

Half and Half

Excerpted and adapted from a *shiur* by HaRav Yechezkel Biberfeld

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<https://baishavaad.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/R-Biberfeld-Parshas-Tazria-Metzora-Is-Doing-Part-of-a-Mitzvah-Doing-Any-of-the-Mitzvah.mp3>

On the eighth day, the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised.

Vayikra 12:3

It happens sometimes that the father of a newborn boy wishes to perform his son's milah himself but wants to leave the *priah* (pulling back of the foreskin) to the mohel. If milah and *priah* are done by different people, has each fulfilled part of the mitzvah or no mitzvah at all? The same question arises in other contexts, like if one person does *bedikas* chametz in one half of a house and another, not appointed by the first as his *shaliach* (proxy), searches the other half.

The Shulchan Aruch (Y.D. 266:14) rules that on Shabbos, milah and *priah* must be done by the same mohel, but the Rama allows one mohel do the milah and another the *priah*. Although the Rama concludes that one should ideally avoid this division on Shabbos, many *Acharonim* allow it *lechatchilah*. The Mishnah Brurah (331:36) writes that it was customary in Poland to always have two mohalim perform a bris together, and it seems that our question is the subject of the above dispute: The Shulchan Aruch holds that if milah and *priah* are done by different people, neither mohel fulfills a mitzvah, so there is no mitzvah of bris milah here that can override Shabbos. But the Rama's initial statement and other *Acharonim* maintain that one who performs half of a mitzvah has fulfilled part of the mitzvah, so the division is allowed on Shabbos.

R' Chaim Kaufman (Mishchas Shemen, Mas'ei) offers support for the latter view from the Sforno (Devarim 4:41), who writes that Moshe designated three *arei miklat* in *Eiver HaYardein* even though they would not be operational until the *arei miklat* in Eretz Yisrael were established later by Yehoshua, because this was a valid partial mitzvah.