

כיבודים – Honors

Since Brit Milah / Circumcision is such a tremendous Mitzvah [Commandment from G-d], anyone involved in its process is considered honored and meritorious. We strive to involve as many people as possible in the process thereby giving them the merit and honor of being involved in this special event.

Honors are usually accorded to Rabbis, family members and close friends who have come to join in the Brit. Here is a brief explanation of each of the honors / roles that can be delegated, and the customs and traditions that come along with each one.

1) קוואטר – GODPARENTS - THE ONES WHO BRING IN THE BABY - is an honor usually accorded to a couple. The wife brings the baby to the entrance of the room where the Mohel is and the Brit will take place, and her husband brings the baby to where the Mohel is standing and the Brit will be done. [This honor is traditionally regarded as a Segulah (omen) for childless couples to conceive. There are many stories of this honor working wonders for people.]

2) כסא של אליהו - CHAIR OF ELIJAH - Since Elijah the Prophet comes to each and every Jewish boy's Brit, we prepare a chair in his honor, and before the Brit the baby is briefly placed on Elijah's Chair. The one chosen to place the baby on Elijah's Chair is the recipient of this great honor. Although this is a high honor, it is still on a lower level than #3,4,5,6 &7. It is a prime opportunity for the recipient of this honor to pray for whatever he needs.

[Note: During the actual Brit, it is considered a prime opportunity for all present to pray to G-d. The Rabbis say that the prayers said during the Brit go straight up to G-d's high chair of honor on the wings of the baby's pure tears being shed for the fulfillment of G-d's commandment. This chance for the one placing the baby on Elijah's chair is an even greater opportunity, afforded to him personally.]

3) סנדק - SANDEK - HOLDING THE BABY DURING THE BRIT - This is considered the highest honor of all at the Brit. The custom is to choose a respectable and prestigious person for this honor because it is said that he actually has an influence on the character traits of the child. Aside from that, he is considered to be the Alter on which the parents are sacrificing a piece of their son solely for G-d's sake - to fulfill his commandment [similar to Abraham sacrificing Isaac]. Because of that, the custom is that the Father of the Baby places his child on the Sandek's lap immediately prior to the Brit, to play the role of placing his son on the Alter.

4) ברכות - BLESSINGS - the one who recites the blessing of the Brit. [This is a different blessing than the Mohel and Father say, their blessings are specific to the act they are doing, whereas this blessing is a general blessing for the Mitzvah of Brit being performed.] This honor is customarily given to a Rabbi or at least someone proficient in reading Hebrew.

5) עמידה לברכות - HOLDING THE BABY DURING THE BLESSING - This honoree is a completion of the job of Sandek [holding the baby during the Brit] which puts it high up in the level of honors. Since it is a silent role it is commonly given to relatives and Rabbis alike.

6) קריאת השם – BESTOWING THE NAME - A Jewish baby boy receives his Hebrew/Jewish name at his Brit. This is the prayer in which the name is bestowed. At the appropriate time the Father customarily whispers the chosen name into the ear of the one reciting the prayer who then says it out loud. Many times the one honored with this role is one to whom the chosen name has special meaning. This honoree must also be proficient in reading Hebrew.

7) עמידה לקריאת השם - HOLDING THE BABY DURING THE NAMING - similar to holding during the Blessing, this is also considered a completion of the Sandek role, and is a silent but prestigious honor.

OPTIONAL HONORS

8) ליד כסא של אליהו - Handing the baby to the one who puts the baby on THE CHAIR OF ELIJAH

מיד כסא של אליהו - Taking the baby off of THE CHAIR OF ELIJAH

מיד הסנדק - Taking the baby off the SANDEK'S lap

These three honors are totally optional. [If you do not honor someone with them they will just be left out.] They are of less prestige than the others, but as mentioned, anyone holding the baby during the entire Brit process is considered fortunate to take part in this great Mitzvah.

NOTE:

It is customary to honor only men for all the aforementioned roles except for the Kvatter - bringing in the baby, which is accorded to a couple.

The custom is that all the above honorees wear a Tallit [prayer shawl] while performing their role. It is therefore good to have a few extra Tallitot around for the Brit. If you do not have any, please advise the Mohel and he can make sure to bring some along.

All Men should also wear Kippot.