

to him, now that I know? How can I let anyone bring a knife to his penis and deliberately damage it? On the other hand, I did not want to make him different. To cause him to suffer socially and later with girls. No way. I got up from the computer, and paced for a few moments. Then I went back and kept on reading. The next day I told my wife that I had doubts. She told me: "You don't want to cut? We will not cut." And that was it for her. My wife has a son from a previous marriage. She circumcised him in the United States with a traditional mohel. She couldn't even stay in the room when it took place. She went out the house and walked and cried until it was over. The circumcision did not go well. When her son was one year old, he had to undergo surgery to correct the outcome. As for me, I needed several months to let the fear go, the fear of making my son a freak and sentencing him to a life of ridicule. Thanks to Kahal—a group of Israeli parents who did not circumcise their sons—I had the chance to meet face to face with other parents who have made the same decision I did. I came to realize that my fear was completely

exaggerated and was mostly comprised of demons in my head, culturally fortified to perpetuate this ancient rite. For the first time in my life, I felt a strong urge to take a public stance. To make a change. To help parents who do not want to circumcise but are too afraid to even consider leaving their sons intact. To protect children from damage to their bodies; from pain, and suffering, and risk.

A few days ago I made a new informational video titled *Eight Reasons Why An Intact Penis Is Better Than A Cut Penis*. The video is in Hebrew with English subtitles. Click the small captions button on the bottom right corner of the film to turn on the English subtitles. I'd love to hear your comments about it.

To watch the video and learn more about Jewish parents who are raising intact children, visit:

**[www.GONNEN.org](http://www.GONNEN.org)**

If you would like support from other Jewish parents who have kept their children intact, join Kahal at:

**[www.KAHAL.org](http://www.KAHAL.org)**

# Shalom!

I'm Israeli, I'm Jewish and I'm an Intactivist, which means I strive to end male circumcision performed on infants and children in Israel and around the world. My journey began seven years ago when my son was born. My wife and I had no doubts about circumcision. Although I hated it, and knew I was only doing it because it was a social dictate, I felt that putting my son through a surgical procedure to make his penis look "normal" was a must.

**The thought of not circumcising didn't even cross my mind ...**

# Our Journey

After my son was born, I made an appointment with a medical doctor, a director of the neonatology department in a big medical center in Tel Aviv, who also has a private circumcision clinic. I was very impressed by this doctor's credentials. However, when I read on his website the instructions for parents regarding the preparations they would need to make before coming to the clinic—applying a generous layer of EMLA cream on the base of the boy's penis and covering it with an adhesive plastic wrap to prevent the cream from soaking into the diaper—that stopped me in my tracks. I just wanted to bring my boy to the clinic and let the doctor do the whole thing.

This triggered some reluctance, and the next thing I did was to look for recommendations on this doctor. I wanted to see what other parents were saying about him. Minutes into my research I accidentally came across websites which oppose circumcision. The first anti-circumcision text that caught my eye was the following paragraph from *The Guide For The Perplexed* by Moses Maimonides:

"As regards circumcision, I think that one of its objects is to limit sexual intercourse, and to weaken the organ of generation as far as possible, and thus cause man to be moderate. Some people believe that circumcision is to remove a defect in man's formation; but every

one can easily reply: How can products of nature be deficient so as to require external completion, especially as the use of the foreskin to that organ is evident. This commandment has not been enjoined as a complement to a deficient physical creation, but as a means for perfecting man's moral shortcomings. The bodily injury caused to that organ is exactly that which is desired; it does not interrupt any vital function, nor does it destroy the power of generation.

Circumcision simply counteracts excessive lust; for there is no doubt that circumcision weakens the power of sexual excitement, and sometimes lessens the natural enjoyment: the organ necessarily becomes weak when it loses blood and is deprived of its covering from the beginning. Our Sages (Beresh. Rabba, c. 80) say distinctly: It is hard for a woman, with whom an uncircumcised had sexual intercourse, to separate from him. This is, as I believe, the best reason for the commandment concerning circumcision."

To this day, I distinctly remember the horror and physical reaction in my body to reading this. Even now I am shaking and crying when I write this. This text for me cracked the thick wall of not wanting to know anything about circumcision. And from that moment, I found myself gulping every piece of information I



could find. I read with disgust a description of the Jewish ritual procedure, including the *peri'ah*, which is scraping the remaining inner lining of the foreskin from the glans, done with the mohel's fingernails (which he elongates and sharpens especially for that task), and the *metitzah b'peh* (where the mohel puts his mouth over the bleeding penis and sucks the blood). I learned about the foreskin anatomy and its functions. I read testimonies by intact Israeli boys about their experiences growing up in Israel, who said it was no big deal. I read the statements by medical associations regarding circumcision, saying there was no medical indication for routine infant male circumcision. And I cried. I cried because I was torn and terrified. I thought on my son who was born only a few days earlier.

On one hand I felt, how can I possibly put him through this? How can I do this