

cupying the Federal judicial seat vacated by S. Arthur Spiegel, also a Cincinnati. Stanley Aronoff served as state senator for 36 years, becoming president of the Ohio Senate in 1987. There have been six Jewish mayors of Cincinnati. In 1900, two Jews actually ran against each other for this office, Julius Fleischmann, who won, and Alfred M. Cohen, who later served as international president of B'nai B'rith. Perhaps the most important Jewish contribution to civic betterment was the Good Government Movement of the 1920s, which culminated in the passage of a new city charter in 1924, and the adoption of a city manager form of government. Murray Seasongood, the Jewish lawyer who spearheaded the anti-corruption campaign against Boss Cox had a vision of how local government could work better and more efficiently.

Members of the Cincinnati Jewish community have become increasingly prominent on the national scene. Attorney Stanley Chesley serves on the board of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, was a member of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council, and in 1992 became national vice chairman of the United Jewish Communities. Since 1998, he has served as *pro bono* counsel for the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany and associated institutions. He has been president of the Jewish Federation, and Chairman of the Board of the University of Cincinnati, 1988 to 1992. His wife is U.S. district judge Susan Dlott. Jerome Teller, also an attorney and past president of the Jewish Federation, serves on the Board of Governors of the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, and is national chairperson of the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society.

Jewish Residential Movement

Jewish residential movement reflects Cincinnati's metropolitan growth. The 19th century Downtown and West End centers shifted in the early 1900s to the "hilltop suburbs" of Walnut Hills and Avondale; then, beginning in the 1950s and 1960s, to outlying suburbs, with movement continuing into the 2000s. This suburbanization is reflected in the movement of synagogues and other communal institutions, but the community faces a problem of increasing dispersion, as well as a decline from its earlier population "highs" of 20–25,000 to the 2005 estimate of 17,500.

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[Nancy Klein (2nd ed.)]

CINNAMON (Heb. קַיְנָמוֹן, *kinnamon*; also called in the Bible *kezi'ah* and *kiddah*), a spice. *Kinnamon* or *kinneman besem* ("sweet cinnamon") was one of the ingredients of the "holy anointing oil," used for anointing the tent of meeting and its vessels as well as the high priest Aaron and his sons (Ex. 30:22–32). According to a *baraita* dating from the Second

Temple period (Ker. 6a and parallel passages), cinnamon was one of the ingredients of the incense used in the Temple, although it is not included in those enumerated in the Bible (Ex. 30:34ff.). The woman of loose virtue perfumed her bed "with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon" to entice her lovers (Prov. 7:17). Cinnamon was a costly spice and its source was a closely guarded secret. Many legends were woven around its origin, as for example that it was produced by the fabulous phoenix (11 Bar. 6:13). Cinnamon comes from the bark of the *Cinnamomum zeylanicum*. There are two varieties, the genuine Ceylon cinnamon (*C.z. Breyne*), and the Chinese (*C.z. var. cassia* = *C. cassia* Blume), most scholars being of the opinion that the former did not reach the Mediterranean area before the Middle Ages and hence the references in early literature is to the latter. *Kezi'ah* is mentioned among the spices used for perfuming the clothes of the king (Ps. 45:9) and as an ingredient of the incense used in the Temple (Ker. 6a). It has been identified with some part of the Chinese *C. cassia* tree, and by I. Loew with its dried flowers, known among the Romans as *flores cassiae*. It may, however, refer to some other layer of the bark of the cinnamon tree, which produces different kinds of cinnamon. The name *kezi'ah* is apparently connected with the Chinese *kuei-chih* (in Latin *cassia*) meaning the bark of the cinnamon. *Kiddah* is mentioned with *kinneman besem* among the ingredients of the anointing oil, and identified by Onkelos with *kezi'ah*. According to Ezekiel (27:19), Tyrian merchants imported *kiddah* from a place called Me'uzal (AV: "going to and fro"). An interesting parallel is given by the naturalist Dioscorides (*De Materia Medica*, 1:13), who mentions a species known as *kitto* or *mosylon* and similar to *Cassia*, on which Galen commented that the reference was to cinnamon coming from Me'uzal on the African coast. According to Pliny and others, it yields several products: a thin and a thick bark, flowers, and branches. The cinnamon is a tropical tree, which, an *aggadah* declares, grew in Erez Israel: "Goats fed on the cinnamon tree and Jews used to grow it" (TJ, Pe'ah 7:4, 20a; Gen. R. 65:17). R. Judah stated: "The (fuel) logs of Jerusalem were of cinnamon trees, and when lit their fragrance pervaded the whole of Erez Israel. But when Jerusalem was destroyed they were hidden" (Shab. 63a). The cinnamon tree was included among the trees of the Garden of Eden (Gen. R. 33:6).

