

**Circumcision – Brit Mila**

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In this [study](study.html) I would like to understand circumcision and the reasons why [HaShem](hashem.html) uses it to seal His [covenant](covenant.html) with the [Jews](gen-jew.html).

***Tehillim (***[***Psalms***](psalms1.html)***) 119:162*** *I rejoice at Your word, as* [*one*](one.html) *that findeth great spoil.*

In [Psalm](psalms1.html) 119:162, the [Talmud](orallaw.html)[[1]](#footnote-1) homiletically interprets אמרתך, *Your word,* in the singular, as if it meant to single out [one](one.html) [*mitzva*](cmds613.html)par excellence. This [*mitzva*](cmds613.html)is brit mila, because it is the very [first](one.html) [one](one.html) that was given to [Abraham](avraham.html) as a specifically [Jewish](gen-jew.html) [*mitzva*](cmds613.html)*.* Rashi agrees and elaborates a bit further:

***162 I rejoice over Your word*** *Over Your promise that You promised me. Another explanation: Over* [*one*](one.html) *of Your enigmatic statements, when I understand it. Our Rabbis, however, interpreted it as referring to brit mila, for [when] David was in the bathhouse and saw himself without zizith, without* [*tefillin*](tefillin.html)*, and without Torah, he said, “Woe is to me, for I am naked of all* [*commandments*](cmds613.html)*.” As soon as he thought of the brit mila, he rejoiced and said when he emerged (from the bathhouse), “I rejoice over Your word.” [This refers to] brit mila, which was* [*first*](one.html) *given with a saying* (אמירה)*, and not with* [*speaking*](mashal.html)(דיבור), *as it is said (Gen. 17:9): “And God said* (ויאמר) *to* [*Abraham*](avraham.html)*, ‘And you shall keep My* [*covenant*](covenant.html)*.’”*

The [seventh](seven.html) of [Avraham](avraham.html)’s [ten](ten.html) tests was to be circumcised in his old age. When [Abraham](avraham.html) was 99 years old he was commanded to undergo brit mila. He was very apprehensive about this, since he hoped to have a son in his old age, and everything possible would have to be done to enhance his virility. Now he was told to reduce his virility by undergoing brit mila, or so he thought.

***Bereshit Rabbah 46:2*** *Why should [*[*Abraham*](avraham.html)*] not have circumcised himself at the age of* [*forty*](forty.html)*-*[*eight*](eight.html)*, when he recognized his Creator? So as not to shut the door in the* [*face*](body.html) *of converts. Then why not be circumcised at the age of eighty-*[*five*](five.html)*, when He* [*spoke*](mashal.html) *with him between the parts?[[2]](#footnote-2) In order that* [*Isaac*](isaac.html) *might issue from a holy source. Then let him be circumcised at the age of eighty-*[*six*](six.html)*, when Ishmael was born? Rabbi Shim’on son of Laqish said: ‘I will set up a cinnamon tree in the* [*world*](worlds.html)*: just as the cinnamon tree yields fruit as long as you manure and tend around it, so [shall* [*Abraham*](avraham.html) *be] even when his* [*blood*](body.html) *runs sluggishly and his passions and* [*desires*](needs.html) *have ceased’ [i.e., the blessed Holy* [*One*](one.html) *promised to renew* [*Abraham*](avraham.html)*’s virility, precisely, by means of brit mila].*

With this worry behind him, [Avraham](avraham.html) moved swiftly to enter a [covenant](covenant.html) with [HaShem](hashem.html). To understand this [covenant](covenant.html), we need to see the structure with which the [covenant](covenant.html) was enacted. When we do this, we see that the [covenant](covenant.html) of circumcision, brit mila, is intimately tied up with the Promised land.

When you examine Bereshit (Genesis) chapter 17, which details the [covenant](covenant.html) that involves brit mila, you can see a sort of ATBASH structure, aka chiasm, that forces our attention to the center and shows us that the chapter [wants](needs.html) us ‘to keep the [covenant](covenant.html)’. Everything leads to the center.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Bereshit (Genesis) 17** | **Structure** |
| **3** And [Abram](avraham.html) fell on his [face](body.html); and God talked with him, saying: | And [Abram](avraham.html) fell on his [face](body.html) |
| **4** ‘As for Me, behold, My [covenant](covenant.html) is with thee, and thou shalt be the father of a multitude of [nations](nations.html). |  [Avraham](avraham.html) will be a father |
| **5** Neither shall thy [name](name.html) any more be called [Abram](avraham.html), but thy [name](name.html) shall be [Abraham](avraham.html); for the father of a multitude of [nations](nations.html) have I made thee. |  [Abram](avraham.html) is changed to [Avraham](avraham.html) |
| **6** And I will make thee exceeding fruitful (וְהִפְרֵתִי ), and I will make [nations](nations.html) of thee, and kings shall come out of thee. |  To multiply greatly - וְהִפְרֵתִי  |
| **7** And I will establish My [covenant](covenant.html) between Me and thee and thy [seed](flower.html) after thee throughout their [generations](toldot.html) for an everlasting [covenant](covenant.html), to be a God unto thee and to thy [seed](flower.html) after thee. |  Everlasting [covenant](covenant.html) |
| **8** And I will give unto thee, and to thy [seed](flower.html) after thee, the land of thy sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.’ |  God / Land / God |
| **9** And God said unto [Abraham](avraham.html): ‘And as for thee, thou shalt keep My [covenant](covenant.html), thou, and thy [seed](flower.html) after thee throughout their [generations](toldot.html). |  And you shall keep the [covenant](covenant.html) |
| **10** This is My [covenant](covenant.html), which ye shall keep, between Me and you and thy [seed](flower.html) after thee: every [male](male%2Bfemale.html) among you shall be circumcised. |
| **11** And ye shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of a [covenant](covenant.html) betwixt Me and you. **12** And he that is [eight](eight.html) days old shall be circumcised among you, every [male](male%2Bfemale.html) throughout your [generations](toldot.html), he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any foreigner, that is not of thy [seed](flower.html). |  Brit mila / [Covenant](covenant.html) / Brit mila  |
| **13** He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must [needs](needs.html) be circumcised; and My [covenant](covenant.html) shall be in your flesh for an everlasting [covenant](covenant.html). |  [Physical](physical.html) everlasting [covenant](covenant.html) |
| **14** And the uncircumcised [male](male%2Bfemale.html) who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that soul shall be cut off (הֵפַר) from his people; he hath broken My [covenant](covenant.html).’ |  To utterly nullify - הֵפַר |
| **15** And God said unto [Abraham](avraham.html): ‘As for Sarai thy wife, thou shalt not call her [name](name.html) Sarai, but Sarah shall her [name](name.html) be. |  Sarai is changed to Sarah |
| **16** And I will bless her, and moreover I will give thee a son of her; yea, I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of [nations](nations.html); kings of peoples shall be of her.’ |  Sarah will be a mother |
| **17** And [Abraham](avraham.html) fell upon his [face](body.html), and laughed, and said in his [heart](body.html): ‘Shall a child be born unto him that is a hundred years old? and shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear?’ | And [Abraham](avraham.html) fell upon his [face](body.html) |

The final message: I will give you land - You will keep the [covenant](covenant.html) and be circumcised. This is clearly, and forcefully conveyed by Yehoshua. Just before the Bne Israel entered the promised land, Yehoshua was commanded to circumcise the Bne Israel. Thus, he established, again, a [connection](connection.html) between the promised land and brit mila.

***Yehoshua (Joshua) 5:2-3*** *At that* [*time*](time.html)[*HaShem*](hashem.html) *said unto Joshua: ‘Make thee knives of flint, and circumcise again the children of Israel the second* [*time*](time.html)*.’* ***3*** *And Joshua made him knives of flint, and circumcised the children of Israel at Gibeath-ha-araloth.*

The brit mila initiated by Yehoshua is another [time](time.html) where [Pesach](passover.html) and brit mila are closely linked. When the Bne Israel were in Egypt they circumcised themselves [four](four.html) days before [Pesach](passover.html). In the above pasuk, Yehoshua is again circumcising the males just before [Pesach](passover.html).[[3]](#footnote-3)

[Pesach](passover.html) is about getting rid of Avoda Zara ([idolatry](idolatry.html)) and commitment to [HaShem](hashem.html). When the good kings of Israel wanted to purge the [idolatry](idolatry.html) from the [nation](nations.html) and to reaffirm commitment to [HaShem](hashem.html), they chose the [festival](festival.html) of [Pesach](passover.html) to enact their policy of teshuva and eradication of avoda Zara.[[4]](#footnote-4)

There are [two](two.html) eternal [laws](law.html) which are intimately connected. The [*first*](one.html) case of an eternal [law](law.html) is in Genesis 17, where God forges the [covenant](covenant.html) of brit mila with [Avraham](avraham.html). Here we see the term *l’dorotam l’brit olam:*

***Bereshit (Genesis) 17:7*** *And I will establish My* [*covenant*](covenant.html) *between Me and thee and thy* [*seed*](flower.html) *after thee throughout their* [*generations*](toldot.html) *for an everlasting* [*covenant*](covenant.html)(לְדֹרֹתָם--לִבְרִית עוֹלָם)*, to be a God unto thee and to thy* [*seed*](flower.html) *after thee.*

And then again *l’brit olam*:

***Bereshit (Genesis) 17:13*** *He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must* [*needs*](needs.html) *be circumcised; and My* [*covenant*](covenant.html) *shall be in your flesh for an everlasting* [*covenant*](covenant.html)*.*

The next case, of an eternal [law](law.html), is in [Exodus](exodus.html) 12, where [HaShem](hashem.html) tells us to celebrate the [Pesach](passover.html) [holiday](festival.html) *l’dorotechem chukat olam,* repeated in 12:14 and 12:17.

***Shemot (***[***Exodus***](exodus.html)***) 12:14*** *And this day shall be unto you for a memorial, and ye shall keep it a feast to* [*HaShem*](hashem.html)*; throughout your* [*generations*](toldot.html) *ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever* (לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶם, חֻקַּת עוֹלָם)*.*

***Shemot (***[***Exodus***](exodus.html)***) 12:17*** *And ye shall observe the feast of* [*unleavened*](chametz.html) *bread; for in this selfsame day have I brought your hosts out of the land of Egypt; therefore shall ye observe this day throughout your* [*generations*](toldot.html) *by an ordinance for ever* (לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶם--חֻקַּת עוֹלָם)*.*

These [two](two.html) positive [commands](cmds613.html), with the penalty of keret,[[5]](#footnote-5) follow each other in the Torah. Their positive nature and penalty connect them. Brit mila is a positive [commandment](cmds613.html). For *neglecting* to perform a positive [commandment](cmds613.html), repentance suffices; no further [atonement](atonemen.html) is required. The *exceptions* to this are the [two](two.html) positive [commandments](cmds613.html) (the [Korban](korbanot.html) [Pesach](passover.html)[[6]](#footnote-6) and brit mila) whose neglect incurs the punishment of excision.[[7]](#footnote-7)

***Bereshit (Genesis) 17:14*** *And the uncircumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my* [*covenant*](covenant.html)*.*

***Bamidbar (***[***Numbers***](nchart.html)***) 9:13*** *But the man that is* [*clean*](purity.html)*, and is not in a* [*journey*](stages.html)*, and forbeareth to keep the* [*passover*](passover.html)*, even the same soul shall be cut off from among his people: because he brought not the* [*offering*](korbanot) *of* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *in his* [*appointed*](settimes.html) *season, that man shall bear his* [*sin*](sin.html)*.*

Brit milah and the [Korban](korbanot.html) [Pesach](passover.html) are vital to the Torah system. What makes brit mila and [korban](korbanot.html) [Pesach](passover.html) different? In order to begin a [marriage](mashal.html) a person must undertake a commitment to join in unity with his wife. Without such a commitment there is no genuine relationship. [One](one.html) can do all kinds of nice deeds but, in the Torah’s [eyes](body.html), they are not married until they perform the [wedding](wedding.html) ceremony prescribed by the Torah. In a similar way, a person [needs](needs.html) to make a commitment to [HaShem](hashem.html) to undertake his relationship with Him. Without such a commitment he cannot begin to have a true relationship. Brit mila and [korban](korbanot.html) [Pesach](passover.html) are both types of covenants with [HaShem](hashem.html), whereby a [Jew](gen-jew.html) commits to keeping the Torah. These [two](two.html) [commandments](cmds613.html) define our Peoplehood, and non-performance is a bill of divorce from the [Jewish](gen-jew.html) [nation](nations.html). This explains why these [two](two.html) positive [commands](cmds613.html) were given to the [Jews](gen-jew.html) before the [Exodus](exodus.html).

[***Midrash***](orallaw.html) ***Rabbah -*** [***Ruth***](ruth.html) ***VI:1*** *Another interpretation: ‘Because of Thy righteous ordinances’, because of the judgments which Thou didst bring upon the Egyptians and the righteousness which Thou wroughtest with our forefathers in Egypt, for they possessed no virtues or good deeds to* [*justify*](justification.html) *their* [*redemption*](redemption.html)*, but Thou didst give them* [*two*](two.html)[*commandments*](cmds613.html) *with which they should occupy themselves and be* [*redeemed*](redemption.html)*, and these are the* [*blood*](body.html) *of the Paschal lamb and the* [*blood*](body.html) *of brit mila . R. Levi said: In that night the* [*two*](two.html) *bloods mingled, as it is said, And when I passed by thee, and saw thee wallowing in thy* [*blood*](body.html)*, I said unto thee: In thy* [*blood*](body.html)*, live; yea, I said unto thee: In thy* [*blood*](body.html)*, live.[[8]](#footnote-8)*

Toledot [Yitzchak](isaac.html) tells us something about [one](one.html) of the meanings behind the reason for brit mila: “Man has been created for **the sole purpose of serving** his Creator. Thus having created man, “the Lord G-d took the man, and put him in the [Garden of Eden](eden.html)...And the Lord commanded the man …”.[[9]](#footnote-9) Likewise in the [command](cmds613.html) to circumcise our sons, after stating, “… and born a man child,” the Torah states: “on the [eighth](eight.html) day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised,” **for he was born to fulfill G-d’s** [**commandments**](cmds613.html) – the brit milah is the [first](one.html) and foremost [mitzva](cmds613.html), without which he is not a [Jew](gen-jew.html). Through brit mila he accepts the yoke of the kingdom of [Heaven](heaven.html), having been marked to serve the Lord and fulfill all His [commandments](cmds613.html). Hence, the [mitzva](cmds613.html) of Milah appears in conjunction with the [birth](thebirth.html) of a [male](male%2Bfemale.html) child. Brit mila is a [sign](signs.html) of our [covenant](covenant.html) with [HaShem](hashem.html), on an individual basis.

