

The Naming of Sean Edward Wyckoff son of Cynthia and Jerry

July 5, 2003

Introduction

Rachel:

Bruchim ha'baim; blessed are we who have gathered here today.

Cynthia and Jerry asked me to create a naming/ welcoming ceremony for Sean, and I'm honored and thrilled to be able to do this for and with them.

Jewish tradition calls for a *brit milah*, a ritual circumcision on the eighth day of a boy's life, to mark his entrance into the Jewish people and into covenant with God. Sean's circumcision took place shortly after he was born; now Cynthia and Jerry have gathered friends and family to be a part of his two ceremonies, symbolizing his welcome into the faiths and traditions of both of his parents.

Opening prayers

We join together in welcoming Sean into his family and into the world. May he be blessed with the ability to learn from the lessons life gives him, and to be joyful, kind and strong.

C&J:

Though none can escape sorrow and pain, we hope Sean grows to have the courage to face them and the strength to transcend them.

It is our hope that he grow to be curious and kind, and that he be endowed with a generosity of spirit that he will bring to all of his relationships and experiences.

Signs & Symbols

We light this braided candle as a symbol of the families and communities within which Sean will be raised. As the flames join each other, making one brighter and more lasting flame, so too does our coming together create a community that is more than the sum of its parts.

Sean is wrapped in a tallit, a prayer shawl. As he is enfolded in the fabric of the tallit, so may he be enfolded in the Shekhinah, the holy Presence, now and all the days of his life.

Blessing the wine

In Jewish tradition wine is a symbol of gladness; it's part of every celebratory and ritual occasion.

This cup is the vessel of our hopes. It is filled with the new wine of life just begun. The sweetness of its taste is the added joy that this new child brings.

Please join with me in blessing the wine, in Hebrew and in English.

All:

ברוך אתה, יהוה, אלהינו מלך העולם, בורא פרי הגפן.

Baruch atah, Adonai, eloheinu melech ha'olam, borei p'ri hagafen.

Blessed are you, Adonai our God, Ruler of the Universe, creator of the fruit of the vine.

Explanation of the Covenant

There is a midrash, an interpretive Torah teaching, which goes like this. When Israel stood at Sinai to receive the Torah, the Holy One said, "Present to Me good guarantors that you will guard My Torah, and I shall give it to you."

They said, "Our ancestors are our guarantors."

The Holy One said, "Your ancestors are not sufficient guarantors. Bring Me better guarantors, and I shall give you the Torah."

They said, "Ruler Of the Universe, our prophets are our guarantors."

God said to them, "The prophets are not sufficient guarantors. Bring Me yet better guarantors and I shall give you the Torah."

They said, "Our children will be our guarantors."

The Holy One said, "They are certainly good guarantors. For their sake I give the Torah to you."

Jewish tradition teaches that all the generations, even those unborn, were at Sinai and participated in the making of a covenant between God and the people. God said "And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your seed after you, throughout your generations as an everlasting covenant."

Today we are ready to bring Sean into that covenant. Through the years to come, we will try to impart the sanctity of the Jewish tradition, so that he may live his life imbued with the ideals of Torah, service and good deeds.

The Actual Naming

The Naming of Snarklets

The Naming of Snarklets is a difficult matter,
It isn't just one of your holiday games;
You may think at first I'm as mad as a hatter
When I tell you, a snarklet must have three different names...

That's a play on TS Eliot's "The Naming of Cats," but it has other roots, also. There's a midrash which says "Every person has three names: the one chosen by his parents, the one that others call him, and the one he acquires for himself."

Sean is a special kid, and over his lifetime he'll acquire more names and nicknames than we can imagine. If he travels in Ghana, he'll be known as Kwesi, because he's Sunday-born. In Iceland, he'd be Sean Geraldsson. Over the nine months before he was born, he was known widely as Snarklet.

Today we have, as the poem says, three names to give him: two English names, and one Hebrew.

Rachel:

Our God and God of our mothers and fathers! Sustain this child through his parents' loving care. Let him be known by the names of **Sean Edward Wyckoff** and **Elihu ben Jeremiah**.

May God who blessed our ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, and Leah, bless Sean. May his father and mother have the privilege of raising him, educating him, and encouraging him to attain a heart of wisdom. And let us say, Amen.

C&J explain names.

Sean, in acquiring your own name and your own identity, may you be inspired by the Covenant which we entered you into today and by the good qualities of those for whom you are named.

Readings

from *Prayer for Jackson*

Let him be adventurous as a menu of ox tongue hash,
lemon rind wine and pinecone Jell-O. Fill him with awe:
for the seasons, minarets' sawtoothed peaks,
the breathing of cathedrals, and all that lives—
for one radiant day or sixty pitiful years.
Bravely, he has ventured among us, disguised
as a newcomer, shedding remarkably few tears.

—Amy Gerstler

Blessing for Children

May you be like the watered garden
May you be like a flowing stream
May you keep the moment of waking
From the heart of a perfect dream

May the warmth of the earth surround you
May the passion of wonder fill your days
May the strength of your friendships sustain you
And your children be blessed always.

— Linda Hirschhorn

from *Forever Young*

May God bless and keep you always,
May your wishes all come true,
May you always do for others
And let others do for you.
May you build a ladder to the stars
And climb on every rung,
May you stay forever young.

May you grow up to be righteous,
May you grow up to be true,
May you always know the truth
And see the lights surrounding you.
May you always be courageous,
Stand upright and be strong,
May you stay forever young.

—Bob Dylan/Joan Baez

Parents' Prayer

C&J:

Our God and God of our ancestors, we are grateful for Your new gift of life, and we ask Your blessing and guidance as we raise this child. Sustain Sean in life and health.

We are thankful for the many joys with which our lives have been blessed. Today we are thankful for this precious gift of new life which fills our hearts with joy.

Be who you are
And may you be blessed
In all that you are

Heyeh asher tihyeh
Veheyeh barukh
Ba'asher tihyeh

— Marcia Falk

Closing

All:

Sean, we pledge to you that we will be your community. We will be here to teach you what we know, to listen to what you have to say, and to support you into growing into the baby, the kid, and the adult you will become.

May you be blessed with your parents' wit and intelligence; their sense of humor and their sense of perspective; their ability to cherish the unusual and the commonplace, football games and nights at the opera, hamburgers and *haute cuisine*.

May you journey through life with wisdom and kindness, grounded in the knowledge that you are loved and that you will grow to do wondrous things.

Rachel:

יברכך יהוה וישמרך.

Yivarechecha Adonai v'yishmarecha.
May God bless you and keep you.

יאר יהוה פניו אליך ויחנך.

Ya'er Adonai panav eilecha vichunecha.
May God's presence deal kindly with you and be gracious unto you.

ישא יהוה פניו אליך וישם לך שלום.

Yis'a Adonai panav eilecha v'yashem lecha shalom.
May God's presence radiate upon you and from within you, and give you peace.

Please join with me in saying the Shehecheyanu, the Jewish blessing sanctifying time:

All:

ברוך אתה, יהוה, אלהינו רוח העולם, שהחינו וקימנו והגיענו לזמן הזה.

Baruch atah, Adonai, eloheinu ruach ha'olam, shehecheyanu v'kiy'manu v'higiyanu lazman hazeh.

Blessed are you, Adonai, Breath of Life, who has kept us alive, sustained us, and enabled us to reach this moment.