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## Brit Milah

Mazal Tov on the birth of your son!

The Torah states (Vayikra/Leviticus 12:3) that Brit Milah (circumcision) takes place on the eighth day inclusive after a baby boy is born, subject to the baby being fit and well. If the baby is not ready on the eighth day, the Brit Milah is ideally performed as soon as possible once the baby is ready.

Brit Milah, which represents the continuation of God's covenant with Abraham is one of the most ancient and enduring rituals in Judaism.

The source of Brit Milah can be traced back to the book of Bereshit (Genesis) where God said to Abraham, *"This is My covenant which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: Every male child among you shall be circumcised."*(Genesis 17: 10)

Why is the eighth day the ideal day to perform a Brit Milah? We learn that the seventh day of creation, Shabbat, represents the unity between God and the Universe. The eighth day, the first day after the seven days of creation, represents values beyond nature and hence a metaphysical connection with God. Brit Milah, which combines a physical action with a metaphysical link to God and to God's continuing involvement in history even after the seven days of creation, is therefore carried out on the eighth day.

As noted above, if a Brit Milah cannot be performed on the eighth day, it is postponed until the Mohel (a qualified person who performs the circumcision) has deemed it safe to do so. A postponed Brit cannot take place on Shabbat or a Yom Tov.

The [Initiation Society](#) <sup>[1]</sup>, which operates under the aegis of the Chief Rabbi, trains and supervises many Mohalim (plural) to make sure that its Mohalim are fully trained with the relevant medical and halachic (Jewish law) expertise for performing a Brit Milah. We strongly recommend that you only use a Mohel who is licensed by the Initiation Society. Please click the link for [a list of such Mohalim](#)<sup>[2]</sup>.

### The Ceremony

You can find the order of service on page 800 in the green edition of the Singer's Siddur.

The ceremony can be held either at home or in another place, such as a synagogue. The main factor is that the location should be convenient for the mother and baby!

Often, the ceremony takes place in the morning, such as straight after morning prayers, but can take place at any time during the day before sunset, if early morning is not convenient.

We set out below the standard procedure for a Brit Milah. If you have any questions about your circumstances, please ask your rabbi or Mohel for advice.

The service begins with the mother passing the baby to the 'Kvaterin', a lady who starts the procession to the area where the Brit Milah will take place. This honour is often given to a newly married couple but can be given to any family member or friend.

Often, the baby is carried along on a special satin, or embroidered white pillow. If she is married, the Kvaterin then passes the baby to her husband, the Kvater, who completes the procession.

Two chairs are set out in the area where the Brit Milah will take place. The first is for the 'Sandek', who holds the baby on his knees during the Brit. This is considered the highest honour at the ceremony. It is often given to the baby's grandfather or a rabbi.

The second chair is known as the 'kisei shel Eliyahu' (Elijah's chair). According to Jewish teachings, the Biblical prophet Elijah spiritually visits every Brit Milah to testify to the commitment of the Jewish people to this great mitzvah (commandment).

After the Mohel has made the bracha (blessing) and performed the Brit Milah, the father responds with his own bracha, followed by two more blessings recited over a cup of wine. The baby is then given his Hebrew name. Finally, a seudat mitzvah (festive meal) is served. This can typically consist of bagels and other similar snacks – it does not have to be a full-blown party! – and is followed by a special version of Birkat Hamazon (Grace after meals) for this meal. Many London Beth Din licensed kosher bakeries can provide platters of bagels and other food for this occasion. You can find a list of these bakeries [here](#) [3] [4].

For the full service see pages 800 – 810 in the green edition of the Singer's Siddur.

We wish you mazaltov and every happiness with your new son! Don't forget to apply for a free [Tribe baby gift pack](#) [5] as well.

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[2] <http://initiationsociety.org.uk/mohel.htm>

[3] <http://www.theus.org.uk/article/bakeries>

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