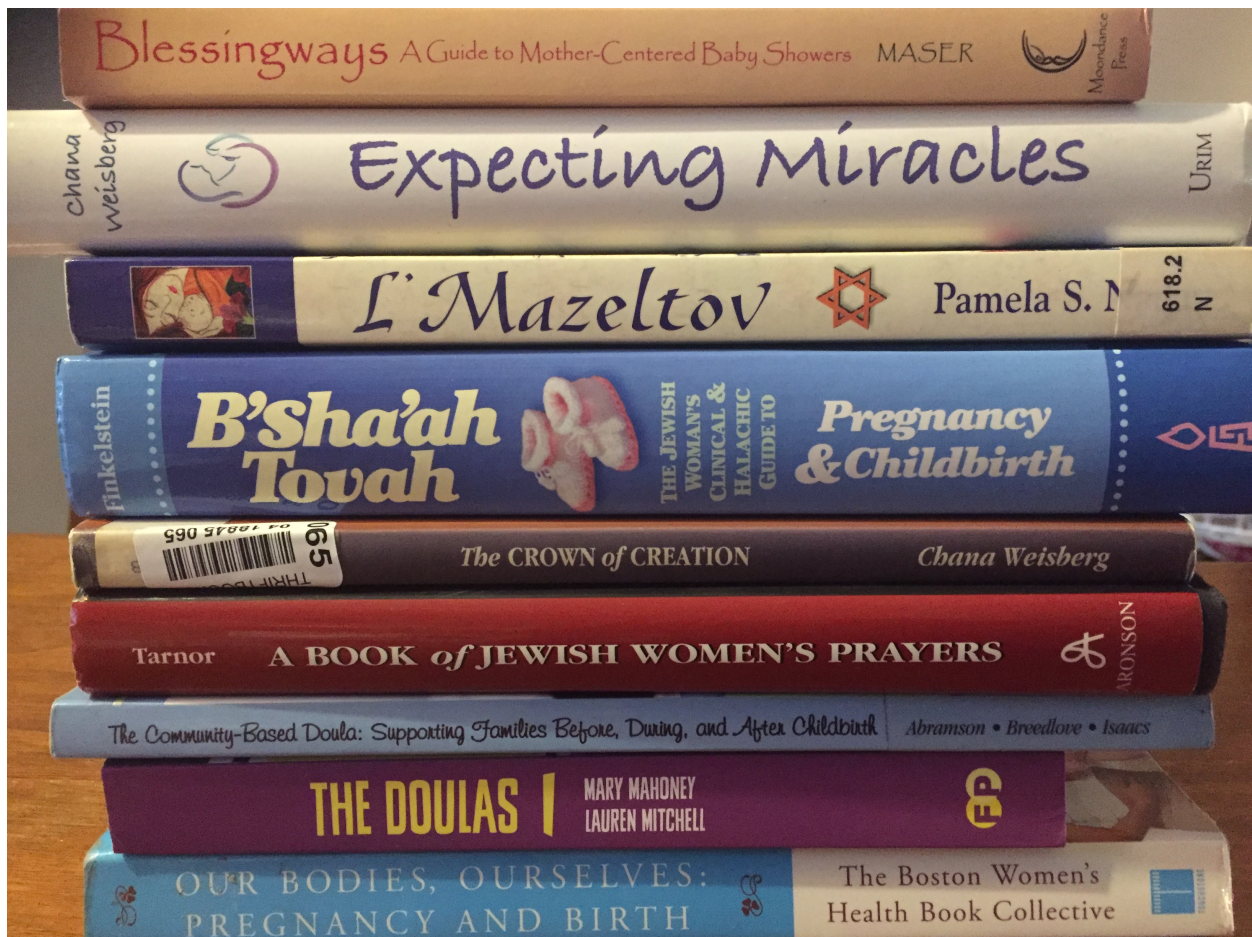




Jewish Doula

Labour & Birth Services

The following is meant to provide education and resources on Jewish prayers, rituals, and practices for pregnancy and birth. Pick what feels relevant and meaningful to you. My role as Jewish Doula is to help you navigate these resources and build them into your pregnancy preparation and birth plan. Let me know what you want to focus on and we'll create a customized plan just for you. Happy reading!



Jewish ideas/ideals and practices that relate to birth (adapted from L'Mazel Tov: Your Personal Guide to Jewish Childbirth Education - Pamela S. Nadav)

Jewish values to consider and adopt during pregnancy/birth preparation/life as a family:

- Regarding all life as sacred
- Respecting human dignity
- Caring for those who are ill (pregnancy is not illness but the principle applies as the birthing person requires care)
- Having compassion for all creatures
- Performing acts of loving kindness
- Not destroying needlessly
- Tzedakah - charity/justice/assisting those in need
- Tikkun Olam - repairing/improving the world
- Seeking peace and being an instrument for peace

Acts to build and express Jewish identity in the home:

- Hang a mezuzah (note: you can find or write alternatives to the traditional scroll)
- Shabbat dinners - try baking your own challah!
- Have a tzedakah box that you contribute to regularly (many families do this each Shabbat). Choose a charity to give to as a family

- Perform Acts of Loving Kindness (G'milut Chasidim) such as visiting the elderly, offering someone a ride, invite someone who is lonely for a meal, clean up trash in the park, etc)
- Support Jewish museums/exhibits/films etc. This helps learn about Jewish culture and supports artists who seek to create Jewish art and artifacts
- Find a community through a local congregation (secular or religious), your local Jewish Community Centre, or grassroots groups
- Celebrate Holidays at home and in community such as Passover, Chanukah, Purim etc
- Learn about the Jewish heritage of your family, if applicable
- Display Jewish ritual objects in your home such as Shabbat candles, Kiddush cup, Menorah
- Try out Jewish recipes
- Read Jewish books and tell Jewish stories
- Hang a “Hamsa” a popular symbol of a hand in Jewish folk art. The word Hamsa comes from the word for “five”. This is a symbol of protection and warding off the evil eye. Some believe in the evil eye and some simply honour the folk art tradition of the people. Here is an image of a Hamsa:



Any or all of the above could be part of your birth preparation. Connecting with one's identity and community can be a meaningful part of the journey as one prepares for parenthood.

