The celebratory meal

The *berit mila* is **one of the most important and joyous events in the life of the parents and family of the newborn baby.**

The ceremony is always followed by a se'uda: a festive meal or banquet. This banquet is considered a *se'udat mitzva,* i.e. by taking part of this meal, **we fulfill a Mitzva**.

The Rabbis indicated, therefore, that the participation in this meal is not optional but **virtually** mandatory. Rama (rabbi Moshe Isserles), in his notes to the Shulchan Arukh asserted that **one who does not participate** of this important banquet 'should be banned from heaven'. That is why in the Ashkenazi communities, the hosts are very careful not to **'invite'** formally any guest to the Berit Mila, because if they **are invited and do not come** to the *seuda* it could be considered as if they rejected this Mitzva, and would be under a heavenly ban. In the Ashkenazi communities, then, **the tradition is that people are not formally invited to the Berit Mila**. The hosts just **announce** publicly the date and place where the berit mila will take place (pitche teshuba).

Because this banquet is not a regular meal, but **the fulfillment of a Mitzva**, people who are in mourning, after the *shiba* (the first seven days of mourning) **are allowed to participate of the ceremony and the meal** (when no music is played at the banquet). According to rabbi Refael Pinchasi (chayim vechesed), before thirty days (*sheloshim)* the mourner participates of the ceremony, but he should not participate of the banquet.

There are many different Minhagim (customs) on this issue. Rama, for example, says that **during the twelve months, the mourner should not take part of any meal outside his house** (YD 393), even if is a *se'udat mitzva*. Each one should know and follow his or her community's traditions.