So, what’s the link with [Pesach](passover.html)?

***Vayikra (Leviticus) 25:42*** *For they are My servants, whom I brought forth out of the land of Egypt; they shall not be sold as bondmen.*

***Vayikra (Leviticus) 25:55*** *For unto Me the children of Israel are servants; they are My servants whom I brought forth out of the land of Egypt: I am* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *your God.*

***Shemot (***[***Exodus***](exodus.html)***) 20:2*** *I am* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before Me.*

Clearly, the link between [Pesach](passover.html) and brit mila is that they both identify us as servants of [HaShem](hashem.html), as the ones who perform His [mitzvot](cmds613.html).

Let us analyze why these [two](two.html) bloods, mila and [pesach](passover.html), were given by [HaShem](hashem.html) as [commandments](cmds613.html) with which to [redeem](redemption.html) Israel. At [first](one.html) the [Jewish](gen-jew.html) people were Paro’s slaves, but brit mila made them [HaShem](hashem.html)’s slaves instead.[[10]](#footnote-10) The purpose of mila is to be a [sign](signs.html), like a branding on a person to show he is a servant of [HaShem](hashem.html). The [Gemara](orallaw.html) discusses the seal of a slave, which, not being an article of clothing, may not be borne in the public domain on [Shabbat](sabbath.html).[[11]](#footnote-11) Mila is [HaShem](hashem.html)’s seal upon us, as we say in the [Grace](grace.html) after Meals, “Your [covenant](covenant.html) that You have sealed in our flesh”.[[12]](#footnote-12)

But mila alone would not suffice, for a servant must work or else there is no servitude, and the [Pesach](passover.html) [sacrifice](korbanot.html) is called avoda (work, service), as it is written, “what is this avodah to you”,[[13]](#footnote-13) and “you will do this service in this month”.[[14]](#footnote-14) This avoda completes his identification as an eved (slave), but would not suffice without the brand of mila. Both mila and [pesach](passover.html), brand and service, are required.

We say in the mila blessing, “And His offspring He sealed with the [sign](signs.html) of the holy [covenant](covenant.html)”. But until he has done the [first](one.html) unit of service he is only a temporary slave, fit only for a partial [redemption](redemption.html). And even if he would want to, an uncircumcised, non-Israelite may not partake of the [pesach](passover.html).[[15]](#footnote-15) If he is branded and serves, this is complete slavery, about which [HaShem](hashem.html) says, “For the children of Israel are My slaves”,[[16]](#footnote-16) and not slaves of other slaves.[[17]](#footnote-17) As such, [HaShem](hashem.html) [redeemed](redemption.html) them from servitude to Paro.

Further, the [Jewish](gen-jew.html) people entered the [covenant](covenant.html) with [three](three.html) things: brit mila, immersion, and a sacrificial [offering](korbanot).[[18]](#footnote-18) Brit mila was performed in Egypt as it states “Anyone who is uncircumcised may not [eat](eating.html)” [the paschal lamb.] Immersion was performed in the desert before the giving of the Torah as it states “and you shall [purify](purity.html) yourselves today and tomorrow and wash your clothing”. A sacrificial [offering](korbanot) as it states “And he sent the youth of the people of Israel and they brought offerings”, these offerings were brought on behalf of the entire [Jewish](gen-jew.html) people. The same applies in all [generations](toldot.html), when a non-[Jew](gen-jew.html) [wants](needs.html) to enter the [covenant](covenant.html) and to settle under the wings of the Shechinah and accept upon himself the yoke of the Torah, he requires brit mila, immersion, and [offering](korbanot) a [sacrifice](korbanot.html) and if she is a [female](male%2Bfemale.html), immersion and [sacrifice](korbanot.html), as it states “like you, so too a [convert](aliens.html)”. Just look like you [converted] with brit mila, immersion and [offering](korbanot) a [sacrifice](korbanot.html), so too, all [generations](toldot.html) of converts do so with brit mila, immersion and [offering](korbanot) a [sacrifice](korbanot.html).[[19]](#footnote-19)

Another [connection](connection.html) between these [two](two.html) [mitzvot](cmds613.html) is that there are [two](two.html) occasions when the Prophet Elijah visits the [Jewish](gen-jew.html) people; at a brit mila and on [Seder](haggada.html) night, the night when we remember the [korban](korbanot.html) [Pesach](passover.html). This is because Elijah, exasperated at the [Jewish](gen-jew.html) people’s continued sinning, declared that there was no hope for them.[[20]](#footnote-20) In response, [HaShem](hashem.html) ordered him to visit every brit mila which would show that, no matter how much the people may [sin](sin.html) they still keep the [covenant](covenant.html) between them and [HaShem](hashem.html). Similarly, Elijah comes at [Seder](haggada.html) night, to see the [Jewish](gen-jew.html) people celebrate their [birth](birth.html) as a [nation](nations.html).[[21]](#footnote-21)

Another [connection](connection.html) between brit mila and [Pesach](passover.html), is based on the idea of “And none of you shall go out of the door of his house until the morning”

***Shemot (***[***Exodus***](exodus.html)***) 12:22*** *And ye shall take a bunch of hyssop, and dip it in the* [*blood*](body.html) *that is in the basin, and strike the lintel and the* [*two*](two.html) *side-posts with the* [*blood*](body.html) *that is in the basin; and none of you shall go out of the door of his house until the morning.*

Or:

***Shemot (***[***Exodus***](exodus.html)***) 12:46*** *In* [*one*](one.html) *house shall it be* [*eaten*](eating.html)*; thou shalt not carry forth aught of the flesh abroad out of the house; neither shall ye break a bone thereof.*

Whoever removes the meat of the [korban](korbanot.html) [Pesach](passover.html) from the house, designated with the [sign](signs.html) of the [blood](body.html) on the doorposts, renders it invalid. And anyone who leaves the house, in Egypt, designated with the [sign](signs.html) of the [blood](body.html) during the [time](time.html) when the [sacrifice](korbanot.html) may be [eaten](eating.html), takes his life in his [hands](fourteen.html). The [Angel](angels.html) of Death is roaming the streets of Egypt.

Likewise, the brit is also a [sign](signs.html). It is a [sign](signs.html) which stamps the [seed](flower.html) of Israel with the [HaShem](hashem.html)’s holiness, as we bless at a Brit Mila: “And he stamped his descendants with the [sign](signs.html) of the holy [covenant](covenant.html) (brit).” Like the [blood](body.html) of the [Pesach](passover.html) which stamps the doorway of the [Jewish](gen-jew.html) home so that the Bne Israel will not go outside to the [Angel](angels.html) of Death, the [blood](body.html) of the brit mila stamps the opening of the [Jewish](gen-jew.html) [body](body.html) so that holy [Jewish](gen-jew.html) [seed](flower.html) will not emerge in vain. [Jewish](gen-jew.html) [seed](flower.html) will emerge only in holiness, just as the Israelites emerged from their homes in Egypt at the [time](time.html) of the [exodus](exodus.html): in holiness, and not to destruction. T**he** [**blood**](body.html) **of brit mila is a stamp on the** [**body**](body.html)**, and the** [**blood**](body.html) **of the** [**Pesach**](passover.html) **is a stamp on the house.**

The Torah refers to [two](two.html) different things as a person’s “house”.

1) His family: “And he shall atone for himself and for his house”.[[22]](#footnote-22) Similarly, in the context of the [Pesach](passover.html) [sacrifice](korbanot.html) we read, “A sheep for each [household](househld.html), a sheep per house”.[[23]](#footnote-23)

2) The place where he lives: “And a person who sanctifies his house as holy to God”.[[24]](#footnote-24) Similarly, concerning the [Pesach](passover.html) we read, “And if the [household](househld.html) [number](nchart.html) too few, then he and his neighbor who is close to his house shall take ...”.[[25]](#footnote-25)

In each “house” a free person is distinguishable from a slave:

***Shemot (***[***Exodus***](exodus.html)***) 21:4*** *If [the slave’s] master shall give him a wife and she bears him sons and daughters, the woman and her children shall belong to his master, and he shall go free by himself.*

A slave does not establish his own family. His master finds him a wife, who is not necessarily someone the slave would have chosen for himself; and his children are not his own, they belong to his master. In the words of Chazal, “A slave has no family lineage.” And since his [marriage](mashal.html) to his partner, the maidservant, does not result in the establishment of a real home, it is not surprising that Chazal state, “The more maidservants, the more immorality”.[[26]](#footnote-26)

At the same [time](time.html), a slave has no home of his own:

***Vayikra (Leviticus) 25:10*** *And you shall declare* [*freedom*](freedom.html) *in the land for all its inhabitants*

[***Rosh Hashana***](teruah.html) ***9*** *Rabbi Yehuda said: [*[*Freedom*](freedom.html) *means] that he may live anywhere that he wishes, and he is under the auspices of someone else.*

[Freedom](freedom.html), on the other [hand](fourteen.html), means possession of both “houses”:

***Vayikra (Leviticus) 25:10*** *And you shall return each man to his possession, and each man shall return to his family.*

The Israelite [eats](eating.html) his [Pesach](passover.html) [sacrifice](korbanot.html) with his [household](househld.html) and his neighbors, in his home. The [blood](body.html) of the [Pesach](passover.html) is a [sign](signs.html) on the houses. It is a [sign](signs.html) that Israel will be brought out to [freedom](freedom.html); that they have [merited](merit.html) “houses” in both senses of the word.

For later [generations](toldot.html), the [mitzva](cmds613.html) of mila guards the [purity](purity.html) of his [seed](flower.html) and his family lest his [seed](flower.html) emerge to be destroyed.

On the day of [Pesach](passover.html) [three](three.html) visitors informed [Avraham](avraham.html) of the impending [birth](birth.html) of [Yitzchak](isaac.html).[[27]](#footnote-27) The essence of the [nation](nations.html)’s forefather was clearly demonstrated in this instance: the *doorway of his home*, sealed against the [Angel](angels.html) of Death, was open wide for visitors from the desert. The *opening of his* [*body*](body.html), sealed with the [sign](signs.html) of [HaShem](hashem.html)’s [covenant](covenant.html) against emergence of impure [seed](flower.html), will now be open to allow for the [birth](thebirth.html) of pure [seed](flower.html), his son, [Yitzchak](isaac.html). And since that [time](time.html) the doors of his children, sealed with the [blood](body.html) of the [Pesach](passover.html) against the entry of the [Angel](angels.html) of Death, are open to visitors, the needy, the hungry: “Anyone who is hungry, let him enter and [eat](eating.html); anyone who is needy, let him enter and partake of the [Pesach](passover.html)”.[[28]](#footnote-28)

The lower opening of the [body](body.html), *the place of the brit*, is sealed with the [blood](body.html) of brit mila against the emergence of impure [seed](flower.html), but the upper opening, *the* [*mouth*](body.html), opens to recount before the pure [seed](flower.html), the wise son who poses his questions, the story of the [exodus](exodus.html).

In both aspects of our “houses”, in our homes and amongst our families, we embark on the [Haggada](haggada.html) of [Pesach](passover.html).

If the taking of the [Pesach](passover.html) lamb is the symbol of the rejection of Egyptian religious culture, and a commitment to [HaShem](hashem.html), brit mila adds another dimension, an additional vital message. Mila is an indelible mark upon the flesh of the [Jewish](gen-jew.html) man. It is not a random operation. It is “the [covenant](covenant.html) of [Avraham](avraham.html) Avinu”. It takes us back to the very roots of who we are and where we come from. Mila joins us not only to the God of Israel, but to the [nation](nations.html) of Israel throughout its [generations](toldot.html). It ties a [Jew](gen-jew.html) to the fate of the [Jewish](gen-jew.html) [nation](nations.html).[[29]](#footnote-29)

The [Pesach](passover.html) lamb proclaims a message; “I will not be an Egyptian. My destiny lies with the God of Israel”. Mila proclaims, “I belong to the [Jewish](gen-jew.html) people. I share their fate”.

Yet, we have a question: Why is it necessary for there to be [two](two.html) [mitzvot](cmds613.html), brit mila and [Pesach](passover.html), that involve the basic commitment to doing [HaShem](hashem.html)’s will, why wouldn’t it be sufficient for [one](one.html) [mitzva](cmds613.html) to fulfill this role?

The answer is that the [two](two.html) [mitzvot](cmds613.html) represent different aspects of a commitment. brit mila was [first](one.html) commanded to a *single individual*, [Abraham](avraham.html), to form his [covenant](covenant.html) with [HaShem](hashem.html). Thus, brit mila represents a person’s commitment to his individual relationship with [HaShem](hashem.html) and all that entails. The [korban](korbanot.html) [Pesach](passover.html) represents our commitment to [HaShem](hashem.html) *as part of the* [*Jewish*](gen-jew.html) *people*. The [laws](law.html) of the [korban](korbanot.html) [Pesach](passover.html) emphasize the importance of fulfilling the [mitzva](cmds613.html) in groups, stressing the national aspect of the [mitzva](cmds613.html). Accordingly, it is necessary to have [two](two.html) forms of covenants; [one](one.html) between the individual and [HaShem](hashem.html) and [one](one.html) between a person as a member of the [Jewish](gen-jew.html) people, and [HaShem](hashem.html).

This understanding can help us explain an unusual [law](law.html) pertaining to the [korban](korbanot.html) [Pesach](passover.html). It is forbidden for an uncircumcised [Jew](gen-jew.html) to participate in the [korban](korbanot.html) [Pesach](passover.html).[[30]](#footnote-30) Why is this the case, the fact that a person does not keep [one](one.html) [mitzva](cmds613.html), in no way exempts him from keeping the other [mitzvot](cmds613.html)! The answer is that a person cannot genuinely commit to [HaShem](hashem.html) as part of a [nation](nations.html) when has had made no such commitment on an individual basis.

