

**CIRCUMCISION:
SEAL OF RIGHTEOUSNESS
ROMANS 4:11**

Genesis 17:9-11: And Elohim said unto Abraham, Thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee in their generations. This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised. And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you.

Compiled by:
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The Question on Circumcision

By Elder Mike Abbaduska

Introduction: Romans 4:11 ¹¹ And he (Abraham) received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which *he had yet* being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also:

Circumcision is a very controversial subject. Even though many Sacred Name and Sabbath groups believe in it, it is seldom discussed and spoken of. Today, there is a great movement to "spiritualize" things of the Torah (Covenant Law) so that new believers think that we do not have to actually do (obey) the law to be first fruits. Also, war is being waged by well meaning Christians and doctors of the medical profession to stop all circumcision. It is the same spiritual war that also opposes the true Names of Yahweh and His Son, Yahshua, our Righteousness. It is the same war that resists the truth about the Sabbath and Kodesh (Holy) Days. It is the work of the adversary to deceive many as we approach the end times.

It is important to understand not only truth, but the opposition to a true doctrine. When there is such a furor against something, there must be some truth in it. In other words, "they protest too much." Why is circumcision so argued about? Because it is so important. Why is it so important to be circumcised? Because it is, a specific sign in the flesh Yahweh gave to Israel as part of His covenant. Though, in some believers opinion, to be circumcised is like a sin. It is considered Jewish or carnal law. Or some feel those who do this are trying to be saved by works of the law. We know that law by itself does not save. It also requires love and conversion. But, obedience is required. (John 14:15) This is all based on a personal relationship with our Father and His Son Yahshua.

The bottom line is this. For the man who is working out his salvation in fear and trembling, he will do all that is in the word. He will do that which may not even seem to be necessary. He will not leave out one jot or tittle (Matt 5:18) because he is careful and wants to please Yahweh out of his own love. In addition, to that, here are a few points that are key to the defense of circumcision. Please prayerfully read and study these statements and the included discussions. Here are some immutable facts to consider along with all the other studies in this folder...

1. Circumcision is stated as a covenant sign to Yahweh's People throughout all their generations. Gen 17:10-14.

2. It was so important that no one could take the Passover without it. Ex 12:48. Passover is a first fruit privilege.
3. In (Ex 2:24-26) Moses was almost killed, the chosen leader of Israel, because he had not circumcised his son. That is how serious Yahweh takes His laws.
4. Circumcision was so important that Joshua was commanded to re- circumcise Israel before they went into Canaan. (The promised land, symbol of the seventh day millennium with Yahshua) Let us look at this a little closer.

A clear picture of the calling of Yahweh for a believer is found in the story of the Exodus. And reviewing this, it is clear that baptism and circumcision were both again found side by side in the Old Testament. These two ordinances were not independent. Between the time Israel was taken out of Egypt (Ex 12:37), and before they heard the law at Sinai (Ex chapter 20), Paul the Apostle says they were baptized in the Red Sea. (I Cor 10:2) After Yahweh separated the sheep from the goats in the wilderness, and weeded out all the disobedient that were not worthy to enter the promised land, He commanded Joshua to circumcise all of the Israelite men. Therefore, the majority men who went into the land of Canaan were both baptized in water and circumcised. What an amazing witness! A called person today hears the calling and comes out of Egypt (Babylon), is then baptized, hears the law and then is obedient unto being circumcised!

5. Unknown to some, the command to circumcise the heart is also in the Old Testament along with the command to circumcise the flesh (Deut 10:16). Some believe that the command to circumcise the heart is the change in the law and purpose of Yahweh in the New Testament. It is not. If the command to circumcise the heart were only in the New Testament, then we could say there is a new covenant and a change, but that is not the case at all.
6. In Acts chapter 15, the Apostles agreed that the new gentiles coming in should not be forced to be circumcised. The main argument by the Jews was that they should be circumcised before they came to the Synagogue. It appears that the conclusion of the Apostles was that the gentiles did not have to be circumcised at all. That is the great misunderstanding! The four items that they told the gentiles to abstain from were serious sins with which they were involved at that present time. (Fornication, eating things strangled, drinking blood, and idolatry, Act 15:20) Again, this is one of the most misunderstood passages in the bible. To prove that circumcision was still for everyone, including the new gentiles, look at verse (21). It says that the gentiles will hear Moses every Sabbath.

What does it mean ‘they will Have Moses’? It clearly means that they will hear the Torah or first five books of the word preached. They will hear Genesis 17:10-14. The command to be circumcised! They will hear the full law. Moses was given the law for us, the commandments and the covenant law, which included circumcision. Notice that the gentiles were not told about clean foods. Are they done away with? Or how about the Kodesh (Holy) Days? Are they just for the Old Testament? Of course not. To hear Moses preached means to keep the whole Torah.

Continuing with our discussion of the New Testament, let us consider the prominent writer of those books. It is a man who wrote and suffered more than all the other Apostles combined. We are speaking of Saul of Tarsus. Paul said that he was a Pharisee of Pharisees who kept the Torah. (Acts 22:3) A student of Gamaliel, the famous teacher of the law. Paul kept Torah. He never taught against the law in any way. In addition, we know that the word of Yahweh does not conflict. Therefore, Paul never said anything in the New Testament against circumcision. If we read statements by Paul (Inspired by the Spirit of Yahweh) that seem to go against this teaching, we must be misunderstanding what he is saying. (Paul wrote things hard to understand) Remember that Paul was sent to the gentiles, and that he was therefore accused of changing the law and teaching against Moses. It was verified that that accusation was not true. (Acts 21:24)

Therefore, to say that the gentiles do not have to follow all the covenant is to say that there are two covenants and two plans of salvation. One for blood Israel and one for the gentiles. Reading the books of Galatians and Hebrews, we know that this is not true. As it is written, there is one law for the home born and the stranger. (Ex 12:49)

6. Another false teaching about circumcision is that it is part of the ceremonial or carnal laws of the Priesthood. The truth is that it was linked to the Passover, the very heart of the ever-lasting covenant given to Abraham and all Israel. It is covenant law, not the temporary ceremonial (Sacrificial) law that was done away in the New Testament.
7. Our last point in support of circumcision is very spiritual. It deals with conversion, the change of the heart and mind. For the man who has totally given his mind to keep the covenants of Yahweh, he has no more rebellion. He is changed to a vessel of honor. He no longer is in conflict or has sin dwelling in his life. He is a changed person who is led by the Spirit of Yahweh. He does not give place to the devil or works of the flesh. We call this conversion. He has submitted to Yahweh's word totally.

Many believers today are not converted. They are still struggling with issues of the flesh they should have already resolved and have under control. They still fight some desire to sin or think bad thoughts. They are still struggling with basics when they should be going higher in spiritual understanding and walk. The man who will be circumcised has reached a very high level of conversion because he is not in conflict with Yahweh's law. It is a pleasure and blessing to him. This man will do anything to submit to the word.