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[Jehuda Feliks]

CIRCUMCISION (Heb. בְּרִית מִילָה, *berit milah*; "covenant of circumcision"), the operation of removing part or all of the foreskin which covers the glans of the penis. Circumcision dates back to prehistoric times and together with the trepanning of the skull forms one of the oldest operations performed by man. Originally a ritual procedure, it was undertaken for medical reasons only later. It is performed by many peoples all over the world. Jewish circumcision originated, according to the biblical account, with Abraham who, at divine behest, circumcised himself at the age of 99. Genesis 17:11–12

reads: "Every male among you shall be circumcised. And ye shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskin, and it shall be a token of a covenant betwixt Me and you. And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every male throughout your generations." Abraham circumcised his son Ishmael, all the males of his household, and his slaves. In the following year when Isaac was born, he was circumcised on the eighth day.

The promise that Abraham's seed should inherit the land of Canaan was bound up together with this covenant. The punishment for failure to observe this command was *karet*, to be "cut off" from one's kind (*ibid* 21:4), understood by the rabbis to mean "excision at the hand of heaven from the community." This commandment is considered so important that the rabbis declared (Shab. 137b) that were it not for the blood of the covenant, heaven and earth would not exist. Abraham was said to have circumcised himself on the tenth of Tishri, the day later celebrated as the Day of Atonement, when the sins of the people are forgiven (PdRE 29).

History

It seems that Abraham did not start the practice of circumcision; rabbinic legend suggests that it was known before (Gen. R. 42:8; and cf. "Huppot Eliyahu Rabbah," in J.D. Eisenstein's *Ozar Midrashim*, 1 (1915), 165). However, circumcision became firmly established among the Hebrews. When Jacob's daughter Dinah was seduced by the Hivite prince Shechem and the question of marriage arose, the sons of Jacob insisted that the Hivites undergo the rite (Gen. 34:14); when Moses failed to circumcise his own son, the fault was repaired by Zipporah, his wife who declared (Ex. 4:25): "Surely a bridegroom of blood (*hatan damim*) art thou to me." The Hebrew term translated as "bridegroom" is connected with the Arabic for "to circumcise" (see EM, 3 (1965), 357, s.v. *Hatan Damim*). Circumcision was not merely a religious practice; it also took on a national character. Only circumcised males could partake of the paschal sacrifice (Ex. 12:44, 48). Before the Israelites entered Canaan, they were circumcised by Joshua, the rite having been omitted in the wilderness owing to the hazards of the journey (Josh. 5:2).

The importance of circumcision is further evident from the repeated contemptuous references to the Philistines as uncircumcised. There was a period, however, in the kingdom of Israel, under the influence of Queen Jezebel, when circumcision was abandoned (1 Kings 19:14). Elijah's zeal in persuading the Israelites to resume the forsaken covenant won him the name of "Herald of the Covenant" (see Chair of Elijah). In the time of the Prophets, the term "uncircumcised" was applied allegorically to the rebellious heart or to the obdurate ear (Ezek. 44:1, 9; Jer. 6:10). Jeremiah declared that all the nations were uncircumcised in the flesh, but the whole house of Israel were of uncircumcised heart (Jer. 9:25). It has been suggested that the Hebrew word for uncircumcised עָרֵל (*arel*) means properly "obstructed," as is indeed explicitly stated by Rashi (to Lev. 9:23) and the fact that the same word and the