This [teaches](teacher.html) us an essential lesson. Many people identify strongly as [Jews](gen-jew.html), and as part of the [Jewish](gen-jew.html) people. They commit to the state of Israel, and would willingly give up [time](time.html) and effort, and perhaps even risk their lives, for the [Jewish](gen-jew.html) people. They stand up to defend Israel when it comes under verbal [attack](attacks.html) from the numerous anti-Semitic forces in the [world](worlds.html). However, on an individual basis, there is far less commitment.[[31]](#footnote-31) [One](one.html) may identify as being part of the [Jewish](gen-jew.html) [nation](nations.html), but he must also strive to commit to his individual relationship with [HaShem](hashem.html). The exact way in which to apply this lesson varies according to each person, however, in a general sense it seems that everyone should see in what way he can increase his personal commitment to his relationship with [HaShem](hashem.html). It could involve [speaking](mashal.html) to [HaShem](hashem.html), learning more of His Torah, striving to keep more aspects of [Shabbat](sabbath.html) or kosher [food](food.html), and so on. The main point is to try something. It is vital to remember that [HaShem](hashem.html) [wants](needs.html) a relationship with each and every individual, in his own right.

We previously noted that the [korban](korbanot.html) [Pesach](passover.html) represents our commitment to [HaShem](hashem.html) *as part of the* [*Jewish*](gen-jew.html) *people*. With this understanding, we can begin to understand [*Pesach*](passover.html)[*sheni*](sheni.html), the second [Passover](passover.html).

[Yosef](joseph.html) was cast out of the House of Israel; years later, after their father’s death, he had an opportunity to cast his brothers into the pit of slavery, to cast them out of the family of Israel. Instead, he chose the moral high road. He chose love. He chose peace; he chose camaraderie. He chose family.

[Yosef](joseph.html)’s heroic gesture resulted in a second chance, another attempt to create unity, to build a [nation](nations.html). Liberating [Yosef](joseph.html)’s remains and including his presence in their historic [journey](stages.html) back to Israel was more than a symbolic gesture meant to remind and inspire the [nation](nations.html). [Yosef](joseph.html) himself was rewarded; he would no longer be an outcast. [Yosef](joseph.html)’s remains would [travel](mashal.html) with them on their [journey](stages.html). He would finally return home, to the land of his [fathers](fathers.html), to his place among his brethren.

Nonetheless, his remains, like those of any other [Jew](gen-jew.html), generated [impurity](purity.html). Any and all who came in contact with his remains became ritually impure. And yet, on a philosophical level, it was nearly inconceivable that those who tended to [Yosef](joseph.html) should be made to feel separated from the [community](community.html); this would be an almost absurd contradiction of [Yosef](joseph.html)’s very essence. And so, in a beautiful gesture of poetic justice, [HaShem](hashem.html) gave them a second chance; the normal rules of sacrifices would be suspended.

[Yosef](joseph.html)’s benevolence is mirrored by [HaShem](hashem.html)’s benevolence. A [new](new.html) [holiday](festival.html) representing second chances would be established,[[32]](#footnote-32) a [holiday](festival.html) well-suited to [Yosef](joseph.html).[[33]](#footnote-33)

The enslavement in Egypt was the direct result of the sale of [Yosef](joseph.html). The callous meal [eaten](eating.html) as [Yosef](joseph.html) languished in the pit required a [tikkun](tikkun.html). The brothers broke bread as [Yosef](joseph.html) screamed. They were impervious to his screams, for they had deemed him no longer part of the [Jewish](gen-jew.html) People. It was a meal which brought the brothers together, with [one](one.html) exception: they were united in their dastardly deed. And so, when the [Jews](gen-jew.html) leave Egypt they are commanded to have a meal, a meal which heals and liberates by bringing the family together.

***Shemot (***[***Exodus***](exodus.html)***) 12:3-4***[*Speak*](mashal.html) *to all the Congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month they shall take every man a lamb, according to the house of their* [*fathers*](fathers.html)*, a lamb for a house; and if the* [*household*](househld.html) *is too little for the lamb, let him and his neighbor next to his house take it according to the* [*number*](nchart.html) *of the souls; according to every man’s* [*eating*](eating.html) *shall you make your count for the lamb.*

Bring the family together; invite the neighbors if you can. The [offering](korbanot) must be [eaten](eating.html) with [matza](chametz.html), which symbolized haughtiness, and that horrific meal [eaten](eating.html) within earshot of the pit, was deemed unacceptable. In fact, all bread and bread products must be exorcized from the home on [Pesach](passover.html). However, [*Pesach*](passover.html)[*Sheni*](sheni.html)has no such requirement: bread and [matza](chametz.html) can reside together in [one](one.html) home.[[34]](#footnote-34) This is truly an extraordinary [holiday](festival.html): a celebration of unity,[[35]](#footnote-35) and a living testimonial of [HaShem](hashem.html)’s love for His People, a [holiday](festival.html) of second chances.[[36]](#footnote-36)

Perhaps now, we can our pasuk in our chapter of [Psalms](psalms1.html), which the [Talmud](orallaw.html)[[37]](#footnote-37) homiletically interprets, *Your word,* in the singular, as if it meant to single out [one](one.html) [*mitzva*](cmds613.html)par excellence. This [*mitzva*](cmds613.html)is brit mila, because it is the very [first](one.html) [one](one.html) that was given to [Abraham](avraham.html) as a specifically [Jewish](gen-jew.html) [*mitzva*](cmds613.html)*.*

***Tehillim (***[***Psalms***](psalms1.html)***) 119:162*** *I rejoice at Your word, as* [*one*](one.html) *that findeth great spoil.*

[Succoth](succoth.html) is always associated with a [salvation](salvation.html) [experience](experience.html). The early kabbalists, in the [name](name.html) of even earlier kabbalists, state that whenever we find saving and [redemption](redemption.html), it is necessary to immdeately go to [succoth](succoth.html). The [first](one.html) [journey](stages.html) of the Children of Israel [from Egypt](thebirth.html) was from Rameses to [Succoth](succoth.html).[[38]](#footnote-38) When [Yaakov](israelja.html) was saved from [Esav](edom.html), he journeyed to [Succoth](succoth.html).[[39]](#footnote-39) When the [Jewish](gen-jew.html) People are saved from all that they must be saved on [Yom Kippur](kippur.html), they [journey](stages.html) to [Succoth](succoth.html).[[40]](#footnote-40) Likewise, by the [redemption](redemption.html) of the second entrance into the Land with Ezra, they immediately did something whose [merit](merit.html) shielded them like a [succah](succoth.html).[[41]](#footnote-41)

# I. Reason for circumcision

***Bereshit (Genesis) 17:1-14*** *When* [*Abram*](avraham.html) *was ninety-*[*nine*](nine.html) *years old,* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *appeared to him and said, “I am G-d Almighty;* [*walk*](walking.html) *before me and be blameless. I will confirm my* [*covenant*](covenant.html) *between me and you and will greatly increase your* [*numbers*](nchart.html)*.”* [*Abram*](avraham.html) *fell facedown, and G-d said to him, “As for me, this is my* [*covenant*](covenant.html) *with you: You will be the father of many* [*nations*](nations.html)*. No longer will you be called* [*Abram*](avraham.html)*; your* [*name*](name.html) *will be* [*Abraham*](avraham.html)*, for I have made you a father of many* [*nations*](nations.html)*. I will make you very fruitful; I will make* [*nations*](nations.html) *of you, and kings will come from you. I will establish my* [*covenant*](covenant.html) *as an everlasting* [*covenant*](covenant.html) *between me and you and your descendants after you for the* [*generations*](toldot.html) *to come, to be your G-d and the G-d of your descendants after you. The whole land of Canaan, where you are now an* [*alien*](aliens.html)*, I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you; and I will be their G-d.” Then G-d said to* [*Abraham*](avraham.html)*, “As for you, you must keep my* [*covenant*](covenant.html)*, you and your descendants after you for the* [*generations*](toldot.html) *to come. 10 This is my* [*covenant*](covenant.html) *with you and your descendants after you, the* [*covenant*](covenant.html) *you are to keep: Every* [*male*](male%2Bfemale.html) *among you shall be circumcised. 11 You are to undergo circumcision, and it will be the* [*sign*](signs.html) *of the* [*covenant*](covenant.html) *between me and you. For the* [*generations*](toldot.html) *to come every* [*male*](male%2Bfemale.html) *among you who is* [*eight*](eight.html) *days old must be circumcised, including those born in your* [*household*](househld.html) *or bought with money from a foreigner--those who are not your offspring. Whether born in your* [*household*](househld.html) *or bought with your money, they must be circumcised. My* [*covenant*](covenant.html) *in your flesh is to be an everlasting* [*covenant*](covenant.html)*. Any uncircumcised* [*male*](male%2Bfemale.html)*, who has not been circumcised in the flesh, will be cut off from his people; he has broken my* [*covenant*](covenant.html)*.”*

G-d’s part:

[Abraham](avraham.html) will be the father of many [nations](nations.html).

G-d will make [Abraham](avraham.html) very fruitful.

G-d will make [nations](nations.html) of [Abraham](avraham.html).

G-d will make kings come from [Abraham](avraham.html).

G-d will give [Abraham](avraham.html) and his descendants the land of Canaan.

This [covenant](covenant.html) will last forever. There are no conditions for G-d.

[Abraham](avraham.html)’s part:

Every [male](male%2Bfemale.html) descendant, of [Abraham](avraham.html), [eight](eight.html) days old shall be circumcised, in the flesh. Every [male](male%2Bfemale.html) bought, by [Abraham](avraham.html) of his descendants, must be circumcised.

Samson Raphael Hirsch notes an apparent discrepancy between verse 10 and verse 11. In verse 10 it is called “My [covenant](covenant.html)”, implying that the [physical](physical.html) act of circumcision is sufficient fulfillment of the [covenant](covenant.html). In verse 11 it is described as the “[sign](signs.html)” or symbol of the [covenant](covenant.html), implying that the act is no more than a symbol, and not a complete fulfillment. He explains that there are [two](two.html) inseparable elements: the act without the realization of the idea is insufficient; likewise the concept without the act is not enough. The act of circumcision must be performed, and it must be recognized as symbolic of the eternal bond between [HaShem](hashem.html) and Israel.

Sefer HaChinuch 2: Among the roots of the [commandment](cmds613.html) are that [HaShem](hashem.html) wished to establish a particular [sign](signs.html) in the [bodies](body.html) of the people whom he had designated to be His own. This special [sign](signs.html) differentiated their [bodies](body.html), just as their souls are differentiated, to demonstrate that their source and mission are not like those of the other [nations](nations.html).

***Romans 4:6-16*** *David says the same thing when he speaks of the blessedness of the man to whom G-d credits righteousness apart from works: “Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven, whose* [*sins*](sin.html) *are covered. Blessed is the man whose* [*sin*](sin.html) *the Lord will never count against him.” Is this blessedness only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? We have been saying that* [*Abraham*](avraham.html)*’s faith was credited to him as righteousness. Under what circumstances was it credited? Was it after he was circumcised, or before? It was not after, but before! And he received the* [*sign*](signs.html) *of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. So then, he is the father of all who believe but have not been circumcised, in order that righteousness might be credited to them. And he is also the father of the circumcised who not only are circumcised but who also* [*walk*](walking.html) *in the footsteps of the faith that our father* [*Abraham*](avraham.html) *had before he was circumcised. It was not through* [*law*](law.html) *that* [*Abraham*](avraham.html) *and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the* [*world*](worlds.html)*, but through the righteousness that comes by faith. For if those who live by* [*law*](law.html) *are heirs, faith has no value and the promise is worthless, Because* [*law*](law.html) *brings wrath. And where there is no* [*law*](law.html) *there is no transgression. Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by* [*grace*](grace.html) *and may be guaranteed to all* [*Abraham*](avraham.html)*’s offspring--not only to those who are of the* [*law*](law.html) *but also to those who are of the faith of* [*Abraham*](avraham.html)*. He is the father of us all.*

Circumcision is a seal of the righteousness by faith.

[Abraham](avraham.html) is the father of all who believe.

Circumcision is not required for [justification](justification.html).

***Vayikra (Leviticus) 12:1-3***[*HaShem*](hashem.html) *said to Moses, “Say to the Israelites: ‘A woman who becomes pregnant and gives* [*birth*](birth.html) *to a son will be ceremonially unclean for* [*seven*](seven.html) *days, just as she is unclean during her monthly period. On the* [*eighth*](eight.html) *day the boy is to be circumcised.*

Israelites are to be circumcised.

***Shoftim (Judges) 14:1-3*** *Samson went down to Timnah and saw there a young Philistine woman. When he returned, he said to his father and mother, “I have seen a Philistine woman in Timnah; now get her for me as my wife.” His father and mother replied, “Isn’t there an acceptable woman among your relatives or among all our people? Must you go to the uncircumcised Philistines to get a wife?” But Samson said to his father, “Get her for me. She’s the right* [*one*](one.html) *for me.”*

Circumcision was important to Israelites. Since women were not [physically](physical.html) circumcised, this statement is obviously applying circumcision to an act or a state which is not [physical](physical.html). G-d speaks of circumcision of the [heart](body.html), and I suspect that this is what Samson’s father is referring to.

***Shoftim (Judges) 15:16-20*** *Then Samson said, “With a* [*donkey*](chamor.html)*’s jawbone I have made donkeys of them. With a* [*donkey*](chamor.html)*’s jawbone I have killed a thousand men.” When he finished* [*speaking*](mashal.html)*, he threw away the jawbone; and the place was called Ramath Lehi. Because he was very thirsty, he cried out to* [*HaShem*](hashem.html)*, “You have given your servant this great victory. Must I now die of thirst and fall into the* [*hands*](fourteen.html) *of the uncircumcised?” Then G-d opened up the hollow place in Lehi, and water came out of it. When Samson drank, his strength returned and he revived. So the spring was called En Hakkore, and it is still there in Lehi. Samson led Israel for* [*twenty*](twenty.html) *years in the days of the Philistines.*

Circumcision became important to Samson.