Think of pregnancy and birth like a Passover Seder. Seder means order. There is an order to gestation: passing through three trimesters and forty (or so) weeks. There is an order to labour and delivery: phases and stages that your body already knows how to do to help bring baby to the world. Trust the seder, the order, of things as you progress through these phases and stages.

Taking time to rest:

In Jewish law, a woman can't leave the house "unaccompanied" for a period of time after the baby is born. However, the baby does count as "accompaniment". This is related to the laws of Niddah (purity). Some of these laws are rooted in sexism and have worked to restrict and repress Jewish women. However, some women find liberation in these laws, because they afford them time to rest and allow for women-only space. I do not believe women should have to be in seclusion, but I do believe the tradition can be used well when it encourages women to rest after birth. The tradition is that the period of rest is seven days if the child was male and fourteen days if female. Interestingly, in modern times, some people who choose not to assign a gender to their child at birth, or who give birth to a child who is intersex, will combine the time to rest and rest for twenty-one days.

Generally speaking, people think pregnant people should "take it easy" and after birth should work hard to "get their body back." Firstly, your body is amazing! It has just created a whole human! Celebrate it! Please consider loving your body for what it is and focus more on health than unrealistic ideals of thinness. You are supposed to be a soft, pillowy, comfortable home for baby, who will be on your body a lot! Secondly, the reality is the opposite of the idea above. In pregnancy, people are generally stronger and more in need of exercise than society realizes. The time to rest is after birth.

Your body needs to recover (your organs are not yet where they normally are!), your pelvic floor needs time to strengthen and heal, and your energy is zapped by long nights, breast/chestfeeding for those who are doing this, and constant care-giving. Please take it easy.

So choose a length of time - seven days at minimum - to stay home. People can visit you in your bedroom. Try to avoid excessive movement up and down stairs etc. And have people bring you food/water/anything you need. This is your time to be cared for so you can care for baby. How lovely that it comes from Jewish wisdom

Text, Torah, Tehillim and more

Biblical personas to contemplate:

Some Jewish women like to consider the stories of biblical women and how they teach us about love, life, birth, death, and more. Here are a few examples:

Eve: the first woman, seeker of knowledge, punished with pain in labour for all women. What would we have done? There are other women who receive salvation through pain. Esther in the Purim story, for example. Hannah is so distraught at her infertility that she pledges any future child to God's service if only she can conceive.

Abraham and Sarah: The first Jewish Parents. Are they always wise and kind? No. We have the complexity of the akedah/binding of Isaac story. We have the treatment of Hagar and Ishmael. But their tent was open on all sides as a sign of hospitality to travellers from any direction. They do love Isaac.

Rebecca: She chooses Isaac. She also guides her children through their rivalry; pulling the strings behind the scenes where necessary.

Rachel: Rachel dies giving birth to Benjamin and doesn't get to name him (she names him Ben Omi, son of my mourning, but it is changed to Ben Yamin). Still, she is fierce in her defiance of her father. She is her own person and from the biblical account, a very loving mother. We are so grateful that maternal mortality is not what it was so that future Rachels may live on.

Sample Jewish meditations for labour:

Meditation - Maschiach on the mountain:

Whether one believes in the maschiach as a literal future who will come, or as a metaphor for a time when the world will achieve balance, peace and fullness, there is a lovely midrashic analogy to waiting for the maschiach: climbing a mountain. Through each mitzvah, and with much longing and much more hard work, we put one foot in front of the other climbing the mountain. Labour can feel like such a mountain as well. Each contraction/surge brings us closer to the peak. The climb can feel steep but with steady momentum, we get there. The new baby is not a maschiach (probably!) but does deliver (excuse the pun) a sense of balance, peace, and fullness.

Meditation - Human-made life is sacred

Here's a parable: Rabbi Akiva is challenged by a Roman General: "which is superior - that which God makes, or that which man makes?" (I'd say "woman," in this case). The General expects that Akiva will say anything made by God is divine and thus superior. However, he replies that the human-made is better. For example, wouldn't the General prefer to go home and eat bread and cake made by his wife than wheat? Akiva asserts that God provides the raw materials and humans perfect the world physically and spiritually. Many Jews believe in God and many don't. Either way, the story reminds us that to create life is a sacred duty. We create the future for the world, and all of its goodness. The giving of life is a divine act; this is ironically so even and especially when done by people.

Poems/songs on birth - could be used as meditations

“Birth” by Esther Shumiatcher-Hirschbein (1899-1985), translated by Beata Kasiarz (reprinted with permission)

I

I drive against the sky, against the stars,
my flesh anguished, bursting with tears.

I clench my teeth,
barely move my lips—
ribs separate violently.

My blood rejoices,
my heart beats up to the stars:
I must become a mother.

II

Sky chases after me,
stars scatter above.
Sharp spears pierce my limbs,
a star breaks off,
marks the sky fiery.

Push after push, flames,
my back searing.

Life in my hands,
I writhe in agony.