He is not in conflict, rebellion or using carnal reasoning to avoid a statute. In addition, he has greater understanding of truth. This is conversion. Therefore, circumcision is not something a man today might do soon after he is baptized. It is something he will do when he approaches a deeper change in the heart. This occurs later as he grows spiritually. This is the intent of the gentiles in Acts chapter 15 to hear Moses and obey in all things later. They would be circumcised later to fulfill all things.

In conclusion, to all these points of truth, consider one powerful fact stated in the old and New Testament. Yahweh changes not! (Mal 3:6; Heb 13:8) There is no turning or "variableness" in Him at all. In the six days He has given us for the plan of salvation, He has not changed anything about the covenant or the plan itself. This is one of the attributes that we depend on. Yahweh does not change! If He did, as men do, we could not count or depend on Him. Therefore, as we see in Roman 4:11, circumcision is a seal of righteousness that is not done away with.

As you read the remainder of these studies, please keep in mind these basic and powerful truths discussed here. We have given you seven witnesses to the truth of the matter. Yahweh bless you and open up you understanding in Him.

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CIRCUMCISION

By James Trimm

There has been much talk in the movement lately about circumcision and circumcision of the heart. I thought I should send out the following to clear up some misconceptions:

CIRCUMCISION

Physical circumcision was to be a required token of the covenant for all generations forever. (Read Gen. 17:9-14)

CIRCUMCISED HEART

This “circumcision of the heart” is mentioned in the Ketuvim Netzarim in Rom. 2:28-29 and Col. 2:11. Many have misunderstood this circumcision of the heart as being a substitute for physical circumcision. However, this circumcision of the heart was neither a substitute for physical circumcision nor a substitute for Torah observance in general. In context, here it seems to refer to removing the stubbornness in one's heart and making it open to Torah.

This Torah tells us to circumcise our heart (Deut. 10:16) love YHWH with all our heart and keep his commandments (Deut. 11:1, 13) and place the Torah in our heart (Deut. 11:18). This circumcision of the heart would seem to involve loving YHWH and keeping his commandments and placing the Torah in our hearts.

UNDERSTANDING ACTS

15 Please read the following. I think it will help you better understand the events of Acts 15. The material below takes the form of a commentary written following material from a preliminary version of my translation of Acts from the Aramaic:

CHAPTER 15

1. And men came down from Y'udah and were teaching the brothers, Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Torah, you are not able to have life [eternal].

COMMENTS:

In Acts 15, we have a halachic issue being settled by the Rosh Beit Din. In order to understand the proceedings of that meeting and its ruling we must know what the issue was that was before it. In this case, Paul's position is not clearly spelled

out in the pashat only his opponents' position is clearly spelled out in the pashat.

Paul's opponent's position is:

“Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of the Torah, you are not able to have life [eternal].”

Now we must ask ourselves: “What are the implications or ramifications of this position?”

We have a good model to work from. A similar position is held today by a group called the “Church of Christ” also known as “Campbelites”. These teach that a person must be baptized in order to be saved. This has resulted in a debate between them and other Protestants (especially Baptists). The Baptists often pose the situation of a man who becomes a believer while across the street from a Church of Christ Church. He immediately runs across the street to be baptized and is hit by a truck and killed. The Baptists point out that this man according to the Church of Christ position would not be saved. Many Church of Christ evangelists run around with keys to their church so that at any time they can go get that baptism immediately, perchance the person dies before a more opportune time comes.

This would also be the mindset of Paul's opponents of Acts 15:1. They would believe that that person should become circumcised immediately upon becoming a believer perchance they die before doing so. The more traditional view in Judaism differs. The more traditional view is that since circumcision and immersion mark the point at which a person becomes a Jew, that they must learn the Torah first. This is because if they are circumcised and become a Jew before learning the commandments of the Torah then they will immediately be violating commandments that they do not know, bringing judgment down upon our whole people (Deut. 28-19 & Lev. 26). The traditional Jewish approach is therefore to teach the new believer the Torah first.

Now we can see from the remez what Paul's position is. The opponents are teaching that a person must be circumcised immediately to be saved and then taught the Torah. Paul was teaching that they should first learn the Torah.

2. And Paul and Bar Nabba had much strife and dispute with them. And it happened that they sent up Paul and Bar Nabba, and others with them, to the emissaries and elders who were in Yerushalayim, because of this dispute.

COMMENTS:

Therefore, they took the matter to the beit din.

3. And the assembly escorted [and] all of Phoenicia and also among the Samaritans while recounting concerning the conversion of the Gentiles, and causing great joy to all the brothers.

COMMENTS: Notice that Paul has been converting Gentiles!?!?!?!?

4. And when they came to Yerushalayim, they were received by the assembly, by the emissaries, and by the elders, and they recounted to them all that Eloah had done with them.

5. And men stood up, those from the teaching of the Parushim who had believed, and were saying, it is necessary for you to circumcise them and you should command them to observe the Torah of Moshe.

COMMENTS:

Here the opponent's argument is only abbreviated. Here it is stated as:

"It is necessary for you to circumcise them and you should command them to observe the Torah of Moshe."

Why does it say this? This on the surface does not even look like the same argument they were making in Acts 15:1. However if we recall our remez it makes perfect sense. This is a statement of chronology:

[first] It is necessary for you to circumcise them.

[second] you should command them to observe the Torah of Moshe.

Now we can see that they are still making the same argument as in 15:1.

6. And the emissaries and elders were gathered to look into this matter.
7. And when there had been much debate. Shimon stood up and said to them, Men, our brothers, you know that from the first days from my mouth. Eloah chose that the Gentiles should hear the word of the b'sorah and trust.
8. And Eloah, who knows what is in hearts, gave testimony concerning them and

gave to them the Ruach HaKodesh as [he did] to us.

9. And he made no distinction between them, and us because he purified their hearts by trust.

COMMENTS: Kefa addresses the opponent's position as fully stated in Acts 15:1. He points to evidence (from Acts 10-11) that salvation precedes circumcision.

10. And now, why do you tempt Eloah so that you place a yoke upon the necks of the talmidim which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?

11. But by the favor of our Master Yahshua the Messiah, we believe to have life, like them.

COMMENTS: The "yoke" here in context is NOT the Torah (although often the Torah is likened to a yoke). The context here is clear. Kefa is calling the argument of Paul's opponents a "yoke". Thus, the "Yoke" in this passage involves earning salvation by works such as circumcision. Kefa appeals to patriarchs as an example. Abraham for example was saved by trust first in Gen. 15:6 and was circumcised LATER in Gen. 17.

Now Kefa has given two case examples:

1. Cornelius and his house (Acts 10-11).

2. The patriarch (especially Abraham) (Gen. 15:6 & Gen. 17).

In both cases, Kefa points out that salvation preceded circumcision. (Although in at least one of them circumcision still came later).¹² And all the assembly was silent and listened to Paul and Bar Nabba who were recounting everything Eloah had done by their hands: signs and mighty deeds among the Gentiles.

COMMENTS: This parallels verse 3 where Paul is recounting conversions. Paul is likening these cases to the two case examples that Kefa has presented.