related *orlah* ("foreskin") are also used to describe a certain kind of taboo (*ibid.*) has resulted in the infelicitous translation of many biblical passages. The word describes the lips of a person whose speech is not fluent (Ex. 6:12, 30) or the heart and ear of a person who will not listen to reason (Jer. 6:10; 9:25; for alternative translations see the JPS translation of the Torah (1962) to Leviticus 19:23 and Deuteronomy 10:16 and 30:6). Such passages as the foregoing, however, do not warrant a purely spiritual interpretation of the commandment which would make the actual physical circumcision superfluous. Ezekiel is full of contempt for the uncircumcised heathen whose fate he foretells (Ezek. 32:21, 24 et al.).

In Hellenistic times, Jews encountered the mockery of Gentiles who believed circumcision to be an unnecessary and unseemly mutilation and circumcision was widely neglected (Jubilees 15:33–34). Many Jews who wanted to participate nude in the Greek games in the gymnasia underwent painful operations to obliterate the signs of circumcision (epispasm).

The first definite prohibition against circumcision was enacted under Antiochus Epiphanes (1 Macc. 1:48). Many mothers who had their sons circumcised suffered martyrdom. It is recorded (2 Macc. 6:10) that two women who had circumcised their children were led round the city with their infants bound to their breasts and then cast headlong from the wall. Conversely, with the victory of the Hasmoneans and the extension of the frontiers, John Hyrcanus forced the conquered Idumeans to undergo circumcision (Jos., Ant., 13:257f., 318). Religious leaders at that time differed about the necessity for circumcision of proselytes. R. Eliezer b. Hyrcanus required both circumcision and ritual immersion for the admission of a proselyte, while R. Joshua held that a proselyte needed only ritual immersion (Yev. 46a; see Proselytes).

The custom of circumcision seems to have spread among the Romans in the Diaspora under the influence of the Jewish community in Rome. Hadrian again proscribed it, and this was one of the causes of the Bar Kokhba rebellion. According to a midrash, when a Roman official asked R. Oshaya why God had not made man as he wanted him, he replied that it was in order that man should perfect himself by the fulfillment of a divine command (Gen. R. 11:6). After the *Bar Kokhba revolt the rabbis apparently instituted *peri'ah* (laying bare of the glans), probably in reaction to attempts to "obliterate the Seal of the Covenant" by epispasm. According to Tractate Shabbat 19:2, circumcision and *peri'ah* became part of a unified process in which the *mohel* disposed of all or most of the foreskin and then split the thin layer of mucosal membrane that is under the foreskin and rolled it downward to uncover the head of the penis. The importance of *peri'ah* is emphasized in the early rabbinic period and supportive midrashic readings were constructed in order to base it in Torah (e.g. *hatan damim* (Ex. 4:25) is said to imply two acts: the blood of *milah*, the actual circumcision, and the blood of the *peri'ah* incision (TJ, Shab. 19:2 17(a)). With the rise of Christianity, circumcision became the sign of difference between the adherents of the two religions. Paul declared that justifica-

tion by faith was sufficient for converts to Christianity (Rom. 3:4), and in Justinian's *Codex* surgeons were prohibited from performing the operation on Roman citizens who converted to Judaism.

Rabbinic Attitudes and Halakhic Legislation

Circumcision was long understood as “completing” the male and as essential for male entrance into the covenant (*brit*), the community, and the world to come. Rabbinic Judaism viewed the *brit milah* (covenant of circumcision) and the accompanying ceremony as a joyous occasion and the sages believed it important to circumcise converts and slaves as well. Some rabbinic midrash claims that a number of biblical heroes were born circumcised (ARN¹ 2). Rabbinic explanations of circumcision are not concerned with the philosophical and medical rationales claimed by later sources, but with the sanctification of a divine commandment.

