BRIT MILA

INTRODUCTION TO BRIT MILA

Introduction to Brit Mila

Avraham was commanded to circumcise himself and all males in his household. From then on, all healthy Jewish males were to be circumcised when they reached 8 days old.
If there is any question about the baby's health, the circumcision is delayed or, in rare cases, not done at all.
The primary obligation to do the circumcision is on the boy's father. Since most people are not skilled surgeons, the actual cutting is usually done by a highly trained expert, called a *mohel*, who is appointed by the father. A festive meal is eaten after the circumcision. A *minyan* is preferred, but not required, for a *brit mila*.

BRIT MILA SCHEDULING

BRIT MILA: WHICH DAY

BRIT MILA: EIGHTH DAY

Brit Mila: When Is Eighth Day

As long as the boy was born before sunset (even one minute before), this time period counts as the first day.
Normally, the *brit mila* will be performed on the following week on that same day of the week (the baby's eighth day). If the baby was born between sunset and dark, consult a *rabbi* or *mohel*.

BRIT MILA: DELAYS

BRIT MILA: DELAYS: HEALTH

Brit Mila: Delays: Health: Doctor and Mohel

The *brit mila* may be done only if the baby is healthy by the opinions of both a doctor and a *mohel*. If either says not to do the *brit mila*, don't.

NOTE Even if the doctor says the baby is healthy, ask the *mohel* for his opinion since the *mohel* can still veto.

BRIT MILA: DELAYS: SHABBAT/JEWISH FESTIVALS

Brit Mila: Delays: Shabbat/Jewish Festivals: Special Births

SITUATION A baby boy is born by caesarean section. The eighth day after the birth is *Shabbat* or a *Jewish festival*.

WHAT TO DO The *brit mila* must be delayed to at least the next day following that *Shabbat* or *Jewish festival*. (If the *mohel* or doctor says the baby is not healthy enough for a *brit*, the *brit* must be delayed even more.)

BRIT MILA: DELAYS: CAESAREAN BIRTH

Brit Mila: Delays: Caesarean Birth

Do not delay a *Shabbat brit mila* until Sunday in order to prevent Jews who do not keep *Shabbat* from driving or otherwise desecrating *Shabbat* to attend the *brit*.

BRIT MILA: WHAT TIME

Brit Mila: Time of Day

The *brit mila* may be done anytime from sunrise to sunset, but the preferred time is in the morning.

NOTE *Brit mila* may only be done during the daytime.

BRIT MILA: HATAFAT DAM

Brit Mila: Hatafat Dam

For a boy who requires an operation six months later (or more) to repair an anomalous condition such as hypospadias or webbing--if the hospital will allow a *mohel* "hands-on" participation, then the *brit mila* is done at the time of the operation.
If not, after the child heals, a *hatafat dam brit mila* should be performed.

BRIT MILA: WHO SHOULD PERFORM

Brit Mila: Who Should Perform: Preference

A father should circumcise his male children (if he knows how to do to the circumcision!) or appoint someone to do so. Order of preference for who should do the circumcision, if competent:

- Father
- Other *shomer-Shabbat* male
- *Shomer-Shabbat* woman (if no male is available).

NOTE A father (or anyone else) may not perform the *brit mila*--even just the incision--on *Shabbat* if it is his first time.

NOTE A non-Jew may not perform a *brit mila*.

NOTE If a child was circumcised in the hospital or by anyone who is not *shomer Shabbat*, consult a *rabbi*.

BRIT MILA: SANDAK

Brit Mila: Choice of Sandak

Choose the greatest Jewish scholar (*talmid chacham*) in your town or city as *sandak* (person who holds the baby for the *brit mila*), since *kabbala* says it is a good omen for the boy's soul. A woman may be a *sandeket* but only if no suitable *man* is available. If no Jewish *man* or woman is available, a non-Jewish person may serve as a *sandak* or *sandeket*.

BRIT MILA: HOW TO DO

Brit Mila: How To Do: Metzitza

When doing a circumcision, *metzitza* (sucking out some blood) is required. *Metzitza* may be done using a pipette or other tube, but the traditional way is by mouth.

NOTE Using a gauze pad for *metzitza* is not traditionally done.

Brit Mila: Amount of Metzitza Blood

There is no minimum amount of blood to draw out for *metzitza:* any quantity suffices.

BRIT MILA: INVITATION

Brit Mila: Announcement or Invitation

Don't formally invite people to a *brit mila* meal, just announce it.

REASON If you invite people and they don't come, they are disrespecting the chance to participate in a *mitzva*.

BRIT MILA: NAMING THE BABY

Brit Mila: Naming a Baby after Someone

You are not *halachically* required to name the baby after a particular person. The custom is that a baby is not named after its living parent.

BRIT MILA: FESTIVE MEAL

Brit Mila Meal: Minimum Requirement

A *se'udat mitzva* is required for a *brit mila,* but the *brit mila* is still valid even if no meal is held. The minimum requirement for the meal is to eat at least 1.3 fl. oz. (39 ml, or 1/6 cup) of bread within four minutes.

Brit Mila: Fast Day

If a *brit mila* is performed on *Tish'a b'Av* or other fast days, the meal (*se'udat mitzva*) is held after the fast ends. On a delayed fast day, the *sandak*, *mohel*, and father of the boy who is having the *brit* may eat after *mincha*.

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