13. And after they were quiet, Ya'akov stood up and said, Men, our brothers, hear me.

14. Shimon recounted to you how Eloah began to choose from the Gentiles a people for his name.

15. And to this the words of the prophets agree, like that which is written.
16. After these [things] I will return and set up the tabernacle of David which has fallen, and I will rebuild that which has fallen of it and I will raise it up.
17. So that the remnant of men might seek YHWH, and all the Gentiles, on whom my name is called, says YHWH who made all these [things].
18. The works of Eloah are known from old.
19. Because of this I say, they should not trouble those who from the Gentiles have turned toward Eloah.
20. But let it be sent to them that they should separate [themselves] from the uncleanness of that which is sacrificed [to idols] and from sexual immorality and from that which is strangles and from blood.
21. For Moshe, from the first generations, had proclaimers in every city in they synagogues, who read him on every Shabbat.

COMMENTS: A fuller version of the ruling is given below where verse 20 is expanded, so I will comment upon it there. However it is significant that Ya'akov presumes that these Gentiles will be hearing [the Torah] of Moshe proclaimed in the synagogues on Shabbat.

Ya'akov seems to say here that the Gentiles would need to maintain a minimum standard of purity and learn the Torah BEFORE becoming circumcised.

Remember the issue being heard involves chronology of three things:

1. Becoming circumcised.
2. Obtaining salvation/eternal life.
3. Instruction in the Torah of Moshe.

The above chronology is that of Paul's opponents. The beit din is determining if this is true or if another chronology should be followed, namely:

1. Obtaining salvation/eternal life.
2. Instruction in the Torah of Moshe.
3. Becoming circumcised.

Paul's opponents placed circumcision first in the chronology, while Paul placed it last.

The beit din agrees with Paul.

22. Then the emissaries and elders, with all the assembly, chose men from them and sent to Antioch, with Paul and Bar Nabba, Y'udah who was called Bar Sabba, and Sila, men who were chiefs among the brothers.
23. And they wrote a letter by their hands [saying] thus: The emissaries, elders, and brothers, to those who are in Antioch and in Syria and in Cilicia, brothers who are from the Gentiles, shalom.
24. It has been heard by us that men from us have gone out, disturbed you with words, and have upset your nefeshim while saying that you must be circumcised and observe the Torah, which we did not command them.

COMMENT: again not the chronology of Paul's opponents:

[1] You must be circumcised.

[2] And observe the Torah.

Each of the three times their position is stated it is abbreviated more (15:1, 5 & 24).

If we put them altogether to get the fullest form of their argument we get:

“Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of the Torah, you are not able to have life [eternal].” It is necessary for you to circumcise them [first] and [second] you should command them to observe the Torah of Moshe.

25. Because of this, all of us, while gathered together, purposed and chose men

and sent to you, with our beloved Paul and Bar Nabba.

26. Men who have committed themselves on behalf of the name of our Master Yahshua the Messiah.

27. And we have sent with them Y'udah and Sila who will tell you these same [things] by speech.

28. For it was the will of the Ruach HaKodesh and also of us that a greater burden should not be placed on you, outside of those [things] that are necessary.

29. That you should abstain from that which is sacrificed [to idols] and from blood and from [that which] is strangled and from sexual immorality, that as you keep your nefeshim from these, you will do well. Be steadfast in our Master.

COMMENTS: Note the phrase “a greater burden” this is not an exhaustive list but the furthest parameters. The questionable areas made clear. There was no doubt as to whether Gentiles could murder or steal so these are not listed. Thus, the furthest limits of idolatry would extend to include eating meat offered to idols, etc. With this in mind, these closely parallel the seven laws of Noach. Also these would set purity rules which would allow these Gentiles to interact with the Torah observant community while learning the Torah.

WHAT ABOUT GALATIANS? Gal. 4:21-5:6. In prompting this study, I will begin with Gal. 5:2:

Behold, I Paul say to you, that if you be circumcised, Messiah shall profit you nothing. Gal. 5:2 KJV.

At first glance, one might think after reading the verse that this one verse disproves the entire case made throughout the book you are now reading. But the key is that we must take the verse in context. One basic rule of hermeneutics is to ask yourself “who is speaking?” and “who is being spoken to?” Now we know that Paul is the speaker, but who is the “you” in Gal. 5:2? Is it the Galatians in general? Is it all mankind? Is it the modern reader? The answer to all of these questions is “no”. If we look up just a little bit in Paul’s letter here we will see that Gal. 5:2 is the summary of an argument that he initiates in Gal. 4:21 and which he illustrates in Gal. 4:22-31.

Gal. 4:21 tells us exactly who the “you” in 5:2 is. He Writes: Tell me, you that desire to be under the law, do you not hear the law? Gal. 4:21.

Note that “you” is defined in 4:21 as “you that desire to be under the law”. Thus, Gal. 5:2 should be understood to mean:

Behold, I Paul say to you, [that desire to be under the law] that if you be circumcised, Messiah shall profit you nothing.

Remember what we learned in the chapter “Paul Misunderstood”, the phrase “under the law” does not refer to the Torah itself but to a false teaching that was never true. Therefore, Paul is telling these people who are ready to apostatize and seek salvation through the false ‘under the law’ doctrine that their circumcisions will profit them nothing. Following the context then the rest of Gal. 5 is addressed to the “you that desire to be under the law” of 4:21.

Now let us examine the parables Paul gives in Gal. 4:22-31. Remember now, we know from Gal. 4:21 that Paul is going to be illustrating a contrast between the Torah and the “under the law” teaching. The parable may be illustrated in a chart as follows:

The Torah, the “Under the Law” teaching.

Abraham’s son by freewoman (Gal. 4:21). Abraham’s son by bondwoman (Gal. 4:21).

[Isaac] Gal. 4:22, [Ishmael] (Gal. 4:22). Born by promise (Gal. 4:23), born after the flesh (Gal. 4:23).

Jerusalem, which is above, which is free, the mother of us all. [Sarah] (Gal. 4:26) from mount Sinai, givers to bondage [Hagar] (Gal. 4:24-25) “the liberty wherewith Messiah hath made us free” (Gal. 5:1) “entangled again with the yoke of bondage” (Gal. 5:1).

The Torah is freedom. False teachings such as the ANOMOS teaching, the “works of the law” teaching and the “under the law” teaching bring only bondage.

Addendum: Someone asked: “Can somebody tell me? Is I Corinthians 7:17-21 a corruption?”

Reply: I Cor. Chapter 7 is a very confusing section of scripture. To begin with this section unusually delineated Paul’s opinions from YHWH’s commands.

7:6 But this I say as to the weak (or sickly) not by commandment.

7:10 It is not from me but from the Master.

7:12 I say--I, not the Master.

7:17 The rule *I* lay down.

7:25 I do not have a command from the Master, but I offer an opinion.

7:40 In my opinion among the personal opinions Paul lays out in this chapter is a controversial call to remain unmarried (7:8).

7:17 Specifically precedes 7:18-20 to indicate that this is only Paul's opinion, like the call to remain unmarried, and NOT from the Master. Why would Paul hold such strange opinions such as persons remaining unmarried?

