



# ShalomBaby

## Bris or Brit Milah

According to Jewish law, a healthy baby boy is circumcised on the eighth day after his birth. Abraham is commanded in Genesis 17 to bear the mark of his special relationship to G-d in his and his descendants' flesh. The instructions in the Torah state "at the age of eight days every male among you throughout the generations shall be circumcised." The *brit milah*, the ritual ceremony of removing the foreskin which covers the glans of the penis, is a simple surgical procedure that can take place in the home or synagogue and marks the identification of a baby boy as a Jew.

The ceremony is traditionally conducted by a *mohel*, a highly trained and skilled individual, although a rabbi in conjunction with a physician may perform the *brit milah*. The *brit milah* is a joyous occasion for the parents, relatives and friends who celebrate this momentous event.

At the *brit milah*, it is customary to appoint a *kvater* (a man) and a *kvaterin* (a woman), the equivalent of Jewish godparents, whose ritual role is to bring the child into the room for the circumcision. Another honor bestowed on a family member is the *sandak* who is most often the baby's paternal grandfather or great-grandfather. This individual traditionally holds the baby during the circumcision ceremony.

The service involves a *kiddush* (prayer over wine), a *challah* (twisted egg bread), the circumcision, blessings, a *dvar torah* (a small teaching of the Torah) and the presentation of the Jewish name selected for the baby. During the *brit milah*, a chair is set aside for Elijah the prophet. Following the ceremony, a *seudat mitzvah* (celebratory meal) is available for the guests.

For information about the *brit milah* for your son, call your rabbi or Jconnect at (301) 348-7356 or (703) 286-1022. You may also want to learn more about *brit milah* from [myjewishlearning.com](http://myjewishlearning.com).



The Jewish Federation  
OF GREATER WASHINGTON