

Yahweh, the Almighty God of Israel, is with us
"Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet,
and shew my people their transgression,
and the house of Jacob their sins." Isaiah 58:1

Vital Biblical Topics

Study Prayerfully & Study Carefully

Circumcision

1. The Everlasting Covenant

We read in the Scriptures that **YAHWEH**, the Creator of the mighty universe, made an '**everlasting covenant**' with Abraham and his descendants to be their God. We also learn that all true believers in Jesus Christ - of whatever nation - are included in this covenant, being reckoned the '**children of Abraham**'.

Galatians 3: 7: "**Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.**"

Galatians 3: 29: "**And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.**"

For more on this point see **Who/What is a Jew?**

Covenants, as any solicitor will confirm, have conditions, promises, tokens, time limits and penalties etc. They are also signed and sealed. The '**everlasting covenant**' is no exception: it has all these and much more. As far as time is concerned, it is everlasting. It continues for all time. This article, however, is about **circumcision**, not about the '**everlasting covenant**;' which is only briefly mentioned here and at **point 7** because circumcision is part of it.

The dictionary definition of the word '**circumcision**' is: "to cut off the foreskin of a male person as a religious rite or surgically." In scripture the act of circumcision - of **males only** - is referred to as the '**token of the everlasting covenant.**' **The circumcising of females is barbaric and unscriptural.** Here is the first scriptural record concerning male circumcision:

Genesis 17:

- 1: "And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect.
- 2: And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly.
- 3: And Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him, saying,
- 4: As for me, behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations.
- 5: Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee.
- 6: And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee.
- 7: **And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.**
- 8: And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.

9: And God said unto Abraham, Thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee in their generations.

10: **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.**

11: **And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you.**

12: **And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed.**

13: **He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised: and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant.**

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.”**

You will agree that this is very powerful legal language. When the Most High makes an agreement which He says is **everlasting**, you can be certain that is what He means. Bear this eternal fact in mind as you read this article.

2. The Early Church

When Gentiles converts began to be called into the early church the question of circumcision was raised by Jewish converts to Jesus Christ. (Yashua the Messiah) The Apostles and elders met in Jerusalem to discuss the issue: and, guided by the Holy Spirit, made a strange decision. The record reads as follows:

Acts 15: 1: *“And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.*

2: *When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question.”*

Acts 15: 19: *“Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God:*

20: *But that we write unto them, that **they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood.***

21: *For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day.*

22: *Then pleased it the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas; namely, Judas surnamed Barsabas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren:*

23: *And they wrote letters by them after this manner; The apostles and elders and brethren send greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia:*

24: *Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law: to whom we gave no such commandment:*

25: *It seemed good unto us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men unto you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul,*

26: *Men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

27: *We have sent therefore Judas and Silas, who shall also tell you the same things by mouth.*

28: **For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things;**

29: **That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well.**

30: *So when they were dismissed, they came to Antioch: and when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the epistle:*

31: *Which when they had read, they rejoiced for the consolation.”*

You will notice that this instruction was given specifically to **Gentiles** who had turned to Christ. To assume that it included Jewish converts is an error. The instruction that **‘Gentile converts to Christianity need not be circumcised,’** passed from city to city. The record tells us that when it was read there was much rejoicing. In the course of time, however, **rumour** reached Jerusalem that Paul was teaching **Jewish believers in the Saviour**

to stop circumcising their sons. If true, his teaching would have directly contradicted one of the conditions of the **everlasting covenant** that required the physical descendants of Abraham be circumcised. (Genesis 17) To the believing Jews, the very idea of giving up circumcision amounted to heresy. The rumour alarmed them. The Apostles met again to consider the rumour and took the following steps to quash it. Here is the record of what happened.