My body becomes
a thousand-eyed being,
limbs look on feverishly.

The earth shakes,
body and soul shiver.

My limbs thrash
back and forth,
earthquake

October 3, 1934.

* * *

V

The day is airy, sheer.
My life glimmering, I sing.
Fields rising, stones speak—

I hear my newborn's shriek.
Sun arrives with a pail of gold,
repaying all my pain with joy.
I kiss the child's tears,
shut my eyes:
I, in peace with eternity.

*

The hospital is alive with song.
Like a river in spring
life rushes, roaring,
blood of the just-born singing—
brilliant news.
My newborn bliss glows with shame.
Oh, my young joy—
new earth, new sky,
dressed in blood and bone.
Outside my window
life blossomed.
Autumn shouts its song,
my young spring beside me.
I became a mother
to a blond son.
Today I bore life,
in dream, in reality.
Golden October flames
illuminate thinning fields,
my son, my blond fire,
miracle of my flesh!

Miriam's Song

Lyrics by Debbie Friedman z"l

And the women dancing with their timbrels

Followed Miriam as she sang her song

Sing a song to the one whom we've exalted!

Miriam and the women danced and danced the whole night long

To view the full text of this song and to hear a recording of it, click on [Miriam's Song](#).

Many women in Biblical times are associated with childbirth. [Sarah](#) laughed when she discovered she was pregnant. [Rachel](#) cried in pain, "Give me children or I will die!" [Hannah](#)'s silent weeping prayer for children was so emotional that people who witnessed her outpouring of grief mistook it for public drunkenness. Shifrah and [Puah](#) were midwives in Egypt who saved countless Jewish lives and, thanks to Miriam, her mother, Yocheved, served as a wet nurse to [Moses](#) – her own son.

Pass around a string and beads. Ask everyone to share a wish, a prayer or a story as they add a bead onto the necklace. If they brought a gift for the mother to be this is the time to share it along with its meaning

Prayer at the Birth of a Child

By Rabbi Rami Shapiro

We are humbled by the awesome power of this moment.

From our lives we have brought forth life.

Through our love we have fashioned a child of love.

The mystery of beginnings is with us
and we acknowledge its presence.

We know neither our origin nor our destiny.

We know only that the journey is a difficult one.

We vow at this moment of creation

to further the work of Creation,

to add our efforts to the redemption of the world
through our honest encounter with Life.

May the life we have birthed
be a blessing to all s/he meets.

And may our child count us
among her/his blessings as well.

JEWISH DOULA NOTE:

When I was in labour one particular niggun (tune) kept coming to me. It was Kol Ha'olam Kulo. The melody will be familiar to most who participated in Jewish camp, youth groups, or other communities where singing is common. Here is the text:

“Kol Ha'olam Kulo, Gesher Tsar Me'od. Vaha'ikar lo lifached klal.” “The whole world is a narrow bridge. The main thing is not to be afraid” - Rabbi Nachman of Breslav

I really used this song as a focal point in my own labour. I love the resonance of meeting challenge with courage. There are other songs and chants one may use similarly. The book “Blessingways: A Guide to Mother-Centred Baby Showers” by Shari Maser, CCE has other songs and readings. Please find a PDF of these resources on the Jewish Doula site.

I also used this quotation:

From The Red Tent: Fear not, the hands of the midwife are clever. Fear not, the earth is beneath you. Fear not, we have water and salt. Fear not, little mother. Fear not, mother of us all”. — Anita Diamant,

Torah/Mishnah/Talmud/Proverb:

“Be fruitful and multiply” Gen 1:28

“And you shall choose life, so that you and your children may live” Deut 30:19

“Though I walk in the valley overshadowed by death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me.” (Psalms 23:4)

"Open for me the gates of righteousness; I shall walk through them." (Psalm 118:19)

“Just as my ancestors planted for me, so shall I plant for my children” - Ta’nit 32a

“A light turns above (the fetus’s) head and he looks and sees from one end of the world to the other. He is taught all of the Torah from beginning to end, and there is no time of life when a person enjoys greater happiness.”
Niddah 30b

“The Torah is compared to a woman. Just as a woman comforts her nursing child, so does the Torah comfort all who seek nourishment from her.” Maharsha, Kedushin 2

“Out of the mouths of babes and sucking You have founded strength”
Tehillim 8:3

“A baby enters the world with hands clenched, as if to say the world is mine and I shall grab it” - Midrash

“Everyone is kneaded out of the same dough, but not baked in the same oven” - Yiddish proverb.

-“Each child carries his (or her) own blessing into the world.” - Yiddish proverb

-“L’dor v’dor” - from generation to generation (a Jewish idea of teaching, building, and strengthening Jewish community)

Ceremonies for children - Brit Milah/Brit Shalom

The Jewish law stipulates that children assigned as male at birth are to be circumcised on the eighth day. This is something many Jews do as a symbol of the family's Jewish identity. The original meaning is to honour the covenant between God and Abraham which guaranteed Abraham would "father" a nation. Some people choose to do this because of family expectation (or pressure). Some people choose not to circumcise.

If you'd like to consult about circumcision, please ask. That's part of my role as Jewish Doula.

For those who choose not to circumcise, or for those who give birth to babies assigned as female, or who choose not to assign a sex/gender at birth, another option is a Brit Shalom ceremony. Brit milah means Covenant of Circumcision. Brit Shalom means Covenant of Peace. In this ceremony, the child is welcomed into the community and the family makes a covenant to raise the child in peace in the hopes that the child will become an agent of peace.

