

The child's Hebrew name is used in the synagogue, and also on religious documents such as wedding certificates.



When a Jewish boy is born, he is circumcised to show that he is a member of the Jewish faith. In orthodox Judaism this is carried out at a ceremony called **Brit Milah**, when the boy is eight days old.

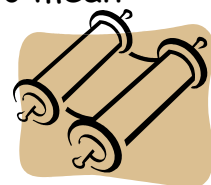


When the baby's circumcision takes place, it is performed by a **mohel**, who is not necessarily a doctor or a rabbi, but is always a specially-trained religious Jew.



When Jewish children are born they are given both an ordinary name and a Hebrew name. The Hebrew name may be given in memory of an important relative. The ordinary name may be chosen from among those which are popular at the time, or it may have Jewish historical meaning.

Jews read the Torah that their ancestor, Abraham, was told by God to be 'fruitful and multiply'. They take this to mean that Jewish couples should have children, so that the community of Jews does not die out.



When a Jewish couple marries, it is hoped that every marriage will result in the birth of children, for they are considered very important, and the link between one generation and another.



When a baby is to be baptised, the child's parents choose people to be godparents. Although godparents do not look after their godchildren by feeding or clothing them, they do help to support the spiritual needs of the child.



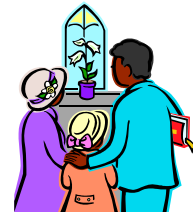
Christians believe that humans are born with sin. Baptism is a Christian symbol for washing away this natural sin so that a person can start again. This can happen at any age.



When Christian babies are born they are blessed by a priest. This is the way that Christian parents show that they want to bring their baby up in a Christian way.



A baptism is a time when the baby's family promise to bring the baby up in a Christian way.



Often gifts are brought for the newborn baby. Although any gifts to support the baby are acceptable, it is usual to try and give gifts that will last. This is why silver is a popular gift.

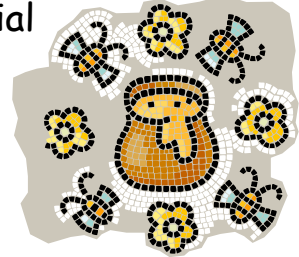


When a baby is baptised (or christened) it is given a Christian name (also known as a first name).

Hindus believe that human souls come from Brahman and that Brahman is everything in the universe. They hope that, after a long journey through many lives, their souls will go back to Brahman. Each birth is a step along the way.



Hindus wash a new baby and then write a special word, AUM, or OM on its tongue with a golden pen dipped in honey.



When the baby is born, it is welcomed into the world with a short ceremony. The priest or one of the family whispers special prayers into the baby's ear and a mixture of honey and ghee is placed on its tongue. The house may be decorated with strings of leaves from special trees to mark the happy event.



For Hindus the path of life begins even before a person is born. There are a number of steps along the path which are marked by ceremonies, called **samskaras**. There are 16 altogether. More than half take place before the child's first birthday. This is to make sure that it has a good start.

The naming ceremony usually takes place ten days after the baby is born. The baby's horoscope is cast at the same time, based on the exact minute the baby was born. The priest often chooses the letter that the name will start with, based on the horoscope.



The arrival of a baby in a Hindu home is a big occasion. Preparations are likely to include special ceremonies performed before the baby is born for the welfare of the mother and child.



Muslims give the baby something sweet to taste. If a baby is born in hospital, the family hold a ceremony when it arrives home. Honey or sugar is put on the baby's tongue and a prayer is said.



One way in which Muslims thank God for a baby is to give gifts to those in need. Muslims believe there are five rules in life that must be obeyed. Giving to people in need is one of those rules.



Soon after a Muslim baby has been born its hair is shaved for the name-giving ceremony. It is customary to give the same amount of silver as the weight of hair. Of course, the hair does not weigh very much and usually the parents give more than that.



After the name-giving ceremony, the family hold a feast. In Muslim countries, if the baby is a boy they kill two goats for the feast. If it is a girl they kill one. They invite friends and neighbours to share the meat, but one third of it should be given to the poor.



Soon after a Muslim baby is born, probably on the seventh day, they prepare it for the Auiqah name-giving ceremony, by washing it and shaving its head. Like Jews, Muslims circumcise boy babies. This is done because they believe it is cleaner.



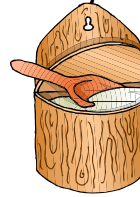
Muslims sometimes take names from the family of Mohammed. Some Muslims ask their leader (called the Imam), to choose the child's name. He chooses names with a meaning to remind Muslims of their faith.



Like Hindus and Buddhists, Sikhs believe that a part of a person, which can be called the soul, is born over and over again in different lives. They hope they will not be reborn on Earth lots of times because they believe there is something better than life on Earth.



The parents take flour, butter and sugar with them when they take the child to the temple. It is made into a special pudding called **kara parshad**, to share. The baby is given a little sugary water, called **amrit**. Water is used as a symbol of purity. Sugar is a symbol of sweetness and goodness.



On the first visit to the gurdwara, the baby is named. There is a reading from the *Granth*, the holy book of Sikhism. The reader opens the book and looks at the first letter on the page. A name beginning with that letter is chosen for the baby.



Sikh parents try to make sure that the first words that their baby hears are those taken from a passage called the *Mool Mantgra*. After these words have been said, honey is put on the baby's tongue.



Sikh parents believe that the soul of their baby has come from God. They hope the soul will return to God after death, if the person has led a good life.



A few weeks later, the baby is welcomed into the community of Sikhs. The child is taken to the gurdwara for the first time.

