

“At the age of eight days every male among you must be circumcised.” (17:12)

The *mitzvah* of *Bris Milah* is a critical *mitzvah* which inducts the young boy into the Jewish People. Throughout the millennia our people have been willing to sacrifice their lives, so that this *mitzvah* may be fulfilled properly. Many stories have been recorded detailing the selfless devotion our People have demonstrated to this *mitzvah*. I recently read a story that poignantly portrays the lengths to which one Jewish mother actualized her perception of the *mitzvah* of *Bris Milah*.

This occurred in Soviet Russia at a time when the Communists were in power. Their disdain for any religion was overshadowed by their revulsion of Judaism. They made every attempt to extinguish whatever observance they could. *Bris Milah* was at the top of their list of *mitzvos* which they sought to abolish. Fearing for their lives, people adhered to the terrible decree. As usual, however, a few dedicated Jews were *moser nefesh*, risked their lives, to circumcise their sons clandestinely. This story is about a Jewish mother who, afraid for her life, refrained from circumcising her son. One day, she heard that another woman had a *Bris* performed for her son. She decided at that point that she, too, would have her son circumcised.

The *Bris* was performed, and they brought the infant back to the mother. Suddenly, she fainted. After a few minutes, they were able to revive her. The people who had assembled to share in this august experience looked at her incredulously and asked, “Why did you faint now? The *Bris* is over. If you were going to faint due to anxiety, you should have done so before the *Bris*.”

Her response should cause each of us to tremble. She said, “When my son was born, I wanted to hug and kiss him, but I could not. Every time I was about to kiss him, I held myself back, reasoning, ‘How can I kiss my baby if I have not yet given my baby a *Bris*, thereby demonstrating my appreciation to Hashem for giving me this beautiful gift?’ Only after my child was circumcised could I allow myself to kiss him. The experience was overwhelming, so I fainted.”

Can we begin to grasp the depth of this woman’s resolution and strength of character? She waited for this child and carried him in her womb for nine months. After she delivered a healthy baby, she did not kiss him until she had shown her appreciation to her Benefactor. This is the type of Jew that lives on, the Jew whom the Russians could not break: the Torah Jew.