



*On the Creation of a Family by Choice*

*A New Liturgy*

We live in an ever changing world. The choices we make for ourselves when we are young are not always lifelong choices. Birth and adoption, death and divorce, coming out of the closet and coming into our own skin all cause changes in our lives and we do not always have control over them. We do have control on who we chose to make our lives with and often that life is not a traditional marriage. At these moments of change, of growth, of commitment we turn to our tradition for guidance and blessing.

The following liturgy is a ritual that can be done publicly or privately to acknowledge and bless the coming together of a new family. These new families come in many shapes. For some it means the shift in identity after a partner or parent has come out as gay, lesbian or transgender. For others it means acknowledging that a parent has chosen a new partner. It can even mean recognizing that what one thinks of as family as changed and deserves to be blessed for all people are blessed *betzelem Elohim* - in the image of God.

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Love is a decision

To love somebody is not just a strong feeling - it is a decision, it is a judgment, it is a promise. If love were only a feeling, there would be no basis for the promise to love each other for ever. A feeling may come and go. How can I judge that it will stay for ever, when my act does not involve judgment and decision?<sup>1</sup>

Today we come together to recognize the creation of a new family. In the tradition of our ancestors who built families of all shapes and sizes, we wrap you in this tallit as a symbol of your coming together to create a family.

[Person chosen to lead ceremony wraps a tallit around those being bound together as family]

The recognition that every family begins when one person meets another and sees a spark they feel is missing from their own life. Martin Buber is created with saying, *If you think you can live without others, you are mistaken, and you are even more mistaken if you think others cannot live without you.*<sup>2</sup>

With those important words, we share a poem of meeting.

A Poem

Whenever two people begin  
to write  
Their lives' poem  
On a single leaf,  
Of hammered paper,  
The angels sing,  
Of course,  
and the ends of the universe,  
Bright with stars  
Move somehow closer.  
And even  
In the deep of winter,  
The earth fallen with snow,  
Like a jewel, yes,

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<sup>1</sup> From *The Art of Loving* by Erich Fromm. Found in: *On the Doorposts of Your House*, 321.

<sup>2</sup> Attributed to Martin Buber. Rewritten by Chaim Stern. Found in: *On the Doorposts of Your House*, 320.

Shines in the sunlight,  
So  
Their joy together  
Eternally  
Becomes  
God's smile.<sup>3</sup>

Families come in all shapes and sizes. We acknowledge the creation of this family with the lighting of this multi-wick candle from these individual flames.

[Candle is lit]

### For Creating a Family

Nuclear? Perhaps. You were alone when You began. And what were Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar doing? Jacob and all four of his wives? Naomi, Ruth, and Boaz? David and his many wives? Solomon and his hundreds? Just as they all created families in their many different ways, God, so too do we open our hearts and lives to Your very first commandment - be fruitful and multiply. And we do it in our many different ways, according to our tradition.<sup>4</sup>

We recognize and acknowledge that each family in our community looks different. We ask that this family be blessed with love, kindness and understanding for one another and for all those who they meet. The coming together of individuals is a blessing and in gratefulness the new family recites together:

### A Blessing

May it be Your will, Eternal God,  
that love and harmony, peace and friendship  
may dwell among us.  
Help us to look forward with confidence and hope.  
Guide us in the world with good companions and good intentions.  
When we rise up in the morning, may we find our hearts ready to revere You,  
and may our deepest longings be fulfilled for our good.  
And make Paradise our destination.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Written by James R. Scher. Found in: *On the Doorposts of Your House*, 292-3.

<sup>4</sup> From *Siddur Sha'ar Zahav*, 29.

<sup>5</sup> B.Ber. 16b; attributed to Rabbi Eliezer. Translation by Rabbi Chaim Stern. Found in: *On the Doorposts of Your House*, 268.

**Optional Reading recited by Family members/Friends of the new family**

Reader 1:

The experience of the Exodus from Egyptian bondage  
has ever sensitized our people  
to the values of human freedom and dignity

Reader 2:

May you exemplify these values as you grow together as a family,  
creating a home where love of Torah,  
awareness of that which is HOLY,  
and compassion for humanity  
always abide.

Reader 3:

Where the hearts of the parents  
and the hearts of the children  
shall always be turned to one another.

Reader 4:

May your family find a place in the community of Israel,  
committed to Justice and Righteousness - to *Tz'dakah*.<sup>6</sup>

**Priestly Benediction (optional if a clergy member is officiating)**

As our people have done for generations, we bestow the blessing of our people upon you.

יְבָרְכֶךָ יְהוָה, וַיִּשְׁמְרֶךָ.

May God bless you and keep you.

יָאֵר יְהוָה פְּנֵיךָ אֵלֶיךָ, וַיַּחַנְךָ.

May God's light shine upon you, and may God be gracious to you.

יִשָּׂא יְהוָה פְּנֵיךָ אֵלֶיךָ, וַיִּשֶׂם לְךָ שְׁלוֹם.

May you feel God's Presence within you always, and may you find peace.

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<sup>6</sup> From *L'chol z'man v'eit = For Sacred Moments: the CCAR life-cycle guide*, 38.

We all join together in the singing of *shehecheyanu*, our blessing thanking God for allowing us to reach this joyous moment, this wonderful season.

Shehecheyanu

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם שֶׁהַחַיִּינוּ וְקִיַּמְנוּ וְהִגִּיעָנוּ לְזִמַּן הַזֶּה

*Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech haolam, shehecheyanu, v'kiy'manu,  
v'higianu laz'man hazeh.*

Our praise to You, Eternal our God, Sovereign of all: for giving us life, sustaining us, and enabling us to reach this season.

As you go out into the world as a newly created unit, may you always remember the individual paths that brought you here. Each person has a unique gift to share with the world, and each family a unique path to walk.

**Mazel tov!**

[If the ceremony is followed by a meal, Kiddush and Hamotzi should be recited here]