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For Generations to Come
Every Male Who is Eight Days Old Must be Circumcised
17: 9-14

For generations to come every male who is eight days old must be circumcised DIG: Why do you think ADONAI chose circumcision to ratify his covenant with Abraham? What does circumcision demonstrate (15:6, 17:1 see Romans 4:9-12)?

REFLECT: If circumcision is no longer required of God's people, what is required of us today (see **Galatians 5:6)? Circumcision did not confer salvation any more in that day than baptism does today, yet that truth is often missed in both Jewish and Gentile circles. Why? What does circumcision of the heart mean to you?**

Then God said to Avraham, "As for you, you must keep My covenant." This is the loving response to the seven **I wills** in **17:1-8**. **The LORD** is not saying **His** promises are conditional; they are not, *but the principle is that unconditional promises of **God** demand a response from us.* It is the same principle as our salvation. We are saved unconditionally. We are **saved by grace through faith, and not by works (Ephesians 2:8-9).** In response to **ADONAI's** love for us we should keep **His commandments**. **Jesus** said: **Whoever has My commandments and obeys them, they are the ones who love Me (John 14:21);** whether we obey them or not, our salvation is secure **(John 6:37-40, 10:27:30),** but, **Elohim** still expects us to act in loving response to **His** gift of salvation **(James 2:18-26)**, and that is the principle that is at work here.

The recipients **of the covenant** would be **Abraham and his descendants for the generations to come. His** new name pointed ahead to **his descendants**. As long as Jewish history continued, this would be a practice that must be performed. **The LORD** had pledged to do **His** part in **the covenant**. Now **He** gave **Abraham** a means by which **he** and **his descendants** would keep **their** part of **the**

covenant.[289] **God** said: **This is My covenant with you and your descendants after you, the covenant you are to keep; every male among you shall be circumcised (17:9-10).**

You are to undergo circumcision *or cutting around*, **and it will be the sign of the covenant between Me and you (17:11).** This was a permanent decision. There was no going back. Like **ADONAI's covenant** with **Noah**, **His covenant** with **Avraham** would have **a sign**. In **God's covenant** with **Noah** the **sign** was the rainbow, and in **His covenant** with **Abraham** the sign was **circumcision**. This **sign** would require the shedding of blood. This would be **a perpetual reminder to walk in His ways, it being, as it were, the master's seal on his servant.** There would be a constant reminder that it is a *blood covenant* **(15:7-21)**. **The rabbis teach that the angels take this blood and store it in a special place. When the LORD is angry with Isra'el, He looks at this blood and has mercy upon them. Circumcision** was not particularly unique in the ancient world no more than it is particularly unique in the present world. There is something else that makes it unique.

What makes Jewish **circumcision** unique is the timing. **For the generations to come every male among you who is eight days old must be circumcised even if it is on the Sabbath (17:12a). The rabbis teach that God swore to Abraham that all of his descendants who were circumcised would not be sent into hell. They teach that Abraham stands before ADONAI guarding the way to sh'ol so that none of his descendants, bearing the mark of circumcision, would enter the place of divine punishment. However, if a Jew died without repentance, special angels would come and reattach his foreskin. He would therefore be uncircumcised and would go into hell. Abraham would not help him because he would be uncircumcised.**

Every Jew was to be **circumcised**, **including those servants born in your household or slaves bought with money from a foreigner after they were born – those who are not your offspring. Whether born in your household or bought with your money, they must be circumcised (17:12b-13a).**

Circumcision was practiced elsewhere in the ancient Near East, but, here it achieved a new meaning: **My covenant in your flesh is to be an everlasting covenant (17:13b).** Prominent Jews in the New Covenant like John the Baptist **(Luke 1:59-60)**, **Jesus (Luke 2:21)**, Paul **(Philippians 3:5)** and **Timothy** were all **circumcised (Acts 16:1-3).**

If anyone did not identify himself or his boys with that physical **sign**, he would be **cut off** from **the LORD's covenant**.[290] **Any uncircumcised male, who has not been circumcised in the flesh, will be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant (17:14).** The phrase, **cut off**, signifies a premature death. There is a play on words here and it goes like this: *If the foreskin is not cut off, he will be cut off.* An example of this would be where **God** struck Moses with a deadly illness of plague because he had failed to circumcise his second son. Only when his wife **Zipporah** intervenes and has **her** son **circumcised** is the life of Moses spared (see my commentary on **Exodus, to see link click Az – Surely You are a Bridegroom of Blood to Me**). So, the failure of **circumcision** required a cutting **off**.

On the other hand, **circumcision** of **the flesh** did not and cannot guarantee salvation. **For in Christ neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love (Galatians 5:6).** People in the TaNaKh were saved exactly like people today are saved, by **faith**. Important as it was, **circumcision** was only an outward symbol for the Jews. It was not proof of salvation. The Jerusalem Counsel ended all debate by removing **circumcision** as a requirement for Gentile believers **(Acts 15:1-29).** Therefore, **circumcision is circumcision of the heart (Romans 2:28-29).** The true mark of a child of **God** is not an outward symbol, such as **circumcision**, but, the condition of **the heart**.[291]

This is what is called progressive revelation: from here in **Genesis**, to **Deuteronomy** (see the commentary on **Deuteronomy Fp – From Restoration to Repentance**), to **Jeremiah** (see the commentary on **Jeremiah** (see the commentary on **Jeremiah Eo – The Days are Coming, declares the LORD, When I Will Make a New Covenant with the People of Isra'el**), and then to

Colossians 2:1-3. In each step along the way **ADONAI** gives us more and more clarity about what it means to **circumcise** our **hearts**.

Avraham and all those of **his household** did not **circumcise themselves** to become members of the *blood* **covenant**. **They** did it because *they already were* members of the *blood* **covenant**. **Circumcision** for **them** represented the same thing that good works represent for us today. Good works are not necessary *for* salvation; they are a result *of* salvation **(James 2:14-26).** Therefore, both Gentiles who believe without being **circumcised**, as well as those Jews who are **circumcised** both physically and spiritually, may claim **Abraham** as their **father** in **the faith (Romans 4:9-12, 16-17)**.