

MOHEL IN RUSSIA

Q (13:18:00) Tell me your name

A My name is Binyamin.

Q How did this happen that you became a Mohel?

A (English) It's a long story. I became close to Yiddishkeit (Judaism) more than 10 years ago. At that time, the young people who became close to Yiddishkeit were supposed to bring other people to Yiddishkeit also. So a lot of practical professions were needed in Russia. Accidentally, I happened to graduate from a University, so it was quite natural that to expect from a Jewish Profession, that it should...

Q Why did you get a Bris?

A (Yiddish to end 13:18:50) Because this is a very important Mitzvah and a part of Jewishness, and the Mitzvah became obsolete because of the evilness of the Russians in those days. So approximately 25 years ago, the Lubavitch emissaries, and the religious Jews that remained here, simply started doing this again. So How did we do this? We used to take a doctor...

Q Tell us how it happened by you.

A (13:19:40) By me it was more than 10 years ago. Simply, I started getting close to Judaism, and decided that I wanted to do a circumcision on myself, and by that time I knew that these things get done by Lubavitch. I came to one of my acquaintances then I wasn't 100% Lubavitch, and he sent me to another person who was a Lubavitch activist that was called Rabbi Abraham Genim. He now lives in Eretz Yisroel. He used to organize the circumcisions here in Russia. What does that mean he organized them? He used to have 5/6 acquaintances doctors, some of them Baalei Teshuvah more or less. They really sacrificed themselves and helped the Community to undergo circumcisions. And he himself or another elderly man, Reb Getch of blessed memory who is no longer alive,, used to go with them, and do whatever it was necessary to perform according to Halachic law and from the medical point of view, the doctors worked along. So I came to him. He organized the circumcisions, but he made a living from being a locksmith. He made keys simply. And with him, you could really observe divine intervention. Because from his work he was very wealthy and could even support the circumcisions. So I came to him in his store, as though I wished to make a key. So he recognized that I needed a circumcision. He told me

to come back in 2 hours and meet him in one of the bus stops. So I got there, and he arrived 5 minutes later in his car and we traveled for 40 minutes through the streets of Moscow. Finally we arrived at our destination. We got out of the car and quickly entered a building...(13:22:11)

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Q (13:41:20) Tell us further regarding the risking of lives...

A Then it was a very dangerous time, both for the Mohel, the doctors and the persons who apartments this was being done in. According to Russian law prevalent at the time, they could have been arrested and punished severely through jail sentences or labor camps. So they didn't look at that, the Jews helped and the doctors did it while risking their lives. There was an old woman who undertook to prepare a Seudas Mitzvah for each circumcision. She wasn't a wealthy woman. She lived practically on pennies. Nevertheless, she gave her apartment in which to perform these circumcisions, and when they would perform this on Jewish youth, she would be in the kitchen preparing whatever she had. To get back to the story, after 40 minutes of traveling, we arrived at this place. No one knew the address, and no one even asked, simply because it was such a dangerous thing to do. Then they performed the circumcision. Where did they perform this? It is also a story. Maybe this also motivated me in becoming a Mohel. (13:43:15) Because there wasn't even the slightest resemblance to conditions existing in America nowadays. The conditions were Russian surgery and we're talking about 50 years ago. And it was really horrendous due to the unsanitary conditions existing. Later, when I had my bris and got closer to Lubavitch, I decided to become a Mohel. How this transpired, is also a lengthy story. Because in my time, at my age, they used to draft into the army and send to Afghanistan. No one wanted to go there willingly. I therefore had a very difficult problem. So exactly a few months before they had to draft me, came one of the emissaries of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, for personal business. (13:44:40) So I met him, and told him about my problems. He took down my name and my mothers and said he will take a blessing for me. Suddenly, after he took a blessing for me, the situation changed. Suddenly, a man arrived whom I hardly knew, and told me to give a small bribe and enroll in a University and in this way get freed from the draft. Then there was a miracle, because this procedure didn't help. Even the University students they would draft into the army. But I didn't have a choice. So I bribed 200 rubles and went to one of the Moscow Universities. ...Then there was a miracle. Because it didn't help. Even the students of the University they would take into the army. I had no choice. I gave 200 Rubles as a bribe and went to one of the Moscow Universities. (13:46:05) I looked for a University where I could keep Kosher, Shabbos, etc. where the administration is not so particular that they should see if the students come on Shabbos, for

instance. So there was a University not far from the Marina Roshcha Shul, and I chose as my Major Medical Biochemistry. This is very close to medicine, so I became exempt from the army. After this, I figured that being that I had already spent time doing these studies, it pays to take advantage, probably due to divine intervention, after this I started to accompany the doctors doing the circumcisions. I simply asked the doctors who were risking their lives, they should teach me the things I needed to know medicinally, that I was lacking. So when I came to America, I was a finished Mohel. By that time, I had already performed hundreds of circumcisions myself. So simply, in America I observed how it's done here in a modern fashion, and that's that.