According to rabbinic legislation it is a Jewish father's duty to have his son circumcised (Sh. Ar., YD 260:1). Should he neglect to do so, it devolved on the *bet din* (*ibid.*, 260:2). It is not a sacrament, and any child born of a Jewish mother is a Jew, whether circumcised or not. Although circumcision may be performed by any Jew (including a woman, if no man is available: Maim. Yad, Milah, 2:1), in the first instance it is desirable that the operator, called a *mohel*, be a loyal adherent to the tenets of Judaism (Sh. Ar., YD 264:1). Even in talmudic times, he was described as a craftsman. In most modern communities, he has been specially trained in the principles of asepsis and in the technique of circumcision and has received rabbinic recognition. The operation must be performed on the eighth day, preferably early in the morning (YD 262:1), thus emulating Abraham in his eagerness to undertake a divine command. Should the child be premature or in poor health, the rite must be postponed until seven days after he has recovered from a general disease or until immediately after recovery from a local disorder (262:2–263:3). Should a child for any reason have been circumcised before the eighth day or have been born already circumcised (i.e., without a foreskin), the ceremony of “shedding the blood of the covenant” (*hattafat dam berit*) must be performed on the eighth day, provided it is a weekday and the child is fit (263:4). This is done by puncturing the skin of the glans with a scalpel or needle and allowing a drop of blood to exude. If the eighth day is a Sabbath or festival, the circumcision must nevertheless take place (266:2) unless the child is born by Caesarean section, when it is postponed to the next weekday. There are special laws relating to the time of circumcision of a child born during twilight of the Sabbath or festival (262:4–6). There was a talmudic disputation as to whether preparations for the operation that are forbidden on the Sabbath may be undertaken on that day, if they have been previously omitted (Shab. 130a–132b).

Joshua used flint knives to circumcise the children of Israel (Josh. 5:3). By Roman times metal knives were employed. The traditional lyre-shaped shield to protect the glans

has been in use at least since the 17th century; this together with the knife and a flask for styptic powder were kept in a lyre-shaped bag. One set of instruments dating from 1801 also contains a probe. In the Middle Ages, the ceremony was frequently performed in the synagogue – and still is today in some communities. There are set parts of the service during which it should take place. Some synagogues have elaborate “Chairs of Elijah” for the desired presence of the Prophet. Today, the ceremony usually takes place in the hospital or at home; in Israel, maternity clinics have large rooms where the ceremony is performed.

Kelalei ha-Milah by R. Jacob ha-Gozer and his son R. Gershom ha-Gozer (13th century) contains the earliest guide to the laws of circumcision. The rite itself preserves the ancient notion that the deity desires the sacrifice of the whole child but is appeased with the offering up of the metonymic portion of the member and thus spares the life of the child. The tradition of naming the child at the time of circumcision is medieval, but it is mentioned in the Talmud (Shab. 134a) and *Pirkei de Rabbi Eliezer* 48. The medieval ritual confirms that the deeper meaning of circumcision is in the shedding of blood, not the removal of the foreskin, and connects the naming with the (rescued) life of the child: “Our God and God of our Fathers, sustain this child for his father and mother and let his name in Israel be _____ son of _____. May the Father rejoice in the child from his loins, and the mother receive happiness from the fruit of her womb, as it is written: ‘When I passed by you and saw you wallowing in your blood, I said to you “Live in spite of your blood.” I said to you “In your blood live”’ (Ezek. 16:6).” Recent scholarship on the medieval parallels between baptism and circumcision has focused on shared conceptions of the salvific power of blood, the role of “god parents” or co-parents during the ceremony, and the staging of the ceremony itself (Baumgarten, *Mothers and Children*).

