

Neil Pollock M.D., Mohel

*Cover Art by: Lynette Brodsky, Seattle Washington.*

*Rendition of a Persian mogen (circumcision shield)  
surrounded by an inscription from Genesis XVII, 11:*

*"והיה לאות ברית ביני וביניכם ... it shall be a sign of a  
covenant between Me and you."*

## ❧ *Parents' Guide To Ritual Circumcision* ❧



### ❧ *Shalom*

The brit (or bris) of your son is a heartfelt and joyous experience. It is a simcha, albeit one filled with some anxiety. As it is written: "May your mother and father rejoice; and may the one who bore you thrill with joy." (Proverbs 23:25).

On the following pages I present a brief overview of the tradition, the ceremony, and the circumcision. Care instructions, a glossary, and 'Brit Check List' are also included.

### ❧ *The Tradition*

Circumcision is a universal mitzvah. Brit milah may be the only mitzvah purposefully observed by Reform, Conservative, and Orthodox alike, even by Jews with no other connection to the faith. For a Jew, circumcision is an indelible sign of our eternal bond with God and loyalty to our community. Thus, with a ceremony known fondly as a brit, we circumcise our sons before God and in the presence of our community.

**Loyalty to our community.** I view brit milah as the common thread that binds our community. Historically, our oppressors understood this and often attempted to prohibit ritual circumcision - for which there are many Jewish martyrs. Baruch Spinoza, a seventeenth century philosopher and skeptic of the covenant of circumcision, oddly enough said it best. "So great importance do I attach to this sign, I am persuaded that it is sufficient by itself to maintain the separate existence of the nation forever."

**Eternal Bond with God.** Brit milah literally means covenant of circumcision. This covenant is between God and the Jewish people. The Torah tells the story of God saying to Abraham: "I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your children after you, throughout all generations, as an everlasting covenant, to be your God and your children's after you ... This is My covenant which you shall keep ... every male among you shall be circumcised. And you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a sign of a covenant between Me and you. " (Genesis XVI 1, 7-11).

**Every male among you.** In modern times this is taken to mean every Jewish male among you. Circumcision does not make a male child Jewish; he is Jewish if his mother is Jewish or she had converted by the time of his birth (Kiddushin 66b, 68b; Yoreh Deah 268-6). If a baby is not Jewish, he may have a brit as the first step of conversion. In such instances, a rabbi who is knowledgeable in the Jewish laws of conversion is consulted.

**Who should circumcise.** Every Jewish father is obligated to circumcise his own son (Yoreh Deah 260:1), just as Abraham circumcised his own son, Isaac (Genesis XXI, 4). However, most fathers are not versed in the Jewish laws concerning brit milah nor are they trained to circumcise, Thus, we invite a mohel (or moyl) to serve as the father's stand-in.

A mohel is someone who has studied the texts and laws of brit milah; the anatomy, physiology, and pathology of the penis (and related organs); and the techniques of circumcision. In addition, many mohelim (myself included) undertake an extensive apprenticeship. A mohel is considered so vital to a Jewish community that a scholar is forbidden to live in a community that does not have a mohel (Sanhedrin 17b).

**When to have the brit.** Eight days old is the age at which God commanded the Jewish people to circumcise their male children - "he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every male throughout your generation..." (Genesis XVII, 12). This mitzvah is so extraordinary that it can supersede the 'Laws of Shabbat' that normally prohibit such an operation on Shabbat and holidays (Shabbat 106a, 132a; Sanhedrin 59b). A

brit may only take place during daylight hours; the earlier the better since we are eager to fulfill a mitzvah (Yoreh Deah 262:1).

Only certain circumstances justify the delay of a brit. Above all, a child that is not well may not be circumcised <sup>1</sup> - "It is possible to circumcise later, but it is not possible to restore life" (Yad, Milah 1: 18; Yoreh Deah 262:2).

You should not delay a brit for convenience nor may it take place before the eighth day. <sup>2</sup> Although delaying a brit for the sake of the late arrival of a family member is discouraged, it is permissible. Jewish ideology is clear that family peace is paramount and can justify the limited delay of a brit "He who makes peace in his own house is as if he made peace in all Israel" Abot de Rabbi Nathan 28:3). If a brit is delayed for any reason, it may not take place on Shabbat or a holiday.