Both Brit Milah and Brit Shalom ceremonies typically include a Baby Naming element (they are sometimes called "baby naming ceremonies")

If you'd like more information on Brit Milah or Brit Shalom, or if you'd like Rabbi Denise (Jewish Doula) to officiate, please be in touch.

Blessing on children. On Shabbat it is traditional to bless the children. Some people do this to honour a newborn child. One holds their heads and says:

For a girl: May Hashem establish you like Sarah, Rivkah, Rachel, and Leah

For a boy: May Hashem establish you like Efrayim and Menasheh

The second part for any gender:

May Hashem bless you and protect you. May His countenance shine upon you and be gracious to you. May Hashem turn His countenance upon you and give you peace.

Marcia Falk has a secular/Humanistic/lovely version of the blessing on the children that I recite for my children:

To a girl:

_____ (the child's name),
Hayi asher tihiy –
vahayi beruhah
ba'asher tihiy.

Be who you are –
and may you be blessed
in all that you are.

To a boy:

_____ (the child's name),
Heyeyh asher tihyeh –
veheyeyh baruh
ba'asher tihyeh.

Be who you are –
and may you be blessed
in all that you are.

From The Book of Blessings (Boston: Beacon Press), copyright 1996 by
Marcia Lee Falk

Links and resources:

Imeinu doula network with resources (Jewish Doula is affiliated):
<https://imeinu.wordpress.com/jewish-birth-resources/>

More prayers/blessings/rituals for pregnancy, labour and birth:
<https://www.ritualwell.org/pregnancy-childbirth>

On Jewish pregnancy and parenting:
kveller.com

Academic article, mainly for care providers, with charts detailing traditional Jewish customs for birth and postpartum, including Kashrut and holiday observances, and laws of Niddah (purity). Note, there is no expectation that clients of Jewish Doula follow all of these laws. This is for informational purposes for clients and care providers.

[http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?
doi=10.1.1.846.1852&rep=rep1&type=pdf](http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.846.1852&rep=rep1&type=pdf)

Article from My Jewish Learning on traditional and new birth traditions:

<https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/giving-birth/>

About having a Jewish Doula:

<https://www.kveller.com/i-loved-my-orthodox-jewish-doula/>

[https://www.acog.org/About-ACOG/News-Room/News-Releases/2017/
Approaches-for-Obgyns-Limit-Intervention-During-Labor-and-Birth-in-Low-
Risk-Pregnancies](https://www.acog.org/About-ACOG/News-Room/News-Releases/2017/Approaches-for-Obgyns-Limit-Intervention-During-Labor-and-Birth-in-Low-Risk-Pregnancies)

A great exercise for birth preparation:

<https://theselittlejoys.com/sentence-completion-exercises-pregnancy/>

Comfort tool I offer:

<https://www.doulatraining.ca/1/post/2017/04/a-comfort-measure-traditional-toolthe-rebozo.html>

Why have a doula?:

<https://evidencebasedbirth.com/the-evidence-for-doulas/>

Jewish law:

https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/1217817/jewish/Laws-of-Childbirth.htm (Note, this includes halachah — Jewish law — relating to pregnancy and birth. Some of these laws are considered sacred for, and some repression to, women. Jewish Doula supports women and families in choosing the laws that are of meaning to them. This link is for information only and is not meant as advice)

Prayers/Blessings

Jewish Doula welcomes and supports Jews of all backgrounds, faiths and practices. I come from the Secular Humanistic Jewish movement, in which we focus on human and earth-centred expressions of cultural Judaism. Below you'll find traditional prayers and Humanistic blessings/alternatives. The goal is that everyone finds something that works for them. Use these as affirmations/meditations in labour, make signs to put up in the labour room or baby's room, study these in pregnancy as a grounding exercise, or simply disregard. Use these however they are useful.

Song of ascents/ Shir Lama'alot (Psalm 121). This is traditionally recited at the birth and these cards are sometimes given to a new baby and hung on the crib (see photo below).



The psalm reads:

I lift my eyes to the mountains - where will my help come from?
My help comes from the L-rd, Maker of Heaven and earth.

He will not let your foot falter; your guardian will not slumber.
Indeed, the guardian of Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.
The L-rd is your guardian; the L-rd is your shade at your right hand.
The sun will not harm you by day, nor the moon at night.
The L-rd will guard you from all harm; he will watch over your soul.
The L-rd will guard your coming and going, now and forever

For Jews who are secular/humanistic/cultural Jews, the Society for Humanistic Judaism offers alternatives (shj.org)

One possibility is the song Ayfo Oree by our movement's founder Rabbi Sherwin Wine:

Ayfo Oree, oree bee
Ayfo Tikvati, tikivati bee
Ayfo Kochi, Kochi bee
V'gam bach, v'gam bach

Where is my light
My light is in me
Where is my hope
My hope is in me
Where is my strength
My strength is in me
And in you
And in you

Shechechyanu - prayer of gratitude for being alive and arriving at the present moment

Traditional: Baruch ata Adonai elohainu melech haolam shechechyanu,
ve'kiyemanu, ve'higi anu laz'man hazeh

Blessed art though, L-rd our G-d, Ruler of the universe,
Who has kept us alive, sustained us
And allowed us to reach this present moment

Humanistic Version:

N'varekh et haolam shechecheyanu, ve'kiyemanu, ve'higianu laz'man
hazeh

We bless the world that has kept us alive, sustained us, and brought us to
this present moment

Recited typically between 7-30 days after birth, once she feels strong, in
the presence of a minyan, the birthing person recites the birkat hagomel.
This is a blessing of gratitude for those who have recovered from a serious
illness or completed a dangerous journey. Birth is sort of both and neither
of these, but it is still commonly said for those who choose it.