Philosophical Rationales

Philo of Alexandria advanced four reasons for circumcision: protection against the “severe and incurable malady of the prepuce called anthrax or carbuncle”; the promotion of the cleanliness of the whole body as befits the consecrated order; the analogy of the circumcised member to the heart (following Jeremiah); and the promotion of fertility. Philo also claimed that circumcision “spiritualizes” the Jewish male by decreasing pride and pleasure, hence enhancing the spiritual persona of the Israelite male (*De Circumcisione*, 11:210). For Maimonides, circumcision both quiets lust and perfects what is defective morally. The “diminution” of the penis is not performed to correct a congenital problem but to diminish the pleasure principle through the painful surgical process. It alters the sensibilities of the male in ways commensurate with the optimal moral life of the Jew. Maimonides' ascetic attitude to sexual relations seems to inform his rationale for circumcision, and this type of logic was not adopted by the majority of legal scholars (Yad, Milah).

Magical and Mystical Understandings of Circumcision

The excision of the foreskin and the shedding of blood combines ancient apotropaic motivations to avoid disease and promote health by keeping the demonic away. Mystical and magical reasons for circumcision may have also contributed to belief in the blood of circumcision as potent and expiatory. In Exodus 4:25, it is the circumcision blood that saves Moses' life when Zipporah circumcises Moses' son (or possibly Moses, himself). The creation of a collective tribal brotherhood based on circumcision ensured the continuity of the patriarchal lineage and acculturated the baby boy into maleness while publicly diminishing the female birthing role. Some have seen the performance of circumcision as a ritual of male empowerment that bonds men in a phallic way to the service of a deity who functions through men and their bodies, not only in procreative activity but also as the source of cultural and intellectual creativity. In Jewish mysticism, the Zohar implies that only one who has been circumcised can fully commune with or see God. Several central kabbalistic concepts are based on interpretations of the meanings of circumcision. These include the "inscription" of the name of God in the flesh and the viewing of the Divine Presence or connection to **Shekhinah* through the physical *berit milah*.

Modern Responses

In the 19th century, some Reform rabbis and theologians sought to eradicate circumcision on the grounds that it excluded the Jew from fulfilling his universal potential. Others viewed circumcision as a vestigial post-biblical practice and unnecessary accretion to true Judaism which was unhygienic and barbaric. *Mohalim* were considered medieval and unprofessional. Other Jewish criticisms of this era included charges that circumcision either robbed the Jewish man of his sexuality or promoted hyper-sexual behavior. Some 19th century German Jews created new welcoming ceremonies for boys without circumcision. Although such rituals were strongly opposed by most rabbinic leaders across the denominational spectrum, they set a precedent for innovative religious ceremonies in American, European, and Israeli society. In the 21st century, opposition to ritual circumcision continues among some Jews on humane grounds, although without any denominational sanction. On the other hand, in the past 100 years, supporters of circumcision, including physicians and many religious leaders, have argued the medical benefits of the procedure, including the claims that circumcision reduces the risks of urinary track infections, cervical cancer in women, and AIDS.

[Leonard V. Snowman / Jonathan Seidel (2nd ed.)]

Implications for Jewish Women

The centrality of circumcision raises difficult questions as to the place of Jewish women in the covenant affirmed at Mt. Sinai. H. Eilberg-Schwartz has written that "since circumcision binds together men within and across generations, it also establishes an opposition between men and women" (*The Savage in Judaism*, 171). S.J.D. Cohen has shown that the rabbis

were quite aware that privileging of circumcision as the central marker of Jewish identity rendered half of the Jewish people ineligible. He suggests they evinced little concern because in rabbinic thinking to be a Jew was to be born into an ethnic community. Even if a woman could not be circumcised, she did not need circumcision or any other ritual to be accepted as a Jew. However, Cohen has also noted that for rabbinic Judaism, Jewish women were not Jews in the same way as Jewish men, writing that the rabbis were so convinced of "the fundamental inferiority, marginality and Otherness of women" that "the presence of a covenantal mark on the bodies of men, and its absence from the bodies of women, seemed natural and inevitable." J. Baskin has suggested that establishing the active agency of men and the passivity of women in reproduction was an important component of rabbinic constructions of female alterity. One aspect of this discourse argued that men were most like God in their ability to generate new life, while women, as submissive nurturers, were subordinate not only in relation to men but in their lack of resemblance to the divine. This dialectic of differentiation, based on the conviction that being like God required fully functioning male sexual organs, emphasized circumcision as the marker of complete status as a human being and as a Jew (Baskin, 18–20).

