



Secret of the Bris

All Jewish ceremonies have a certain magic that is associated with them, that creates special moods and triggers different spiritual responses in a person. Bris Milah ceremony is no exception. There is obviously the awe of another member entering into the covenant, and the excitement of the name of the child; yet, beyond that there is the intensity of the revelation of Eliyahu Hanavi that affects each person present at a bris. The father prepares a special chair at the bris called *Kisei shel Eliyahu*, and this designation is mentioned out loud.

Why does Eliyahu Hanavi appear at each bris? The classic answer is rooted in an event in the life of Eliyahu Hanavi. At one point, he fled from Izevel who was trying to kill him, ran to Har Sinai, and complained to Hashem that the Jews had left His brit. Hashem, therefore, as a punishment for Eliyahu's zealotry against the people, makes Eliyahu Hanavi go to every brit,

and come back to Hashem to report how the people are indeed keeping His brit. Prisha sees this as a reward to Eliyahu Hanavi. Since he was so concerned about the people keeping the brit, he is rewarded seeing every brit that takes place. Rav Wolfson notes that Eliyahu Hanavi stays with the *sandek* throughout the entire day, and therefore the *sandek* has an immense power of bracha and tefilla the whole day.

Igra D'pirka explains that Eliyahu Hanavi complained to Hashem that he can't possibly go to every bris, because the people are filled with sins. Hashem therefore promises that the father, the mohel, and in fact all the people at the bris, will be forgiven for their sins. *Vaykach Ovadyahu* explains that since this mitzvah is done with such simcha, it helps the people commit to keeping the Torah, and defeating their yetzer hara. *Otzar Habrit* adds that this mitzvah is like being '*mekabel pnei haShchinah*' and everyone at the bris receives an extra dose of 'neshama' like on Shabbat, and that gives a person the impetus to be zoche to keep the whole Torah, and merit their sins to be forgiven. Indeed, the Seforno notes that the chair is really set aside for Hashem Himself, kivyachol, since Hashem comes to every bris, as He came to the first bris of Avraham Avinu. *V'charot Imo Habrit*, notes that Hashem was the '*sandek*' for Avraham Avinu at the very first bris.

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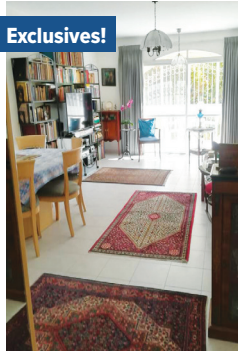
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Ollelot Efrayim offers great advice for people; that at the time when the child cries, one should use that time to daven. The child's pure cries go straight up to Shamayim, and our tefillas can ascend with them. A support for the power of this time is found in the Targum's understanding of 'yancha Hashem b'yom tzara' [Hashem will answer on the day of trouble] as referring to the day of the bris, which is a time of favor. It is customary to say *perek vav* of Tehillim which references 'al hashminit', the eighth, at this time as well.

Throughout the bris, it is customary for everyone to stand in deference to the Shechinah that is found at the bris. Rema states that the custom to stand is based on the Passuk, 'vayamod ha'am babrit'. Rav Wolfson questions this source, since there everyone entered the covenant, while here, only the baby is entering into the bris. He therefore explains that at a bris, an aspect of the perfected world of Mashiach is present. The father when making the bracha to enter into the bris of Avraham Avinu, is also alluding to all the people who at that moment are gathered together accessing their higher soul, the pristine soul as found in our origin, of Avraham Avinu, and that will be found at the time of Mashiach. Therefore, the people need to stand, as they too, indeed, are also entering into a special covenant at the time of the bris milah. Therefore, since they too are intimately connected with the bris, they also say a bracha, 'kshem snichnas...., and don't just stand passively by. ■

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