

A Song for My Sister

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What is your family's song?

Oh, Baby!

New babies are exciting, and marking their arrival is meaningful. In Judaism, the birth of a baby boy is traditionally celebrated with a *brit milah*, a ritual circumcision. There is no fixed ritual for baby girls, so families can get creative. Some parents announce their daughter's name for the first time during a synagogue service. Others, like Mira's family, hold a *simchat bat* (Hebrew for "joy of a daughter") at home. This gathering celebrates the new baby girl through blessings, songs, and sharing of her name. It can be a beautiful opportunity for parents to talk about why they've chosen a particular name for a particular little person. To learn more, visit pjlibrary.org/songformysister.

What's in a Name?

Shakespeare said that "that which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet," but Jewish tradition begs to differ. For many Jewish families, a baby's name is anything but random. Some parents choose a name with a meaning they hope will be reflected in their child's personality. It is also common to name a baby after close relatives. Jews with Ashkenazi (Central and Eastern European) background often name their children after those who have passed away, while those in Sephardic (Spanish and Middle Eastern) communities often name children after living family members. In both cases, the names honor loved ones and maybe even instill their qualities in these new little humans. A name can also come up naturally for a trait that is already loudly proclaiming itself, as in Shira's case. Names are beautiful songs announcing new, unique souls in the world.

The Power of Music

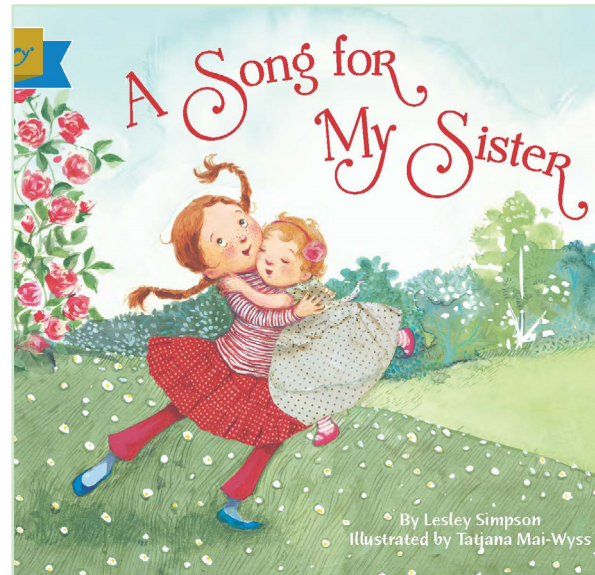
Mira copes with her sister's crying by singing to her — an age-old human response. From a baby's very first days in this world, music has the power to soothe, entertain, and even help to develop those tiny brains. Not only that, but music can bring people together, as it does for Mira and Shira when Mira breaks into a *nigun* (Hebrew for "tune"). A traditional Jewish *nigun* is wordless, making it easy for everyone to join in. As Rabbi Nachman of Breslov, an 18th-century Hasidic teacher and great lover of music, said: "Even if you cannot sing well, sing." If baby Shira can do it, anyone can!

TALK IT OVER WITH YOUR KIDS

What is the story behind your name?

What can you do to help cheer up your siblings or friends when they're upset?

What kinds of songs do you like to sing? How do they make you feel?



HANDS ON!



Create a Music Chest

Mira's house is filled with Shira's song, but yours can be filled with whatever sounds you create.

Supplies

Cardboard box

Paints, markers, crayons, stickers

Whatever you've got in your recycling bin

Your imagination!



Decorate your music chest however you wish. Now fill it with recycled "instruments." A yogurt container filled with beans can be a maraca. Loop ribbons through old CDs, and you've got cymbals. An old pot and spoon is a classic drum! You can turn to your music chest whenever you feel a song coming on.