During the Middle Ages, Christian polemics attacked the exclusion of women from full status in Judaism, since they are not circumcised, as opposed to the more egalitarian Christian dispensation which did not require literal circumcision. Sages responded with the argument that Jewish women demonstrated their covenantal status through obedience to **niddah* regulations (e.g., *Nizzaḥon Vetus* §237). The excitement that traditionally accompanied the birth of a son as opposed to the disappointment at the birth of a daughter is expressed in rabbinic writings (e.g. Nid. 31b) and in modern literary works by authors such as Devorah *Baron in her Hebrew short story "The First Day." A traditional welcoming ceremony among Sephardi Jews is called *zeved ha-bat* ("gift of a daughter"). In recent decades, many Jewish families have instituted ceremonies, often called *simḥat bat* ("joy of a daughter") or *brit banot* ("daughters' covenant") to welcome daughters into the Jewish community and the divine covenant between God and the Jewish people.

[Judith R. Baskin (2nd ed.)]

Ritual

In traditional practice, the child is brought from the mother by the godmother and handed over at the door of the room to the godfather who, in turn, hands it to the *mohel*. Before this, the child is welcomed by the congregation with *Barukh ha-Ba* ("Blessed be he that comes") and the Sephardim sing a *piyyut* in which those who keep the covenant are blessed. The *mohel* places the baby for a moment on the Chair of Elijah, after which it is placed on a pillow on the knees of the *sandak* ("holder"). The infant's legs are held firmly by the *sandak*; the *mohel*, having previously thoroughly scrubbed and immersed his hands in a disinfectant solution, takes a firm grip of the

foreskin with his left hand. Having determined the amount to be removed, he fixes the shield on it to protect the glans from injury. The knife, sometimes double-edged, is then taken in the right hand and the foreskin is amputated with one sweep along the shield. This discloses the mucous membrane, the edge of which is then firmly grasped between the thumbnail and index finger of each hand and is torn down the center as far as the corona. This part of the operation is called *periah*. Sometimes this maneuver is performed with scissors, but it is known that a lacerated wound is much less likely to bleed than a cut wound.

The next stage is the performance of *mezizah* ("suction"). Traditionally, the *mohel* sucked blood from the circumcised penis. This practice, originally based on medical notions of healing the wound more quickly, became subject to severe criticism by the mid-19th century on both hygienic and political grounds. The method now authorized by most rabbinical courts is for *mezizah* to be performed either by a swab or through a glass tube, preferably containing a small piece of absorbent cotton. The rounded end of the tube is placed firmly over the penis, pressed firmly over the area of the pubis, and suction by the mouth is carried out through the flattened end of the tube or through a rubber attachment. This is followed by the application of a sterile dressing, and the readjustment of the diaper. Immediately after the actual circumcision the father recites the benediction "Who hast hallowed us by Thy commandments and hast commanded us to make our sons enter into the covenant of Abraham our father." In Israel this is followed by the *She-Heheyanu* benediction. The congregated guests reply "Even as this child has entered into the covenant so may he enter into the Torah, the nuptial canopy, and into good deeds."

The dressing of the wound does not form a statutory part of the rite, but the sages took an active interest in the incidence of hemorrhage after the operation. Hemophilia was apparently recognized in talmudic times, since there is a law that a mother who has lost two children from the unquestionable effects of circumcision must not have her next sons operated on until they are older and better able to undergo the operation. Moreover, should two sisters each have lost a son from the effects of circumcision, the other sisters must not have their sons circumcised (Sh. Ar., YD 263:2-3).