***I Shmuel (Samuel) 14:6*** *Jonathan said to his young armor-bearer, “Come, let’s go over to the outpost of those uncircumcised fellows. Perhaps* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *will act in our behalf. Nothing can hinder* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *from saving, whether by many or by few.”*

Circumcision seemed to be related to our relationship with [HaShem](hashem.html), i.e. He acts for the circumcised.

***I Shmuel (Samuel) 17:22-27*** *David left his things with the keeper of supplies, ran to the battle lines and greeted his brothers. As he was talking with them, Goliath, the Philistine champion from Gath, stepped out from his lines and shouted his usual defiance, and David heard it. When the Israelites saw the man, they all ran from him in great* [*fear*](fear.html)*. Now the Israelites had been saying, “Do you see how this man keeps* [*coming*](coming.html) *out? He comes out to defy Israel. The king will give great wealth to the man who kills him. He will also give him his daughter in* [*marriage*](mashal.html) *and will exempt his father’s family from taxes in Israel.” David asked the men* [*standing*](mashal.html) *near him, “What will be done for the man who kills this Philistine and removes this disgrace from Israel? Who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living G-d?” They repeated to him what they had been saying and told him, “This is what will be done for the man who kills him.”*

David had a very low opinion of the uncircumcised.

***Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 51:22 - 52:6*** *This is what your Sovereign* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *says, your G-d, who defends his people: “See, I have taken out of your* [*hand*](fourteen.html) *the cup that made you stagger; from that cup, the goblet of my wrath, you will never drink again. I will put it into the* [*hands*](fourteen.html) *of your tormentors, who said to you, ‘Fall prostrate that we may* [*walk*](walking.html) *over you.’ And you made your back like the ground, like a street to be walked over.” Awake, awake, O Zion, clothe yourself with strength. Put on your garments of splendor, O* [*Jerusalem*](city.html)*, the holy* [*city*](city.html)*. The uncircumcised and defiled will not enter you again. Shake off your* [*dust*](rock.html)*; rise up, sit enthroned, O* [*Jerusalem*](city.html)*. Free yourself from the chains on your* [*neck*](body.html)*, O captive Daughter of Zion. For this is what* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *says: “You were sold for nothing, and without money you will be* [*redeemed*](redemption.html)*.” For this is what the Sovereign* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *says: “At* [*first*](one.html) *my people went down to Egypt to live; lately, Assyria has oppressed them. “And now what do I have here?” declares* [*HaShem*](hashem.html)*. “For my people have been taken away for nothing, and those who rule them mock,” declares* [*HaShem*](hashem.html)*. “And all day long my* [*name*](name.html) *is constantly blasphemed. Therefore my people will* [*know*](daat.html) *my* [*name*](name.html)*; therefore in that day they will* [*know*](daat.html) *that it is I who foretold it. Yes, it is I.”*

No uncircumcised [male](male%2Bfemale.html) will enter [Jerusalem](city.html) in the [future](future.html)!

***Yehezekel (Ezekiel) 28:6-10*** *“‘Therefore this is what the Sovereign* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *says: “‘Because you think you are wise, as wise as a god, I am going to bring foreigners against you, the most ruthless of* [*nations*](nations.html)*; they will draw their swords against your beauty and wisdom and pierce your shining splendor. They will bring you down to the pit, and you will die a violent death in the* [*heart*](body.html) *of the seas. Will you then say, “I am a god,” in the presence of those who kill you? You will be but a man, not a god, in the* [*hands*](fourteen.html) *of those who slay you. You will die the death of the uncircumcised at the* [*hands*](fourteen.html) *of foreigners. I have spoken, declares the Sovereign* [*HaShem*](hashem.html)*.’“*

[HaShem](hashem.html) seems to have a different death for the “circumcised”.

***Yehezekel (Ezekiel) 32:18-32*** *“Son of man, wail for the hordes of Egypt and consign to the earth below both her and the daughters of mighty* [*nations*](nations.html)*, with those who go down to the pit. Say to them, ‘Are you more favored than others? Go down and be laid among the uncircumcised.’ They will fall among those killed by the sword. The sword is drawn; let her be dragged off with all her hordes. From within the grave the mighty leaders will say of Egypt and her allies, ‘They have come down and they lie with the uncircumcised, with those killed by the sword.’ “Assyria is there with her whole army; she is surrounded by the graves of all her slain, all who have fallen by the sword. Their graves are in the depths of the pit and her army lies around her grave. All who had spread terror in the land of the living are slain, fallen by the sword. “Elam is there, with all her hordes around her grave. All of them are slain, fallen by the sword. All who had spread terror in the land of the living went down uncircumcised to the earth below. They bear their shame with those who go down to the pit. A bed is made for her among the slain, with all her hordes around her grave. All of them are uncircumcised, killed by the sword. Because their terror had spread in the land of the living, they bear their shame with those who go down to the pit; they are laid among the slain. “Meshech and Tubal are there, with all their hordes around their graves. All of them are uncircumcised, killed by the sword because they spread their terror in the land of the living. Do they not lie with the other uncircumcised warriors who have fallen, who went down to the grave with their weapons of war, whose swords were placed under their heads? The punishment for their* [*sins*](sin.html) *rested on their bones, though the terror of these warriors had stalked through the land of the living. “You too, O Pharaoh, will be broken and will lie among the uncircumcised, with those killed by the sword. “*[*Edom*](edom.html) *is there, her kings and all her princes; despite their power, they are laid with those killed by the sword. They lie with the uncircumcised, with those who go down to the pit. “All the princes of the north and all the Sidonians are there; they went down with the slain in disgrace despite the terror caused by their power. They lie uncircumcised with those killed by the sword and bear their shame with those who go down to the pit. “Pharaoh--he and all his army--will see them and he will be consoled for all his hordes that were killed by the sword, declares the Sovereign* [*HaShem*](hashem.html)*. Although I had him spread terror in the land of the living, Pharaoh and all his hordes will be laid among the uncircumcised, with those killed by the sword, declares the Sovereign* [*HaShem*](hashem.html)*.”*

Circumcision seems to be very important to [HaShem](hashem.html).

***Yehezekel (Ezekiel) 44:5-9***[*HaShem*](hashem.html) *said to me, “Son of man, look carefully, listen closely and give attention to everything I tell you concerning all the regulations regarding the* [*temple*](temple.html) *of* [*HaShem*](hashem.html)*. Give attention to the entrance of the* [*temple*](temple.html) *and all the exits of the* [*sanctuary*](mikdash.html)*. Say to the rebellious house of Israel, ‘This is what the Sovereign* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *says: Enough of your detestable practices, O house of Israel! In addition to all your other detestable practices, you brought foreigners uncircumcised in* [*heart*](body.html) *and flesh into my* [*sanctuary*](mikdash.html)*, desecrating my* [*temple*](temple.html) *while you offered me* [*food*](food.html)*, fat and* [*blood*](body.html)*, and you broke my* [*covenant*](covenant.html)*. Instead of carrying out your duty in regard to my holy things, you put others in charge of my* [*sanctuary*](mikdash.html)*. This is what the Sovereign* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *says: No foreigner uncircumcised in* [*heart*](body.html) *and flesh is to enter my* [*sanctuary*](mikdash.html)*, not even the foreigners who live among the Israelites.*

Without circumcision it is impossible to get close to [HaShem](hashem.html)? Both [physical](physical.html) and [heart](body.html) circumcision are important.

# II. Circumcision of the [heart](body.html)

What is “circumcision of the [heart](body.html)”? This cryptic phrase begs definition. What does [HaShem](hashem.html) mean by this phrase? The Ramban says that it indicates a change in our human existence: the removal of the Yetzer Hara. This is the vision of the era of [Mashiach](mashiach.html), the days of the final [redemption](redemption.html), when we will have no inclination for rebellion or vice and we will live in harmony with ourselves and with [HaShem](hashem.html). No inner struggle will divert our energies from the true goal of the [spiritual](physical.html) life. Apparently the reward for our [desire](needs.html) to return to [HaShem](hashem.html) is the removal of the factors which might take us away from Him.

The Ramban however goes further. He sees this change as a return to an era long gone. He views this change as a return to the pristine [world](worlds.html) of [Gan Eden](eden.html). In [Gan Eden](eden.html) man lives in harmony with [HaShem](hashem.html). It reflects the perfect togetherness of man and his maker. Teshuva takes us back to the exact point of departure. It is ‘return’ in the literal sense of the word.

It is interesting that this verse from Nitzavim (“umal [HaShem](hashem.html) elokecha Et Levavcha Ve’et Levav zarecha”) is seen as the acronym of the word [ELUL](elul.html)[[42]](#footnote-42). [Elul](elul.html) is seen as the [time](time.html) of removal of the yetzer hara. Only that we have to make the change in ourselves. [HaShem](hashem.html) cannot do it for us. [Elul](elul.html) offers a road that leads us back to [Gan Eden](eden.html). It is a [time](time.html) of return. Return to [HaShem](hashem.html), but also a return to ourselves, to the [purity](purity.html) of soul represented by man on his [first](one.html) day of [creation](bara.html) when his soul was in it’s original [purity](purity.html). In [Elul](elul.html) we aim to take ourselves back to a pre-[sin](sin.html) [world](worlds.html).

***II Luqas (Acts) 7:51-54*** *“You stiff-necked people, with uncircumcised hearts and* [*ears*](body.html)*! You are just like your* [*fathers*](fathers.html)*: You always resist the Holy Spirit! Was there ever a prophet your* [*fathers*](fathers.html) *did not persecute? They even killed those who predicted the* [*coming*](coming.html) *of the Righteous* [*One*](one.html)*. And now you have betrayed and murdered him-- You who have received the* [*law*](law.html) *that was put into effect through* [*angels*](angels.html) *but have not obeyed it.” When they heard this, they were furious and gnashed their* [*teeth*](body.html) *at him.*

Circumcision of the [heart](body.html) was recognized by [first](one.html) century believers and unbelievers. From the context, it is obvious that Stephen in referring to the descendants of [Jacob](israelja.html).

***Romans 2:25 - 3:4*** *Circumcision has value if you observe the* [*law*](law.html)*, but if you break the* [*law*](law.html)*, you have become as though you had not been circumcised. If those who are not circumcised keep the* [*law*](law.html)*’s requirements, will they not be regarded as though they were circumcised? The* [*one*](one.html) *who is not circumcised* [*physically*](physical.html) *and yet obeys the* [*law*](law.html) *will condemn you who, even though you have the written code and circumcision, are a lawbreaker. A man is not a* [*Jew*](gen-jew.html) *if he is only* [*one*](one.html) *outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and* [*physical*](physical.html)*. No, a man is a* [*Jew*](gen-jew.html) *if he is* [*one*](one.html) *inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the* [*heart*](body.html)*, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a man’s praise is not from men, but from G-d. What advantage, then, is there in being a* [*Jew*](gen-jew.html)*, or what value is there in circumcision? Much in every way!* [*First*](one.html) *of all, they have been entrusted with the very words of G-d. What if some did not have faith? Will their lack of faith nullify G-d’s faithfulness? Not at all! Let G-d be true, and every man a liar. As it is written: “So that you may be proved right when you* [*speak*](mashal.html) *and prevail when you judge.”*

Circumcision has value if you observe the [law](law.html). So, if we see the [law](law.html) as a way of life, circumcision ought to be a part of that life style.

If you obey the [law](law.html) [HaShem](hashem.html) will view you as though you were circumcised!

There is much value in being a [Jew](gen-jew.html) and in being circumcised.

[***Galatians***](galatian.html) ***6:11-16*** *See what large* [*letters*](letters.html) *I use as I write to you with my own* [*hand*](fourteen.html)*! Those who want to make a good impression outwardly are trying to compel you to be circumcised. The only reason they do this is to avoid being persecuted for the cross of* [*Mashiach*](mashiach.html)*. Not even those who are circumcised obey the* [*law*](law.html)*, yet they want you to be circumcised that they may boast about your flesh. May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord* [*Yeshua*](yeshua.html)[*Mashiach*](mashiach.html)*, through which the* [*world*](worlds.html) *has been crucified to me, and I to the* [*world*](worlds.html)*. Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is a* [*new*](new.html)[*creation*](bara.html)*. Peace and mercy to all who follow this rule, even to the Israel of G-d.*

Remember that the theme of the entire book of [Galatians](galatian.html) is [justification](justification.html). [Justification](justification.html) does not come by circumcision.

***Yiremeyahu (Jeremiah) 9:23-26*** *This is what* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *says: “Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom or the strong man boast of his strength or the rich man boast of his riches, But let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me, that I am* [*HaShem*](hashem.html)*, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight,” declares* [*HaShem*](hashem.html)*. “The days are* [*coming*](coming.html)*,” declares* [*HaShem*](hashem.html)*, “when I will punish all who are circumcised only in the flesh-- Egypt, Judah,* [*Edom*](edom.html)*, Ammon,* [*Moab*](stages.html) *and all who live in the desert in distant places. For all these* [*nations*](nations.html) *are really uncircumcised, and even the whole house of Israel is uncircumcised in* [*heart*](body.html)*.”*

We had better have circumcised hearts as well as circumcised foreskins!

