



# why do it?

Surely there's no more bizarre Jewish ritual than the bris. We take a baby boy who is eight days old. Family and friends gather round excitedly as we cut off the the skin covering the tip of his sexual organ. Then we congratulate the parents and all celebrate together with a festive meal! Clearly, something important is going on. Actually, Judaism is making a very powerful statement to the child. It's about who he is and who our society believes he should be. Despite what Jewish mothers might believe about their sons, they are not born perfect. God created them with a foreskin. Although a man is not born perfect, Judaism believes he should still strive to perfect himself. And the physical is always a reflection of the spiritual. So, in the same way as a man might try to perfect himself physically, he should try to perfect himself spiritually. The act of the bris shows that any struggle for perfection will always be difficult. With effort and struggle, comes goodness.

## elijah's chair

The baby is placed on Elijah's Chair. The mohel reads a paragraph reminding us that in Jewish tradition Elijah the prophet attends every bris (in a spiritual sense). Elijah was a man who, in his generation, fought for the spiritual survival of the Jewish people almost entirely single-handedly. His battle for Jewish values against the craziness of his society, provides the perfect spiritual backdrop for the bris. It's a struggle to be Jewish. It's not easy. But struggling for values and principles, even if that means swimming against the current, is what Judaism is all about.

## sandak

### the one who holds the baby

The baby is passed to the Sandak, (from the Greek word meaning "companion of child"). This is the person who will be holding the baby for the ceremony. It is considered a great honour and usually a grandfather, close relative or Rabbi is chosen.

## a good time for prayer

The Rabbis say that when the God sees the discomfort of a child at his circumcision, his compassion is aroused and the gates of mercy are opened. It is a good time to pray not only for the child, but also for anything that one might wish to pray for. It is considered a time of particular compassion and prayers are more readily responded to.

## With the baby comfortable in Elijah's Chair, the mohel says:

This is the chair of Elijah  
the prophet of blessed memory  
I recognize the seriousness of  
what I am about to do  
and ask you, God, for your support.  
Your teachings inspire me.  
Anyone who is excited by  
Your teachings will find deep  
spiritual wholeness.  
Anyone who comes close to You  
will get pleasure in life.

זֶה הַכֵּסֵּא שֶׁל אֱלֹהֵי הַנְּבִיא,  
זְכוֹר לְטוֹב. לִישׁוּעָתְךָ, קוּיִתִּי ה'.  
שִׁבְרָתִי לִישׁוּעָתְךָ ה' וּמִצְוֹתֶיךָ  
עָשִׂיתִי. אֱלֹהֵי מִלְאָךְ הַבְּרִית,  
הִנֵּה שְׁלֹךְ לְפָנֶיךָ, עֲמוּד עַל יְמִינִי  
וְסִמְכֵנִי. שִׁבְרָתִי לִישׁוּעָתְךָ ה'.  
שֵׁשׁ אֲנֹכִי עַל אִמְרֹתֶיךָ, כְּמוֹצֵא  
שָׁלֵל רַב. שְׁלוֹם רַב לְאַהֲבֵי  
תּוֹרָתְךָ, וְאִין לְמוֹ מְכַשֹּׁל. אֲשֶׁרִי,  
תִּבְחַר וּתְקַרֵּב, יִשְׁכּוֹן חֲצֵרֶיךָ.

## Everyone responds:

### Nisb'oh b'tuv bay'se'ch<sup>o</sup>h, k'dosh hay'cho'le'ch<sup>o</sup>h

Let's take pleasure in  
Your presence

נִשְׁבְּעָה, בְּטוֹב בֵּיתְךָ,  
קֹדֶשׁ הִכְלָלְךָ.

The baby is placed on the lap of the Sandak  
and prepared for the bris.

# the importance of a hebrew name

In Hebrew, names are carefully considered. They are not just treated as a way of identifying an individual. It's believed that a name is a way of defining the inner essence of a human. Simcha means Joyous. Chana means Gracious. Chaim means Life. Jewish mystics say that parents are gifted with Divine inspiration when choosing their child's name. Jewish parents give a child a name that inspires them, hoping that the name will also inspire the child.



## Then the Mohel goes on to naming the boy.

God and God of our fathers, let this child strengthen this Jewish family. His name is \_\_\_\_\_ son of \_\_\_\_\_. Let his parents be happy with him. Our Prophets tell us the following lessons from the bris: your commitment to Judaism is your life; if you are committed to God, He will remain committed to you in the way He was committed to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; always live by what you know to be right, even if your society goes against it. Let us thank God for his continual kindness; let us thank God for his continual kindness. May this young child become great.

## Everyone responds:

k'sheym she'nich'nas la'bris, keyn yik'o'neys l'tor'oh  
ool'chu'po ool'ma'a'sim tov'im

Just as he has become a part of the covenant, so let him achieve an understanding of life, a successful marriage and good deeds.

אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ, קִיַּם אֶת הַיְלִיד הַזֶּה  
לְאָבִיו וְלְאִמּוֹ, וַיִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ, בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל  
בֶּן \_\_\_\_\_ .  
יִשְׂמַח הָאָב בְּיוֹצֵא חֲלָצִיו, וְתִגַּל אִמּוֹ בְּפָרִי  
בְטָנָהּ. כְּפִתּוּב: יִשְׂמַח אָבִיךָ וְאִמְךָ, וְתִגַּל  
וְלִדְתֶיךָ. וְנֹאמַר: וְאֶעֱבֹר עֲלֶיךָ וְאֶרְאֶךָ  
מִתְבוֹסֶסֶת בְּדַמְיוֹךָ, וְאִמֹר לְךָ בְּדַמְיוֹךָ חַיִּי,  
וְאִמֹר לְךָ בְּדַמְיוֹךָ חַיִּי. וְנֹאמַר: זָכַר לְעוֹלָם  
בְּרִיתוֹ, דָּבַר צוּה לְאֶלְפֵי דוֹר. אֲשֶׁר כָּרַת  
אֶת אַבְרָהָם, וְשָׁבוּעָתוֹ לְיִשְׁחָק. וְעַמִּידָה  
לְיַעֲקֹב לְחֹק, לְיִשְׂרָאֵל בְּרִית עוֹלָם. וְנֹאמַר.  
וְיָמַל אַבְרָהָם אֶת יִצְחָק בְּנוֹ, בֶּן שְׁמֹנֶת  
יָמִים, כְּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה אֱלֹהִים. הוֹדוּ לַה' כִּי טוֹב,  
כִּי טוֹב, כִּי לְעוֹלָם חֶסֶדוֹ. הוֹדוּ לַה' כִּי טוֹב,  
כִּי לְעוֹלָם חֶסֶדוֹ. בֶּן \_\_\_\_\_  
זֶה הַקָּטָן גָּדוֹל יִהְיֶה.

כְּשֶׁם שֶׁנִּכְנַס לְבְרִית, בֶּן  
יִכְנַס לְתוֹרָה, וְלַחֻפָּה,  
וְלַמַּעֲשִׂים טוֹבִים.