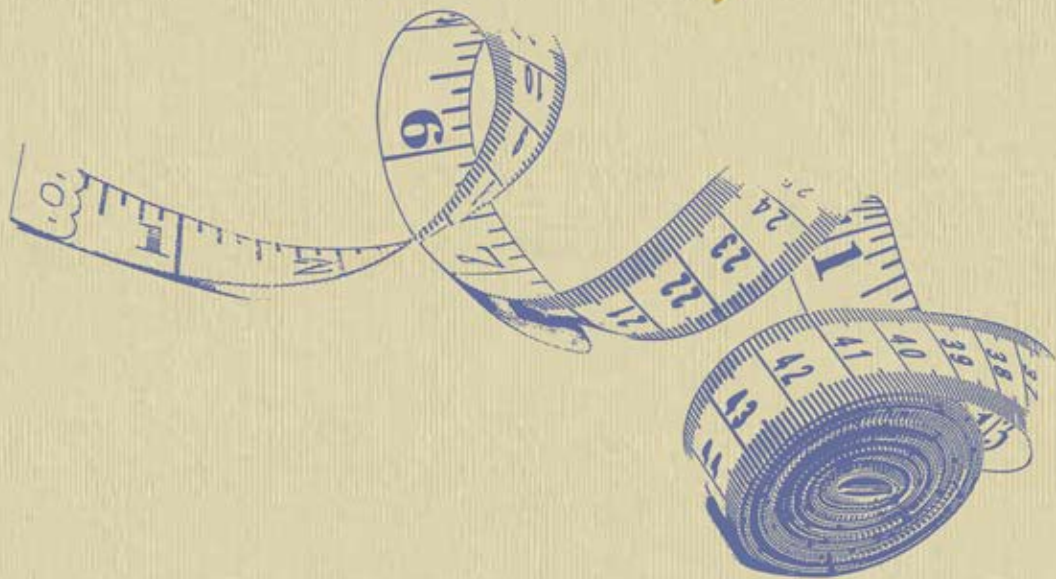


Ritual Guide to a
Hebrew Naming
Ceremony



The Set Up

Jews call upon people with their Hebrew name for blessings of healing, blessings said when reading the Torah, and other key communal rituals. Jewish adults who choose Hebrew names for themselves are making a public commitment to their heritage and a shared Jewish future. Taking on a Hebrew name as part of a trip to Israel can bring another dimension of meaning and connection to the land, the Hebrew language and the Jewish people.

Key Words: Renewal Shem Hashem Legacy Heritage Identity

Ritual Items: Wine/grape juice; Anointing oil or water; Naming certificate; Pocket guide with sample names

Step-by-Step:

1. Words of welcome
2. Covenant Blessing and/or action (such as anointing of water or oil)
3. Statement by individual about taking the name
4. Bless the individual and announce the name: May his/her/their name in Israel be called _____. **See back page for additional blessings.**
5. Friends/relatives offer their own blessings/wishes for the person being named
6. Blessing on wine 7. Priestly blessing 8. *Shehekheyanu* blessing

Blessings:

May YHVH (Hashem) bless you and protect you! May YHVH (Hashem) shine Hashem's face upon you and be gracious towards you! May YHVH (Hashem) lift Hashem's face up to you, and give you peace!

יְבַרְכֶךָ ה' וְיִשְׁמְרֶךָ. יָאֵר ה' פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ וְיַחַנְךָ. יִשְׂאֵהוּ פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ וְיִשְׂלֹם:

Yevarekhekha Adonai veyishmerekha. Ya'er Adonai panav elekha vi'khunnekka. Yissa Adonai panav elekha veyasem lekha shalom.

Blessed are you YHVH (Hashem) our elo'ah, majesty of the world, who has kept us alive, and has preserved us, and enabled us to reach this season.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם שֶׁהַחַיִּינוּ וְקִיָּמְנוּ וְהִגִּיעָנוּ לְזֶמַן הַזֶּה:

Barukh atta Adonai Elohenu melekh ha'olam shehekheyanu vekiyyemanu vehiggi'anu lazzeman hazzeh.

Creative Adaptations

The naming ceremony can be held for a group of five to ten participants, or it can be held for one person at a time.

Work with the participants to help them decide what name to take on. There is a list of Hebrew names in the staff pocket guide. The participant may also wish to consult with the Israelis in the group, including the bus driver and guard.

Sign a naming certificate. Optional: sign the name in both Hebrew and English letters

Note: The naming certificates will be in your staff bag. Let the Rakaz know if you need more certificates. The Zelda poem is on the certificate.

Texts

Psalms 147:4

[YHVH] counts the numbers of the stars; To each of them, [YHVH] gives a name.

תהלים קמ"ז:ד

מוֹנֵה מִסְפָּר לַכּוֹכְבִּים, לְכֹלם שְׁמוֹת יִקְרָא:

Isaiah 40:26

Lift your eyes on high and behold who has created these things [the stars], that bring out their host by number. He calls them all by names; because of the greatness of His might and because He is strong in power, not one is missing.

ישעיהו מ:כ"ו

שְׂאוּ-מְרוֹם עֵינֵיכֶם וְרֹאוּ מִי-בָרָא אֱלֹהִי, הַמוֹצִיא בַמִּסְפָּר צְבָאָם; לְכֹלם, בְּשֵׁם יִקְרָא, מְרַב אוֹנִים וְאֵמִץ כֹּחַ, אִישׁ לֹא נֶעְדָּר.