I Corinthians was written in 59 C.E. At that time, the kingdom offer was being accepted and the believers were expecting the last week to run from 64 to 70 C.E.

In 63 when the kingdom offer expired without being accepted they realized that the last days would not occur until after 6,000 years of human history had been completed.

In 59, Paul was of the opinion that there was precious little time left. In his opinion, it was not a time to embark on a new marriage or to start a conversion process. (See my paper at <http://www.nazarene.net> on the Kingdom Offer).

Colossians: In whom you also are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands...Col. 2:11.

This refers to the circumcision of the heart, which many are surprised to learn is a concept from the Torah. As good noble Bereans we should look back at the Scriptures to see what this means. We read in Deut. 10:16:

Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiff necked.

In context of Deut. 10:16, this passage had to do with opening ones heart to the Torah. In fact just a few verses down we read:

Therefore, you shall love YHWH your Elohim, and keep his charge, and his statutes, and his judgments, and his commandments, always. Deut 11:1.

Then just a few more verses down:

Therefore shall you lay up my words in your heart and in your soul...Deut. 11:16.

Notice that in the days of Moses, the people had circumcised hearts and had the Torah written in their hearts. Obviously, these things do not negate the need to observe Torah, in fact these things are supposed to motivate us to keep Torah. Imagine what would have happened if Moses was lining up Torah violators to be stoned to death for violating Sabbath, and one of them were to say “But Moses...I have the Torah written in my heart...I have a circumcised heart...” Moses’ reply would likely have been “If you had the Torah in your heart and had a circumcised heart then you wouldn’t be here right now.”

Col 2:14: Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his stake. Col. 2:14 KJV.

The KJV has a very poor translation here. The Greek is better translated as it appears in the New American Standard translation:

Having cancelled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us and which was hostile to us; and he has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the stake. Col. 2:14 NAS.

The Aramaic reads: He has blotted out by his commandments the handwriting of our debts which were against us, and he took it from the midst and fastened it on his gallows. Col. 2:14 from Aramaic.

In both the Aramaic and the Greek, it is not the Torah that was done away with in Col. 2:14, but the record of our sins.

Col. 2:16-17. Let not man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a holyday, or of the new moon, or the Sabbath days: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Messiah. Col. 2:16-17 KJV.

There are three issues we must look at here:

First, the passage speaks not only of “meat” but also of “drink” so it cannot be speaking about the kosher laws that deal with food not drink. Paul’s opponent here has differing views regarding “meat”; “drink”; “holydays”: “new moons” and “Sabbaths”. Clearly, his opponent here is the Essene influence within the movement that later re-emerged as the Ebionites. These Essene-Proto-Ebionites were vegetarians, (they all took the Nazarite Vow and thus abstained from wine) and they used a Solar Calendar. Thus, they differed with Paul on issues of “meat”; “drink”; “holydays”; “new moons” and “Sabbaths”. THEREFORE, Paul is not speaking here about the validity of Torah, but of his opponent’s positions on these issues.

Secondly, there is the “shadow” issue. Now we know that Passover was a shadow which Messiah fulfilled, yet rather than abolish the observance of Passover as a result, Paul says “therefore let us keep the feast” (I Cor. 5:7-8). In fact these observances have always been “shadows of things to come” even when Moses was stoning people to death for violating the Sabbath. We should ask ourselves this: When Moses was stoning people to death for violating Sabbath why did they not timidly lift a finger and say “Excuse me Moses, but the Sabbath is just a shadow...”? Clearly then the fact that it is a “shadow” does not mean that it should not be observed, in fact the scripture indicates that the fact that it is a shadow is all the more reason to observe it.

(Note especially that in Paul’s day these things were still shadows of things to come.)

Lastly, we must once again look at the KJV’s use of italics here. Remember the italics in the KJV indicate words that are not there in the Greek, but which the KJV has added to the text. This is supposed to be to help the text make sense in English, but in some cases like this one, the italics have been used to completely and radically change the meaning of the text. If we remove the italicized word “is” from the phrase “body is of Messiah”, we see the familiar phrase “body of Messiah” which appears repeatedly in the New Testament. Why would one disrupt the common phrase “body of Messiah” by inserting the word “is”? If we reread the KJV without this word, something interesting happens:

Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of holydays, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body of Messiah. Col. 2:16-17 KJV.

Suddenly the passage is no longer contrasting “shadow” with “body” it is contrasting “man” with the “body of Messiah”! by James Trimm

THE WAR AGAINST CIRCUMCISION

Study No. 176

By Richard C. Nickels

As part of the overall decline of morals, circumcision is under attack today in America, Australia, and other parts of the world where formerly it was a common practice. The American Academy of Pediatrics has reversed itself, and now says that the medical benefits of circumcision don't justify recommending the practice routinely. Anti-circumcision forces are openly attacking the practice. As a result, fewer and fewer males are becoming circumcised.

However, in a *USA Today* article of March 2, 1999, pediatrician Dr. Stephen Park of the University of Michigan School of Medicine, strongly recommends circumcision. He said, "there is compelling evidence" of medical benefits from circumcision, such as reduced risk of urinary tract infection, lower risk of penile cancer, and somewhat lower risk of HIV infection.

One source that defends circumcision is www.circumcision.net. You can call for the nearest *mohel* (certified Jewish expert in circumcision) at **888-mohel44**. A competent, experienced, doctor should be able to satisfactorily perform a circumcision.

But, didn't **Acts 15** do away with the need to be circumcised? By no means! Please read our article, "Truth About Circumcision," Study No. 134. It is available on the Internet at: www.givesshare.org/BibleStudy/134.circumcision, or free from our bookstore in Missouri. We now cover other aspects of circumcision.

Circumcision, the Jewish Way

To be a Jew is to be circumcised. The positive commandment of circumcision is found in **Genesis 17:10-14**. This act is referred to as a Covenant with God (Yahweh). He instructs Abraham to circumcise himself and his children and to continue the practice down through the generations. This commandment is the only one that is literally sealed in the flesh and is therefore unique. It serves as a constant reminder to each Jew that he is a descendant of Abraham and a servant of the Almighty. The Jewish Nation has observed this commandment since its inception, some 3500 years ago. Jews have adhered to circumcision at the cost of martyrdom in times of oppression.

Each Jewish father is obligated to arrange to have his sons circumcised when they are eight days old. It is traditional to celebrate this first milestone with a party attended by friends and family. Ritual circumcision is not merely a surgical procedure, but, rather, is a highly significant religious ceremony.

The sole valid reason for postponing a circumcision (after the eight day of the child's life) is the child's health. Maimonides reiterated the Talmudic ruling: circumcision a sick child is forbidden. Jews would never risk a child's life, since it is impossible to rectify the loss of human life.

The fact that circumcision is performed on the sexual organ is significant. This organ is representative of the body's urges and this procedure indicates that we must control and sublimate these urges and conform them to the will of God (Yahweh). As we will see later, the procedure encourages sexual purity.