***Devarim (Deuteronomy) 10:12-18*** *And now, O Israel, what does* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *your G-d ask of you but to* [*fear*](fear.html)[*HaShem*](hashem.html) *your G-d, to* [*walk*](walking.html) *in all his ways, to love him, to serve* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *your G-d with all your* [*heart*](body.html) *and with all your soul, And to observe* [*HaShem*](hashem.html)*’s* [*commands*](cmds613.html) *and decrees that I am giving you today for your own good? To* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *your G-d belong the* [*heavens*](heaven.html)*, even the highest* [*heavens*](heaven.html)*, the earth and everything in it. Yet* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *set his affection on your forefathers and loved them, and he chose you, their descendants, above all the* [*nations*](nations.html)*, as it is today. Circumcise your hearts, therefore, and do not be stiff-necked any longer. For* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *your G-d is G-d of gods and Lord of lords, the great G-d, mighty and* [*awesome*](awesome.html)*, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes. He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the* [*alien*](aliens.html)*, giving him* [*food*](food.html) *and clothing.*

***Devarim (Deuteronomy) 30:1-11*** *When all these blessings and curses I have set before you come upon you and you take them to* [*heart*](body.html) *wherever* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *your G-d disperses you among the* [*nations*](nations.html)*, And when you and your children return to* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *your G-d and obey him with all your* [*heart*](body.html) *and with all your soul according to everything I* [*command*](cmds613.html) *you today, Then* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *your G-d will restore your fortunes and have compassion on you and* [*gather*](gather.html) *you again from all the* [*nations*](nations.html) *where he scattered you. Even if you have been banished to the most distant land under the* [*heavens*](heaven.html)*, from there* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *your G-d will* [*gather*](gather.html) *you and bring you back. He will bring you to the land that belonged to your* [*fathers*](fathers.html)*, and you will take possession of it. He will make you more prosperous and numerous than your* [*fathers*](fathers.html)*.* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *your G-d will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants, so that you may love him with all your* [*heart*](body.html) *and with all your soul, and live.* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *your G-d will put all these curses on your enemies who hate and persecute you. You will again obey* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *and follow all his* [*commands*](cmds613.html) *I am giving you today. Then* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *your G-d will make you most prosperous in all the work of your* [*hands*](fourteen.html) *and in the fruit of your* [*womb*](thebirth.html)*, the young of your livestock and the crops of your land.* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *will again delight in you and make you prosperous, just as he delighted in your* [*fathers*](fathers.html)*, If you obey* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *your G-d and keep his* [*commands*](cmds613.html) *and decrees that are written in this Book of the* [*Law*](law.html) *and turn to* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *your G-d with all your* [*heart*](body.html) *and with all your soul. Now what I am commanding you today is not too difficult for you or beyond your reach.*

***Yiremeyahu (Jeremiah) 4:3-4*** *This is what* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *says to the men of Judah and to* [*Jerusalem*](city.html)*: “Break up your unplowed ground and do not sow among thorns. Circumcise yourselves to* [*HaShem*](hashem.html)*, circumcise your hearts, you men of Judah and people of* [*Jerusalem*](city.html)*, or my wrath will break out and burn like* [*fire*](fire.html) *because of the evil you have done--burn with no* [*one*](one.html) *to quench it.*

Circumcision seems to involve more that just foreskins.

***Vayikra (Leviticus) 26:40-42*** *“‘But if they will confess their* [*sins*](sin.html) *and the* [*sins*](sin.html) *of their* [*fathers*](fathers.html)*--their treachery against me and their hostility toward me, Which made me hostile toward them so that I sent them into the land of their enemies--then when their uncircumcised hearts are humbled and they pay for their* [*sin*](sin.html)*, I will remember my* [*covenant*](covenant.html) *with* [*Jacob*](israelja.html) *and my* [*covenant*](covenant.html) *with* [*Isaac*](isaac.html) *and my* [*covenant*](covenant.html) *with* [*Abraham*](avraham.html)*, and I will remember the land.*

[HaShem](hashem.html) will remember His [covenant](covenant.html) when they circumcise their hearts?

***Yehoshua (Joshua) 5:1-9*** *Now when all the Amorite kings west of the* [*Jordan*](stages.html) *and all the Canaanite kings along the coast heard how* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *had dried up the* [*Jordan*](stages.html) *before the Israelites until we had crossed over, their hearts melted and they no longer had the courage to* [*face*](body.html) *the Israelites. At that* [*time*](time.html)[*HaShem*](hashem.html) *said to Joshua, “Make flint knives and circumcise the Israelites again.” So Joshua made flint knives and circumcised the Israelites at Gibeath Haaraloth. Now this is why he did so: All those who came* [*out of Egypt*](thebirth.html)*--all the men of military age--died in the desert on the way after* [*leaving Egypt*](thebirth.html)*. All the people that came out had been circumcised, but all the people born in the desert during the* [*journey*](stages.html)[*from Egypt*](thebirth.html) *had not. The Israelites had moved about in the desert* [*forty*](forty.html) *years until all the men who were of military age when they left Egypt had died, since they had not obeyed* [*HaShem*](hashem.html)*. For* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *had sworn to them that they would not see the land that he had solemnly promised their* [*fathers*](fathers.html) *to give us, a land flowing with milk and honey. So he raised up their sons in their place, and these were the ones Joshua circumcised. They were still uncircumcised because they had not been circumcised on the way. And after the whole* [*nation*](nations.html) *had been circumcised, they remained where they were in* [*camp*](stages.html) *until they were healed. Then* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *said to Joshua, “Today I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you.” So the place has been called Gilgal to this day.*

Why didn’t they circumcise their sons? Why didn’t [HaShem](hashem.html) make an issue out of it sooner? Answer: because they were NOW about to enter “The land”.

# III. Great Biblical men who were circumcised

***Philippians 3:1-12*** *Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord! It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again, and it is a safeguard for you. Watch out for those dogs, those men who do evil, those mutilators of the flesh. For it is we who are the circumcision, we who worship by the Spirit of G-d, who glory in* [*Mashiach*](mashiach.html)[*Yeshua*](yeshua.html)*, and who put no confidence in the flesh-- Though I myself have reasons for such confidence. If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: Circumcised on the* [*eighth*](eight.html) *day, of the people of Israel, of the* [*tribe*](tribes.html) *of* [*Benjamin*](benyamin.html)*, a* [*Hebrew*](hebrew.html) *of* [*Hebrews*](bereans.html)*; in regard to the* [*law*](law.html)*, a Pharisee; As for zeal, persecuting the* [*church*](church.html)*; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless. But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of* [*Mashiach*](mashiach.html)*. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing* [*Mashiach*](mashiach.html)[*Yeshua*](yeshua.html) *my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain* [*Mashiach*](mashiach.html) *And be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the* [*law*](law.html)*, but that which is through faith in* [*Mashiach*](mashiach.html)*--the righteousness that comes from G-d and is by faith. I want to* [*know*](daat.html)[*Mashiach*](mashiach.html) *and the power of his* [*resurrection*](techiyat.html) *and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, And so, somehow, to attain to the* [*resurrection*](techiyat.html) *from the dead. Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which* [*Mashiach*](mashiach.html)[*Yeshua*](yeshua.html) *took hold of me.*

We ought not to have confidence that circumcision will bring [justification](justification.html). Paul was circumcised.

***Luqas (***[***Luke***](luke.html)***) 1:57-63*** *When it was* [*time*](time.html) *for Elizabeth to have her baby, she gave* [*birth*](birth.html) *to a son. Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown her great mercy, and they shared her joy. On the* [*eighth*](eight.html) *day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to* [*name*](name.html) *him after his father Zechariah, But his mother* [*spoke*](mashal.html) *up and said, “No! He is to be called John.” They said to her, “There is no* [*one*](one.html) *among your relatives who has that* [*name*](name.html)*.” Then they made* [*signs*](signs.html) *to his father, to find out what he would like to* [*name*](name.html) *the child. He asked for a writing tablet, and to everyone’s astonishment he wrote, “His* [*name*](name.html) *is John.”*

John the Baptist was circumcised on the [eighth](eight.html) day.

***Luqas (***[***Luke***](luke.html)***) 2:15-21*** *When the* [*angels*](angels.html) *had left them and gone into* [*heaven*](heaven.html)*, the shepherds said to* [*one*](one.html) *another, “Let’s go to* [*Bethlehem*](bethlehem.html) *and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.” So they hurried off and found Mary and* [*Joseph*](joseph.html)*, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, And all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her* [*heart*](body.html)*. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising G-d for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told. On the* [*eighth*](eight.html) *day, when it was* [*time*](time.html) *to circumcise him, he was named* [*Yeshua*](yeshua.html)*, the* [*name*](name.html) *the* [*angel*](angels.html) *had given him before he had been conceived.*

[Yeshua](yeshua.html) was circumcised on the [eighth](eight.html) day.

***Bereshit (Genesis) 17:23-27*** *On that very day* [*Abraham*](avraham.html) *took his son Ishmael and all those born in his* [*household*](househld.html) *or bought with his money, every* [*male*](male%2Bfemale.html) *in his* [*household*](househld.html)*, and circumcised them, as G-d told him.* [*Abraham*](avraham.html) *was ninety-*[*nine*](nine.html) *years old when he was circumcised, And his son Ishmael was* [*thirteen*](thirteen.html)*;* [*Abraham*](avraham.html) *and his son Ishmael were both circumcised on that same day. And every* [*male*](male%2Bfemale.html) *in* [*Abraham*](avraham.html)*’s* [*household*](househld.html)*, including those born in his* [*household*](househld.html) *or bought from a foreigner, was circumcised with him.*

Ishmael and the rest of [Abraham](avraham.html)’s [household](househld.html) were circumcised.

***Bereshit (Genesis) 21:1-7*** *Now* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *was gracious to Sarah as he had said, and* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *did for Sarah what he had promised. Sarah became pregnant and bore a son to* [*Abraham*](avraham.html) *in his old age, at the very* [*time*](time.html) *G-d had promised him.* [*Abraham*](avraham.html) *gave the* [*name*](name.html)[*Isaac*](isaac.html) *to the son Sarah bore him. When his son* [*Isaac*](isaac.html) *was* [*eight*](eight.html) *days old,* [*Abraham*](avraham.html) *circumcised him, as G-d commanded him.* [*Abraham*](avraham.html) *was a hundred years old when his son* [*Isaac*](isaac.html) *was born to him. Sarah said, “G-d has brought me* [*laughter*](mashal.html)*, and everyone who hears about this will* [*laugh*](mashal.html) *with me.” And she added, “Who would have said to* [*Abraham*](avraham.html) *that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age.”*

[Isaac](isaac.html) was circumcised on the [eighth](eight.html) day.

[***Galatians***](galatian.html) ***2:1-5***[*Fourteen*](fourteen.html) *years later I went up again to* [*Jerusalem*](city.html)*, this* [*time*](time.html) *with Barnabas. I took Titus along also. I went in response to a revelation and set before them the* [*gospel*](mishna1.html) *that I preach among the* [*Gentiles*](gen-jew.html)*. But I did this privately to those who seemed to be leaders, for* [*fear*](fear.html) *that I was running or had run my race in vain. Yet not even Titus, who was with me, was compelled to be circumcised, even though he was a Greek. [This matter arose] because some false brothers had infiltrated our ranks to spy on the* [*freedom*](freedom.html) *we have in* [*Mashiach*](mashiach.html)[*Yeshua*](yeshua.html) *and to make us slaves. We did not give in to them for a moment, so that the truth of the* [*gospel*](mishna1.html) *might remain with you.*

Titus was not COMPELLED to be circumcised [for [salvation](salvation.html)].

***Yochanan (John) 7:21-24***[*Yeshua*](yeshua.html) *said to them, “I did* [*one*](one.html) *miracle, and you are all astonished. Yet, because Moses gave you circumcision (though actually it did not come from Moses, but from the patriarchs), you circumcise a child on the* [*Sabbath*](sabbath.html)*. Now if a child can be circumcised on the* [*Sabbath*](sabbath.html) *so that the* [*law*](law.html) *of Moses may not be broken, why are you angry with me for healing the whole man on the* [*Sabbath*](sabbath.html)*? Stop judging by mere appearances, and make a right judgment.”*

Circumcision seems to involve healing of part of a man.

Rav Nachman bar [Yitzchak](isaac.html) notes the expressions “[sign](signs.html)”, “[covenant](covenant.html)”, and “throughout their [generations](toldot.html)” are used both in [connection](connection.html) with circumcision and with the [Sabbath](sabbath.html). From these common designations we learn that circumcision supersedes the [Sabbath](sabbath.html).[[43]](#footnote-43)

***II Luqas (Acts) 15:40 - 16:5*** *But Paul chose Silas and left, commended by the brothers to the* [*grace*](grace.html) *of the Lord. He went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches. He came to Derbe and then to Lystra, where a disciple named Timothy lived, whose mother was a Jewess and a believer, but whose father was a Greek. The brothers at Lystra and Iconium* [*spoke*](mashal.html) *well of him. Paul wanted to take him along on the* [*journey*](stages.html)*, so he circumcised him because of the* [*Jews*](gen-jew.html) *who lived in that area, for they all* [*knew*](daat.html) *that his father was a Greek. As they traveled from town to town, they delivered the decisions reached by the apostles and elders in* [*Jerusalem*](city.html) *for the people to obey. So the churches were strengthened in the faith and grew daily in* [*numbers*](nchart.html)*.*

Why did Paul circumcise Timothy? Because of [fear](fear.html)? Because he wanted to be more effective?

***II Luqas (Acts) 21:18-24*** *The next day Paul and the rest of us went to see James, and all the elders were present. Paul greeted them and reported in detail what G-d had done among the* [*Gentiles*](gen-jew.html) *through his ministry. When they heard this, they praised G-d. Then they said to Paul: “You see, brother, how many thousands of* [*Jews*](gen-jew.html) *have believed, and all of them are zealous for the* [*law*](law.html)*. They have been informed that you* [*teach*](teacher.html) *all the* [*Jews*](gen-jew.html) *who live among the* [*Gentiles*](gen-jew.html) *to turn away from Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children or live according to our customs. What shall we do? They will certainly hear that you have come, So do what we tell you. There are* [*four*](four.html) *men with us who have made a vow. Take these men, join in their purification rites and pay their expenses, so that they can have their heads shaved. Then everybody will* [*know*](daat.html) *there is no truth in these reports about you, but that you yourself are living in obedience to the* [*law*](law.html)*.*

Paul was [teaching](teacher.html) the [Jews](gen-jew.html) to be circumcised. This is [one](one.html) of the points that Paul was proving when he joined in their purification rites, for a nazirite vow.

