may choose to participate and our entire staff are here to help. The first contact is usually with one of our executive assistants either Andrina [andrina@emanuel.org.au](mailto:andrina@emanuel.org.au) or Sarah [sarah@emanuel.org.au](mailto:sarah@emanuel.org.au) or give us a call 9389 6444.



## THE FIRST YEAR

These beautiful ceremonies and rituals are the beginning of your child's journey in Judaism. During the first year of their life you will enjoy learning about each other and forming the sacred and special bonds which connect parents and their children. And there is also a wonderful opportunity to connect with the community, other children, and celebrate the first milestones in their lives: their first Shabbat, Pesach, Rosh Hashana and other festival moments. We would love to walk with you along the wonderful path of Judaism, discovering the magic of stories, rituals and gatherings of connection. There are many ways to integrate Judaism into your family's and baby's life and we hope that we can do that together. We have included a sheet with some of the synagogue and community events and activities for babies and families

*Mazal tov!*



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