A "mohel" is a master circumcision surgeon. The process itself takes less than 30 seconds during which the *mohel* first recites a Hebrew blessing, then amputates the foreskin with a sterilized scalpel, quickly split's the mucous membrane with (disinfected) thumbnails, applies suction, and completes the procedure by bandaging the wound. The essential procedures of the ritual circumcision are (1) the removal of the prepuce and (2) the splitting and peeling back of the mucosal surface, thus exposing the glans penis. Romi Cohn, a master mohel, in seventeen years of voluntarily performing circumcisions, has performed over 10,000 adult circumcisions and countless more on infants.

Jewish religious law opposes the use of a clamp that causes complete homeostasis (stanching of the blood), since part of the Jewish ritual is the "Dam Bris" (Blood of the Covenant) which is considered a vital part of the procedure. In addition, the required method is one that minimizes the child's pain, an essential element under Jewish law. Clamps cause a great deal of pain, whereas a sharp cutting instrument does not.

Certain children (hemophilic) may not be circumcised. There are a number of medical criteria used to diagnose jaundice as an ailment that requires a delay of the circumcision.

The ritual has been found to provide a number of unexpected benefits, as in the case of many commandments found in the Bible. Circumcision has been found to inhibit the development of penile and cervical cancer and acts as a method of prophylaxis by facilitating personal hygiene. One circumcised is said to have entered the Bris (Brit) Milah, the Covenant of Circumcision.

Almost Painless Circumcision

Does the baby experience great pain from circumcision? When done the Jewish way, circumcision is almost painless for the child. In contrast, the method of circumcision practiced in most hospitals today uses a Gomco or Mogen clamp to crush the skin and seal the blood vessel, giving an almost bloodless circumcision, albeit with great pain to the infant.

Jewish-style circumcision on the other hand, is performed using a finely honed blade of surgical steel (that has an edge comparable to a scalpel) and a non- constricting guard, which is placed over the foreskin. Some Jewish doctors do not recommend anesthesia, which should not even be necessary, because the nerves in a newborn on the eighth day are not fully developed.

Then why does the infant sometimes cry? A newborn will tend to cry as soon as his diaper is opened and he is uncovered. This may be due to a need to feel enclosed or merely due to feeling cold. The infant usually stops crying shortly after the procedure and then falls asleep. The discomfort experienced by the infant afterwards is mainly due to the dressing on the wound, which is foreign to the child.

The clamp method is preferred by many hospitals, as it is easy to use, and can be performed by no skilled lower level staff. Yet the extreme pain and trauma of the clamp method is why many today are opposed to the practice of circumcision.

Against the Infant's Will?

The most vigorous objection to circumcision is that the baby has no say in the matter. Some claim it is a human rights issue. It is true that the infant is not voluntarily undergoing the circumcision operation. Anti-circumcision proponents make a great appeal at the “tragedy” of a boy losing a body part against his free will.

The way the Jews look at it, *Brit Milah* is first and foremost incumbent upon the father. If he does not have it done on his son, other Jews will step in and do it for him. Barring either of these two events, the child himself is obligated to have it done when he reaches adulthood, and then continue the practice by having his sons circumcised. The parallel to spiritual conversion is striking. I did not decide to follow God (Yahweh). He figuratively

knocked me over the head with a two-by- four, and called him. Barring either of these two events, the child himself is obligated to have it done when he reaches adulthood, and then continue the practice by having his sons circumcised. The parallel to spiritual conversion is striking. I did not decide to follow God (Yahweh). He figuratively knocked me over the head with a two-by- four, and called me to follow Him. Circumcision is a type of the calling of our Heavenly Father. Those who reject the statute demonstrate their rebellion against God (Yahweh)

The Benefits of Circumcision

The potential advantages from infant circumcisions are numerous. Unlike uncircumcised infants, babies who have been circumcised rarely require urological evaluation or treatment for urological tract infections. Circumcision lessens the chances of kidney disease. It reduces the risk of high blood pressure and genital cancer. From a secularist viewpoint, circumcision also minimizes the chances of acquiring sexually transmitted diseases.

A circumcised infant has a strong foundation. Even if he chooses not to follow the Bible, circumcision singles him out as different. It provides him--even as an adult--with the opportunity to search for his roots.

External circumcision should motivate us to activate an inner commitment to God (Yahweh) and His commandments. A person who lacks an inner commitment to the covenant is described as “uncircumcised,” (**Jeremiah 9:25, 6:10; Ezekiel 44:7; Deuteronomy 10:16; Exodus 6:12**). Circumcision is much like abstaining from unclean foods. It is a physical act with a deep spiritual meaning.

Thus, when parents selfishly opt not to circumcise their newborn infant, they not only deprive their son of his Godly legacy, his tradition, his birthright, but they are condemning him to a life adrift and lonely. Circumcision is a physical seal that we are men of God (Yahweh), ONLY IF it is followed by loving obedience from the inner man.

Circumcision may have much more to do with the spiritual survival of God’s (Yahweh’s) people, physical Israelites or not, than many realize.

The Proper Time

Jews know what it means to circumcise a male when it is eight days old. They say circumcision should be on the eight day *after* the baby’s birth (per the Bible instruction),

after sunrise. Thus, if your son is born on April 1, he should be circumcised on April 9. If the baby is ill, it is postponed and then still done during daytime.

If the baby is not well, even a slight weakness, it is postponed. If the baby is born at twilight, between sunset and starlight, Jews count from the following day, which will come out to be either their eight or ninth day. However, if the baby's head emerged from the birth canal while still day, they count eight days from that day. If the eighth day of the boy's life is on a Sabbath, circumcision is still to be performed on the Sabbath. But, if it was postponed because of sickness, then it would be postponed for a Sabbath.

Attacks on Circumcision

Because of the war against circumcision, circumcision of newborns has now dropped to less than 60 percent in the U.S.A., though rates vary from 80 percent in the Midwest to 35 percent in California, where there are large numbers of Asian and Hispanic immigrants (who traditionally do not circumcise), a preponderance of energetic anti-circumcision groups, and a trendy, affluent middle class for whom the possession of a foreskin is now chic. In Canada, the average rate of infant circumcision for boys is roughly 25 %, with large regional variations.

Queen Victoria, who believed her family descended from King David, sanctioned circumcision, and Prince Charles was circumcised by a *mohel*.

Doctors, themselves, are divided. Removal of the foreskin virtually precludes penile cancer, and eliminates balanoposthitis (infection of the foreskin) and phimosis (inability to retract the foreskin). Louis XVI of France, a famous phimosis sufferer, was unable to have sex with his wife, Marie Antoinette, until he was circumcised at age 21.

Dr. James Roberts, of Tulane University, found that the underside of the foreskin is a favorite hiding place for the bacteria called *Pfimbriated E. coli*. The bacteria like to cling to the underside of the foreskin, where they colonize, and then climb up the urethra, causing urinary tract and kidney infections.