***Bereshit (Genesis) 34:11-18*** *Then* [*Shechem*](city.html) *said to Dinah’s father and brothers, “Let me find favor in your* [*eyes*](body.html)*, and I will give you whatever you ask. Make the price for the bride and the gift I am to bring as great as you like, and I’ll pay whatever you ask me. Only give me the girl as my wife.” Because their sister Dinah had been defiled,* [*Jacob*](israelja.html)*’s sons replied deceitfully as they* [*spoke*](mashal.html) *to* [*Shechem*](city.html) *and his father Hamor. They said to them, “We can’t do such a thing; we can’t give our sister to a man who is not circumcised. That would be a disgrace to us. We will give our consent to you on* [*one*](one.html) *condition only: that you become like us by circumcising all your males. Then we will give you our daughters and take your daughters for ourselves. We’ll settle among you and become* [*one*](one.html) *people with you. But if you will not agree to be circumcised, we’ll take our sister and go.” Their proposal seemed good to Hamor and his son* [*Shechem*](city.html)*.*

Some who were not descendants of [Abraham](avraham.html) were circumcised. (done deceitfully).

***Shemot (***[***Exodus***](exodus.html)***) 4:21-26***[*HaShem*](hashem.html) *said to Moses, “When you return to Egypt, see that you perform before Pharaoh all the wonders I have given you the power to do. But I will harden his* [*heart*](body.html) *so that he will not let the people go. Then say to Pharaoh, ‘This is what* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *says: Israel is my firstborn son, And I told you, “Let my son go, so he may worship me.” But you refused to let him go; so I will kill your firstborn son.’“ At a lodging place on the way,* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *met [Moses] and was about to kill him. But Zipporah took a flint knife, cut off her son’s foreskin and touched [Moses’]* [*feet*](heel.html) *with it. “Surely you are a bridegroom of* [*blood*](body.html) *to me,” she said. So* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *let him alone. (At that* [*time*](time.html) *she said “bridegroom of* [*blood*](body.html)*,” referring to circumcision.)*

Moses’ son was circumcised. Moses nearly died for not circumcising him. Notice that the trip from Midian to Egypt required them to [travel](mashal.html) through the land promised to [Abraham](avraham.html). Circumcision and the land are here, and elsewhere, intimately linked.

# IV. Circumcision and [Pesach](passover.html)

***Shemot (***[***Exodus***](exodus.html)***) 12:43-49***[*HaShem*](hashem.html) *said to Moses and Aaron, “These are the regulations for the* [*Passover*](passover.html)*: “No foreigner is to* [*eat*](eating.html) *of it. Any slave you have bought may* [*eat*](eating.html) *of it after you have circumcised him, But a temporary resident and a hired worker may not* [*eat*](eating.html) *of it. “It must be* [*eaten*](eating.html) *inside* [*one*](one.html) *house; take none of the meat outside the house. Do not break any of the bones. The whole* [*community*](community.html) *of Israel must celebrate it. “An* [*alien*](aliens.html) *living among you who* [*wants*](needs.html) *to celebrate* [*HaShem*](hashem.html)*’s* [*Passover*](passover.html) *must have all the males in his* [*household*](househld.html) *circumcised; then he may take part like* [*one*](one.html) *born in the land. No uncircumcised* [*male*](male%2Bfemale.html) *may* [*eat*](eating.html) *of it. The same* [*law*](law.html) *applies to the native-born and to the* [*alien*](aliens.html) *living among you.”*

A neker may not [eat](eating.html) of the [Passover](passover.html), but, the [ger](aliens.html) must be circumcised before he [eats](eating.html) of it.

***I Corinthians 5:1-8*** *It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that does not occur even among pagans: A man has his father’s wife. And you are proud! Shouldn’t you rather have been filled with grief and have put out of your fellowship the man who did this? Even though I am not* [*physically*](physical.html) *present, I am with you in spirit. And I have already passed judgment on the* [*one*](one.html) *who did this, just as if I were present. When you are assembled in the* [*name*](name.html) *of our Lord* [*Yeshua*](yeshua.html) *and I am with you in spirit, and the power of our Lord* [*Yeshua*](yeshua.html) *is present,* [*Hand*](fourteen.html) *this man over to Satan, so that the sinful nature may be destroyed and his spirit saved on the* [*day of the Lord*](day.html)*. Your* [*boasting*](chametz.html) *is not good. Don’t you* [*know*](daat.html) *that a little* [*yeast*](chametz.html) *works through the whole batch of dough? Get rid of the old* [*yeast*](chametz.html) *that you may be a* [*new*](new.html) *batch without* [*yeast*](chametz.html)*--as you really are. For* [*Mashiach*](mashiach.html)*, our* [*Passover*](passover.html) *lamb, has been sacrificed. Therefore let us keep the* [*Festival*](festival.html)*, not with the old* [*yeast*](chametz.html)*, the* [*yeast*](chametz.html) *of malice and* [*wickedness*](wicked.html)*, but with bread without* [*yeast*](chametz.html)*, the bread of sincerity and truth.*

Paul seems to be encouraging us to “keep” [Pesach](passover.html). So, we must be circumcised?

***Shemot (***[***Exodus***](exodus.html)***) 12:1-20***[*HaShem*](hashem.html) *said to Moses and Aaron in Egypt, “This month is to be for you the* [*first*](one.html) *month, the* [*first*](one.html) *month of your year. Tell the whole* [*community*](community.html) *of Israel that on the tenth day of this month each man is to take a lamb for his family,* [*one*](one.html) *for each* [*household*](househld.html)*. If any* [*household*](househld.html) *is too small for a whole lamb, they must share* [*one*](one.html) *with their nearest neighbor, having taken into account the* [*number*](nchart.html) *of people there are. You are to determine the amount of lamb needed in accordance with what each person will* [*eat*](eating.html)*. The animals you choose must be year-old males without defect, and you may take them from the sheep or the goats. Take care of them until the* [*fourteenth*](fourteen.html) *day of the month, when all the people of the* [*community*](community.html) *of Israel must slaughter them at twilight. Then they are to take some of the* [*blood*](body.html) *and put it on the sides and tops of the doorframes of the houses where they* [*eat*](eating.html) *the lambs. That same night they are to* [*eat*](eating.html) *the meat roasted over the* [*fire*](fire.html)*, along with bitter herbs, and bread made without* [*yeast*](chametz.html)*. Do not* [*eat*](eating.html) *the meat raw or cooked in water, but roast it over the* [*fire*](fire.html)*--*[*head*](body.html)*,* [*legs*](body.html) *and inner parts. Do not leave any of it till morning; if some is left till morning, you must burn it. This is how you are to* [*eat*](eating.html) *it: with your cloak tucked into your belt, your sandals on your* [*feet*](heel.html) *and your* [*staff*](staff.html) *in your* [*hand*](fourteen.html)*.* [*Eat*](eating.html) *it in haste; it is* [*HaShem*](hashem.html)*’s* [*Passover*](passover.html)*. “On that same night I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn--both men and animals--and I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt. I am* [*HaShem*](hashem.html)*. The* [*blood*](body.html) *will be a* [*sign*](signs.html) *for you on the houses where you are; and when I see the* [*blood*](body.html)*, I will pass over you. No destructive* [*plague*](plagues.html) *will touch you when I strike Egypt. “This is a day you are to commemorate; for the* [*generations*](toldot.html) *to come you shall celebrate it as a* [*festival*](festival.html) *to* [*HaShem*](hashem.html)*--a lasting ordinance. For* [*seven*](seven.html) *days you are to* [*eat*](eating.html) *bread made without* [*yeast*](chametz.html)*. On the* [*first*](one.html) *day remove the* [*yeast*](chametz.html) *from your houses, for whoever* [*eats*](eating.html) *anything with* [*yeast*](chametz.html) *in it from the* [*first*](one.html) *day through the* [*seventh*](seven.html) *must be cut off from Israel. On the* [*first*](one.html) *day hold a* [*sacred assembly*](rehearse.html)*, and another* [*one*](one.html) *on the* [*seventh*](seven.html) *day. Do no work at all on these days, except to prepare* [*food*](food.html) *for everyone to* [*eat*](eating.html)*--that is all you may do. “Celebrate the Feast of* [*Unleavened*](chametz.html) *Bread, because it was on this very day that I brought your divisions* [*out of Egypt*](thebirth.html)*. Celebrate this day as a lasting ordinance for the* [*generations*](toldot.html) *to come. In the* [*first*](one.html) *month you are to* [*eat*](eating.html) *bread made without* [*yeast*](chametz.html)*, from the evening of the* [*fourteenth*](fourteen.html) *day until the evening of the* [*twenty*](twenty.html)*-*[*first*](one.html) *day. For* [*seven*](seven.html) *days no* [*yeast*](chametz.html) *is to be found in your houses. And whoever* [*eats*](eating.html) *anything with* [*yeast*](chametz.html) *in it must be cut off from the* [*community*](community.html) *of Israel, whether he is an* [*alien*](aliens.html) *or native-born.* [*Eat*](eating.html) *nothing made with* [*yeast*](chametz.html)*. Wherever you live, you must* [*eat*](eating.html)[*unleavened*](chametz.html) *bread.”*

The whole [community](community.html) of Israel MUST celebrate [Pesach](passover.html) and Chag HaMatza! Therefore they MUST be circumcised. This implies that they are already justified else they would not be Israel.

# V. Circumcision and [salvation](salvation.html)

***Luqas (Acts) 10:39-48*** *“We are witnesses of everything he did in the country of the* [*Jews*](gen-jew.html) *and in* [*Jerusalem*](city.html)*. They killed him by hanging him on a tree, But G-d raised him from the dead on the* [*third*](three.html) *day and caused him to be seen. He was not seen by all the people, but by witnesses whom G-d had already chosen--by us who* [*ate*](eating.html) *and drank with him after he rose from the dead. He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the* [*one*](one.html) *whom G-d* [*appointed*](settimes.html) *as judge of the living and the dead. All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives* [*forgiveness*](forgive.html) *of* [*sins*](sin.html) *through his* [*name*](name.html)*.” While Peter was still* [*speaking*](mashal.html) *these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the* [*Gentiles*](gen-jew.html)*. For they heard them* [*speaking*](mashal.html) *in* [*tongues*](spirit.html) *and praising G-d. Then Peter said, “Can anyone keep these people from being baptized with water? They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have.” So he ordered that they be baptized in the* [*name*](name.html) *of* [*Yeshua*](yeshua.html)[*Mashiach*](mashiach.html)*. Then they asked Peter to stay with them for a few days.*

Circumcision is not a condition of [salvation](salvation.html).

Notice how James answers the question of circumcision:

***Luqas (Acts) 15:1-21*** *Some men came down from Judea to Antioch and were* [*teaching*](teacher.html) *the brothers: “Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom* [*taught*](teacher.html) *by Moses, you cannot be saved.” This brought Paul and Barnabas into sharp dispute and debate with them. So Paul and Barnabas were* [*appointed*](settimes.html)*, along with some other believers, to go up to* [*Jerusalem*](city.html) *to see the apostles and elders about this question. The* [*church*](church.html) *sent them on their way, and as they traveled through Phoenicia and Samaria, they told how the* [*Gentiles*](gen-jew.html) *had been converted. This news made all the brothers very glad. When they came to* [*Jerusalem*](city.html)*, they were welcomed by the* [*church*](church.html) *and the apostles and elders, to whom they reported everything G-d had done through them. Then some of the believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees stood up and said, “The* [*Gentiles*](gen-jew.html) *must be circumcised and required to obey the* [*law*](law.html) *of Moses.” The apostles and elders met to consider this question. After much discussion, Peter got up and addressed them: “Brothers, you* [*know*](daat.html) *that some* [*time*](time.html) *ago G-d made a choice among you that the* [*Gentiles*](gen-jew.html) *might hear from my lips the message of the* [*gospel*](mishna1.html) *and believe. G-d, who knows the* [*heart*](body.html)*, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us. He made no distinction between us and them, for he* [*purified*](purity.html) *their hearts by faith. Now then, why do you try to test G-d by putting on the necks of the disciples a yoke that neither we nor our* [*fathers*](fathers.html) *have been able to bear? No! We believe it is through the* [*grace*](grace.html) *of our Lord* [*Yeshua*](yeshua.html) *that we are saved, just as they are.” The whole assembly became silent as they listened to Barnabas and Paul telling about the miraculous* [*signs*](signs.html) *and wonders G-d had done among the* [*Gentiles*](gen-jew.html) *through them. When they finished, James* [*spoke*](mashal.html) *up: “Brothers, listen to me. Simon has described to us how G-d at* [*first*](one.html) *showed his concern by taking from the* [*Gentiles*](gen-jew.html) *a people for himself. The words of the prophets are in agreement with this, as it is written: “‘After this I will return and rebuild David’s fallen tent. Its ruins I will rebuild, and I will restore it, That the remnant of men may seek the Lord, and all the* [*Gentiles*](gen-jew.html) *who bear my* [*name*](name.html)*, says the Lord, who does these things’ That have been* [*known*](daat.html) *for ages. “It is my judgment, therefore, that we should not make it difficult for the* [*Gentiles*](gen-jew.html) *who are turning to G-d. Instead we should write to them, telling them to abstain from* [*food*](food.html) *polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from the meat of strangled animals and from* [*blood*](body.html)*. For Moses has been preached in every* [*city*](city.html) *from the earliest times and is read in the synagogues on every* [*Sabbath*](sabbath.html)*.”*

So, what was James’ answer to the question of circumcision?

***Colossians 2:9-17*** *For in* [*Mashiach*](mashiach.html) *all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, And you have been given fullness in* [*Mashiach*](mashiach.html)*, who is the* [*head*](body.html) *over every power and* [*authority*](authority.html)*. In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the* [*hands*](fourteen.html) *of men but with the circumcision done by* [*Mashiach*](mashiach.html)*, Having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of G-d, who raised him from the dead. When you were dead in your* [*sins*](sin.html) *and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, G-d made you alive with* [*Mashiach*](mashiach.html)*. He forgave us all our* [*sins*](sin.html)*, Having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross. Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you* [*eat*](eating.html) *or drink, or with regard to a religious* [*festival*](festival.html)*, a* [*New*](new.html)[*Moon*](chodesh.html) *celebration or a* [*Sabbath*](sabbath.html) *day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in* [*Mashiach*](mashiach.html)*.*

All believers have “circumcised hearts”.

