



Passover & Circumcision
Beit Emet Congregation ~ Vancouver, WA
Ben Ehrhardt, Shamash
4/5/08
www.hearoisrael.org

A subject in our movement that is either treated with what some may view as severe “*legalism*” or virtually no mention at all is “*circumcision*”. At this time of year in particular, it becomes an even more sensitive topic. Most of us who were not raised observing the Feasts of Yahweh, remember how excited we were to learn more about them and to experience keeping them. I remember the first Passover we celebrated in 2000. We went to a congregational Seder and to a true Jewish (Messianic Jewish) home Seder. The congregational Seder was on Passover. But, the home Seder was not; but rather, a re-enactment to teach the keeping of Passover. Because, according to the family, they kept the feast with their congregation, those whom they knew were circumcised.

Let’s look at what Torah has to say about observing Passover. While it’s mentioned in **Wayyiqra** (Leviticus), **B’midbar** (Numbers) and **Debarim** (Deuteronomy) also; the most comprehensive description is in **Shemot** (Exodus) **12:1-51**. Now, we’ll read it all in two weeks, on Abib 14, when we gather for Shabbat and to eat the Passover together, in the evening. For today, I want us to look at **Shemot / Exodus 12:43-50**; **And YHVH said to Mosheh and Aharon, “This is the law of the Passover: No son of a stranger is to eat of it, but any servant a man has bought for silver, when you have circumcised him, then let him eat of it. A sojourner and a hired servant does not eat of it. It is eaten in one house, you are not to take any of the flesh outside the house, nor are you to break any bone of it. All the congregation of Yisra’el are to perform it. And when a stranger sojourns with you and shall perform the Passover to YHVH, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and perform it, and he shall be as a native of the land. But let no uncircumcised eat of it. There is one Torah for the native-born and for the stranger who sojourns among you.” And all the children of Yisra’el did as YHVH commanded Mosheh and Aharon, so they did.**

As usual, the Hebrew is most interesting and offers us some real understanding of what Yahweh’s Heart is in this matter. So, let’s go slow and see what He’s saying to us. First in **verse 43**, Yahweh says to Moshe and Aharon that this is the “**Chukat ha Pesach**” or “**Ordinance of the Passover**”. Now, in two weeks, we’ll look more closely at the meaning of the Hebrew word “**Pesach**”. But, Passover is certainly what is meant here. Then, Yahweh says that “**kal ben nekar lo akal bo**” or “**all sons of strangers** (literally, “**nakar**” = “**unknown**”) **do not eat of it**”. According to Gesenius’ Hebrew – Chaldee Lexicon, the word “**nekar**”, which is the same word as “**nakar**” (**nun-kaf-reish**) literally means “**stranger**” in the context of that person(s) being “**unknown**”; but also, referring to “**unknown mighty ones**”. Think of it this way, a “**son**” in the context of a follower of “**an unknown mighty one**” is not to eat the Passover. Only B’nei Elohim can eat the Pesach.

Next, we have; **“... but any servant a man has bought for silver, when you have circumcised him, then let him eat of it.”** So, a man who has been purchased as a servant can eat of it after you circumcise him. The Hebrew word here for **“circumcise”** is **“u’malta’ah”** and it literally means to **“cut off”** or **“circumcise”**. OK? The idea here is that this **“cutting”** off of the foreskin represents being **“cut off”** from ones past life as a **“ben nakar”** or **“son of a strange mighty one”** and becoming a **“son of Elohim”**. It is the outward sign of the belief that is put into action. Thus, belief is counted as righteousness to the person who is circumcised. By the way, like **“milah”** (as in **“Brit Milah”**), **“u’malta’ah”** is from the root word **“muwl”** and is where the Hebrew word **“mo’hel”** and the Yiddish word **“moyle”** come from.

Then, in **verse 45** we read; **A sojourner and a hired servant does not eat of it.** Again, in Hebrew it reads **“Toshav v’ sakir lo akal bo”**. What we literally have here is a **“toshav”**, who is a **“sojourner”** or more accurately, an **“un-naturalized foreigner”**, and a **“sakir”** or a **“hireling”** (a laborer hired for a specific time period; by the hour, day, etc.) cannot eat of the Passover. Neither of these two people are B’nei Elohim or Yisra’el; at least not yet.

Verse 46 tells us; **It is eaten in one house, you are not to take any of the flesh outside the house, nor are you to break any bone of it.** Or in Hebrew, **“B’ beit echad e’ akal lo totzi man ha beit man basar chutza v’etsem lo tish b’ru bo”**. So, here we get a picture of what Yahweh is really saying, **“B’ beit echad e’ akal”**. **“In a house that is one, it is eaten”**. Or, **“In a house united, it is eaten”**. **“Sh’ma Yisra’el, Yahweh Eloheinu, Yahweh Echad.... Yahweh is One”**. So, in **“one belief”** it is eaten. And, you are not to take the **“flesh”** or **“basar”** outside the house. Well, we have learned that the **“basar”** is also the **“delivering”**, **“preaching”** or **“witnessing”** of the Tov News. And, what is the Tov News? The restoration of the Kingdom, through the Pesach of Messiah. So, this is telling us to keep this witness within the house that is one, within the body of Yisra’el. We are to spread this Tov News and make taught ones. But, the witness of the Passover is for the house, the whole house of Yisra’el. We’ll talk more on this at Passover; but, this is why Yahshua said, in **Yochanan / John 6:54-56**; **“He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood possesses everlasting life, and I shall raise him up in the last day. For My flesh is truly food, and My blood is truly drink. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood stays in Me, and I in him.”**

Then, we read back in our source text, speaking of the Pesach, in **Shemot 12:46b**, **nor are you to break any bone of it.** Or, **“v’etsem lo tish b’ru bo”**. The Hebrew phrase here for **“break”** is **“tish b’ru”** and it means literally **“to tear down”**, **“break down”** or **“to destroy”**. And for **“bone”** we see **“etsem”** which is **“strength”**. So, we are not to **“tear down”** or **“destroy”** its **“strength”**. And, how would we do that? One way, would be to dilute, or pollute, the Passover with **“strange”** or **“foreign”** mighty ones; as in *ishtar* (easter), for an example. This again is why **no “ben nakar”**, *son of a stranger* or *strange g-d*, shall eat the Passover. Ahmein? This is tough stuff.