A recent *Scientific American* article showed that "only one factor" seemed to correlate with susceptibility to HIV infection in Africa: lack of circumcision. A 1994 study by Dr. Stephen Moses in the *International Journal of Epidemiology* showed that around the world uncircumcised men were three to four times likelier to be infected with HIV than

circumcised men. The virus may be transmitted through tears in the foreskin during intercourse.

In spite of these findings, many doctors don't recommend circumcision. Dr. David Kaufman, an assistant professor of clinical urology at Columbia College of Physicians and Surgeons, says, "If [and, that is a big "if"] proper hygiene is practiced, all of the potential medical problems can be avoided." Studies show that even in developed countries, good hygiene can be elusive. A study of uncircumcised British schoolboys in 1964 showed that 70 percent had poor genital hygiene.

There are new risks in hospital circumcision. In times past, skilled pediatricians circumcised babies, but now growing insurance costs have forced many to abandon the procedure, which often falls to the lowest qualified person in the delivery room. Some doctors think *mohels* do a better job. "They're probably the best," says Columbia's Dr. Hensle.

Anti-circumcision groups have launched a successful campaign to ban the practice. Blue Shield of Pennsylvania, the Prudential Insurance Company and some welfare programs have stopped paying for circumcision.

As sexual promiscuity and disregard for God's (Yahweh's) Law escalates, one would expect that circumcision, even in America, will become more and more the exception rather than the rule. Jewish Dr. Nir, who survived in Poland during World War II with his mother and sister by posing as a Catholic, knew that if someone had discovered he was circumcised, he and his family would have been sent to the gas chamber. History may yet repeat. The war against circumcision is *not* a battle of conflicting scientific opinions. It is primarily a religious and cultural attack on the Creator, who knows what is best for mankind.

As our article, "Truth About Circumcision" (available free from Giving & Sharing) demonstrates, the Bible is clear that eight-day-old boys should be circumcised, not as a religious rite anymore, but a continuing law of health. Newly converted adult males who are not yet circumcised would naturally be led by the Holy (Kodesh) Spirit to be circumcised. As Herbert W. Armstrong wrote in *God Speaks Out on the New Morality*, page 280, circumcision is "urgently recommended."

February 29, 2004

<http://www.giveshare.org/BibleStudy/176.circumcision.html>

THE TRUTH ABOUT CIRCUMCISION

(From a talk given at the 2004 Feast of Unleavened Bread
by Frank Brown, and revised in May 2004)

Those of us who have come out of Christianity, with its no-law teachings, often have a hard time determining just what of TORAH was changed and what was not. Seems we're just sure that **SOME** things were changed or done away.

Here is a good guideline to remember: Things that had to do with animal sacrifices and/or temple rituals, and/or the Levitical priesthood, while not "done away", are now **suspended** until those things are reinstated, at some future time (Zech. 14).

Paul's writings have been wrested and twisted, just as Kepha (Peter) wrote, to the destruction of those who do it; **AND ALSO TO THE DESTRUCTION OF THE UNWARY WHO MAY BE DECEIVED INTO FOLLOWING THEIR WAYS. THAT MAY INCLUDE A LARGE NUMBER OF US "YAHWISTS"**. I know it did me for a long time, I just recently had my eyes opened to some additional truth, and that is what I want to bring you today.

First, a little background. Yahshua said He came **NOT** to destroy the Law (the TORAH) or the Prophets: **(Matt 5:17 NRSV) "Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill"**. Notice that He was not **ONLY** recognizing the Torah, but **ALSO**, He was authenticating the writings of the prophets such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Zechariah, Malachi, etc. He was putting the stamp of approval on their authenticity--that they **ALSO** were inspired of Yahweh, just as was the Torah itself through Moses.

The question before us today is about circumcision, and circumcision of the flesh versus circumcision of the heart in this New Covenant, post-Messianic age. I believed and taught for many years that we, in this dispensation, are circumcised in **HEART**, when we repent and are baptized. In other words, I thought that the act of baptism, **NOW**, is equivalent to Old Testament physical circumcision.

The Apostle Shaul (Paul) was my authority in such places as 1 Cor. 7:18-19, Col. 2, Gal. 5:1-6. Let us look at that one:

(Gal 5:1-6 KJV) “Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith the Messiah hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. {2} Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, the Messiah shall profit you nothing. {3} For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. {4} The Messiah is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace. {5} For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. {6} For in Yahshua the Messiah neither circumcision availed any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.”

It certainly sounds like Paul was “doing away with” the circumcision requirement, doesn’t it? But is Paul a law-giver? Did he have authority to do something that even Yahshua the Messiah did not? No, of course not! Therefore, we need to compare what he DID, with what he supposedly said. Let’s establish some things. Is circumcision part of Torah?

(Gen 17:9-14 NRSV) “Elohim said to Abraham, ‘As for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your offspring after you throughout their generations. {10} This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your offspring after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised. {11} You shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you. {12} Throughout your generations every male among you shall be circumcised when he is eight days old, including the slave born in your house and the one bought with your money from any foreigner who is not of your offspring. {13} Both the slave born in your house and the one bought with your money must be circumcised. So shall my covenant be in your flesh an everlasting covenant. {14} Any uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin shall be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant.’”

(Gen. 17:23-27 NRSV) “Then Abraham took his son Ishmael and all the slaves born in his house or bought with his money, every male among the men of Abraham’s house, and he circumcised the flesh of their foreskins that very day, as Elohim had said to him. {24} Abraham was ninety-nine years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. {25} And his son Ishmael was thirteen years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. {26} That very day Abraham and his son Ishmael were circumcised; {27} and all the men of his house, slaves born in the house and those bought with money from a foreigner, were circumcised with him.”

(Gen. 21:4 NRSV) “And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old,

as Elohim had commanded him.”

(Exodus 12:43-44 NRSV) “Yahweh said to Moses and Aaron: This is the ordinance for the passover: no foreigner shall eat of it, {44} but any slave who has been purchased may eat of it after he has been circumcised;”

(Exo 12:48-50 NRSV) “If an alien who resides with you wants to celebrate the Passover to Yahweh, all his males shall be circumcised; then he may draw near to celebrate it; he shall be regarded as a native of the land. But no uncircumcised person shall eat of it; {49} there shall be one law for the native and for the alien who resides among you. {50} All the Israelites did just as Yahweh had commanded Moses and Aaron.”

(Lev 12:1-3 NRSV) “Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying: {2} Speak to the people of Israel, saying: If a woman conceives and bears a male child, she shall be ceremonially unclean seven days; as at the time of her menstruation, she shall be unclean. {3} On the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised.”

Question: Was Abraham circumcised in the flesh **before**, or **after** he was circumcised in heart--in other words, before or after his conversion?

Answer: After. He was justified by FAITH. He believed Yahweh.

