

NEW YORK

Jewish But Don't Want to Circumcise?

There's an option for you.

By Emma Rosenblum

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Just as more American parents are choosing not to circumcise their children, so too are more Jewish parents reconsidering the practice. Devised by ultraliberal rabbis, the Brit Shalom is a relatively new and increasingly popular, if still rare, ceremony designed for parents who want to participate in a key part of the Jewish tradition while foregoing circumcision. Essentially a bris without the cutting, the ceremony involves a naming rite for the baby, prayers spoken by the rabbi, and an explanation of the name from the parents, if they so choose. It's a way of "welcoming the child into the Jewish people," says **Rabbi Peter Schweitzer of the City Congregation of Humanistic Judaism** on the Upper West Side. Although the vast majority of rabbis would vehemently disagree, Schweitzer maintains that circumcision isn't a requirement of Judaism. "If you've committed to raising your child Jewish, that's really all that matters to us," he says.

Gail Karp, a Reform Jewish writer living in Harlem, opted for a Brit Shalom when her son was born in 2007. She allows that she sometimes wonders if he may one day feel different from other Jews, but says she ultimately made the right decision: "I'm certain that if he wants to be religious, being circumcised isn't a prerequisite."

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