Baruch ata Adonai, Eloheinu melech ha-olam, ha-Gomel t'chayavim tovim
she-g'malani kol tuv.

Blessed are You, Lord our God, ruler of the world, who rewards the
undeserving with goodness, and who has rewarded me with goodness.

Congregation responds:

Mi she-g'malcha kol tuv, hu yi-g'malcha kol tuv selah.

May He who rewarded you with all goodness reward you with all goodness
forever.

Humanistic alternative:

For this one, I invite you to consider how you express gratitude. Some people in labour make a list of things for which they are grateful. Some people simply repeat "I am grateful for health, life, love". You can also use the Humanistic shechechyanu above as a blessing for gratitude

Shema - a custom is that a community gathers around the child and recites the shema within the first week of life (prior to the bris, if there is to be one). The night before a bris it is also customary to learn Torah in the house of the child.

Traditional:

Sh'ma Yisrael Adonai Eloheinu Adonai Echad - "Hear, O Israel: the LORD is our God, the LORD is One."

Alternatives:

Sh'ma by Marcia Falk:

Sh'ma
By Marcia Falk

With all my heart
And all my spirit,
All my senses and strength,
I take upon myself
And into myself
These promises:

To care for the earth
And those who live upon it,
To pursue justice and peace,

To love kindness and compassion.
I will teach this to our children
Through the passage of the day –
As I dwell in my home
And as I go on my journey,
From the time I rise
Until I fall asleep.

And may my actions
Be faithful to my words
That our children's children
May live to know:
Truth and kindness
Have embraced,
Peace and justice have kissed
And are one.

The Torchbearers, by Humanistic Rabbi Eva Goldfinger

As one with our forebears, we affirm that
righteousness and enlightenment
shall be our torch.
We shall teach these values diligently to our children
All the days of our lives.
We shall endeavour to live by these values
In the comfort of our homes
Or on cold and wind-swept roads.
Whether adversity bows our heads
Or fulfillment makes our spirits soar.
Our hands shall mete out justice to all
And our eyes shall be open to the light of truth.
We shall emblazon our paths through life
With this light as a beacon for all humanity.

My very favourite way to use blessings in birth is for the person in labour to say the Misheberach - prayer for healing. Some women, while pregnant, collect names of those suffering, ill, etc. The tradition of this prayer is that one names the person and their mother. For example: Dinah bat Hannah - Dinah, daughter of Hannah. This matriarchal connection is empowering for a woman in labour. As she recites the misheberach for all who need it, naming them and considering their suffering or struggles, she takes her focus off of her own struggle. She feels united with her community and feels her own labour is a labour of love.

Traditional:

May the One who blessed our ancestors —
Patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,
Matriarchs Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah —
bless and heal the one who is ill:

_____ son/daughter of _____ .

May the Holy Blessed One
overflow with compassion upon him/her,
to restore him/her,
to heal him/her,
to strengthen him/her,
to enliven him/her.
The One will send him/her, speedily,
a complete healing —
healing of the soul and healing of the body —
along with all the ill,
among the people of Israel and all humankind,
soon,
speedily,
without delay,
and let us all say: Amen!

Mi Sheberakh in Hebrew Transliteration

The transliterated text below presents the prayer with correct pronouns for male and female patients. The word before the slash is for males, the one after for females.

Mi Sheberakh

Avoteinu: Avraham, Yitzhak, v'Yaakov,

v'Imoteinu: Sarah, Rivka, Rachel v'Leah,
Hu yivarekh virapei
et haholeh/haholah _____ ben/bat _____
HaKadosh Barukh Hu
yimalei rahamim alav/aleha,
l'hahalimo/l'hahlimah,
u-l'rap'oto/u-l'rap'otah,
l'hahaziko/l'hazikah,
u-l'hay-oto/u-l'hay-otah.
V'yishlah lo/lah bim-hera
r'fuah shlemah,
r'fu-at hanefesh u-r'fu-at hagoof,
b'tokh sh'ar holei Yisrael v'holei yoshvei tevel,
hashta ba'agalah u-vizman kariv,
v'no-mar, Amen!

Humanistic version:

R'FUAH SH'LEIMAH

*By Rabbi Jeffrey Falick, Rabbi Adam Chalom and Rabbi Miriam Jerris,
adapted from lyrics by Debbie Friedman and Drorah Stel,
based on Psalm 133:1 music by Debbie Friedman*

Makom ha-koah b'toch-einu,
M'korot ha-b'rakha m'hevrot-einu,
May the source of strength
That dwells so deep inside us
Help us find the courage to make our lives a blessing,
and let us find, shalom.

Makom ha-koah b'toch-einu,
M'korot ha-b'rakha m'hevrot-einu
Give those in need of healing their r'fuah sh'leimah
The renewal of body, the renewal of spirit
And let us find, shalom.

Techinnah/Techinnot

These were prayers written by women in Yiddish, often about domestic life or things relating to the world of women at the time. As a result, some are about pregnancy/birth. Some women used to write the special prayers on pieces of fabric or paper and adorn the baby's cradle with them.

