

CEREMONIES ASSOCIATED WITH BIRTH

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IMPORTANCE OF RITUALS IN JEWISH LIFE

- Rituals are important in Jewish family life, as family is where faith is preserved and taught to the next generation.
- 4 important events in the life of a family are celebrated with religious rituals.- These are **Birth, coming of age, marriage and death.**
- The wider Jewish community also helps families to celebrate and observe these 'rites of passage'.
- We are going to focus on the ceremonies associated with birth:
 - **Naming, circumcision and redemption of the first born son.**

THE NAMING CEREMONY

- Boys are named at their circumcision, which occurs 8 days after their birth.
- Girls names are usually announced in the synagogue, about a month after birth, traditionally by the baby's father.
- Nowadays, in Orthodox synagogues, boys and girls are blessed on the first Shabbat after their birth. During this, the Father recites the Torah blessing and asks god for the good health of his child and wife.
- In Reform synagogues, both parents take part in this ceremony and it doesn't have to happen on the first Shabbat after the baby's birth.

“ God blessed them and God said to them, ‘ Be fertile and increase, fill the Earth and master it.’”
Genesis

BRIT MILAH- CIRCUMCISION

- Is the circumcising of a Jewish boy, 8 days after his birth, to recall the covenant with Abraham and serve as a permanent reminder that he's one of God's chosen people.
- A close friend or relative is chosen to have the honourable job of placing the baby on the empty chair, which symbolizes the presence of Elijah the Prophet.
- A Mohel, a trained circumciser, picks up the baby and places him on the knee of the person chosen to be the 'companion of the child'. Often the baby's grandfather or a respected member of the synagogue.
- The boy's father then blesses the son by saying " Blessed are you Lord ,our God, King of the Universe, who sanctified us with his mitzvot and commanded us to enter my son into the covenant of Abraham."
- The other guests then say "Just as he has entered into the covenant, so may he enter into Torah, into marriage and into good deeds."
- A blessing is then said over the wine, the baby's foreskin is quickly removed, and family members have a festive meal to celebrate.

"You shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin, and that should be the sign of the covenant between me and you."
Genesis

" Any male who is uncircumcised ... shall be cut off from his kin; he has broken my covenant."
Genesis

REDEMPTION OF THE FIRST BORN SON

- Orthodox Jews give a small amount of money 31 days after their first son's birth, to redeem him from temple service.
- Although the temple no longer exists, Orthodox parents keep up the tradition in the Pidyon Ha- Ben ceremony.
- In this ceremony, 5 silver coins are given to a Kohen- a descendant of the priests who used to work in the temple.
- Prayers are then also said, asking that the child may 'enter into Torah, into marriage and into good deeds'- Echoing what's said by the congregation at a circumcision.

“ You shall have the first- born of man redeemed ... Take as their redemption price, from the age of one month up, the money equivalent of 5 shekels”
Numbers

ACTIVITIES:

- ① Explain why circumcision is important to Jews. (5)
- ② Explain how the birth of a baby girl is announced in the synagogue. (5)