

Resources on *Simchat Bat* and *Pidyon Ha-Ben* Ceremonies (See Guide's Separate Section on [Mohels](#) for Information about the *Bris Milah*)

This section is intended to point you towards some useful readings on the various customs, traditions, and meanings associated with the relatively new *Simchat Bat* ceremony tradition, and with the *Pidyon Ha-Ben* ceremony. If you are interested in logistical information for planning purposes associated with these events, please cross-reference this Guide's sections on [Kosher Caterers](#), and [Simcha Space Rental](#), and [Synagogues](#).

*Please note, as with all sections of this resource guide, this by no means represents a comprehensive set of information or exhaustive list of resources. We would welcome any and all suggestions for adding to the usefulness of this page. In addition, if our members have electronic file versions of programs or literature that they used for their own *Simchat Bat* or *Pidyon Ha-Ben* events, and that they would be willing for us to post as part of a reference bank, please email us with attachments at lifecycle@dcminyan.org*

An Overview of these Two Traditions (see the suggested resources below for more in-depth information and background):

Simchat Bat

While traditionally, the birth of a girl in Jewish tradition was celebrated with a baby naming -- generally done on the Shabbat morning following the birth and involving an *aliyah* by one (or both) of the parents, a blessing for the parents, and the formal announcement of the daughter's Hebrew (and English) names -- an increasingly popular tradition has emerged over the past few decades of holding a ceremony called a *simchat bat* ("Joy of a Daughter"), or *Bris Ha-Bat* ("Covenant of the Daughter"). With the notion of celebrating the arrival of a daughter with much the same fanfare as one does a son (via the *Bris Milah* ceremony), these ceremonies often incorporate many of the non-circumcision elements of the *Bris Milah*. However, since there is no prescribed formula, the format and content are open to the creativity and personalization of the parents.

Pidyon Ha-Ben

The *Pidyon Ha-Ben* ceremony is a rather obscure event for a newborn son in Jewish tradition and applies only in cases in which:

1. The newborn son is the first-born child of his mother;
2. He was not born via caesarean section;
3. His father is not a *kohen* or a *levi*, and his mother is not a *bat kohen* (daughter of a *kohen*) or *bat levi* (daughter of a *levi*).
4. His mother did not previously miscarry after more than 40 days of pregnancy, or have an abortion.

Literally translated as "Redemption of the Son," the ritual derives from the biblical narrative in the book of Exodus in which God lays claim to the first born of every Israelite. Accordingly, first-born sons were obligated to serve as assistants to the *Kohanim* (Priests) in the Temple. When only the Levites chose God over the Golden Calf in the Exodus Mount Sinai narrative, Levites were chosen to replace first-born sons as assistants to the *Kohanim*.

Nonetheless, first-born sons are still considered sanctified and require “redemption” from their service.

The book of Numbers specifically prescribes that the child should be redeemed via payment to a *Kohen* from the age of 1 month and up. Traditionally, therefore, the *Pidyon Ha-Ben* ritual is performed on the 31st day after the birth (counting the day of birth as the first day -- if the 31st day falls on Shabbat or a *Yom Tov*, then the ritual is delayed until the following day).

During a *Pidyon Ha-Ben* ceremony, the father recites two blessings. The first praises God for commanding the redemption and the second is the traditional *Shechechyanu* prayer. The child is then redeemed via a symbolic payment to a *Kohen*: generally five silver dollars or a small article of silver. The *Kohen* holds the money over the baby's head and says a phrase that translates as, "This instead of that, this in commutation for that, and this in remission for that." Then he prays for the child and recites the traditional priestly prayer. The ceremony is generally performed in the context of a celebratory meal.

Pidyon Ha-Ben Resources

<http://mikvah.org/inside.asp?id=215>

Provides a detailed explanation of the requirements and components of the ritual.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pidyon_HaBen

A very thorough overview of the ritual from Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, and Reconstructionist perspectives. It also includes some interesting information regarding the role of women or first-born daughters in this tradition).

http://www.aish.com/literacy/lifecycle/Pidyon_Haben.asp

Overview of the requirements and components of the ceremony

http://www.myjewishlearning.com/life/Life_Events/Newborn_Ceremonies/Pidyon_HaBen/History.shtml

An historical look at the *Pidyon Ha-Ben* tradition.

Simchat Bat Resources

<http://eng.itim.org.il/?CategoryID=203>

A detailed guide to planning a simchat bat ritual, including printable handouts, from ITIM, the Jewish Life Information Center.

<http://www.ritualwell.org/lifecycles/babieschildren/babynamingsimchatbat/>

Ideas for simchat bat ceremonies as well as articles and other resources from Ritualwell, (a “source for innovative, contemporary Jewish ritual.”)

http://www.myjewishlearning.com/life/Life_Events/Newborn_Ceremonies/History_and_Themes/Ceremonies_for_Girls.shtml

An overview of the evolution of the simchat bat ceremony.

Simchat Bat: Ceremonies to Welcome a Baby Girl, by the Women's League for Conservative Judaism.

Contains an introduction by Rabbi Nina Beth Cardin, three sample ceremonies with traditional blessings in English, Hebrew, and transliteration, additional readings, a resource list, a sample invitation, and a *Simchat Bat* certificate.

Available from Women's League for Conservative Judaism 48 East 74th Street, New York, NY 10021, tel. 212-628-1600, fax. 212-772-3507.

“Brit Bnot Yisrael: Welcoming a Daughter into the Covenant,” by Rabbi Sandy Eisenberg Sasso; and “Naming Ceremony for a Daughter,” by Ellen Sandler and Dennis Danziger in *A Ceremonies Sampler: New Rites, Celebrations, and Observances of Jewish Women*. Ed. Elizabeth Resnick Levine; (1991).

"Simhat Lev: Celebrating a Birth," by Shulamit Magnus in *Lifecycles Volume 1: Jewish Women on Life Passages and Personal Milestones*. Ed. Rabbi Debra Orenstein; (1994).

Describes a naming ceremony for a boy (but adaptable for girls) that took place a month after his birth (his *bris milah* was performed privately), which emphasizes entering the Covenant through special Torah readings and blessings. It suggests an alternative for those who want to de-emphasize circumcision.