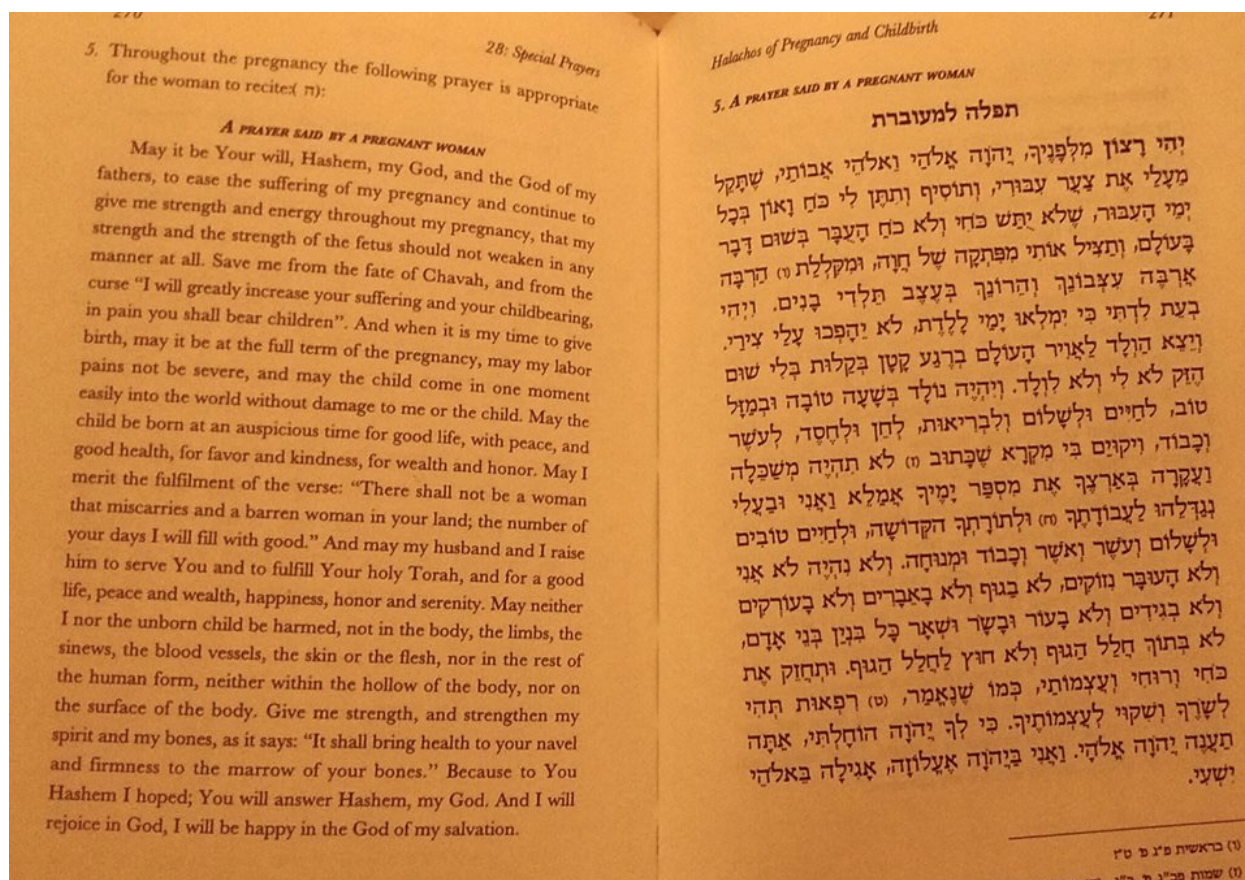
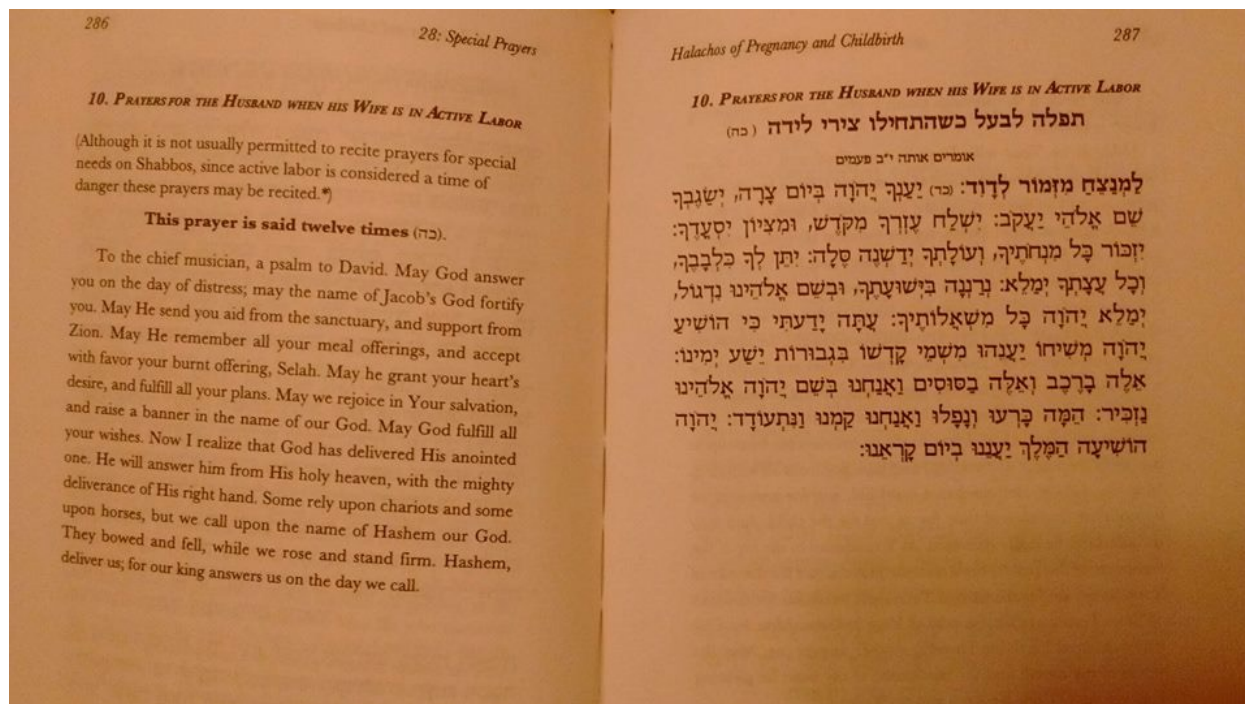
This is a "pregnant woman's prayer" (from Norman Tarmor's A Book of Jewish Women's Prayers)