**Where to have the brit.** Traditionally, a brit was held in the synagogue to add beauty and sanctity to the mitzvah. Most parents prefer that a brit takes place at home. The home is generally a warm, familiar environment. The brit should take place in a well-lit room that is large enough to accommodate all who are present.

If the eighth day falls on Shabbat or holiday, it is appropriate that the brit take place in a synagogue. It may either take place immediately following the Torah service, but before the Torah is replaced, or it may take place after the completion of morning services. Remember, all supplies and food except for what is needed to care for the baby must be brought to the synagogue before the start of Shabbat (or holiday).

**Who comes to the brit.** For most parents, a brit is a great simcha which they want to share with friends and relatives. A minyon is preferred-, although, the baby and someone to perform the circumcision are all that are required. All may attend: male, female, Jew, non-Jew, young, old everybody.

*A note about children:* Many parents are concerned that a brit may be inappropriate for their children to witness. The fact of the matter is, children do just fine (usually better than their parents). Being forthright, honest, and upbeat is the best approach.

**Announcing the Brit.** It is important that you and the mohel establish a time and date before announcing the brit. Once established, it is proper to inform your friends and relatives of the time and place of the brit, rather than specifically inviting them. That is, attending a brit is in itself a mitzvah, and one should not be put in the position of refusing a mitzvah if they are unable to attend.

---

1 Steinberg A. Brit Mila - Medical-Halachic Aspects; pp. 157-174. "CROSSROADS: Halacha and the Modern World." Zomet; Jerusalem 0 987).

2 Exception: When a person who is not bar mitzvah dies and is uncircumcised (a still birth is one example), a circumcision and naming may take place at the grave site (Yoreh Deah 263,5). This choice is left up to the parents, if they are living, otherwise we follow community customs.

## *The Ceremony*

Brit milah is possibly the oldest ritual in our nearly 4,000 year history: thus, it is rich with many beautiful customs. Presented here are the customs that I routinely follow ; although, I am always willing to incorporate other customs, especially family traditions.

**The ceremony.** The baby is in a back room, family, friends and community are gathered. Just before the ceremony starts, while your son is still in the private room, I will examine him to determine that he has no congenital condition that would preempt the circumcision. I will also cleanse his genital area with an anti-septic scrub and administer local anesthetic. This preparation requires about five minutes.

There is always a small chance that at this time I may discover something that leads me to delay the Bris or re-book your son for a circumcision in the hospital using a different technique. This happens in 1% of all cases.

The ceremony starts with a friend or family member lighting the candles. Then I exclaim 'kvatter' and one or two appointed guests designated to accompany mom, now usher (who brings the baby) into the room. As the baby enters the room, everyone stands and greets him with the words, Barukh Habah! Mom then sits with the baby on the chair set aside for the prophet Elijah, Angel of the Covenant (Throne of Elijah). I recite a blessing that greets Elijah and requests God's assistance with the circumcision. The father then takes his son from the Throne of Elijah and personally hands him to me, the mohel. I'll place the baby on a special comfortable holding tray on the brit table, (The baby can also be placed on a pillow the Sandek's lap but this is not advisable because it is not stable). The I request that all guests close their eyes, pray for the well-being of the child, and sing 'Eliyahu Hanavi.' The sandek, places his arm around the baby while I recite the blessing of ritual circumcision and perform the circumcision. The father recites the blessing of the covenant. The baby is swaddled and handed to his mother for the naming followed by a blessing of speedy recovery for both mother and son. We celebrate!

**Candles:** Candles are lit before the brit (no blessing is recited). The origin of lit candles is not clear. The Talmud refers to the practice during a time when circumcision was prohibited: a lit candle in a window signaled the community where and when a brit was to take place (Ketubot Yerushalmi 1:5). A more spiritual origin may be that a lit candle represents a spark of life, a new soul entering the Jewish community. This is surmised from the phrase, " the candle of God is the soul of man" (Proverbs 20:27).

**Throne of Elijah.** We set aside a chair for the prophet Elijah (Eliyahu HaNavi), Angel of the Covenant. This tradition stems from the lore that Elijah comes to every brit to ensure the well-being of the child, and to report back to God that the Jewish people are still fulfilling the mitzvah of milah (Pirkei de Rabbi Eliezer 29). To honor the Angel of the Covenant, there is a custom of decorating this chair and reserving its use for three full days.