***Colossians 3:7-12*** *You used to* [*walk*](walking.html) *in these ways, in the life you once lived. But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices And have put on the* [*new*](new.html) *self, which is being renewed in* [*knowledge*](knowledge.html) *in the image of its Creator. Here there is no Greek or* [*Jew*](gen-jew.html)*, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but* [*Mashiach*](mashiach.html) *is all, and is in all. Therefore, as G-d’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.*

***Romans 3:27-31*** *Where, then, is* [*boasting*](chametz.html)*? It is excluded. On what principle? On that of observing the* [*law*](law.html)*? No, but on that of faith. For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the* [*law*](law.html)*. Is G-d the G-d of* [*Jews*](gen-jew.html) *only? Is he not the G-d of* [*Gentiles*](gen-jew.html) *too? Yes, of* [*Gentiles*](gen-jew.html) *too, Since there is only* [*one*](one.html) *G-d, who will* [*justify*](justification.html) *the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith. Do we, then, nullify the* [*law*](law.html) *by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the* [*law*](law.html)*.*

[Justification](justification.html) and circumcision are not related.

***Colossians 3:8-12*** *But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices And have put on the* [*new*](new.html) *self, which is being renewed in* [*knowledge*](knowledge.html) *in the image of its Creator. Here there is no Greek or* [*Jew*](gen-jew.html)*, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but* [*Mashiach*](mashiach.html) *is all, and is in all. Therefore, as G-d’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.*

G-d’s chosen people can be Greek or [Jew](gen-jew.html), circumcised or uncircumcised.

# VI. Problem passages.

[***Galatians***](galatian.html) ***5:1-12*** *It is for* [*freedom*](freedom.html) *that* [*Mashiach*](mashiach.html) *has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery. Mark my words! I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised,* [*Mashiach*](mashiach.html) *will be of no value to you at all. Again I declare to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obligated to obey the whole* [*law*](law.html)*. You who are trying to be justified by* [*law*](law.html) *have been alienated from* [*Mashiach*](mashiach.html)*; you have fallen away from* [*grace*](grace.html)*. But by faith we eagerly await through the Spirit the righteousness for which we hope. For in* [*Mashiach*](mashiach.html)[*Yeshua*](yeshua.html) *neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love. You were running a good race. Who cut in on you and kept you from obeying the truth? That kind of persuasion does not come from the* [*one*](one.html) *who calls you. “A little* [*yeast*](chametz.html) *works through the whole batch of dough.” I am confident in the Lord that you will take no other view. The* [*one*](one.html) *who is throwing you into confusion will pay the penalty, whoever he may be. Brothers, if I am still preaching circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the offense of the cross has been abolished. As for those agitators, I wish they would go the whole way and emasculate themselves!*

Circumcision or [law](law.html) will not [JUSTIFY](justification.html) us. Circumcision for the purpose of [justification](justification.html) makes [Mashiach](mashiach.html) of no value.

***I Corinthians 7:17-24*** *Nevertheless, each* [*one*](one.html) *should retain the place in life that the Lord assigned to him and to which G-d has called him. This is the rule I lay down in all the churches. Was a man already circumcised when he was called? He should not become uncircumcised. Was a man uncircumcised when he was called? He should not be circumcised. Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing. Keeping G-d’s* [*commands*](cmds613.html) *is what counts. Each* [*one*](one.html) *should remain in the situation which he was in when G-d called him. Were you a slave when you were called? Don’t let it trouble you--although if you can gain your* [*freedom*](freedom.html)*, do so. For he who was a slave when he was called by the Lord is the Lord’s freedman; similarly, he who was a free man when he was called is* [*Mashiach*](mashiach.html)*’s slave. You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men. Brothers, each man, as responsible to G-d, should remain in the situation G-d called him to.*

***Vayikra (Leviticus) 12:1-4*** [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *said to Moses, “Say to the Israelites: ‘A woman who becomes pregnant and gives* [*birth*](birth.html) *to a son will be ceremonially unclean for* [*seven*](seven.html) *days, just as she is unclean during her monthly period. On the* [*eighth*](eight.html) *day the boy is to be circumcised. Then the woman must wait* [*thirty*](thirty.html)*-*[*three*](three.html) *days to be* [*purified*](purity.html) *from her bleeding. She must not touch anything sacred or go to the* [*sanctuary*](mikdash.html) *until the days of her purification are over.*

[One](one.html) who is uncircumcised when called should not become circumcised. This is in relationship to being called, because obviously circumcision is commanded.

Keeping [Hashem](hashem.html)’s [commands](cmds613.html) is what counts, and [Hashem](hashem.html) commanded circumcision. Rambam’s [two](two.html) hundred and [fifteenth](fifteen.html) positive [command](cmds613.html), of the 613 [mitzvot](cmds613.html), is to circumcise your son on the [eighth](eight.html) day. Seems like even this uncircumcised believer would circumcise his son, on the [eighth](eight.html) day. It is also worthwhile noting that circumcision preceded the [law](law.html).

# VII. Circumcision and the [land of Israel](city.html)

The [first](one.html) [time](time.html) that circumcision is used in the Torah, is in:

***Bereshit (Genesis) 17:9-14*** *Then G-d said to* [*Abraham*](avraham.html)*, “As for you, you must keep my* [*covenant*](covenant.html)*, you and your descendants after you for the* [*generations*](toldot.html) *to come. This is my* [*covenant*](covenant.html) *with you and your descendants after you, the* [*covenant*](covenant.html) *you are to keep: Every* [*male*](male%2Bfemale.html) *among you shall be circumcised. You are to undergo circumcision, and it will be the* [*sign*](signs.html) *of the* [*covenant*](covenant.html) *between me and you. For the* [*generations*](toldot.html) *to come every* [*male*](male%2Bfemale.html) *among you who is* [*eight*](eight.html) *days old must be circumcised, including those born in your* [*household*](househld.html) *or bought with money from a foreigner--those who are not your offspring. Whether born in your* [*household*](househld.html) *or bought with your money, they must be circumcised. My* [*covenant*](covenant.html) *in your flesh is to be an everlasting* [*covenant*](covenant.html)*. Any uncircumcised* [*male*](male%2Bfemale.html)*, who has not been circumcised in the flesh, will be cut off from his people; he has broken my* [*covenant*](covenant.html)*.”*

Circumcision is the “[sign](signs.html)” of the [covenant](covenant.html) given to [Abraham](avraham.html). Notice what [Hashem](hashem.html) promises, to [Abraham](avraham.html), before He give the “[sign](signs.html)”:

***Bereshit (Genesis) 17:4-8*** *“As for me, this is my* [*covenant*](covenant.html) *with you: You will be the father of many* [*nations*](nations.html)*. No longer will you be called* [*Abram*](avraham.html)*; your* [*name*](name.html) *will be* [*Abraham*](avraham.html)*, for I have made you a father of many* [*nations*](nations.html)*. I will make you very fruitful; I will make* [*nations*](nations.html) *of you, and kings will come from you. I will establish my* [*covenant*](covenant.html) *as an everlasting* [*covenant*](covenant.html) *between me and you and your descendants after you for the* [*generations*](toldot.html) *to come, to be your G-d and the G-d of your descendants after you. The whole land of Canaan, where you are now an* [*alien*](aliens.html)*, I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you; and I will be their G-d.”*

So, [Hashem](hashem.html)’s part of the [covenant](covenant.html) was to give, among other things, [Abraham](avraham.html) and his descendants the land. The year is 2047 am, Ishmael is [thirteen](thirteen.html) years old, and Sarai, is eighty-[nine](nine.html).

This [covenant](covenant.html) requires actions by both parties: [Hashem](hashem.html)’s part is in verses 2-8, and [Abraham](avraham.html)’s is in verses 9-14. Notice, though, that the promise of the land came [first](one.html) and was not conditioned on obedience!

Circumcision and “The Land” seem to be closely tied together. Remember that circumcision was imposed on the Congregation of Israel before they celebrated [Passover](passover.html) which was the beginning of their entrance into the land.

Remember that in Joshua chapter 5 the Israelites are circumcised just before they enter the land. Here, too, we see the promise of the land [coming](coming.html) immediately before the [command](cmds613.html) of circumcision.

Notice that when Moses travels back to Egypt, his route would have taken him into the land promised to [Abraham](avraham.html); therefore [HaShem](hashem.html) met him there and demanded that his son, Gershom “stranger in a strange land”, be circumcised! (Midian is located [east](east.html) of the gulf of Aquaba and extended to Jezreel in Transjordan. Remember that Midian is a descendant of [Abraham](avraham.html) - Genesis 25).

***Shemot (***[***Exodus***](exodus.html)***) 4:24-28*** *At a lodging place on the way,* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *met [Moses] and was about to kill him. But Zipporah took a flint knife, cut off her son’s foreskin and touched [Moses’]* [*feet*](heel.html) *with it. “Surely you are a bridegroom of* [*blood*](body.html) *to me,” she said. So* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *let him alone. (At that* [*time*](time.html) *she said “bridegroom of* [*blood*](body.html)*,” referring to circumcision.)* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *said to Aaron, “Go into the desert to meet Moses.” So he met Moses at the mountain of G-d and kissed him. Then Moses told Aaron everything* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *had sent him to say, and also about all the miraculous* [*signs*](signs.html) *he had commanded him to perform.*

It is at approximately the same place where [HaShem](hashem.html) tells the Israelites to build the Tent of [Appointment](appointm.html), so that [Hashem](hashem.html) will [dwell](dwelling.html) with man:

***Shemot (***[***Exodus***](exodus.html)***) 29:44-46*** *“So I will consecrate the Tent of Meeting and the altar and will consecrate Aaron and his sons to serve me as* [*priests*](priests.html)*. Then I will* [*dwell*](dwelling.html) *among the Israelites and be their G-d. They will* [*know*](daat.html) *that I am* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *their G-d, who brought them* [*out of Egypt*](thebirth.html) *so that I might* [*dwell*](dwelling.html) *among them. I am* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *their G-d.*

# VIII. Uncircumcised [Heart](body.html) (Erel Lev)

(uncircumcised [heart](body.html), i.e. a rasha)

Hakham Akiva Tatz has indicated that [one](one.html) who [eats](eating.html) non-kosher [food](food.html) is uncircumcising his [heart](body.html). Those who [eat](eating.html) only kosher [food](food.html) have circumcised their lips.

\* \* \*

***Devarim (Deuteronomy) 30:6*** *And* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *thy God will circumcise thine* [*heart*](body.html)*, and the* [*heart*](body.html) *of thy* [*seed*](flower.html)*, to love* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *thy God with all thine* [*heart*](body.html)*, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live.*

***Yeremyahu (Jeremiah) 4:4*** *Circumcise yourselves to* [*HaShem*](hashem.html)*, and take away the foreskins of your* [*heart*](body.html)*, ye men of Judah and inhabitants of* [*Jerusalem*](city.html)*: lest my fury come forth like* [*fire*](fire.html)*, and burn that none can quench it, because of the evil of your doings.*

***Yeremyahu (Jeremiah) 9:26*** *Egypt, and Judah, and* [*Edom*](edom.html)*, and the children of Ammon, and* [*Moab*](stages.html)*, and all in the utmost corners, that* [*dwell*](dwelling.html) *in the wilderness: for all* [*nations*](nations.html) *uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel uncircumcised in the* [*heart*](body.html)*.*

***Ezekiel 11:17-20*** *“Therefore say: ‘This is what the Sovereign* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *says: I will* [*gather*](gather.html) *you from the* [*nations*](nations.html) *and bring you back from the countries where you have been scattered, and I will give you back the* [*land of Israel*](city.html) *again.’ “They will return to it and remove all its vile images and detestable idols. I will give them an undivided* [*heart*](body.html) *and put a* [*new*](new.html) *spirit in them; I will remove from them their* [*heart*](body.html) *of stone and give them a* [*heart*](body.html) *of flesh. Then they will follow my decrees and be careful to keep my* [*laws*](law.html)*. They will be my people, and I will be their G-d.*

***Yehezekel (Ezekiel) 44:7*** *In that ye have brought strangers, uncircumcised in* [*heart*](body.html)*, and uncircumcised in flesh, to be in my* [*sanctuary*](mikdash.html)*, to pollute it, even my house, when ye offer my bread, the fat and the* [*blood*](body.html)*, and they have broken my* [*covenant*](covenant.html) *because of all your abominations.*

***II Luqas (Acts) 7:51*** *Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in* [*heart*](body.html) *and* [*ears*](body.html)*, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your* [*fathers*](fathers.html) *did, so do ye.*

***Romans 2:28*** *For he is not a* [*Jew*](gen-jew.html)*, which is* [*one*](one.html) *outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh:*

***Romans 2:29*** *But he is a* [*Jew*](gen-jew.html)*, which is* [*one*](one.html) *inwardly; and circumcision is that of the* [*heart*](body.html)*, in the spirit, and not in the* [*letter*](letters.html)*; whose praise is not of men, but of God.*

***Philippians 3:3*** *For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in* [*Mashiach*](mashiach.html)[*Yeshua*](yeshua.html)*, and have no confidence in the flesh.*

***Collosians 2:11*** *In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without* [*hands*](fourteen.html)*, in putting off the* [*body*](body.html) *of the* [*sins*](sin.html) *of the flesh by the circumcision of* [*Mashiach*](mashiach.html)*:*

In fact, the whole point of [Passover](passover.html) and the other [plagues](plagues.html) was to allow the Israelites to [dwell](dwelling.html) with [HaShem](hashem.html):

***Vayikra (Leviticus) 26:40-45*** *“‘But if they will confess their* [*sins*](sin.html) *and the* [*sins*](sin.html) *of their* [*fathers*](fathers.html)*--their treachery against me and their hostility toward me, Which made me hostile toward them so that I sent them into the land of their enemies--then when their uncircumcised hearts are humbled and they pay for their* [*sin*](sin.html)*, I will remember my* [*covenant*](covenant.html) *with* [*Jacob*](israelja.html) *and my* [*covenant*](covenant.html) *with* [*Isaac*](isaac.html) *and my* [*covenant*](covenant.html) *with* [*Abraham*](avraham.html)*, and I will remember the land. For the land will be deserted by them and will enjoy its Sabbaths while it lies desolate without them. They will pay for their* [*sins*](sin.html) *because they rejected my* [*laws*](law.html) *and abhorred my decrees. Yet in spite of this, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not reject them or abhor them so as to destroy them completely, breaking my* [*covenant*](covenant.html) *with them. I am* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *their G-d. But for their sake I will remember the* [*covenant*](covenant.html) *with their ancestors whom I brought* [*out of Egypt*](thebirth.html) *in the sight of the* [*nations*](nations.html) *to be their G-d. I am* [*HaShem*](hashem.html)*.’“*

[HaShem](hashem.html) links [heart](body.html) circumcision with the land! This [connection](connection.html) seems to be integrally linked with the “[New](new.html) (renewed) [Covenant](covenant.html)”.

