"The Bris"

Frequently Asked Shaylos

Rabbi Ya'akov Trump

Why do we do a bris?

We do this because it is mandated in the Torah

Vayikra 12:2-3

דַּבֵּר אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר אִשָּׁה כִּי תַזְרִיעַ וְיָלְדָה זָכָר וְטָמְאָה שִׁבְעַת יָמִים כִּימֵי נִדַּת דְּוֹתָהּ תִּטְמָא׃

Speak to the Israelite people thus: When a woman at childbirth bears a male, she shall be impure seven days; she shall be impure as at the time of her condition of menstrual separation.

וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁמִינִי יִמּוֹל בְּשַׂר עָרְלָתוֹ׃

On the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised.

Other ideas embedded in this mitzva:

- **Idea 1: Uniqueness**
  - Sefer Hachinuch 2 – It is to be a sign of distinction between Israel and the world.
- **Idea 2: The Mission of Life**
  - Tanchuma, Tazria 5 – It is meant to be a symbol of the power of human self perfection.
- **Idea 3: Altruism**
  - TB Menachos 43b explains that David Hamelech was in the bathhouse and was concerned about being naked from mitzvos until he realized he had the Mila. What does this mean? Rav Baruch of Mezebush explains that David was examining his own actions. He was searching for pure intentions and found none in all his good actions. Until he came to his bris mila, which he realized was his only altruistic mitzva.

Why only for boys?

Moreh Nevuchim 3:49 – This is a mitzva intended to temper sexual drive.

Why the 8th day?

Moreh Nevuchim 3:49 suggests that the mila takes place on the 8th day because that is the time the child is considered viable, like by korbanos needing to be 8 days old.

Who has the responsibility of making the bris?

Mishna Torah 1:1-2 – It is the father's responsibility. If he fails that responsibility, it is the responsibility of the beis din. If they do not do their duty, it is incumbent on the person themselves to get circumcised.

Where should we make the bris?

The place a bris should be is in the shul unless not possible.

Should I keep my Tefillin on?

Shach, YD 265:9 – One should keep it on because it is a sign like the bris is a sign. There are others who suggest taking them off.

If one is going to end up speaking mundane matters in them, it is better to take them off beforehand.

What are the honors at the bris?

1. Kvatter – man who brings the baby into the room
2. Kvatrin – woman who brings the baby to the man who bring the baby into the room
3. Kisei shel Eliyahu – person who puts the baby on the kisei shel eliyahu
4. (Min Hakisei) – person who lifts the baby from kisei shel eliyahu
5. Sandek – person who holds the baby during the bris
6. Brachos – person who says the bracha on the wine and the bris
7. Amida L'Brachos – person who holds the baby while the brachos are recited
8. Krias Hashem – person who recites the prayer giving the baby the name
9. Amida L'Krias Hashem - person who holds the baby while the name is being given

What is the Kisei shel Eliyahu?

The Avudraham explains that since Eliyahu claimed that Israel was not keeping the covenant of the bris, Hashem mandated that he attend every bris to testify to Israel continues to keep the bris.

Who should get the honor of sandek?

The Maharil explains that the sandek is the biggest honor at the bris. It is considered to be like the cohen who brings the incense on the alter, which is a segula for riches, among other things. Thus, it should not be given to the same person twice for one family.

What are the brachos which are said?

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ עַל הַמִּילָה׃

Blessed are You, Adonoy our God, King of the Universe, Who sanctified us with His commandments, and commanded us concerning the circumcision.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ לְהַכְנִיסוֹ בִּבְרִיתוֹ שֶׁל אַבְרָהָם אָבִינוּ׃

Blessed are You, Adonoy our God, King of the Universe, Who sanctified us with His commandments, and commanded us to bring him into the covenant of our father, Abraham.

Who says them?

The mohel says the first one, and the father says the second one.

When are they said?

The bracha of *al hamila* before the *mila* and the *bracha* of *lehachniso* right after. The Avudraham explains that the bracha of *al hamila* is a *birkas hamitzva* and therefore needs to be before the *mila*. The *bracha* of *lehachniso* is afterwards since it is birkas hashevach(appreciating the wonders of Hashem).

What does the assembled crowd respond and why?

The Ramo YD 265:1 explains that everyone should be standing.

Sefardim respond to the brachos with the nusach of the Shulchan Aruch YD 265:1 which is:

כְּשֵׁם שֶׁהִכְנַסְתּוֹ לַבְּרִית, כָּךְ תִּזְכֶּה לְהַכְנִיסוֹ לַתּוֹרָה וְלַמִּצְוֹת וְלַחֻפָּה וּלְמַעֲשִׂים טוֹבִים:

Ashkenazim respond to the brachos with the nusach of the Shach sk 3 which is:

אָמֵן. כְּשֵׁם שֶׁנִּכְנַס לַבְּרִית, כֵּן יִכָּנֵס לְתוֹרָה וּלְחֻפָּה וּלְמַעֲשִׂים טוֹבִים:
Amein! Even as he has entered into the covenant, so may he enter into the [study of] Torah, chupah [the nuptial canopy], and good deeds.

Is there a bracha of Shechiyanu?

Sefardim have the practice for the father to recite the bracha of shehechiyanu.

Ashkenazim have the practice not to say this bracha. The Shibolei Haleket (Mila 4) explains that since there is pain to the child, it is not the time to say such a bracha.

What are the brachos after the bris?

