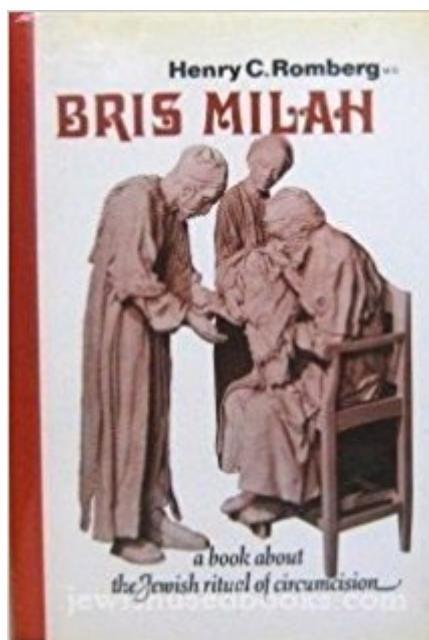


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Bris Milah: A Book About The Jewish Ritual Of Circumcision



Synopsis

Book by Romberg, Henry

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Book by Romberg, Henry

This is a review of both this book and Samuel Kunin's "Circumcision: Its Place in Judaism, Past and Present." The rating is just for this book. Recently I have read a whole stack of pro-circumcision books in the interest of "knowing the enemy." Two physicians who double as mohels have written guides to the Jewish ritual of circumcision. Both books may be of interest to anyone concerned with male genital integrity, particularly to those interested in Judaic aspects. Romberg's work, while it is the more dated of the two books (and also happens to currently be out of print), proves itself easily the superior and more engaging of the two. Henry Romberg's words, while they are merely two decades old, seem to come to us from another era. I enjoyed Romberg's folksy tone, which is charming in its way (at least as long as one is able to forget his subject). The author describes how, following his medical internship, he settled in Cleveland on the advice of his spiritual mentor. At that time he was one of the very few mohels in that city and was often called upon to travel to perform brises in places where no mohel was available. Romberg cheerfully describes his apprenticeship and learning process as a mohel, the advantages and disadvantages of being both a physician and a mohel, ceremonies associated with the bris, the details of how the bris is performed (both ritual and procedure are described), his advice to parents, etc. One purportedly humorous yet unintentionally painful story is provided of a set of triplet boys whose birth occasioned a trip by

Romberg in order to ritually circumcise them. Romberg does mention in passing at one point that opposition to circumcision does exist, but quickly dismisses the issue and notes that certainly no Jew worth the name would ever question the practice. The author provides appendices on Jewish laws, on questions he has been asked about bris milah, and about the significance of the covenant. Samuel Kunin is a prominent proponent of circumcision who has appeared on television to debate leading intactivists. Citing his predecessor Romberg at one point, he comes across as a very enthusiastic but curiously uninformed (or deliberately deceitful) advocate of the procedure. Unlike Romberg, he cheerfully conflates distinct issues (e.g., medical rationales vs. religious rationales) until it almost seems he wishes to defend the practice by confusing the reader. Rather remarkably given his medical degree, he suggests that NO circumcised man has ever had cancer of the penis, which is easily disprovable through a quick search of the medical literature. Despite his intellectual achievements, Kunin seemingly will not allow truth or accuracy to stand in the way of his cheerleading for his favorite procedure. In this respect, Kunin probably resembles other modern-day physician advocates of circumcision. Typographical errors also crop up repeatedly throughout the book. Kunin's book comes across as a bizarre curiosity, almost comparable to another radically pro-circumcision book written a century earlier, Peter C. Remondino's History of Circumcision from the Earliest Times to the Present. Proceed with caution! At least read Dr. Romberg's book first if you can find it!

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