The child is then handed to the father or to an honored guest, and the *mohel*, holding a goblet of wine, recites the benediction for wine and a second benediction praising God who established a covenant with His people Israel. The *mohel* then recites a prayer for the welfare of the child during the course of which the name of the child is announced. Naming a child at the circumcision is an ancient custom already mentioned in Luke 1:59. It is customary for the *mohel* to give the infant a few drops of wine to drink. The ceremony is followed by a festive meal at which special hymns are sung, and in the Grace after Meals blessings are recited for the parents, the *sandak* and the *mohel*. Although women are permitted to perform circumcisions, it is only in the liberal Jewish denomi-

nations that *mohalot* have emerged from training programs sponsored by the Reform and Conservative movements in North America.

[Leonard V. Snowman]

Folklore

On the first Friday evening after the birth of a boy a ceremony called *ben zakhor* or *shalom zakhor* is held to express the joy at the birth of a boy, since "as soon as a male comes into the world peace comes into the world" (Nid. 31b). On this occasion the *Shema* is recited as well as Gen. 48:16 and various psalms and other prayers (cf. Isserles to Sh. Ar., YD 265:12). In Oriental communities this ceremony is called *shasha* or *blada*, and special prayers and portions of the *aggadah* are recited from a booklet called *Berit Olam* in honor of the prophet Elijah. It is customary to serve boiled chick peas on this occasion.

Another home ceremony, called in Yiddish *vakhmakht* ("watchnight, vigil"), was held on the night preceding circumcision. Candles were lit throughout the home, and following a festive meal, featuring cooked beans and peas, prayers were recited and the Torah was studied until after midnight. Before departing, the guests recited the *Shema* aloud at the bedside of the mother. This custom is mentioned as early as the Talmud by the name *yeshu'a ha-ben* or *shevu'a ha-ben* (Sanh. 32b; BK 80a). It probably evolved from the fact that when the *mohel* checked the infant's health on the eve of the circumcision, he was accompanied by the *sandak* ("god-father") and other friends who came to congratulate the parents. This custom later became associated with the belief that it is necessary to guard the child against Lilith and other evil spirits by guarding him throughout the night while reciting prayers and studying Torah. This vigil, also very popular among Sephardi Jews, is called "midrash" because of a discourse on the weekly Torah section delivered by the *hakham*. The *hazzan* also chants appropriate poems and the *Kaddish*. Poppy-seed, honey cake, and coffee are served at this ceremony. In Salonika, the eve of the circumcision was known as "*veula*" ("watchnight," from *vigilia* - "eve," "watch"), and the mother stayed awake all night. In Yemen, on the eve of circumcision, care was taken not to leave the mother and child alone, and incense was burned inside the room to ward off the evil spirits.

In Persia and Kurdistan, a ceremony known as "*Lel Ikd ill Yas*" was celebrated during which the Chair of Elijah was consecrated and adorned with silver crowns and various plants. In Ashkenazi communities it was customary to place the *mohel's* knife under the mother's pillow until the following morning. In some places the kabbalistic Book of Raziel was also left there. It was customary to donate the swaddle in which the child was wrapped at the circumcision to the synagogue; richly embroidered, it would be used as a band for the Torah Scroll. In Salonika the severed foreskin was buried in the cemetery.

