

The Torah Project

Genesis 17

אֵל שָׁדַי
"El Shaddai"
"Sufficient/Enough" "Breast"

Exodus 12:5

"Your lamb shall be an **unblemished** male a year old..."

17:3-8

God's Covenantal Obligations

17:9-14

Abraham's Covenantal Obligations

Brit Milah: The Unique Commandment

- Given *before* the Torah at Sinai
- Foundation of all subsequent commandments
- Actively Fulfilled (adults) or Passively fulfilled (infants)
- Only males participate
- This commandment *is* the covenant. + *Sign*
 - *Fulfilled only once in one's lifetime.*
 - *Required shedding of one's own blood.*

Q: If it is so important, why did Paul write....

1 Corinthians 7:18-19

Was any man called already circumcised? Let him not become uncircumcised. Has anyone been called in uncircumcision? Let him not be circumcised. Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but what matters is the keeping of the commandments of God.

The covenant of brit milah...was much more than the giving of one specific mitzvah; it was a total transformation and change of Abraham as an individual..."

❖ R' Meir Y. Malbim

ערל

(*erel*) "to be blocked" (v.)

ערלה

(*orlah*) "blockage" (n.)

מול

(*mul*) "to cut away" (v.)

מילה

(*milah*) "circumcision" (n.)

Five Things Having *Orlah*

#1 – Hearts

Deuteronomy 10:16 Cut away the **blockage** from your heart, and be stubborn no more.

Romans 2:28-29 *For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly; neither is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God.*

#2 – Lips

Exodus 6:12 *But Moses spoke before Adonai, saying, “Behold, the sons of Israel have not listened to me; how then will Pharaoh listen to me, for my lips are **blocked**?”*

#3 – Ears

Jeremiah 6:10 *To whom shall I speak and give warning, that they may hear? Behold, their ears are **blocked**, and they cannot listen. Behold, the word of Adonai has become a reproach to them; They have no delight in it.*

#4 – Fruit Trees

Leviticus 19:23 *‘And when you enter the land and plant all kinds of trees for food, then you shall count their fruit as **blocked**. Three years it shall be forbidden to you; it shall not be eaten.*

#5 – Male Flesh

Q: What do these five things have in common?

- 1 – Male Organ**
- 2 – Hearts**
- 3 – Lips**
- 4 – Ears**
- 5 – Fruit of Trees**

A: Seed

"The Torah does not define what part of the body is to be circumcised. How is it known that it is the foreskin? [R' Moshe ben Nachman] begins his discussion of this matter..."

≈ Artscroll Ramban Beresheit, (p.386)

Genesis 17:11
(According to *Ramban*)

"And you shall cut off your flesh of blockage, and that shall be the sign of the covenant between me and you."


בשר (*basar*)

"herald" or "flesh"
(*v.*) (*n.*)

"Who is the **ערל בשר** (erel basar)? He who is not master over his body and flesh. The body is not meant to be the master but, rather the **בשר** – the herald and servant of the spirit. If, however, the body does not submit to the free and moral spirit, then the body is in a state of **ערלה** (orlah)..."

❖ R' Samson Raphael Hirsch

Isaiah 52:7

How lovely on the mountains are the feet of him **who brings good news**, who announces peace and brings good news of happiness, who announces salvation, and says to Zion, "Your God reigns!"

Psalm 40:9

I have proclaimed glad tidings of righteousness in the great congregation; Behold, I will not restrain my lips, Adonai, as You know.

בְּרֵבָד = "Gospel"

1 Corinthians 6:20

For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.

The Menorah Pattern of Chapter 17*

- A. "Abraham fell on his face." (3)
- B. Abraham - "father of multitudes" (4)
- C. Abram → "Abraham" (5)
- D. "וְהִפְרַתִּי" "become fruitful" (6)
- E. "eternal covenant" (7)
- F. a) "be a God" (7-8)
b) land
a) "be a God"
- CENTER? (9-10)**
- F. a) "circumcision" (11-12)
b) "sign"
a) "circumcision"
- E. "eternal covenant" (13)
- D. "הִפְרָא" "invalidated" (14)
- C. Sarai → Sarah (15)
- B. Sarah - ... Nations (16)
- A. "Abraham fell on his face." (17)

The Heart of the Matter

Genesis 17:9-10

God said further to Abraham...

“Now as for you, you shall keep My covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations. This is My covenant, which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: every male among you shall be circumcised.”

Romans 4:11-12, 16

...and [Abraham] received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while uncircumcised, that he might be (A) the father of all who believe without being circumcised, that righteousness might be reckoned to them, and (B) the father of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision, but who also follow in the steps of the faith of our father Abraham which he had while uncircumcised... For this reason it is by faithfulness, that it might be in accordance with grace, in order that the promise may be certain to all the descendants, not only to those who are of the Torah, but also to those who are of the faithfulness of Abraham, who is the father of us all,

2 Corinthians 5:17

Therefore if any man is in Messiah, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.