I pray to you, Lord God of Israel, that You consider my prayer as You did that of Mother Channo (Hannah), the prophetess who prayed for a son, the prophet Samuel. May her z'chus (merit) stand me in good stead. May I, Your maidservant, who am with child (Your creation!), carry full term and give birth to a healthy child who will become a pious Jew and serve You heart and soul; one who will love Torah and be God-fearing according to Your holy will, a beautiful plant in the Jewish vineyard for the beauty of Israel (Tiferet Israel). Omayn.

This is a prayer "On behalf of a pregnant woman" (from Norman Tarmor's A Book of Jewish Women's Prayers)

Compassionate and gracious God, have pity on the woman (A, daughter of B), that she give birth without complications. May the z'chus (merit) of our holy Matriarchs Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah, together with the merit of our prophetesses Miriam, Deborah, Hannah, Huldah, and the merit of Yael, stand her in good stead during this dangerous time so that she shall have an easy delivery. May the newborn be a pure soul dedicated to Your service, a tzaddik (righteous person) who will busy himself with (the study of) Torah and the (performance of) Mitzvos. Should it be a girl child, may she grow into a modest woman, God-fearing and blessed with mazel (good fortune). May mother and child be well and may the newborn enter into a world of salvation and consolation for Klal Yisroel (all Israel). In that time, may all Jews be fortunate enough to merit a true and lasting redemption. Omayn

The following come from a variety of sources and were collected by Imeinu Doula Collective:



down in authoritative *sefarim*.

3. If someone wishes especially for a boy or a girl, he may say the following prayers during the first forty days:*

For a boy—יהי רצון שתלד אשתי זכר.

May it be Your wish that my wife give birth to a boy.

For a girl—יהי רצון שתלד אשתי נקבה.

May it be Your wish that my wife give birth to a girl.

4. Some give *tzedakah* every day (1) and say the following prayer:
(1) See Chapter 15 par. A7.

I am giving charity in honor of the soul of Rabbi Meir Ba'al Hanes, that my wife may give birth to a viable child and have an easy delivery, and that the child emerge into the world in a time that is good and fortunate for us and for the child, and that her child have a healthy future, in the merit of Rabbi Meir Ba'al Hanes. And may all my issue be holy, and be the seed of people who are perfect in the morals and in their beliefs and in all kinds of perfection, and of whole and sound body. God of Meir, answer me! God of Meir, answer me! God of Meir, answer me!

A psalm of thanksgiving, Shout for joy to Hashem, everyone on the earth. Serve Hashem with gladness, bow to Him with rejoicing. Know that Hashem is God: He has made us and we are His, His people and the flock of His pasture. Enter His gates with thanksgiving, His courtyards with praise. Give thanks to Him, bless His name. For Hashem is good, His loving kindness is eternal and His faithfulness extends to all generations.

PRAYER TO RECITE WHEN GIVING CHARITY DURING PREGNANCY

תפלה בעת נתינת צדקה בימי העיבור

הריני נותן צדקה לעלוי נשמת רבי מאיר בעל הנס כדי שבוכות רבי מאיר בעל הנס תלד אשתי ורע של קומא בנקל, ויצא הולד לאויר העולם בשעה טובה ומזל טוב לנו ולנלה, ויהיה בריא מעלה, ויהיה כל ירעי ורע קדש, ורע אנשים שלמים במדות ובדעות ובכל מיני שלמות, ושלמים בעולם. אלהא דמאיר ענני, אלהא דמאיר ענני, אלהא דמאיר ענני.

ממור לתורה: הרינו לה כל הארץ עבדו את ה' בשמחה, באו לפניו ברגל: דעו כי ה' הוא אלקים, הוא עשנו, ולו אנחנו עמו וצאן מרעיתו: באו שערי בתורה הצרותיו בתהלה, הודו לו ברכו שמו: כי טוב ה' לשלם חסדו, ועד דר ודר אמונתו.

חולדת חזו

18 / ברכות

«BLESSING UPON THE BIRTH OF A SON»

ברוך אתה יהוה אלהינו מלך העולם, הטוב והמטיב.

Blessed are You, HASHEM, our God, King of the universe,
Who is good and does good.

You should recite this blessing as soon as you learn that you have given birth to a baby boy, even before seeing the baby. Say the blessing even if this is not your first son.

Your husband should also recite this blessing. In fact, if you are together and hear the good news at the same time, he can recite the blessing out loud for both of you.¹⁴⁹

If you did not recite the blessing when you found out about the birth, you can recite it later, as soon as you get a chance to do so (as long as you are still informing people about the birth).¹⁵⁰

If you had twin boys, recite the blessing only once.¹⁵¹

A special prayer of thanksgiving to be recited upon the birth of a son appears on page 1008.

«BLESSING UPON THE BIRTH OF A DAUGHTER»

ברוך אתה יהוה אלהינו מלך העולם,
שהחינו וקיימנו והגיענו לזמן הזה.