(Rom 4:1-14 NRSV) “What then are we to say was gained by Abraham, our ancestor according to the flesh? {2} For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before Yahweh. {3} For what does the scripture say? ‘Abraham believed Yahweh and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.’ {4} Now to one who works, wages are not reckoned as a gift but as something due. {5} But to one who without works trusts him who justifies the unrighteous, such faith is reckoned as righteousness. {6} So also David speaks of the blessedness of those to whom Yahweh reckons righteousness apart from works: {7} ‘Blessed are those whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; {8} blessed is the one against whom Yahweh will not reckon sin.’ {9} Is this blessedness, then, pronounced only on the circumcised, or also on the uncircumcised? We say, ‘Faith was reckoned to Abraham as righteousness.’ {10} How then was it reckoned to him? Was it before or after he had been circumcised? It was not after, but before he was circumcised. {11} He received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. The purpose was to make him the ancestor of all who believe without being circumcised and who thus have righteousness reckoned to them, {12} and likewise the ancestor of the circumcised

who are only circumcised but who also follow the example of the faith that our ancestor Abraham had before he was circumcised. {13} For the promise that he would inherit the world did not come to Abraham or to his descendants through the law but through the righteousness of faith. {14} If it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void.’”

We find the same thing with Cornelius and his household in the Book of Acts of the Apostles:

(Acts 10:34-35 NRSV) “Then Peter began to speak to them: ‘I truly understand that Yahweh shows not partiality, {35} but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.’”

(Acts 11:1-8 NRSV) “Now the apostles and the believers who were in Judea heard that the Gentiles had also accepted the word of Yahweh. {2} So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcised believers criticized him, {3} saying, ‘Why did you go to uncircumcised men and eat with them?’ {4} Then Peter began to explain it to them, step by step, saying, {5} ‘I was in the city of Joppa praying, and in a trance I saw a vision. There was something like a large sheet coming down from heaven, being lowered by its four corners; and it came close to me. {6} As I looked at it closely I saw four-footed animals, beasts of prey, reptiles, and birds of the air. {7} I also heard a voice saying to me, ‘Get up, Peter; kill and eat.’ {8} But I replied, ‘By no means, Master; for nothing profane or unclean has ever entered my mouth.’ {9} But a second time the voice answered from heaven, ‘What Yahweh has made clean, you must not call profane.’ {10} This happened three times; then everything was pulled up again to heaven. {11} At that very moment three men, sent to me from Caesarea, arrived at the house where we were. {12} The Spirit told me to go with them and not to make a distinction between them and us. These six brothers also accompanied me, and we entered the man’s house. {13} He told us how he had seen the angel standing in his house and saying, ‘Send to Joppa and bring Simon, who is called Peter; {14} he will give you a message by which you and your entire household will be saved.’ {15} And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them just as it had upon us at the beginning. {16} And I remembered the word of the Messiah, how he had said, ‘John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.’ {17} If then Yahweh gave them the same gift that he gave us when we believed in the Sovereign Yahshua the Messiah, who was I that I could hinder Yahweh?’ {18} When they heard this, they were silenced. And they praised Yahweh, saying, “Then Yahweh has given even to the Gentiles the repentance that leads to life.’”

Their conversion came first. In this case, even the receiving of the Holy Spirit came before baptism.

Now, let's consider Acts 15, the famous Jerusalem Conference. You all know the background. Certain Jewish teachers were insisting that the Gentiles converts be circumcised before being admitted to fellowship with the other Believers.

(Acts 15:1-10 NRSV) *“Then certain individuals came down from Judea and were teaching the brothers, ‘Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.’ {2} And after Paul and Barnabas had not small dissension and debate with them, Paul and Barnabas and some of the others were appointed to go up to Jerusalem to discuss this question with the apostles and the elders. {3} So they were sent on their way by the assembly, and as they passed through both Phoenicia and Samaria, they reported the conversion of the Gentiles, and brought great joy to all the believers. {4} When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the assembly and the apostles and the elders, and they reported all that Yahweh had done with them. {5} But some believers who belonged to the sect of the Pharisees stood up and said, ‘It is necessary for them to be circumcised and ordered to keep the law of Moses.’”*

Please understand that Paul and Barnabas were not against physical circumcision in obedience to Yahweh's command in the Torah--it is just that they were against the false idea that salvation comes as a result of one's own righteousness--in other words, salvation by our own works, apart from faith in Yahshua.

Here is what the conference had to consider: the reconciling of the Torah and the Prophets, such as Ezekiel 44:9, in which only those circumcised in **both** heart AND flesh could enter the Temple, with the situation in Acts 10, Cornelius and his family, who were circumcised in heart, but not yet in the flesh.

Let's read on in Acts 15:

*{6} The apostles and the elders met together to consider this matter. {7} After there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, ‘My brothers, you know that in the early days Yahweh made a choice among you, that I should be the one through whom the Gentiles would hear the message of the good news and become believers. {8} And Yahweh, who knows the human heart, testified to them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as he did to us; {9} and in them and us. {10} Now therefore **why are you putting Yahweh to the test by placing on the neck of the disciples a yoke that neither our ancestors nor we have been able to bear?**”*

What was this yoke that none of them could bear? The Ten Commandments? No, they are called a joy and a blessing. They are NOT grievous, as we see in 1 John 5:3. David declared, “O how love I Thy Law!” John the Baptist’s parents kept the law perfectly (Luke 1:6).

Was it circumcision? No, they were all circumcised. So what was it? It was the ADDED “traditions of men” that the Jewish hierarchy had added to the Law--those traditions that Yahshua spoke against in Matthew 15:1-3, Mark 7:7-9, and that Paul wrote of in Colossians 2 and other places (Please read Colossians 2 with special attention to these verses which speak of letting some “man” lead you astray: verses 4, 8, 16, 18, 20 and 22). This has been a stumbling block to Christians for 2,000 years now--confusing the “yoke” of man’s tradition with Yahweh’s holy, righteous Commandments, His Torah.

These were Jews who still believed in Judaism with all its traditions and unscriptural rules and regulations--”THE Circumcision” versus the Gentiles. The Judaizers were teaching salvation by WORKS. Many references to “circumcision” by Paul and others should be seen as referring to THE Circumcision, meaning the followers of Judaism, who believed in salvation by their own works, as opposed to salvation by FAITH in Yahshua. They thought that these new converts should be required to be circumcised, **and** learn all the Torah and the traditions BEFORE being allowed to be baptized and brought into fellowship.

Now let’s read some more in Acts 15, this time verses 11 through 20:

(Acts 15:11-20 NRSV) *“On the contrary, we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Master Yahshua, just as they will. {12} The whole assembly kept silence, and listened to Barnabas and Paul as they told of all the signs and wonders that Yahweh had done through them among the Gentiles. {13} After they finished speaking, James replied, ‘My brothers, listen to me. {14} Simeon has related how Yahweh first looked favorably on the Gentiles, to take from among them a people for his name. {15} This agrees with the words of the prophets, as it is written, {16} ‘After this I will return, and I will rebuild the dwelling of David, which has fallen; from its ruins I will rebuilt it, and I will set it up, {17} so that all other peoples may seek Yahweh--even all the Gentiles over whom my name has been called. Thus says Yahweh, who has been making these things {18} known from long ago’. {19} Therefore I have reached the decision that we should not trouble those Gentiles who are turning to Yahweh, {20} but we should write to them to abstain only from things polluted by idols and from fornication and from whatever has been strangled and from blood.’”*

Notice these things closely. No mention of Sabbath-keeping, or of using Yahweh's Name, or of honoring parents, or of not murdering, lying, stealing, or lusting after your neighbor's wife. So is this ALL that new converts have to do today, as some teach? No, of course not! Let's get "the rest of the story":

(Acts 15:21 NRSV) *"For in every city, for generations past, Moses has had those who proclaim him, for he has been read aloud every Sabbath in the synagogues."*

Of course! They would learn the rest of Yahweh's requirements in Sabbath services, and begin to obey as they were taught "new" things.