***Devarim (Deuteronomy) 30:1-6*** *When all these blessings and curses I have set before you come upon you and you take them to* [*heart*](body.html) *wherever* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *your G-d disperses you among the* [*nations*](nations.html)*, And when you and your children return to* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *your G-d and obey him with all your* [*heart*](body.html) *and with all your soul according to everything I* [*command*](cmds613.html) *you today, Then* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *your G-d will restore your fortunes and have compassion on you and* [*gather*](gather.html) *you again from all the* [*nations*](nations.html) *where he scattered you. Even if you have been banished to the most distant land under the* [*heavens*](heaven.html)*, from there* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *your G-d will* [*gather*](gather.html) *you and bring you back. He will bring you to the land that belonged to your* [*fathers*](fathers.html)*, and you will take possession of it. He will make you more prosperous and numerous than your* [*fathers*](fathers.html)*.* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *your G-d will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants, so that you may love him with all your* [*heart*](body.html) *and with all your soul, and live.*

A person having an “**uncircumcised** [**heart**](body.html)” can be viewed as a person who is closed-minded to [HaShem](hashem.html)’s [commandments](cmds613.html)[[44]](#footnote-44). We figuratively circumcise our hearts when learning more about Judaism, observing [Shabbat](sabbath.html) or performing other [mitzvot](cmds613.html).

Rav Kook, in his short but extraordinary essay about the Song of Songs, says that just as any literary canon would be considered deficient or lacking if the subject of romantic passion were never breached within its volumes, however-the-more-so would the Book of Books, the Torah, be considered lacking if its holy pages never addressed that ever-coveted subject! The Song of Songs, he says, completes this task admirably, and notes that the [Jewish](gen-jew.html) preoccupation with the sort of intimate love enumerated in the Song of Songs stems from our own preoccupation with the source of that love, [HaShem](hashem.html) Himself! He tells us about the [chamor](chamor.html) l’ahava (lit. “the [donkey](chamor.html) for love”), someone who values only the chomer, the materiality of human love relationships, who debases the [physical](physical.html) longings ennatured within his flesh from their highest potentials of sublimity to the depths of grossness; Rav Kook says that this person has an “**uncircumcised** [**heart**](body.html),” because he has never tasted the “sweet light of the love of the [Rock](rock.html) of the universe!” In other words, this person doesn’t understand that [physical](physical.html) love between humans is deeply connected-to and is a fundamental expression-of Divine love, and this lack of understanding renders him incapable of grasping the sublimity of the depths of love’s root-source. Thus, this “[donkey](chamor.html) for love” would never notice if the Song of Songs went missing from the Torah; its intimations about the sublime root-source of all love would be completely lost on him, so he’d never notice if it vanished.

And so before the [coming](coming.html) of [Mashiach](mashiach.html), it says that [HaShem](hashem.html) will remove the uncircumcised [heart](body.html), which is the subtlest of unholiness, in order to be able to receive the G-dliness that will be revealed with the [coming](coming.html) of [Mashiach](mashiach.html), which is even higher than that which was revealed at the giving of the Torah.

The revelation that will come with the [coming](coming.html) of [Mashiach](mashiach.html) is the revelation of G-d Himself. This is the idea of making a [dwelling](dwelling.html) place for G-d. A [dwelling](dwelling.html) place is the place where for example a king comes and is himself. A home, a [dwelling](dwelling.html) place, is not a place that serves a particular function. The king doesn’t go to his home in order to do a particular service or act. It is where he simply is. In the palace there are rooms for every occasion: where he greets guests, where he passes [laws](law.html), where he meets with his ministers and so on. Each room serves a particular function. But a home is where he belongs. It is where his essence can be revealed, not only his functions.

# IX. Uncircumcised Lips

***Shemot (***[***Exodus***](exodus.html)***) 6:30*** *“Moshe said to G-d, ‘Behold, I am of uncircumcised (closed) lips.’ ”*

When Moshe tells [HaShem](hashem.html) that he has “uncircumcised lips”, he was referring to the injury which he suffered when he touched his [tongue](spirit.html) with a burning coal.

[***Midrash***](orallaw.html) ***Rabbah -*** [***Exodus***](exodus.html) ***I:26*** *AND THE CHILD GREW (II, 10). She suckled him only for* [*twenty*](twenty.html)*-*[*four*](four.html) *months, and you say: AND THE CHILD GREW? This is to* [*teach*](teacher.html) *you that he grew abnormally. AND SHE BROUGHT HIM UNTO PHARAOH’S DAUGHTER. Pharaoh’s daughter used to* [*kiss*](mashal.html) *and hug him, loved him as if he were her own son and would not allow him out of the royal palace. Because he was so handsome, everyone was eager to see him, and whoever saw him could not tear himself away from him. Pharaoh also used to* [*kiss*](mashal.html) *and hug him, and he [Moses] used to take the crown of Pharaoh and place it upon his own* [*head*](body.html)*, as he was destined to do when he became great. It was this which G-d said to Miriam: Therefore have I brought forth a* [*fire*](fire.html) *from the midst of thee (Ezek. XXVIII, 18), and even so did the daughter of Pharaoh bring up him who was destined to exact retribution from her father. (The Messianic king, too, who will* [*one*](one.html) *day punish* [*Edom*](edom.html)*, dwells with them in that province, as it is said: There shall the calf feed, and there shall he lie down (Isa. XXVII, 10).3) The magicians of Egypt sat there and said: ‘We are afraid of him who is taking off thy crown and placing it upon his own* [*head*](body.html)*, lest he be the* [*one*](one.html) *of whom we prophesy that he will take away the kingdom from thee.’ Some of them counseled to slay him and others to burn him, but Jethro was present among them and he said to them: ‘ This boy has no sense. However, test him by placing before him a gold vessel and a live coal; if he stretch forth his* [*hand*](fourteen.html) *for the gold, then he has sense and you can slay him, but if he make for the live coal, then he has no sense and there can be no sentence of death upon him.’ So they brought these things before him, and he was about to reach forth for the gold when* [*Gabriel*](angels.html) *came and thrust his* [*hand*](fourteen.html) *aside so that it seized the coal, and he thrust his* [*hand*](fourteen.html) *with the live coal into his* [*mouth*](body.html)*, so that his* [*tongue*](spirit.html) *was burnt, with the result that he became slow of speech and of* [*tongue*](spirit.html)*.*

Why was his [tongue](spirit.html) injured and not his [hand](fourteen.html)?

When Batya found the baby Moshe in the Nile River, she asked a [number](nchart.html) of Egyptian women to nurse him. Destined to [speak](mashal.html) with [HaShem](hashem.html), “[mouth](body.html) to [mouth](body.html)” (see *Bamidbar* 12:8), Moshe refused their milk. However, during the process, some of the milk of the Egyptian nurses fell on his [tongue](spirit.html) and he spat it out immediately.

[***Midrash***](orallaw.html) ***Rabbah -*** [***Exodus***](exodus.html) ***I:25*** *THEN SAID HIS SISTER TO PHARAOH’S DAUGHTER. etc. (I, 7). Why did Miriam say, A NURSE OF THE* [*HEBREW*](hebrew.html) *WOMEN? Was it then forbidden to Moses to drink the milk of a non-Jewess? Have we not learnt: A Jewess must not suckle the child of a non-Jewess, but a non-Jewess may suckle the child of an Israelite in her home. Then why did Miriam say so? Because she took Moses round to every Egyptian wet-nurse, but he rejected them all. And why did he reject them? Because G-d said: ‘Shall the* [*mouth*](body.html) *that will* [*one*](one.html) *day* [*speak*](mashal.html) *with Me suck anything unclean? ‘ This is the meaning of: Whom shall* [*one*](one.html)[*teach*](teacher.html)[*knowledge*](knowledge.html)*? (Isa. XXVIII, 9), i.e. to whom shall He* [*teach*](teacher.html)[*knowledge*](knowledge.html)*? To them that we weaned from milk, etc. (ib.). Another reason why Moses rejected their* [*breasts*](body.html) *is this. G-d said: ‘This child will* [*one*](one.html) *day* [*speak*](mashal.html) *with Me and then the Egyptian women will say: “I suckled him now* [*speaking*](mashal.html) *with the Shechinah.”‘*

When non-kosher [food](food.html) comes in contact with a kosher utensil it [needs](needs.html) *kashering.* This is normally done by immersing the utensil in boiling water or using [fire](fire.html) to make it red hot so that it will expel whatever it had absorbed. Thus, Moshe’s [tongue](spirit.html) was burned in order to remove all traces of Egyptian milk. His lips have now become circumcised.

# X. Interim Conclusions

[HaShem](hashem.html)’s plan for His chosen people, both the true and the wild olive, is the same. This premise infers that what is good for [Jews](gen-jew.html) is good for [Gentiles](gen-jew.html). This, therefore, seemed to mean that those [Gentiles](gen-jew.html) who are not circumcised, not circumcised for the correct reason, or who were not circumcised on or after the [eighth](eight.html) day should be re-circumcised for the right reason.

I believe that the [Jerusalem](city.html) council and the decree of James seems to indicate that there was no condemnation or penalty for circumcision or the following of any of the other parts of the [law](law.html).

If we were to try to prove the validity of circumcision from the Tanakh[[45]](#footnote-45) alone, as the [Bereans](bereans.html) did, I believe that we would come to the conclusion that circumcision is required of [HaShem](hashem.html)’s people.

\* \* \*

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1. Shabbat130a [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. see Bereshit (Genesis) 15:9–10 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Yehoshua (Joshua) 5:10 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. See Divrei HaYamim II, ch.30: Chizkiyahu’s teshuva program takes place on Pesach, and see Divrei HaYamim II, ch. 35: King Yoshiyahu conducts a public Pesach celebration as part of his own process of renewal. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Sefer Hachinuch, Mitzva 2. *Karet* is translated as spiritual excision - there is much discussion as to what exactly this entails but, as its name implies, it involves some form of losing a connection with HaShem. It should be noted that a person who commits one of these forbidden actions due to a lack of knowledge does not suffer from *karet*. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. The Passover sacrificial lamb eaten at the seder. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Mishna, Kereitot 1:1 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Yehezechel (Ezekiel) 16:6. According to the Rabbis it was only on that night that they circumcised themselves. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Bereshit (Genesis) 2:15-16 [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Sforno, Bereshit (Genesis) 17:11: “Sign of the covenant” means a perpetual reminder to walk in His ways, it being the Master’s seal on His servant. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Shabbat 48a [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Gur Arye [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Shemot (Exodus) 12:26 [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Derasha I’Shabbat Hagadol 196b: Man was originally created in order to serve Hashem. ne Pesach is singled out and called “service” to Him, as it says, “You shall do this service in this month” (Shemot 13:5). Pesach comes on account of Israel being fit to serve HaShem and for this reason it is called ‘service’, for the fulfillment of this commandment makes them slaves to HaShem, obligated to serve Him. See Gevurot Hashem 60:264a and 72:329a. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Shemot (Exodus) 12:43 [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Vayikra (Leviticus) 25:55 [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Kiddushin 22b [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. With the destruction of the Temple it is no longer possible to bring a sacrificial offering. Instead we render our offering with our lips – Hoshea (Hosea) 14:2 [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Rambam, Hilchot Isurei Biah 13:1-4 [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Melachim alef (I Kings) 19:10. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. It is interesting to note, that two of the most well-observed mitzvot amongst secular Jews, are brit milaand Seder night. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Vayikra (Leviticus) 16 [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Shemot (Exodus) 12:3 [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Vayikra (Leviticus) 27 [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Shemot (Exodus) 12:4 [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Avot chap. 2 [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Bereshit 18, see Rashi ad loc. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. from the Haggada [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. See Rav Soloveichik - Kol Dodi Dofek - about Mila and Tevilla - fate and destiny. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Sefer Hachinuch, Mitzva 17. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. It should be noted that, whilst the actual Mitzva of brit mila applies to men, the lessons derived from it, apply equally to women. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. According to the Zohar (Bamidbar 152b) the spiritual feeling of Pesach Sheni can be felt for seven days: There is a commandment to bring a Pesach sheni for those who were unable to fulfill the mitzvah in the proper time, or were impure with some other impurity. If the secret of Pesach is the secret of the faith which Israel entered, this rules (only) in the month of Nisan, then is the time for joy, how can someone who was impure or missed the (proper) time bring the offering in the second month ― the (correct) time has passed? The answer is that the community of Israel is endowed with the crown in the month of Nisan, the crown is not removed for thirty days. And for these thirty days the matron sits with her crown and all the hosts rejoice. And whoever wishes to see the matron can see. The crier then goes and announces whomever cannot see the matron can come and look before the gates are closed. When does the crier go out? On the fourteenth of the second month and from that day the gates are opened for seven more days, from that day onward the gates are closed, this is the Pesach Sheni. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. See Shem Mishmuel Bahalotcha 5672. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. See Rashi Bamidbar 9:10. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Yosef represents unity see Sfat Emet Miketz 5652. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. See Shem Mishmuel Vayikra ― Chodesh 5674. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Shabbat130a [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Shemot (Exodus) 12:37, Bamidbar (Numbers) 33:5 [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Bereshit (Genesis) 33:17 [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Vayikra (Leviticus) 23 [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. REFLECTIONS & INTROSPECTIONS, Elul, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Succos – Torah insights of HaGaon HaGadol Rav Moshe Shapiro, by Moshe Antebi [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. see Mishna Beruura O”CH #581 [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Shabbat 123a [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Hertz, *Leviticus* 26:41 and commentary; *Deuteronomy* 10:16 [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. The Old Testament [↑](#footnote-ref-45)