

Why is there so much "Hock" about Metzitza?

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# מילכים במילכה



## A Nice Vort for a Bris

By a *bris* we make two *berachos*. The first is על המילה, this is recited on the מעשה המצוה, the actual act of the *mitzvah*, and, accordingly, prior to the physical act of the *bris* being performed, one recites the first *beracha*. The second *beracha* is להבנינו and that is made immediately after the act is performed (ע"ע יו"ד ס' רסח סע' ד' וש"ך שם). Why is it necessary to have two *berachos*, both of which appear to refer to the identical act of performing a *bris*? It must be that there is separate dimension and aspect to the *mitzvah* which is encompassed by the second *beracha*. Which aspect could that be referring to? What does it mean that רך הנימול is now entered into the *bris* of our forefather Avraham?

The covenant that Avraham first observed was that of *chesed*, he epitomized kindness. Avraham's whole nature is one of *chesed*. One could look at the *Torah* itself and see it describing a significant episode in Avraham's life, how it reflects on his commitment to the covenant of *chesed*. On the third day following his *bris*, Avraham sits on the doorstep of his home, mid-day, eagerly awaiting guests that he could invite into his home. Avraham then leaves the presence of Hashem and rushes to welcome total strangers. The *passuk* in *Bereishis* (18:7) says:

וְאַל־תִּקְרַךְ רֵיז אַבְרָהָם וַיִּלָּחַךְ בְּרֵיז בְּלֶחֶם רֵד  
וַיִּמְנָח אֶל־הַנְּעָר וַיִּמְחַר לַעֲשׂוֹת אֹתוֹ:

The *PIRKEI DERABBI ELIEZER* (36) in reference to this *passuk* teaches "Avraham ran to bring a calf, but it fled from him and entered the Cave of *Machpelah*. Avraham went in after it and found Adam and Eve sleeping in their beds. There were lit candles next to them and a most pleasing smell permeated the room. This is why he wanted to acquire the Cave of *Machpelah* as a burial plot."

It seems that Avraham was only allowed into the Cave of *Machpelah* after he accepted upon himself the covenant of *Bris Mila*. This assumption is based on the premise that, in Avraham's day the Cave of *Machpelah* had the same level of *Kedusha* as the *Beis Hamikdash*. Therefore, just as it is prohibited for an uncircumcised Jew to enter the *Beis Hamikdash*, so too, Avraham was prevented from entering the Cave of *Machpelah* as long as he remained uncircumcised. Once he removed the *orlah*, Hashem immediately opened his eyes and led him into the cave's entrance.

There is yet another valuable lesson to be gleaned from this *PIRKEI DRABBI ELIEZER*: that the true beneficiary of *chesed* is not the recipient, but the benefactor. Avraham found the cave in the midst of fulfilling the *mitzvah* of *Hachnassas Orchim*. As a direct consequence of endeavoring to serve his guests the very best calf in his possession, he merited to find the most magnificent burial plot in which to bury his beloved wife, Sara. As it is taught in (מדרש רות (ה"ט):  
תני בשם ר' יהושע: יותר ממה שבעל הבית עושה עם העני, העני עושה עם בעל הבית

{It is taught in the name of R' Yehoshua: The pauper helps the donor more that the donor helps the pauper}

Rabbi Eliezer Ginsburg Shlit'a relates from R' Eliezer Menachem Shach Zatzal who heard from R' Isser Zalman Meltzer Zatzal. A true story that poignantly illustrates this concept:

A certain person from the city of Slutzk had a daughter who was afflicted with severe physical and mental impairment. The man lived in utter misery, for his daughter's care demanded all of his time. One day, he showed up at R' Isser Zalman's house and exclaimed, "Rebbe, I can't take it any longer! Please pray for my daughter's death." The daughter eventually died, but a few days later so did her father.

In reference to this incident R' Isser Zalman Meltzer commented "this man was under the impression that he was sustaining his daughter's life, but it seems that the very opposite was the case. She was actually the one sustaining him. Little did he know that he was granted extended life for as single purpose to care for his daughter. This is why he passed away so soon after her death.