So, what was the meaning of the decree of the Jerusalem Council? The four things they were to stop doing before being baptized were the four things most abominable and offensive to Yahweh, namely:

That they abstain from things polluted by idols, and from fornication (sex sins), and from things strangled, and from blood (drinking blood). The pagans did these four things in their religious rites, and these were particularly obnoxious to Yahweh.

Then, AFTER they were baptized, v. 21, they would learn the rest of Yahweh's requirements in Sabbath services, where the Torah was read every Sabbath day. These four things were only the first step.

Now we have established that the Torah requires circumcision--both of heart and flesh. We see that neither Yahshua nor Paul did away with circumcision or any of Torah. Now let's tie up some loose ends. Turn to Galatians 5:1-7:

(Gal 5:1-7 NRSV) *"For freedom the Messiah has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery. {2} Listen! I, Paul, am telling you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, the Messiah will be of no benefit to you. {3} Once again I testify to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obliged to obey the entire law. {4} **You who want to be justified by the law have cut yourselves off from the Messiah; you have fallen away from grace.** {5} For through the Spirit of faith, we eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness. {6} For in the Messiah Yahshua neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything; the only thing that counts is faith working through love. {7} You were running well; who prevented you from obeying the truth?"*

This certainly sounds like Paul is saying that anyone who allows himself to be circumcised has lost his salvation, doesn't it? But, what did Paul do, immediately after the Jerusalem conference? We will see in just a moment, but first, note the statement that Paul made within the quote above:

{4} “You who want to be justified by the law have cut yourselves off from the Messiah; you have fallen away from grace.” These Judaizers were teaching salvation by **works**, not by grace. This is hard for some to understand. We cannot work for our salvation, yet we cannot be saved without “works”. Commandment keeping alone will not bring salvation. We must also have Yahshua's “grace” to forgive us of PAST sins. I takes **both**--obedience AND Yahshua's grace. Now, back to what Paul did just after the Jerusalem Conference:

(Acts 16:1-3 NRSV) *“Paul went on also to Derbe and to Lystra, where there was a disciple named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer; but his father was a Greek. {2} He was well spoken of by the believers in Lystra and Iconium. {3} Paul wanted Timothy to accompany him; and he took him and had him circumcised because of the Jews who were in those places, for they all knew that his father was a Greek.”*

Now, I don't know anyone who seriously thinks that Paul caused Timothy to lose his salvation. Far from being opposed to circumcision, Paul actually upheld it.

(Rom 2:29 KJV) *“But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of Yahweh.”*

(Rom 3:1-1 KJV) *“What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? {2} Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of Yahweh.”*

Here is an example of usage of “Circumcision” to refer to the Jews--”THE Circumcision”.

Remember that Paul's writings concerning circumcision have been misconstrued and misunderstood, and taken out of context, giving him “powers” that Yahweh never intended him to have--that of lawgiver. We find the same thing being done by the “lawless” or no-law teachers with Paul's writings about the Sabbath, clean and unclean meats, the annual Holy Days, etc. etc. He never once spoke against Torah on any of these subjects, despite unlearned arguments to the contrary.

And what about “circumcision of the heart,” as opposed to “circumcision of the flesh”? Isn’t “of the heart” of the New Testament, and “of the flesh” of the Old Testament? Well, let’s see:

(Deuteronomy 10:16) “*Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your **heart**, and be not more stiffnecked.*”

(Deuteronomy 30:6) “*And Yahweh thy El will circumcise thine heart, and the **heart of thy seed**, to love Yahweh thy El with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live.*”

(Jeremiah 4:4) “*Circumcise yourselves to Yahweh, and take away the foreskins of your **heart**, ye men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem: let my fury come forth like fire, and burn that none can quench it, because of the evil of your doings.*”

(Jeremiah 9:26) “*Egypt, and Judah, and Edom, and the children of Ammon, and Moab, and all that are in the utmost corners, that dwell in the wilderness: for all these nations are uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel are **uncircumcised in the heart.***”

(Ezekiel 44:1-8) “*Then he brought me back the way of the gate of the outward sanctuary which looked toward the east; and it was shut.*” {2} *Then said Yahweh unto me; This gate shall be shut, it shall not be opened, and no man shall enter in by it; because Yahweh, the El of Israel, hath entered in by it, therefore it shall be shut.* {3} *It is for the **prince**; the prince, he shall sit in it to eat bread before Yahweh; he shall enter by the way of the porch of that gate, and shall go out by the way of the same.* {4} *Then brought he me the way of the north gate before the house: and I looked, and, and behold, the glory of Yahweh filled the house of Yahweh: and I fell upon my face.* {5} *And Yahweh said unto me, Son of man, mark well, and behold with thine eyes, and hear with thine ears all That I say unto thee concerning all the ordinances of the house of Yahweh, and all the laws thereof; and mark well the entering in of the house, with every going forth of the sanctuary.* {6} *And thou shalt say to the rebellious, even to the house of Israel, thus said Adonai Yahweh; O ye house of Israel, let it suffice you of all your abominations, {7} **In that ye have brought into my sanctuary strangers, uncircumcised in heart, and uncircumcised in flesh, to be in my sanctuary, to pollute it, even my house, when ye offer my bread, the fat and the blood, and they have broken my covenant because of all your abominations.** {8} **And ye have not kept the charge of mine holy things: but ye have set keepers of my charge in my sanctuary for yourselves.** {9} Thus saith Adonai*

Yahweh; No strangers, uncircumcised in heart, nor uncircumcised in flesh, shall enter into my sanctuary, of any stranger that is among the children of Israel.

This quote from Ezekiel should give us pause. It is an end-time prophecy, and a scary one at that. If we think we are circumcised in heart, and refuse to be circumcised in the flesh, is that not rebellion? Can we truly have a circumcised heart, and yet refuse His commandment for a fleshly one, too? It is just a matter of which comes first. We have seen that Abraham was circumcised in heart, first. His obedience and faith in Yahweh preceded his fleshly circumcision.

But, when Yahweh gave him that requirement--when He said, “cut off your foreskin, you and all your males for all generations,” Abraham didn’t quibble. He just said, “Yes, Sir,” then went and did it, that very day (Gen 17:23-27).

May Yahweh open your hearts and minds so that we would be a meek and yielded to Yahweh’s instructions as our father Abraham was.

Remember this Scripture: Galatians 3:29 ***“And if ye be the Messiah’s then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”***

That’s OUR promise. May we have eyes to see and ears to hear.

Hallelu YAH!