Midrash Tanchuma — Ha'azinu 7

"Remember the days of old, Consider the years of many generations" (Deuteronomy 32:7 partial). It is always important for a person to choose a name for their child that will be perceived as righteous, since every time the name is pronounced, invokes either good or invokes evil.

תּוֹמַרְשׁ תַּנְחוּמָא, הָאֲזִינוּ ד'

"זְכוֹר יָמֹת עוֹלָם בֵּינוּ שְׁנוֹת דּוֹר־דּוֹר" (דְּבָרִים ל"ב:ז חֵלֶק). לְעוֹלָם יִבְדֵּק אָדָם בְּשֵׁמוֹת לְקָרָא לְבָנוֹ, הֲרֵאִי לְהִיֹּת צְדִיק. כִּי לְפַעְמִים הַשֵּׁם גּוֹרֵם טוֹב אוֹ גּוֹרֵם רָע.

Everyone has a Name, by Zelda (translated from the Hebrew)

Everyone has a name
given to him by God
and given to him by his parents.

Everyone has a name
given to him by his stature
and the way he smiles.
and given to him by his clothing

Everyone has a name
given to him by the mountains
and given to him by the walls.

Everyone has a name
given to him by the stars
and given to him by his neighbors.

Everyone has a name
given to him by his sins
and given to him by his longing.

Everyone has a name
given to him by his enemies
and given to him by his love.

Everyone has a name
given to him by his holidays
and given to him by his work.

Everyone has a name
given to him by the seasons
and given to him by his blindness.

Everyone has a name
given to him by the sea and
given to him
by his death.

Themes for Reflection

What does having a Hebrew name mean to you?

How do you expect to use your new Hebrew name?

What are the benefits of being an adult before choosing a name?

What is the role of gender in choosing a name?

Are you seeking a Hebrew name that connects to your English name? Why or why not?

What inspires a name? Some popular sources for names include family ancestors (Ashkenazim) or admired relatives (Sephardim), Biblical characters, famous people, and themes (animals, food, moods, etc.).

Is there destiny in a name?

Want to Learn More?

To learn how to choose a Jewish name, the meanings of popular Hebrew names, and more, visit Hillel's Crafting Ritual resource page at <https://tinyurl.com/Crafting-Ritual-Resources> to find helpful links.

Next Steps

Use this Ritual with Your Students Throughout the Year

Encourage students who receive a Hebrew name to create a collage or slide show and a brief blog post telling the story of their name. (Post it to your Hillel website.)

Offer students on campus the opportunity to choose a Hebrew name and receive it in a formal ceremony.

Highlight those who have chosen new Hebrew names in a newsletter, annual meeting, social post, or other special gathering back on campus.

Additional Blessings:

For a woman: May You who blessed (our foremothers): Sarah and Rivkah, Rachel and Leah, and the prophet Miriam, and Avigayil, and Queen Esther, daughter of Avi'ayil — may You bless this woman and let her name (in Yisra'el) be ... [insert first name here] with good luck and in a blessed hour; and so may it be your will, and let it be said, Amen!"

מִי שֶׁבֵרַךְ (אֲמוֹתֵינוּ) שָׂרָה וְרִבְקָה רָחֵל וְלֵאָה וּמִרְיָם הַנְּבִיאָה וְאַבִּיגַיִל וְאֶסְתֵּר הַמַּלְכָּה בַּת אַבְיָחַיִל הוּא יְבָרַךְ אֶת הָאִשָּׁה הַזֹּאת וְיִקְרָא שְׁמָהּ (בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל) [פְּלוֹנִיָּה] בְּמִזְל טוֹב וּבְשַׁעַת בְּרָכָה. וְכֵן יְהִי רְצוֹן וְנֹאמַר אָמֵן:

Mi shebberakh immoteinu Sara veRivka Rachel veLe'a uMiryam hannevi'a va'Avigayil ve'Esther hammalka bat Avi'ayil hu yevarekh et ha'isha hazzot veyikkarei shemahh beYisra'el [] bemazzal tov uvesha'at berakha vekhen yehi ratson venomar amen.

For a man: May You who blessed (our forefathers): Avraham, Yitschak, and Yaakov, Moshe and Aharon, Yoav ben Tsruyah and Mordekhay ben Yair — may You bless this man and let his name (in Yisra'el) be ... [insert first name here] with good luck and in a blessed hour; and so may it be your will, and let it be said, Amen!"

מִי שֶׁבֵרַךְ (אֲבוֹתֵינוּ) אַבְרָהָם, יִצְחָק, וְיַעֲקֹב מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן יוֹאֵב בֶּן־צְרוּיָה וְמוֹרְדֵכַי בֶּן־יָאִיר הוּא יְבָרַךְ אֶת הָאִישׁ הַזֶּה וְיִקְרָא שְׁמוֹ (בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל) [פְּלוֹנִי] בְּמִזְל טוֹב וּבְשַׁעַת בְּרָכָה. וְכֵן יְהִי רְצוֹן וְנֹאמַר אָמֵן:

Mi shebberakh avoteinu Avraham Yitschak veYa'akov Mosheh ve'Aharon Yo'av ben-Tsruya uMordekhay ben-Ya'ir hu' yevarekh et ha'ish hazzeh veyikkarei shemo beYisra'el [] bemazzal tov uvesha'at berakha vekhen yehi ratson venomar amen.

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