Every Jewish infant who is given a *bris* is also entered into the covenant of *chesed*. Hence, the separate and distinct *beracha* recited to express gratitude to Hashem for this *bris* of *chesed* made with Avraham and his descendants who continue to follow in his footsteps.



המשגיח הרה"ג ר' שלמה וולבה זצוק"ל בסנדקאות

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In our continued effort to raise awareness about the mitzvah of *bris mila*, we will raise questions and comments to promote discussions that pertain to the inyan of *mila*. Please feel free to discuss them with your LOR, or your LOM (Local Orthodox Mohel).

- 1 By a *bris* of Twins, there is a *Minhag* to say "המלאך הגואל וגו'" in between the two *brissim*-, what is the source & reason?
- 2 Medically, is the third day from the *mila* more painful?
- 3 Should the father of the baby hold the knife (*izmel*) when he is appointing the *Mohel* to do the *bris* for him?
- 4 When does medical neonatal jaundice (yellow discoloration of a newborn baby's skin and eyes) postpone a *Bris*?
- 5 Some have *minhag* to make *Seuda* on the *Vachnact*. Why?
- 6 The *nussach* for the second *beracha* is להבנינו... no other *beracha* says the *Nussach* of אבינו in it, what could be a explanation?
- 7 Why is there so much "hock" about Metzitza? When did it start? Is it a modern thing?
- 8 If a *Bris* is performed by laser- Will a *Beracha* be made?

Send Please submit any questions or comments you have, so they can be printed in future volumes of *Millim Brmila*, to Your1mohel@gmail.com.

## מועשה שהיה כך היה – *A Bris in Communist Russia*

Communist Russia was, along with Nazi Germany, the worst possible place on the globe for Judaism. After the revolution of 1917 the 'Party' began closing Synagogues and forbidding the learning of Torah and in the early 20's only the old Jews and the Chassidim dared look 'Jewish' in public. Only card carrying Communists could get normal jobs and anyone caught doing a Jewish ritual even in private would lose any position of importance.

In such an environment occurred, in the city of Gomel in 1924, a sensational trial with a Jewish theme; a high-ranking Communist official who happened to be Jewish, discovered that his wife, without his knowledge, had their baby son circumcised eight days after he was born and was suing for divorce.

The Communists made sure it was well-publicized; they wanted everyone to see how outdated religion was and courthouse was overflowing; even the standing-room bleachers and public galleries were full to capacity.

The judge, who happened to be Jewish, sat austere in a large chair behind a thick table and before him stood several burly young Yevseksia (Jewish movement sworn to destroy Judaism) 'security' ready to keep order.

The first to take the stand and testify was the husband.

"I came home to find my child crying. When I went to change his diaper I saw that he was bandaged up. 'Circumcised' she says! Just like that. I was surprised, disgusted and angry at once. Then she insisted that she had nothing to do with it which, even if it's true still makes her at fault! Isn't she supposed to guard the child? And, frankly, I don't believe her. I mean, comrade judge, can one possibly live with a woman tells lies because her mind is too small to accept the new order?! I want a divorce!!"

The judge thanked him, told him to step down and called the defendant; his wife. She was red-eyed from crying and as she passed her husband he turned his head in disgust so as not to look at her.

"Comrade Judge." She said trying to choke back her tears and occasionally dabbing her eyes. "I am innocent. I swear I am a loyal Party Member and a good wife but my husband will not let me explain. What happened was like this. A few days ago I had to go out shopping to buy some food. I have no baby sitter, so I waited for the baby to go to sleep, locked the door and ran to the market. Anyway, when I came back home, it couldn't have been more than fifteen minutes later, maybe twenty my door was open and the baby was gone!! Gone!!!" She wept uncontrollably for a few seconds, blew her nose with a small kerchief and continued.

"So I ran into the streets asking people, searching like a crazy woman asking everyone if they saw my son until about a half an hour later I see my parents and in-laws walking in the distance. So I ran to them yelling and crying and what do I see? They are carrying

my baby! They just had taken him for a walk!! That's what they said. I was so relieved and happy!! But when I got home I saw what had happened! He had blood on his diaper!! Oy!! How could my own parents have mutilated my baby!!! MY BABY!!!" And she began wailing so loudly she had to be escorted from the witness stand.