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CIRCUSES AND THEATERS. In rabbinic literature circuses are generally classed with theaters (Shab. 150a). The rabbis looked down on them as symbols of a debased Greek and Roman culture, in contrast to the houses of learning and synagogues which symbolized Jewish culture. Whenever Nehunya b. ha-Kanah took leave of his *bet ha-midrash* he used to say, “I give thanks to Thee, O Lord, that Thou hast set my portion among those who attend the *bet ha-midrash* and synagogues, and not among those who attend theaters and circuses. I toil and they toil; I arise early and so do they. I toil to inherit the Garden of Eden, but they toil for the pit of destruction” (TJ, Ber. 4:2, 7d). According to the Midrash, Naomi said to Ruth: “My daughter, it is not the custom of Israelite women to visit gentile theaters and circuses” (Ruth R. 2:22). Abba b. Kahan expounded: “The People of Israel said to God: Lord of the Universe, I have never entered gentile theaters and circuses and amused myself in them” (PDRK 119). Apparently to reprove the common people who frequented them, the rabbis interpreted the verse: “The land was filled with them” (Ex. 1:7) as “the theaters and circuses were filled with them” (Tanḥ. B., Ex. 2). They foretold that eventually even theaters and circuses would become places of Torah (Meg. 6a). The identification of circuses with pugilism, gladiatorial combat, contests with wild beasts, and activities of doubtful morality in general gave rise to the comment of Phinehas b. Pazzi (to Ps. 1:1): “Happy is the man who hath not walked in the way of the wicked” – to the theaters and circuses of idolaters; ‘nor stood in the way of sinners’ – not attending contests of wild beasts; ‘nor sat in the seat of the scornful’ – not participating in evil schemes” (Av. Zar. 18b; Yal., Ps. 613, Shab. 150a). A *baraita* quotes R. Meir as saying: “One should not go to theaters or circuses because entertainments are arranged there in honor of the idols,” to which the Sages commented: “Where such entertainments are given they are banned because of suspicion of idolatry; where they are not given, they are banned as ‘the seat of the scornful’” (Av. Zar. 18b; parallel sources, e.g., Tosef., Av. Zar. 2:5; TJ, *ibid.* 1:7, 40a, omit “circuses,” possibly reflecting different places or periods). An additional objection to the theaters lay in their presentations, in which Jews were often derided and their customs and poverty mocked. Abbahu offers a graphic description of a typical presentation, which apparently took place in Caesarea, where he resided: “R. Abbahu opened his discourse with the text, ‘They that sit in the gate talk of me’ (Ps. 69:13): this refers to the nations of the world who sit in the-

aters and circuses. ‘And I am the song of the drunkards’: after they take their places, and have eaten and drunk and become intoxicated, they sit and talk of me, scoffing at me and saying, ‘We have no need to eat carobs [the staple food of the poor] like the Jews.’ They ask one another, ‘How long do you wish to live?’ ‘As long as a Jew wears his Sabbath shirt.’ They then lead a camel into their theater, put their shirts upon it, and ask one another, ‘Why is it in mourning?’ To this they reply, ‘It is a Sabbatical year among the Jews and they have no vegetables, so they eat this camel’s thorns; and that is why it is in mourning.’ Next they bring a clown with shaven head into the theater and ask one another, ‘Why is his head shaven?’ to which they reply, ‘The Jews observe the Sabbath, and whatever they earn during the week they eat on the Sabbath. Since they have no wood for fuel, they break up their bedsteads for this purpose. As a result they sleep on the ground and get covered with dust, and anoint themselves with oil which is [thus in short supply and] very expensive for that reason [so that to avoid the expense of anointing their heads with oil, they shave them].’” (Lam. R., Proem 17). The Jews did not always take this mockery passively. Once, during a Sabbatical year, the gentiles, in their haste to get to the circus left their produce unattended in the marketplace. When they returned, they found that the Jews had generously helped themselves to it in their absence (Tosef., Oho. 18:16).

Textual sources and archaeological finds in Israel show that the earliest theaters were erected only at the end of the first century B.C.E. One of the earliest theaters in the area was the one at Caesarea which was built between 20 and 10 B.C.E. Theaters have been uncovered at Sepphoris, Dor, Tiberias, Legio, Beth-Shean (two theaters), Shuni, Caesarea, Sebaste, Shechem, Antipatris, Jericho, and Elusa. These mostly date from the second century C.E. and were in use until the later Byzantine period. A theater also existed in Jerusalem but nothing has been found of it except for possible theater seats reused in walls close to the Temple Mount.

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CIRCUS PARTIES, rival socio-political factions in the Byzantine Empire, active in the fifth to seventh centuries at the imperial circus chariot races. They were called “Blues” and “Greens” according to colors worn by their supporters. Jews in the Byzantine Empire participated in circus activities. In 423 the synagogue near Antioch was destroyed by the Greens, and in 484 and 507 they were attacked by the Greens in Antioch since the Jews were generally Blues. In the political troubles of 608–10, Jews were among the Blues at Antioch and among both Blues and Greens at Constantinople. A seventh-century