**Kvatter.** <sup>3</sup> One or two people will accompany mom as she carries the baby into the room. Often the honor is given to the grandparents, but it may be given to anyone. It is considered good luck for a couple seeking to have a baby to undertake such an honor; that is, God rewards those likewise who partake in a mitzvah (Bamidbar Rabbah 14:2).

**Barukh Habah!** As the baby is brought into the room everyone stands and greets him with the words: Barukh Habah (May the one who has entered be blessed!) The baby is then set upon the Throne of Elijah and guarded by a friend or family member. The mohel recites the words that greet Elijah, and that request God's assistance with the milah.

If more than one brit is to be held at the same time (e.g., in the case of twins). each must be done separately - each child is honored with the greeting of 'barukh habah' and a complete complement of blessings (Yoreh Deah 265:15).

**Sandek.** The sandek is the one honored with sitting beside the brit table and placing his arm around the child during the circumcision. The role of sandek is considered an extraordinarily spiritual honor, far greater than any other; even greater than that of the mohel, rabbi, or parents. For this reason. the sandek must be Jewish. Usually, one of the grandfathers is chosen, but you may honor any friend or family member. In some communities, the rabbi or father is so honored. Finally, the sandek should wear a tallit which will be partially draped over the child's head.

**Milah (Ritual circumcision).** Milah involves the fulfillment of a mitzvah, a commandment of God. <sup>4</sup> It is the act of circumcision itself that fulfills the mitzvah and not the recitation of blessings. Thus, only a Jew may perform milah (Yoreh Deah 264:1). As a sign of reverence for the impending covenant, it is appropriate for both the father and the mohel to don tallitot.

Immediately before the milah the mohel recites the blessing of the commandment of milah - "Blessed are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the universe, who sanctified us by Your commandments and commanded us regarding circumcision." Once the mohel completes the milah, the father recites the blessing of the covenant of Abraham:

ברוך אתה יי~ה אלהינו מלך העולם, אשר קדשנו במצוותיו, וצונו  
להכניסו בבריתו של אברהם אבינו.

Barukh atah adonai elohanu melekh ha'olam, asher kidshanu b'mitz  
vo-tav v'tzivanu l'hakhniso bivrito shel avraham avinu.

---

3 Kvatterin (fem). It is a common misconception, due to uncertain etymology, that Kvatter and kvatterin are godparents - they are not! They are simply beares of the child.

4 Ritual circumcision is not done for reasons of health or hygiene as is a medical circumcision. Any health consequences of a ritual circumcision are coincidental.

"Blessed are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the universe, who sanctified us by Your commandments and commanded us to have our sons enter into the covenant of Abraham our father."

Since the mitzvah of brit milah is that of the child's (and not of the parents), we (the community) remind the parents of their continued responsibility to assist their child in the performance of mitzvot we exclaim:

כָּשִׁים שְׂנֵכְנֵס לְבְרִית, כֵּן יִכְנֵס לְתוֹרָה וְלַחֻפָּה וְלַמַּעֲשִׂים טוֹבִים.

K'shaim she'nikhnas la'brit, kain yikanais l'torah u'l'chupah u'l'ma'asim  
tovim Amen.

"Just as he has entered into the covenant, so may he enter into the study of Torah, the marriage canopy, and the performance of good deeds  
Amen. "

**Giving the Name.** Following the milah the child will be given his Jewish name. Up to this point your son has no Jewish name only the parents need be privy to what it may be. There are many customs concerning the choosing of a name; consult your rabbi (or mohel) if you are in doubt. It is appropriate, though not required, to explain the origin your child's name following the naming. To symbolize the mother's integral role in the Covenant of Abraham, I ask that she hold her son for his naming.

**A Parents' Blessing.** Many parents want to affirm their commitment to the Covenant of Abraham and to their baby, and may do so with this optional blessing (or one of their choosing):

"Our God and God of our ancestors, we thank You for the precious gift of life and the blessing of parenthood. Eternal Creator, we ask Your continued blessing. Grant our child length of days and vigor of body and mind. Endow us with understanding and love, that we may rear our son, [son's name], to manhood filled with love of Torah and the performance of good deeds. May we be privileged to bring him to the wedding canopy  
Amen. "

**Seudat Mitzvat (Festive Meal).** The Talmud states that because brit milah is a precept that Jews accepted with joy, it is celebrated with joy (Shabbat 130a) song & dance and, most importantly, a festive meal (Yoreh Deah 265:12). This meal can range from the minimal challah and kosher wine to an elaborate feast. It is traditional to have sweets and other foods that are associated with a simcha. On fast days (e.g., Yom Kippur), we do not have a Seudat mitzvat.