Acts 21: 18: *“And the day following Paul went in with us unto James; and all the elders were present.
19: And when he had saluted them, he declared particularly what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry.
20: And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord, and said unto him, **Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe; and they are all zealous of the law:**
21: And they are informed of thee, that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs.
22: What is it therefore? the multitude must needs come together: for they will hear that thou art come.
23: Do therefore this that we say to thee: We have four men which have a vow on them;
24: **Them take, and purify thyself with them, and be at charges with them, that they may shave their heads: and all may know that those things, whereof they were informed concerning thee, are nothing; but that thou thyself also walkest orderly, and keepest the law.**
25: As touching the Gentiles which believe, we have written and concluded that they observe no such thing, save only that they keep themselves from things offered to idols, and from blood, and from strangled, and from fornication.”*

We see from this passage that **Jewish believers** were not included in that instruction about circumcision. Paul was not preaching that the Jews should abandon circumcision, the token of the **everlasting covenant**. The rumour was false. It was **'nothing.'** Paul was, in fact, **walking orderly and keeping the law.** To prove this he went ahead with the plan to purify himself and shave his head: actions quite unnecessary after Calvary, but which Paul took in order to testify to the Jews that **he was not teaching that circumcision was obsolete.** In fact when Timothy, a half Jew, was converted to the faith, Paul had him circumcised.

Acts 16: 3: *“Him would Paul have to go forth with him; and took and circumcised him because of the Jews which were in those quarters: for they knew all that his father was a Greek.”*

In short, the early church, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, directed that Gentile converts need not be circumcised: but Jews who had accepted the Messiah were to continue circumcising their sons.

3. Jew / Gentile ... Why the Difference?

Bible students know well enough that **'in Christ'** there really is no difference between a Jew or Gentile, male or female, slave or freeman: **'we are all one in Christ Jesus.'** The following texts make this point clear.

Romans 10: 12: *“For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.”*

Galatians 3: 28: *“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.”*

Colossians 3: 11: *“Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.”*

4. What does Circumcision Signify?

Why then, had that distinction, as regards circumcision, been drawn between the Jewish and Gentile converts to Christ? To understand we must first learn what circumcision stands for: what high level condition does the act of **'cutting off the foreskin'** symbolize? After all no one is born circumcised. The answer is as follows. Physical circumcision is a personal token of:

- Faith in Yahweh, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel.
- Obedience to His commandments.

- A putting away of the lusts of the flesh.
- A new creature.
- Holiness.

In short, **circumcision is a token of faith and holiness**. This means that if holiness is absent in the life of a physically circumcised man, then his circumcision is as meaningless as a wedding ring upon the hand of an adulterous wife. In other words, **having the sign of circumcision without faith and obedience is a complete waste of time**. Circumcision may have some medical advantages, but as far as spirituality is concerned, it amounts to nothing. Paul makes this fact clear in the following verses:

1 Corinthians 7: 19: ***“Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God.”***

Galatians 5: 6: ***“For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but **faith which worketh by love.**”***

Galatians 6: 15: ***“For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a **new creature.**”***

The teaching that **‘circumcision is a sign of holiness’** is not new. It is found in the Old Testament. The Most High has always required that His people have circumcised **hearts** (motives/thoughts) and **lips**. (words) Even the **fruit** of their trees was to be dedicated and holy.

Exodus 6: 12: ***“And Moses spake before the LORD, saying, Behold, the children of Israel have not hearkened unto me; how then shall Pharaoh hear me, who am of **uncircumcised lips?**”***

Deuteronomy 10: 16: ***“Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiff-necked.”***

Leviticus 19: 23: ***“And when ye shall come into the land, and shall have planted all manner of trees for food, then ye shall count the fruit thereof as **uncircumcised: three years shall it be as uncircumcised unto you: it shall not be eaten of.**”***

Leviticus 26: 41: ***“And that I also have walked contrary unto them, and have brought them into the land of their enemies; if then their **uncircumcised hearts** be humbled, and they then accept of the punishment of their iniquity:”***

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

Yes, circumcision is an age-old, personal sign of faith, obedience and absolute commitment to Yahweh the Almighty God of Israel. That's what the Sriptures teach.

5. True Conversion

If circumcision is a physical sign of faith and obedience and part of the everlasting covenant, why didn't the Holy Spirit direct the apostles to have newly converted Gentiles circumcised? The answer, I believe, is because the sign was being degraded. Its meaning was being missed by millions of Israelites - and other nations - who cared little for Yahweh's commandments. Millions of Jews already bore the sign in their bodies; but their hearts and minds were anything but holy. They were sinners through and through. The **'token of circumcision'** had become as meaningless as the wedding rings worn by adulteresses and prostitutes. Currently, if one includes the Muslim world, there are around 200,000,000 physically circumcised males on this earth. They are circumcised in the flesh; but by no stretch of the imagination can we say that they are *'new creatures'* totally committed to obeying the commandments of **Yahweh the Almighty God of Israel**.