Bracha on the wine and the ceremony:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרִי הַגָּפֶן:
Blessed are You, Adonoy our God, King of the Universe, Who creates the fruit of the vine.
בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדַּשׁ יְדִיד מִבֶּטֶן, וְחוֹק בִּשְׂאֵרוֹ שָׂם, וְצֶאֱצָאָיו חָתַם בְּאוֹת בְּרִית קוֹדֶשׁ, עַל כֵּן בִּשְׂכַר זֹאת, אֵל חַי חֶלְקֵנוּ צוּרֵנוּ, צַוֵּה לְהַצִּיל יְדִידוּת שְׁאֵרֵנוּ מִשָּׁחַת. לְמַעַן בְּרִיתוֹ אֲשֶׁר שָׂם בִּבְשָׂרֵנוּ. בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, כּוֹרֵת הַבְּרִית:
Blessed are You, Adonoy our God, King of the Universe, Who sanctified [Isaac] the beloved one, from birth, and set Your statute in his flesh, and sealed his offspring with the sign of the holy covenant. Therefore, on this account, living Almighty, our Portion, our Rock, give the command to rescue the beloved soul within our flesh from destruction, for the sake of His covenant that He has set in our flesh. Blessed are You, Adonoy, Maker of the covenant.

Calling of the name:

אֱלֹהֵינוּ וֵאלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ, קַיֵּם אֶת הַיֶּלֶד הַזֶּה לְאָבִיו וּלְאִמּוֹ וְיִקָּרֵא שְׁמוֹ בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל (פלוני) בֶּן (פלוני) יִשְׂמַח הָאָב בְּיוֹצֵא חֲלָצָיו, וְתָגֵל אִמּוֹ בִּפְרִי בִטְנָהּ. כַּכָּתוּב, יִשְׂמַח אָבִיךָ וְאִמֶּךָ וְתָגֵל יוֹלַדְתֶּךָ. וְנֶאֱמַר, וְאֶעֱבוֹר עָלַיִךְ וָאֶרְאֵךְ מִתְבּוֹסֶסֶת בְּדָמָיִךְ, וָאֹמַר לָךְ בְּדָמָיִךְ חֲיִי. וָאֹמַר לָךְ בְּדָמָיִךְ חֲיִי. וְנֶאֱמַר, זָכַר לְעוֹלָם בְּרִיתוֹ, דָּבָר צִוָּה לְאֶלֶף דּוֹר. אֲשֶׁר כָּרַת אֶת אַבְרָהָם וּשְׁבוּעָתוֹ לְיִשְׂחָק וַיַּעֲמִידֶהָ לְיַעֲקֹב לְחוֹק, לְיִשְׂרָאֵל בְּרִית עוֹלָם. וְנֶאֱמַר, וַיָּמָל אַבְרָהָם אֶת יִצְחָק בְּנוֹ בֶּן שְׁמוֹנַת יָמִים, כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה אֹתוֹ אֱלֹהִים: הוֹדוּ לַיהוָה כִּי טוֹב, כִּי לְעוֹלָם חַסְדּוֹ הוֹדוּ לַיהוָה כִּי טוֹב, כִּי לְעוֹלָם חַסְדּוֹ זֶה הַקָּטוֹן (פלוני) בֶּן (פלוני) גָּדוֹל יִהְיֶה, כְּשֵׁם שֶׁנִּכְנַס לַבְּרִית, כֵּן יִכָּנֵס לְתוֹרָה וּלְחֻפָּה וּלְמַעֲשִׂים טוֹבִים:

Our God and God of our fathers, preserve this child to his father and his mother, and let his name be called in Israel (the child's Hebrew name) son of (father's Hebrew name). May his father rejoice in his offspring and may his mother exult in the fruit of her womb; as it is written: Let your father and your mother rejoice, and let her who gave birth to you exult. And it is said: And I passed by you and saw you staggering in your blood, 'and I said to you, In your blood live!' 'And I said to you, in your blood live!' And it is said: He remembered His covenant forever, the word which He commanded to a thousand generations. Which He made as a treaty with Abraham, and which was His oath to Isaac. And He established it for Jacob as a statute, for Israel as an everlasting covenant. And it is said: Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him. Thank Adonoy for He is good, for His kindness endures forever. Thank Adonoy, for He is good, for His kindness endures forever. This little child—(child's Hebrew name) son of (father's Hebrew name) may he become great. Even as he entered into the covenant, so may he enter into the [study of] Torah, chupah [the nuptial canopy] and good deeds.

Why is the name-calling at the bris?

It would seem that this is the first time this child is part of the nation of Israel and as such receives his name then.

How does the ceremony end?

It closes with Aleinu. The Yaavetz explains that this is because it include the phrase – velo asuna kegoyei ha'aratzos – that Hashem did not make us like the nations of the world. Now this child is included in this phrase.

Who should get invited to the meal?

There should minimally be a minyan at the meal but one should be careful not to invite people to the meal or make an announcement about it since a person who does not partake in such a meal is considered cursed. (Shulchan Aruch YD 265:12)

What should happen at the meal?

Usually the father/parents will give a Dvar Torah, thank yous and an explanation of the name they chose.

What is unique about the meal?

It is a seudas mitzva. People should wash and then in Birkas hamazon say the special zimun for the bris and add the 6 special harachamans at the end.

What happens if the bris is on Shabbos?

The bris mila pushes aside Shabbos but all the ancillary preparations need to be done before Shabbos.