Blessed are You, HASHEM, our God, King of the universe,
Who has kept us alive, sustained us, and brought us to this season.

Your husband should recite this blessing when he sees the baby for the first time. He should recite the blessing even if this is not your first daughter or his first daughter.¹⁵²

You may also recite the blessing, but you do not need to do so. The practice varies with local custom.

If you had twin girls, the blessing is said only one time. If you had a boy and a girl, it is appropriate to recite only the blessing הטוב והמטיב when seeing the children both together.¹⁵³

A special prayer of thanksgiving to be recited upon the birth of a daughter appears on page 1008.

the [mosh] in my home. Illuminate Your [first] foot [first].
an auspicious time and with our right foot [first].

A PRAYER TO BE BLESSED WITH A CHILD

אָבִינוּ Our Father, O merciful Father! Harken to our prayers and give heed to our cries that all childless women be remembered for the good — swiftly, easily, and with speed — to give birth with Your compassion to living and thriving children. May Your people, Israel, multiply like the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or counted. Just as Your compassion was mighty over our first forefather: Abraham, who was [but] one,¹ along with his wife, Sarah, whom You remembered for the good. You remembered them in their old age and gave them Isaac, and You promised to multiply his offspring like the stars in the heavens. So, too, may Your insides moan and Your compassion be aroused² for all the childless women of Your people, the House of Israel, whose eyes are set on You alone, that You grant them viable offspring for Your service and Your reverence. Have compassion upon them for Your sake, and remember them for good, and fulfill their requests with compassion. Allow Yourself to be entreated by them, hear their prayer and swiftly, easily, and speedily grant them to become pregnant. May they have the privilege of delivering viable offspring whose fathers and mothers delight in them, and may they merit to raise them for Torah, the bridal canopy, and for good deeds, for length of days and good years.

(1) Genesis 49:25. (2) See Rashi to Genesis 8:11 from Sanhedrin 108b.
(3) See Rashi to Genesis 24:67 from Berishis Rabbah 16. (4) Psalms 80:4.
(5) See Ezekiel 33:24. (6) In Hebrew, the same word, תָּקַח, is translated "moan" and "aroused" depending on the context.

והשרה שכינתך בביתי ואת הבן קדושך פניך ונשעה בשעה טובה וברגל
התמיד שלא יכבה לעולם. והאר פניך ונשעה בשעה טובה וברגל
ימנית לחפה.

תפלה להפקד בבנים

אָבִינוּ אב הרחמן שמע תפלתנו ותאזין שועתנו, שיהיו כל העקרות נפקדות לטובה חיש קל מהרה, ויולידו ברחמיך בנים חיים וקיימים ויתרבו עמך בני ישראל כחול הים אשר לא ימד ולא יספר. וכשם שגברו רחמיך על אבינו הראשון, אחד היה אברהם אבינו ואשתו שרה אמנו אשר זכרתם לטובה, נתפקדם לעת זקנותם ונתת להם את יצחק, והבטחתם להרבות זרעו ככוכבי השמים. כן יהמו נא מעיך ורחמיך על כל עקרות עמך בית ישראל אשר עיניהם תולות אליך לברך, שתתן להם זרע של קיימא לעבודתך וליראתך. רחם עליהם למענה, ופקדם לטובה ומלא משאלותם ברחמים, ותעתר להם ותשמע תפלתם, ותתן להם הריון חיש קל מהרה. ויזכו להוליד זרע של קיימא וישמחו אביהם ואמם בהם ויזכו לגדלם לתורה ולחפה ולמעשים טובים לארך ימים ושנים טובות.

1009 / APPENDIX: ADDITIONAL PRAYERS AND SUPPLICATIONS

VERSES TO RECITE FOR AN EASY BIRTH

(from R' Yaakov Yisroel Kanievski [The Steipler]) ז"ל

וִיִּרְדּוּ Then all those servants of yours will come down to me and bow to me, saying, "Leave — you and the entire people that follows you." After that I will leave.¹
The midwives said to Pharaoh, "Because the Hebrew women are unlike the Egyptian women, for they are experts; before the midwife comes to them they have given birth."²
It is like a groom emerging from his bridal chamber, it rejoices like a powerful warrior to run the course.³

A PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING, AFTER CHILDBIRTH

(from Shevet Mussar)

יְהִי רָצוֹן May it be Your will, HASHEM, my God and the God of my forefathers, O merciful and compassionate King, just as You have rescued me from this great distress and from this intense danger, so may Your mercy be aroused to rescue from this danger all the daughters of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, offspring of those who are beloved by You. Just as You have saved me now, so too, make a sign of goodness for me whenever I give birth.

WHEN A NEW MOTHER LEAVES THE BIRTHING BED

(for a baby boy)

יְהִי רָצוֹן May it be Your will, HASHEM, my God and the God of my forefathers, that You prepare sustenance for Your servant, this infant, with an abundance of milk — his requirement, whatever he may lack.¹ Place in my heart the [correct] time to nurse him in order to give him what he needs. Lighten my sleep so that when he cries, You may open my ears so that I hear him immediately. Rescue me — that my hand not fall onto him while sleeping, and he die, Heaven forbid.

(for a baby girl)

יְהִי רָצוֹן May it be Your will, HASHEM, my God and the God of my forefathers, that You prepare sustenance for Your maidservant, this infant, with an abundance of milk — her requirement, whatever she may lack.⁴ Place in my heart the [correct] time to nurse her in order to give her what she needs. Lighten my sleep so that when she cries, You may open my ears so that I hear her immediately. Rescue me — that my hand not fall onto her while sleeping, and she die, Heaven forbid.