**Orlah (foreskin).** Before entering Canaan, Joshua circumcised the Israelites according to God's command. The Israelites buried their foreskins and blood of brit milah in earth (Pirkei de Rabbi Eliezer 29; Yoreh Deah 265:10).

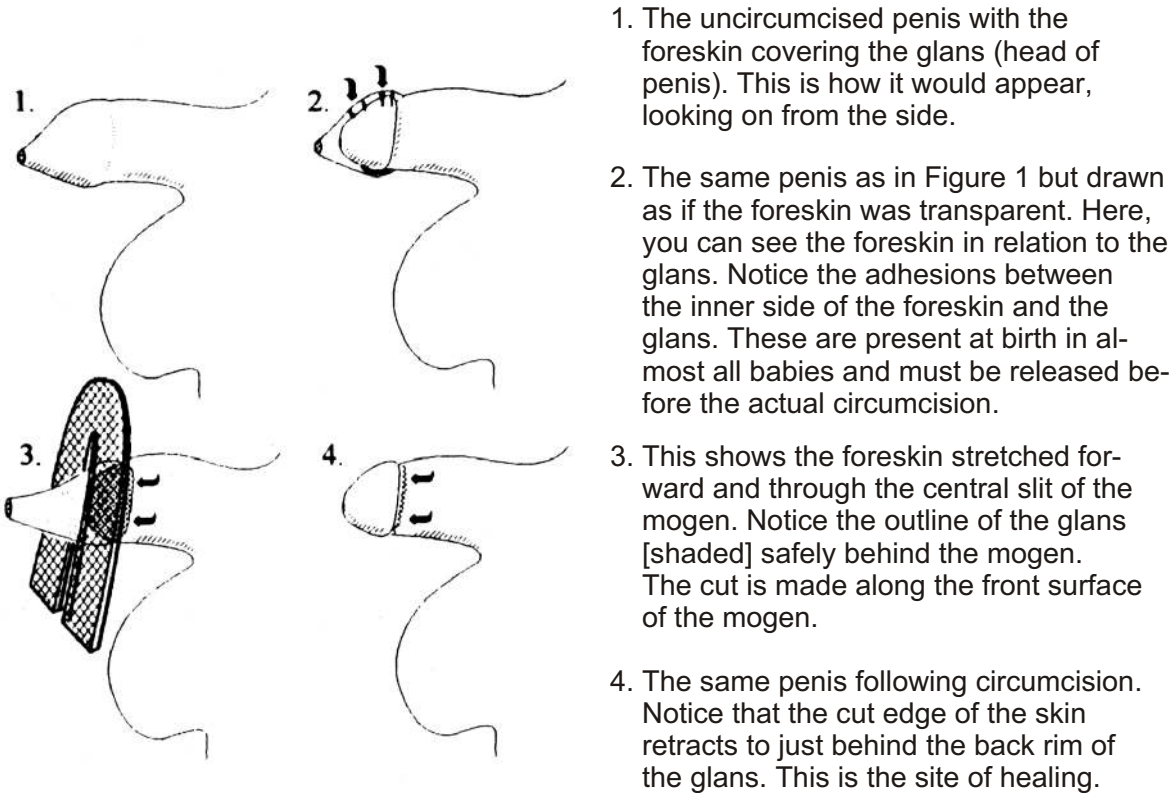


Since milah is the father's responsibility, I encourage him to do everything that he is capable of doing - like burying the foreskin. The foreskin may be buried anywhere. A beautiful custom is to bury the foreskin under the roots of a young tree, then harvest branches from this tree for the child's chuppah. Though no blessing is recited when burying the foreskin, it is a good time for mother and father to reflect on the significance of brit milah and their son's place in the Judaic continuum.

## ☞ *The Circumcision*

The entire circumcision (including bandaging) takes about 2 minutes, rarely longer. To calm the baby, a brown sugar filled gauze pacifier lightly moistened with sweet wine is used. .