The Holy Spirit was (and still is) fully aware of this fact: and, in my opinion, **temporarily postponed implementation of the 'everlasting sign of circumcision,'** just as He did during Israel's 40 year wilderness wanderings in the days of Moses. But the everlasting covenant was, and still is, alive. After Israel's 40 year wilderness wanderings Yahweh gave this instruction to Joshua:

Joshua 5: 2: ***“At that time the LORD said unto Joshua, Make thee sharp knives, and circumcise again the children of Israel the second time.***

3: ***And Joshua made him sharp knives, and circumcised the children of Israel at the hill of the***

foreskins.

4: *And this is the cause why Joshua did circumcise: All the people that came out of Egypt, that were males, even all the men of war, died in the wilderness by the way, after they came out of Egypt.*

5: **Now all the people that came out were circumcised: but all the people that were born in the wilderness by the way as they came forth out of Egypt, them they had not circumcised.**

6: *For the children of Israel walked forty years in the wilderness, till all the people that were men of war, which came out of Egypt, were consumed, because they obeyed not the voice of the LORD: unto whom the LORD sware that he would not shew them the land, which the LORD sware unto their fathers that he would give us, a land that floweth with milk and honey.*

7: *And their children, whom he raised up in their stead, them Joshua circumcised: for they were uncircumcised, because they had not circumcised them by the way.*

8: *And it came to pass, when they had done circumcising all the people, that they abode in their places in the camp, till they were whole.*

9: *And the LORD said unto Joshua, This day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off you. Wherefore the name of the place is called Gilgal unto this day.”*

6. What of the Future?

That story about Joshua circumcising the Israelites with 'flint knives' (see margin in KJV) just before they entered the Promised Land has great spiritual significance. It is a dramatised prophecy, a type of the **'true circumcision'** that is due to be performed by **Yeshua the Messiah** just before we enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Joshua was a type of Christ: and the Promised Land a type of the Kingdom of Heaven. **Yeshua the Saviour is due to circumcise the thoughts, motives, words and actions of his people before he leads us into the Kingdom of Heaven.** Before we enter that eternal abode, he will cut away every vestige of sin from our minds and bodies. Then, for the very first time in our lives, we will become **absolutely holy people**. That is what physical circumcision stands for. Under his Father's instruction the Saviour Yeshua will perform that spiritual operation just as Joshua (Yeshau) did in days gone by before Israel entered the land of Canaan. The 'flint knife' is itself a symbol of Yahshua's power to cut away every inclination to sin.

What exactly will the Saviour do at that time? The answer is: **he will circumcise our minds by writing his Father's law on the tablets of our souls.** We will then eternally reflect Yahweh's character and will. That is the **true circumcision, the everlasting token of the everlasting covenant.**

Hebrews 8: 10: ***“For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people.”***

Hebrews 10: 16: ***“This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them...”***

Notice that this covenant is made with the **House of Israel**. It is new in that now Yahweh's law is written on the mind. Previously it had been written on **tablets of stone**; but alas! Israel's promises to obey it had proved false. In the new covenant, when the Saviour writes his Father's law on the believer's heart and soul, spiritually circumcises him/her so to speak, then that sacred law will be kept to perfection. That is what circumcision signifies.

What of Circumcision Now?

Physical circumcision has been **temporarily suspended** as it had been, for 40 years, in the days of Moses. If a Jew or Muslim is converted to Christ he should not undo his circumcision. If an uncircumcised Gentile is converted to Christ, he should not go and get circumcised: because the **real circumcision** is still future. Paul writes:

1 Corinthians 7: 18: ***“Is any man called being circumcised? let him not become uncircumcised. Is any called in uncircumcision? let him not be circumcised.”***

Spiritual Circumcision will be performed on our minds and glorified bodies by Yeshua the Messiah, just before we enter the Kingdom of God. That is what the experience in Joshua chapter 5 tells us.

The Eternal Temple

Bible prophecy further indicates that **only the circumcised in heart and flesh will enter the Temple** detailed in Ezekiel chapters 40 to 47. Who are these people who will officiate as priests in that eternal sanctuary? Who will be excluded? The prophecy says that the uncircumcised will be excluded from that sacred place. I repeat: when the eternal Temple is finally erected and Yahweh takes His place in it, only the circumcised in heart **and flesh** will enter, be they converted Gentiles or blood-born Israelites. That is what this prophecy is saying.