The grandparents took the stand. The four of them stood before the Judge like wax figures of thousands of years ago. The men sported long white beards and wore worn-out, long black coats to their knees while the grandmothers had their hair covered with large kerchiefs tied under the chin. The judge asked if they had anything to say in their defense.

One of the grandmothers who spoke Russian better than the others stepped forward and said in a thick Jewish accent, "Your Honor". The Judge cut her short and said authoritatively, "Your Honor" is an out-dated title of the old regime. You are to call me 'Comrade'.

"You Honorable Comrade" she said as a few snickers came from the crowd. "Although I don't see what's so bad about our einikel (Yiddish for grandson) having a 'Bris' (circumcision) like everyone but I want you to know that we didn't mean to do it.... It just happened."

There was a second of total silence and then like an explosion, the crowd burst into howling laughter repeating the words 'Just happened! Haa Haaa! Just happened!! Hooo!!'. Even the Judge had to turn his face to a side until he could regain enough seriousness to pound his gavel and call for silence.

The old lady was obviously lying and when things returned to normal he leaned forward, narrowed his eyes and asked her sarcastically. "Happened?! And how, Babichka, can such a thing as a circumcision just 'happen'?"

"I tell you Your Comrade Honor-ship." She continued as though talking to someone on the street. "We went to our daughter's house to take the baby for a long walk for his health. My daughter doesn't take him for enough fresh air. Anyway she wasn't home but we have a key. So we took him, our little sweetie, and went for a long walk. Then suddenly from nowhere some man walks over to us that we never saw before and asks if we want our einikel to be a Jew. We answered, what's the question? So he takes out a knife, makes a brocha (blessing) and that's it! Circumcised!!"

The crowd was already on the edge of pandemonium and this was it! The laughter was like thunder and it just got louder and louder. The judge pounded on the table, screamed for silence, stood up and stamped with his feet but nothing helped. People were in tears, holding their stomachs and a few actually fell into the isles! Totally out of control.

The Judge motioned to the Yevseksia thugs and when they turned to the crowd and gave a few menacing glares the crowd became silent.

"But you should know, Comrade Honorable Judge," The old woman continued as though there had been no disturbance. "We are happy."

"Happy?! Who is happy?" Exclaimed the Judge in exasperation. "And about what?"

"Ahh, we are all happy that our dear Einikel is one hundred percent Jewish..... just like you Your Honor! Aren't you proud and happy you are circumcised?"

That was it! The crowd went wild! Whistling and hooting! Even the Yevseksia thugs couldn't control the waves of sheer glee. The Judge didn't



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even try. He had no choice but to wait for the noise to subside, tell the grandparents to be seated, call the husband back and try to bring this fiasco to an end.

"Tell me, dear Comrade. I see from your record that you are a good, loyal hero of Communism and hold a very responsible position. Is there any other reason, that is, do you have any other reason for divorcing your wife?"

"No, Comrade Judge, none whatsoever; she cooks my meals, cleans my shirts and is a good wife. Except for this!"

"Well" The Judge continued "If I tell you that she is not guilty and has no part in this terrible act would you consider returning to her and dropping the charges?"

"Yes, of course Comrade Judge, if that is the decision of the court."

"If so, the decision of this court is that your wife is innocent of all the charges. It is totally the fault of your superstitious parents and in-laws for allowing this act to be perpetrated. They will be fined 50 rubles and you may return to your wife. Case dismissed!!

No one in that room including the Judge (except for a few religious friends of the family) had any idea that it was all a staged trick! The couple wanted to have their son circumcised and still retain their government positions and this was the only way they could do it.

The name of the 'Mystery Mohel' that circumcised the child from nowhere was Rabbi Chonya Shagalov; was one of the thousands of Chabad Chassidim of the time that risked their lives daily just to do a favor for someone else and whose offspring are Chabad Chassidim throughout the world still risking everything to help others.



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