**Figures 1 - 4.** Anatomy of the Circumcision



**Circumcision.** This is a simple operation that involves the removal of the foreskin that sheaths the head of the penis (Figures 1 & 2). The techniques used for ritual circumcision differ from those most often used in the medical profession. Most ritual circumcisions are either performed with a shield called a mo-gen or a special shield-like clamp called the mo-gen clamp ( I personally use the latter). The mo-gen technique is most notably known for its quickness and safety.

**Healing.** Healing is usually rapid and can be viewed in several stages. It should be remembered that this is like any other cut and that there are many factors that influence healing, but most importantly, every child heals differently. First, the cut edge seals and bleeding ceases within minutes. Within hours, maybe a day, the area just behind the glans (especially the underside) will become swollen; this inflammation will subside within a week or two. In a day or two there may be an off-white or yellowish, patchy appearance of the glans. These patches are a type of scab and are associated with normal healing. You will also notice that the glans is red and glossy. This is because the skin covering the glans of an uncircumcised penis is mucous membrane (like the skin inside your cheek). Once exposed, the mucous membrane will toughen (or keratinize) and in time take on a normal appearance (like the skin outside your cheek). The penis should take on a 'normal, healed appearance' in about a month.

**Complications.** Circumcision is associated with few and infrequent complications, though with any surgical procedure there are occasional problems, like bleeding. In almost all cases bleeding is controlled by direct pressure.

There are reported cases of infection, although these are rare amongst ritually circumcised children. Common signs of infection include: a pus-like discharge, a foul smell, excessive swelling or redness, local warmth, a fever, or a rash anywhere in the area of the penis. With any of these signs consult the mohel **without delay**.

**Appearance.** Aside from direct complications, the most common concern of parents is related to aesthetics. It should be remembered that penises come in all shapes & sizes. While most penises 'look normal' within days of the circumcision, some do not take on a 'completely normal appearance' until after the penis starts to grow. Furthermore, the penis may appear smaller after circumcision - it's not! This appearance is mostly due to the relaxation of skin surrounding the penis, which prior to circumcision holds the penis more erect.

On occasion, a poor aesthetic result occurs when too little or too much skin is removed, or more likely when the cut edge of the skin attaches too high or too low along the length of the penis. The latter is sometimes caused by the presence of a hydrocele or penile erections. In nearly all cases the penis will heal properly and in time take on a normal appearance.

*Even though complications are rare, do not hesitate to consult the mohel (at any time) if you have any questions about the appearance of the penis - remember, early treatment (if any is needed) is always best.*

One last comment. Each year, with over a million circumcisions performed in North America, there are only a few rare cases where complications were sufficient to require hospitalization or were considered life threatening. In fact, circumcision is regarded as one of the safest routine operations in practice today.

### *∞ In Addition*

**What about photos?** Both video and still photography are permissible except on days where they are otherwise prohibited; i.e., Shabbat and holidays.

Do other parents feel as nervous as I do? It is normal to be anxious about your son's brit. All parents experience some level of anxiety. And as strange as it may seem, it is the triumph of these feelings that will make your son's brit a heartfelt experience.

What about Pidyon Haben? If both father and mother are Israelites and this is the first ever vaginal opening of the mother's womb, you will want to have a Pidyon Haben (redemption of the first-born son) when your son is 31 days old. Please consult your rabbi for further information.

If you want to know more! I encourage you to talk to your rabbi (or mohel) to find out more about brit milah and about local customs. For further reference, "Guide to Ritual Circumcision and Redemption of the First-Born Son"<sup>5</sup> and "Berit Mila in the Reform Context"<sup>6</sup> are well written, easy to read books. The video "Circumcision? or Bris!, Surgery? or Simcha!"<sup>7</sup> does a good job of contrasting medical circumcision from brit milah.

---

*Mazel tov! May your son grow into a life of Torah,  
chuppah and good deeds; any may he become great.*

---

5 By Rabbi Eugene J. Cohen. ktav Publishing House, Inc., New York, 1984.

6 Edited by Rabbi Lewis Barth. Berit Mila Board of Reform Judaism, Los Angeles, 1990.

7 By Rabbi Yehoshua Krohn. Tradition!, New York, 1990, (1-800-222-9269).

### **Before the Brit:**

- It is necessary to have finished feeding your son one hour before the brit. One hour is ideal. This avoids painful indigestion from a recent meal and yet is not so long that your baby will be overly hungry.
- For the brit, your son should be dressed in a T-shirt, a disposable diaper, socks, and a receiving blanket (flannel is preferred).
- It is helpful (though not required) to have your son's penis examined by his physician before the day of the brit. This reduces the chances of a last minute postponement for health reasons.