Ezekiel 44: 9: ***“Thus saith the Lord GOD; No stranger, uncircumcised in heart, nor uncircumcised in flesh, shall enter into my sanctuary, of any stranger that is among the children of Israel.”***

From this text we can see that 'no stranger' (Gentile convert) uncircumcised in the **mind** and **flesh** will enter the eternal Temple. He may worship from a distance; but he will not enter the holy place and serve as the priests do. In ancient days, Gentile believers in Yahweh used to worship from a distance, standing in the place called the 'Court of the Gentiles.' In the new covenant, believing Gentiles who do not balk at the idea of being classified as Israelites are grafted into the Olive of Israel. Those appointed to the priesthood to wait on Yahweh in the Eternal Temple will be circumcised in **heart** (mind) and **flesh**. The 'eternal covenant of circumcision' will then be in full operation. Having been temporarily suspended in the past, it will come into its own when **Yeshua circumcises his people with his own hand**, symbolised by Joshua's 'flint knife.' The Everlasting Covenant, as its name implies, will then continue for all time - never to be violated.

7. The Everlasting Covenant

It is not possible to over-emphasise the importance of the everlasting covenant and Yahweh's promise **to be our God** if we **trust** and **obey** Him.

Here are some texts concerning the **everlasting covenant**:

Parties

Yahweh and His people Israel. (See **Who/What is a Jew**)

Conditions: That we keep Yahweh's commandments

1 Chronicles 16:17 *"And hath confirmed the same to Jacob for a law, and to Israel for an **everlasting covenant**,"*

Psalm 105:10 *"And confirmed the same unto Jacob for a law, and to Israel for an **everlasting covenant**:"*

Blessing

Jeremiah 32:40 *"And I will make an **everlasting covenant** with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me."*

Reasons for Punishment

Isaiah 24:5 *"**The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant.**"*

Promise to live with His people for evermore

Ezekiel 37:26 *"Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an **everlasting covenant** with them: and I will place them, and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore."*

Personal Token of Holiness

Genesis 17:13 *"He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be*

circumcised: and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant."

Communal Sign of Sanctification

Exodus 31: 13: *"Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, **Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the LORD that doth sanctify you.***

14: Ye shall keep the sabbath therefore; for it is holy unto you: every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death: for whosoever doeth any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people ...

*16: Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the sabbath, to observe the sabbath throughout their generations, for a **perpetual covenant.**"*

8. Summary

- The everlasting covenant Yahweh made with Abraham the '*father of the faithful*' and his descendants is - **'to be our God!'** Faith in Jesus Christ (Yeshua the Messiah) makes one a child of Abraham. (Gen.17:7, Gal:3:7&29)
 - **Physical Circumcision** is a '*token*' of the everlasting covenant. Abraham and his male descendants were subsequently circumcised. (Gen.17:11)
 - The early Apostles, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, instructed **Gentile converts** that they need not be circumcised. Jewish converts to Christ, however, were to continue with circumcision. (Acts 15:1-30, 21:18-25)
 - **Physical Circumcision signifies HOLINESS, faith and obedience, a new creature.** (1 Cor.7:19, Gal.5:6, Gal.6:15)
 - Currently there are multiplied millions of circumcised males on earth. But by no stretch of the imagination can we say that they are all holy and obedient to Yahweh the Almighty God of Israel. This is, perhaps, why the Holy Spirit sanctioned the **temporal suspension** of circumcision for Gentiles.
 - **True Circumcision** will, nonetheless, be performed on the faithful by **Yeshua the Saviour** just before we enter the kingdom of heaven. He will perform this act with his own hand when he writes his Father's law on our minds and actions. We will then become 100% holy people. That coming event is prefigured by Joshua's circumcision of Israel just before the nation took possession of Canaan. Prophecy further indicates that those who will officiate as priests in the **Eternal Temple** (from which flows the River of Life) will be circumcised in **mind and flesh**.
- The **Everlasting Covenant** is, indeed - everlasting! (Hebrews 8: 10, Joshua 5, Ezekiel 44: 9)
- Meanwhile we follow Paul's Advice:
1 Corinthians 7: 18: ***"Is any man called being circumcised? let him not become uncircumcised.
Is any called in uncircumcision? let him not be circumcised."***

AMEN!

In the Son's Name - For the Father's glory.

Elder: Max W. Mader

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