While many synagogues have responded to the coronavirus shutdown by taking their services and rituals online, there’s one Jewish tradition that simply cannot be performed that way: the brit milah.

With the Los Angeles County Department of Health now banning all gatherings, Rabbi Shalom Denbo, a Los Angeles-based mohel, told the Journal that he’s gone from “ceremonies in a hotel ballroom with 500 people to a bris with just me, the father and the mother.” Some parents, he added, have just “outright canceled.”

But, he added, it’s only the tone of the ceremonies that have changed, given that there is no halachic requirement that a minyan be present for a brit milah. Now, he said, “it’s less of a public event and more the observance of the covenant and a celebration of that. You don’t have a large crowd to joyously welcome the baby, and chant ‘Barukh ha-ba!’”

*“Parents should not take lightly that the bris should happen on the eighth day [but] in this situation, it’s a matter of health. We’re dealing with fear and anxiety and public concern.” — Rabbi Shalom Denbo*

However, if the family decides to wait until after the eighth day to perform the brit milah, it is, Denbo said, still a “valid, kosher bris.” He explained that the Talmud deals with the possibility of the brit milah not happening on the eighth day.

“It says, ‘You have a child who grows up and never has a bris. It doesn’t speak about the reasons why, but just says he never had a bris. He has to take care of it; it’s now his responsibility,” Denbo said.

He added, “Parents should not take lightly that the bris should happen on the eighth day,” [but] in this situation it’s a matter of health. We’re dealing with fear and anxiety and public concern.”

However, Denbo did caution parents not to wait too long, because a few weeks after birth, the circumcision has to take place in a hospital.