### **General Care Following Circumcision:**

- Expect your son to be a little irritable for about a day.
- Most babies like to nurse in a quiet environment following the circumcision. A baby who cries for more than a few minutes is usually suffering from air swallowed during the circumcision and needs to be burped.
- Most babies sleep quite well following the circumcision. The best sleeping position for your baby is on his side, supported by a blanket roll.
- Healing is promoted by keeping the area clean and dry. Warm water and a cotton-ball or washcloth are preferred for cleaning the area around the penis. Avoid pre-moistened towelettes, alcohol, powders, and lotions, since these may cause irritation.
- Disposable diapers are strongly recommended for the first week since they tend to be less irritating and help keep the area dryer and cleaner.
- Word to the wise: Baby your baby; it is better both before and for about three days following the circumcision to restrict the handling of your baby to just a few people. Also, avoid unnecessary travel - car seats can be irritating to the new circumcision and can delay or perturb healing.
- **Finally, it is advisable to have your son's penis examined within 2-7 days by me, this can be arranged by calling 604.717.6200 to set up an appointment at one of my 4 offices**

### **Care Following Circumcision - the first 24 hours:**

- Keep your son snugly swaddled (especially his legs). The more he moves his legs the more discomfort he may experience.
  1. Wash your hands thoroughly.
  2. Squeeze a mound of Vaseline ointment (the size of a quarter) onto the center of a sterile 3 X 3 inch gauze square and set aside.
  3. Remove old diaper, clean any mess, and place new disposable diaper.

4. Remove old 3 X 3 inch gauze square only if it is dirty (i.e covered in feces) by gently peeling from bottom up. Expect to find some light blood stains with the first few changes they should progressively lighten with each change.
5. Inspect the area for fresh blood, then drape the new 3 X 3 inch gauze square over the penis so that the mound of ointment is applied directly over the tip of the penis. Close the diaper.
6. Afer 24 hours no gauze is needed just ointment for 6 days.

**If there is active bleeding:**

You treat bleeding on the penis the same as you would for the tip of a finger.

1. Apply pressure to the penis for 3 minutes; no less. Do this by grasping the penis between two or three fingers (over the 3 X 3 inch gauze square).
  2. Without removing the 3 X 3 inch gauze square, inspect the area for continued bleeding and repeat 'step 1' if necessary.
  3. Leave the 3 x 3 inch gauze square in place and close diaper - removing it may lead to renewed bleeding.
- In all cases of fresh bleeding, contact the mohel for further instructions.

**If the bandaging should stick:**

There will be a long gauze bandage (1/2 x 8 inches) wrapped around your son's penis. This bandage should fall off within the first 24 hours (when it does, do not attempt to replace it). If after 48 hours the gauze bandage is still in place, it will have to be removed:

1. Apply Vaseline ointment liberally and completely over the stuck surface.
  2. Allow 15 minutes to soften (with the diaper closed).
  3. Gently peel away surfaces that are no longer stuck.
- Repeat process as necessary.

**Boys with stout penises:**

When the length of the penile shaft is no greater than its diameter or when there is a goodly amount of pubic fat, the penis will probably tend to retract inward - which is normal. This characteristic is only a concern during the first month or two since the healing circumcision can adhere to the surrounding skin resulting in a 'concealed penis.' If your son fits this profile, you can reduce the chance of concealed penis by applying a very thin layer of vaseline ointment to the entire penis<sup>11</sup>, once a day, until the penis takes on a healed appearance (about 1 to 2 months). Remember, even if your son fits this profile, the incidence of concealed penis is low.

---

11. To expose a penis that has retracted inward, place gentle downward pressure on either side of the base of the penis. Consult the mohel or child's physician if the penis can not be fully exposed.

