

A SONG FOR MY SISTER

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Mira's wish for a baby in the family comes true, but who knew how much noise she would make? No matter what Mira and her parents do, the baby's reaction is WAAAA. On the day of her simchat bat (Jewish welcoming ceremony for a baby girl) Mira finally finds the answer to all the wailing!

Welcoming a child into a Jewish home, whether through birth or adoption, is cause for great celebration. Traditionally, a male baby is formally taken into the community with a *brit milah* (ritual circumcision) eight days after his birth. In recent decades, some families celebrate a new daughter with a *simchat bat*—literally “joy of a daughter.” This ceremony usually takes place in the synagogue or at home, and may include blessings, singing, refreshments and sharing, for the first time, the Jewish name by which the little girl will be known.

JEWISH NAMES

Many Israelis and Orthodox Jews give their children a Hebrew name only; other Jewish parents choose both a Hebrew and a secular name. Parents may choose a Hebrew name that starts with the same letter as the secular name, such as Naomi for Nancy; for others, the secular name has a clear connection to the Hebrew name, like Melody and *Shira* (the Hebrew word for song). Naming a child after a beloved relative is also common.

USING THIS BOOK AT HOME

Any addition to a family brings both joys and challenges. Invariably, a sense of humor helps: think of the funny con-

versations in this book about what to call a wailing infant! With your children, talk about names they might give a crying baby. Share nicknames you had as a child. Tell your children stories of what made them scream as a baby as well as what calmed them. Use these questions to spark lively family conversations:

- What's important about a name?
- Do people ever get to choose or change their name?
- How do you feel about your name?

In this book, Mira shares a *nigun* at the simchat bat. *Nigun* is the Hebrew word for “tune” or “melody.” As Mira explains, it is “a song without words.” A *nigun* is often spontaneous and can be improvised, making it perfect for even the most musically-challenged. Together, come up with a family *nigun*, one that you can hum quietly together at bedtime, while waiting in the doctors' office—or when a baby is wailing! PJ

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