

Thom E Lobe, MD  
(901) 550-1378  
DrThom@yourchicagomohel.com/YourChicagoMohel.com

From: Thom E Lobe, MD  
Re: **Your Baby's Brit Milah**

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Mazel Tov on the birth, or pending birth, of your baby. Brit means covenant, and relates to an agreement or commitment between G-d and the Jewish people. Milah means circumcision. The ceremony we are planning will link your baby to our rich heritage and tradition. It will be a profound moment and my goal is to work together and make it one of painless, sacred beautiful.

As always, there are 3 parts to a Brit Milah, or Bris in Yiddish:

- 1) The circumcision
- 2) The baby naming
- 3) A festive meal

In a Brit Milah there can be several honored participants. I find that the Bris is more special if you include loved ones in this ceremony. These are some of the traditional roles they can play. Sometimes these roles are virtual and sometimes symbolic:

- a) Sandek, one or more guests who sit with the baby, soothing and comforting him during the circumcision by giving him a pacifier, or a gauze soaked in sweet wine or sugar. It is customary for this person to be Jewish. This is a sacred role just as comforting a person in stress is a sacred role. The Bris will be performed on a table, not on the Sandek's lap.
- b) Kvater (man) and/or Kvatterin (woman) is the religious G-dparent(s) of your son. Some believe they are responsible for his Jewish education. There is a belief that this role will enhance the couples' fertility so be careful in your selection! Kvatterin are often friends or the baby's Aunts and Uncles.
- c) Some families light candles at a Brit Milah. Historians believe during Roman occupation, when circumcision was outlawed, candles burning in a window was code that a Bris was taking place. Candle lighting at the Bris is often performed by the Grandmothers or elders(s).
- d) Motzi over bread and Kiddush over wine, blessings often done by children or Great Grandparents. Some families have everyone unmute and recite this together in a beautiful chorus.
- e) Blessings for the child and personal reflections and wishes can be provided by guests and family.
- f) An attending clergy member such as a Rabbi or Cantor may be honored by naming the baby.

**ITEMS NEEDED FOR THE CEREMONY**  
**PLEASE GATHER OR PURCHASE THESE BEFORE THE BRIS**

- Some chairs: one is the Chair of Elijah the Prophet which can be adorned with a family tallis, pillows, cloths, prayer books etc. Some synagogues have special chairs for this purpose. The other chair(s) is for the you to sit with the baby and comfort him.
- 1 table: large enough to hold the baby.
- Family Judaica such as a kiddush cup, challah, and candles if used.
- Challah and challah cover. Please don't put other food on this table until after the ceremony.
- Kosher sweet wine or grape juice with a Kiddush cup or wine glass
- Tallis (optional) – a family Tallis is a nice touch. Let me know if you need me to bring a Tallis
- Kippot/Yalmukahs (optional) – for guests
- Table Cloth (optional)
- Pictures or family mementos you wish to display
- Candles, matches and candle holders (preferred but optional)
- Several receiving blankets and bundling cloths
- Extra diapers
- Pacifier if the baby uses one
- Change of clothes for just before the ceremony - It is easiest if the baby wears a pull up gown, or shirt and pants.

**BEFORE THE CEREMONY**

If the bris is not in your home, arrive at least one hour before the scheduled time. The baby needs to be relaxed. He should be fed on schedule or demand.

**ITEMS REQUIRED FOR POST CIRCUMCISION**

Diapers, wipes, gauze, bacitracin or Vaseline

**THE NAMING CEREMONY**

A baby's Hebrew name is his ceremonial name to be used when in front of the Torah. A Hebrew name may have no relation to his English name. In the Eastern European or Ashkanazi tradition the Hebrew name often honors a relative who has passed. In the Mizrachi or Sepharadi tradition the Hebrew name often honors a living relative.

Parents sometimes ask me how to find a Hebrew name. One lovely idea suggested to me resonates - after the birth, go online to Hebcal.com, and read the Torah Portion that is chanted the Sabbath after the birth. This is his birth portion. See if a name or image from the birth portion speaks to you. Other options are the many books and websites to help find a Hebrew name; I can help as well.

Please take a minute to write down some words about the personal significance of the name you choose. Who are you are honoring? What memories are cherished about that person? What type of person was s/he and what was her/his life like? What blessings and traits would you like that person to gift to your baby? One day, your baby

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may want to know about his namesake so I suggest writing this information down and tucking it away. It can be very powerful if you, or someone reads this at the ceremony.

**THE MEAL**

Kosher, or kosher style please. Avoid overt non-kosher food such as pork or shrimp out of respect for our heritage.

**POST CIRCUMCISION CARE** varies based on dressing used:

- Wound glue – no care required. The glue is waterproof, decreases infection and needs no care. I bring this to the Brit Milah.
- Vaseline gauze -Remove Vaseline gauze with each diaper change and continue to use Vaseline in the area for 3 days. If you cannot see the entire head of the penis, push (do not pull) downward, any skin covering the head of the penis. If it does not separate easily, you may use a wet Q-tip, gently pushing as you might a cuticle. Do this around the penis, avoiding the 6:00 position. Do this until the groove just below the head of the penis is seen. No other care is needed. If there is swelling or discoloration don't worry, it will heal.

**FEE**

My suggested fee is sliding scale meaning not so much as to be a burden but not so little to be inconsequential. Typical fee is \$800 to \$1000 and varies with the travel distance from Downtown Chicago. Please pay me before the ceremony. I accept cash, Zelle, Venmo, or check. I will provide you with a Superbill for your insurance which may allow you reimbursement of some of the fee if you have out of network benefits and have met your deductible. TWINS: please add \$200-\$300 to the fee.

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If you are interested, some of my families have offered to speak to other clients about this process. I can link you at your request. I also recommend looking at The New Jewish Baby Book by Anita Diamant. It is a well written guidebook to this extraordinary moment.

Please contact me with questions, input, concerns and feedback. I need to know how you envision your child's Bris. What seems Holy to you? Working together makes this moment even more special and seamless.

May you cherish the joy of this time and save these feelings to revisit over the years!  
May you be blessed to see many joyous moments in the life of your child!

B'Shalom,

Thom E Lobe, MD, FACS, FAAP  
Certified Mohel, member of NOAM  
Fellowship trained and Board Certified Pediatric Surgeon  
Chief of Pediatric Surgery/Urology, The University of Illinois at Chicago, Mount Sinai Hospital, Chicago, and John Stroger (Cook County) Hospital, Chicago, IL

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Thom E Lobe, MD  
773-850-0699  
DrThom@yourchicagomohel.com/YourChicagoMohel.com