**What you need for your son's Bris:**

**Things you must have in the main room where the ceremony will take place:**

1. A table (e.g. bridge table or square table).
2. Three chairs around this table. One chair should have a pillow on it. On the bridge table should be one Kiddush cup filled two thirds full with a sweet Kosher wine. You do not need to have the wine bottle on the table.
3. Two candle holders with candles and matches (also on the table).
4. A spare disposable diaper. (N.B. At home have one week supply of disposable diapers for the first post-operative week.)
5. A garbage bag under the table.
6. A bright light shining onto the table preferably suspended above the table or set up beside the table.
7. A decorative table cloth.
8. A glass of juice, preferably apple, on the table.
9. A smaller saucer for my sugar balls.
10. A Tallit for the Sandek and a second one for the father.
11. The back page of your information book has a list of people to be honoured plus a list of the English and Jewish names of the family. It should be filled out and that page should be left on the table so that the Mohel can see the names during the naming ceremony.
12. Lots of Kippahs for your guests.
13. You may want to have a picture of the family member(s) after whom the baby was named on the bris table.

**We will also need a separate room to do the pre-examination of the child. This room must have the following:**

1. A closeable door.
2. A small table with a chair in front of it. This table should allow one person to stand behind it to hold the baby.
3. A bright light shining onto the table.
4. A diaper, diaper wipes, and a receiving blanket on the table.
5. A garbage bag under the table.
6. A soother on the table.

## General Information

- The Brit Milah must be on eighth day. The day of birth is day one.
- The Mitzvah of Brit Milah overrides the Sabbath and Festivals.
- The Brit Milah cannot be on the Sabbath or Festival (first and last two days of Passover; Shavuos; Rosh Hashanah; Yom Kippur; first two days of Succoth; Shemini Azereth; or Simchat Torah) *if*

(a) the Brit Milah was postponed for any reason, or

(b) Birth was by C-section, or

(c) Baby is being converted.

- Reasons for postponement:
  - (a) A Brit Milah cannot be performed on an ill child until he is fully recovered.
  - (b) A child with clinically significant jaundice. Your family doctor will decide this.
  - (c) If a child has an illness with a fever, he must be completely cured for seven 24-hour periods before his Brit Milah.

(d) If the child required a transfusion, he must wait a full seven days for his Brit Milah.

(e) If the child was in an incubator, he must wait seven full days from the time he was released.

(f) The child should weigh at least 5½ lbs – 6 lbs.

Consultation between the doctor and the Mohel is customary and may modify some of the above conditions. For example, if the baby had one degree of fever for a few hours, the doctor may not feel the postponement is necessary.

(g) A Brit Milah may not be delayed for convenience.


- The Brit Milah must be during daylight hours.
- It is customary to have a festive meal for your guests after the ceremony.
- Ashkenazic Jews traditionally name their children after a deceased relative or close friend. Sephardic Jews traditionally name the baby in honor of a living relative.
- The current American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommendation is that circumcision be performed with anesthesia. It is clear in Jewish law (halacha) anesthesia is permitted during a Brit Milah. As licensed physician, Dr. Pollock is able to provide local anesthesia



**Keep in mind the following things:**

1. Turn off the phones and answering machines before the ceremony. Place a sign on the door that reads "PLEASE COME IN" so that guests will not knock on the door during the ceremony.
2. Have your guests come 15 minutes before the start of the ceremony (but preferably no early) so that it may begin on time.
3. I will be there 1 hour before start time to prepare the baby, family and room.
4. Don't feed your baby before the ceremony. Last feeding should be one hour before the Bris is scheduled.
5. Give your baby 1.0 millilitre of Tempra or Children's Tylenol syrup the concentration should be 80mg/ml written on the box or bottle one hour before the Bris is scheduled to start. **Do not give Advil or any medication instead of Tylenol or Tempra.**
6. If your child has any medical problems or significant jaundice discuss this with the Mohel before giving the Tylenol.
7. Refer to page 10 for care for the first twenty-four hour period. For the following 6 days put a small amount of Vaseline ointment on your finger and rub it over the incision site placing a thin layer of ointment over the head of the penis and cut area to avoid this healing area sticking to the diaper.
8. You can sponge bath your baby for the first two or three days and do not submerge him in water for this period.
9. **I will bring you the gauze and ointment-you do not need to get it. If you have any other comments or questions do not hesitate to call. In case of emergency call me anytime at (604) 644-5775.**

Yours Sincerely,



Neil Pollock, M.D., Mohel NP/rp

**Note: Please sign the attached consent form & present it to me before the circumcision as I can not proceed without it. (see next page)**

## Glossary:

Bris / Brit	Bris is the Ashkenazi (Eastern European) pronunciation of brit. In modern or Sephardic Hebrew it is pronounced brit. Colloquially used to mean ritual circumcision ceremony.
Challah	Braided egg bread. Matzo may be substituted for challah.
Chuppah	Marriage canopy.
Concealed penis	An uncommon complication where the cut edge of the circumcision adheres to the surrounding skin trapping the penis in a retracted state. In most cases, concealed penis can be prevented (see above).
Congenital	This refers to anatomical abnormalities that are present at birth. Hypospadias, where the urethral opening occurs along the underside of the penis, is a common example (present in 1 out of 300 male births).
Eliyahu Hanavi	Elijah the Prophet. Song: Eliyahu Hanavi, Eliyahu Hatishbi, Eliyahu, Eliyahu, Eliyahu ha-Giladi. Bimheira V'yameinu, yavo eilenu. Im Mashiach ben Dovid, im Mashiach ben Dovid... (May the Prophet Elijah come soon, in our time. With the Messiah, son of David).
Fever	Newborn: Any sustained elevation in axillary (underarm) temperature above 99.4°F (37.4°C) or rectal temperature above 100.4°F (38.0°C).
Hydrocele	A congenital condition characterized by a fluid filled membrane protruding into the scrotum that waxes with activity and crying, and wanes during periods of rest. The waxing and waning of the scrotal size indirectly tugs on the circumcision and may disrupt healing.
Israelite	One of the 3 patriarchal divisions of Judaism: Kohen, Levi, and Israelite. Most Jews including all converts are Israelites.
Jaundice	A condition characterized by a yellowish appearance of the skin. It is a common, if not normal, condition in newborn babies between day 2 and day 11. Elevated bilirubin (a by-product of red blood cells) produces jaundice. Severe jaundice or extreme bilirubin levels may indicate an abnormal condition which would justify the delay of a brit.
Laws of Shabbat	The Jewish code of laws that discusses what is and is not allowed on Shabbat (e.g., Mishnah Berurah 111) and on the following holidays: first two and last two days of Passover; Shavuot; Rosh Hashanah; Yom Kippur; first two days of Succot; Shemini Atzeret; and Simchat Torah.
Low Birth Weight	Any full term birth weight less than 5½ pounds (2500 grams)
Minyon	A quorum of 10 adult Jews.
Mitzvah	pl. mitzvot. A commandment of God. Colloquially used to mean a good deed.
Simcha	Joy or a joyous occasion.
Tallit	tallis pl. tallitot, A prayer shawl with fringes.

**REGISTRATION FORM**

RE: BRIS

**Names of Family Members:**

*English Names*

*Jewish Names*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Son

\_\_\_\_\_  
Son

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent 1

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent 1

1. \_\_\_\_\_

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

Parents of Parent 1

Parents of Parent 1

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent 2

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent 2

1. \_\_\_\_\_

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

Parents of Parent 2

Parents of Parent 2

**Address of Bris:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Address (including city and postal code)

**Contact:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Preferred Phone Number

\_\_\_\_\_  
Email

**Honors:**

*Please record the name of your honorees*

Light candles: \_\_\_\_\_

Throne of Elijah: \_\_\_\_\_

Kvatter: \_\_\_\_\_

Sandek: \_\_\_\_\_

**A Note Regarding Supplies:**

Dr. Pollock will supply the ointment and sterile 3x3 inch gauze squares. Please ensure you have the following supplies: disposable diapers, kosher wine, candles, a tallit, and kipot.

**CONSENT FORM**

RE: BRIS

I agree to have my son circumcised by Dr. Neil L. Pollock. In signing this consent form for a circumcision or bris I am stating that the complications and risks of this procedure have been explained to me including risks of bleeding, infection, removing too much or too little foreskin, and trauma to the head of the penis. Although rare, I understand that more serious complications may arise.

I understand all of the above mentioned risks regarding this procedure. Dr. Pollock has explained the post-operative management to me.

Although it is impossible for Dr. Pollock to inform me of every possible complication that may occur, Dr. Pollock has answered all my questions to my satisfaction.

I agree to bring my son back to post-operative checks within 3-5 days of the procedure.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Parent/Guardian

\_\_\_\_\_  
Witness's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent or Guardian Name (Printed)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Witness's Name (Printed)