Then, **verse 47** reads short and sweet; **All the congregation of Yisra’el are to perform it.** This is great. The Hebrew here for **“congregation”** is **“e`dat”** (*ayin-dalet-tav*), which, while translated often as **“congregation”** or **“assembly”**, more rightly translates as **“people”** and is the Hebrew word for **“witnesses”**. So, the **“witnesses of Yisra’el shall perform it”**. Perform what? *The witnesses shall perform the testimony of the Pesach in the House united.* Halleluyah!

Now, things really begin to make sense. In **verse 48** we read, **And when a stranger sojourns with you and shall perform the Passover to YHVH, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and perform it, and he shall be as a native of the land. But let no uncircumcised eat of it.** OK, we’ve got the same context going on; but, a couple of different words,

which show us more of this picture. When a “**stranger**” (*gimmel-reish*) or (“**ger**” – literally “**someone outside his own country**”) “**sojourns**” (*gimmel-vav-reish*) or (“**guwr**” – “**to continue**” or “**remains with**”) you and shall perform the Passover to Yahweh, let (“**kal zakar**”) all his males be (“**ha mo’hel**”) circumcised, and let him (“**qarab**”) come near and perform it, and he shall be (“**eizrach**”) as a native born (“**ha eretz**”) of the land of Yisra’el. (“**V’ kal arel lo e’ kal**”) But let no uncircumcised eat of it. This is truly speaking of someone who chooses to “**remain with**” Yisra’el and seeks to perform the Passover and has no further life with strange or false mighty ones.

And, this is how Yahweh can say, in **verse 49**, “**There is one Torah for the native-born and for the stranger who sojourns among you.**” Here’s another interesting use of words. It says that there is “**Torah echad**” rather than “**Torah aleph**”. This means *Torah is one for the home-born and for the stranger who sojourns among us*. Torah makes us one. Ahmein? **And all the children of Yisra’el did as YHVH commanded Mosheh and Aharon, so they did.**

If we look just a little bit at Torah, we’ll see many connections with “**uncircumcision**” and the “**sons of strange mighty ones**” (*nekar = strangers*). In a few weeks, we’ll be studying **Wayyiqra / Leviticus 26**, as part of the Torah portion. Did you know that **Wayyiqra 26** is a prophecy of the idolatry of both houses of Yisra’el and their punishment and humbling of our “**uncircumcised**” hearts and eventual return to the Land? In **verses 1-2** we read; “**Do not make idols for yourselves, and do not set up a carved image or a pillar for yourselves, and do not place a stone image in your land, to bow down to it. For I am YHVH your Elohim. Guard My Sabbaths and reverence My set-apart place. I am YHVH.**” Then, Yahweh promises to bless us if we keep His commands and walk in them. Yet, Yahweh tells us what will happen if we do not obey His commands. And, after judgment, he says in **verses 18-19**; “**And after all this, if you do not obey Me, then I shall punish you seven times more for your sins. And I shall break the pride of your power, and shall make your heavens like iron and your earth like bronze.**” Then, He says in **verse 33**; “**And I shall scatter you among the gentiles and draw out a sword after you. And your land shall be desert and your cities ruins,...**” And, in **verses 40-45**; “**But if they confess their crookedness and the crookedness of their fathers, with their trespass in which they trespassed against Me, and that they also have walked contrary to Me, and that I also have walked contrary to them and have brought them into the land of their enemies – if their uncircumcised heart is then humbled, and they accept the punishment of their crookedness, then I shall remember My covenant with Ya’aqob, and also My covenant with Yitzaq, and also remember My covenant with Avraham, and remember the land. For the land was abandoned by them, and enjoying its Sabbaths while lying waste without them, and they were paying for their crookedness, because they rejected My right-rulings and because their being loathed My laws. And yet for all this, when they are in the land of their enemies, I shall not reject them, nor shall I loathe them so as to destroy them and break My covenant with them. For I am YHVH their Elohim. Then I shall remember for their sake the covenant of the ancestors whom I brought out of the land of Mitsrayim before the eyes of the nations to be their Elohim. I am YHVH.**”

In the end, Yahweh sees the “**uncircumcised**” as lost. In **Yehezqel / Ezekiel 28-32**, Yahweh speaks 13 times of judging kings and rulers and casting them down to the depths of hell, with the “**arel**” (*ayin-reish-lamed*) or “**uncircumcised**” (literally “**having foreskin**”). Speaking to the Prince of Tsor (here a metaphor for ha satan), Yahweh says in **Yehezqel 28:10**; “**The death of the uncircumcised you shall die, by the hand of foreigners. For I have spoken,**” declares the **Master YHVH**. And, of Pharaoh, Yahweh speaks in **Yehezqel 31:18**; “**To whom are you to be compared in esteem and greatness among the trees in Eden? But you shall be brought down**

with the trees of Eden to the depths of the earth, lie in the midst of the uncircumcised, with those slain by the sword. This is Pharaoh and all his crowd,' declares the Master YHVH."
And, in Chapter 32:26-28; *"There are Meshek and Tubal and all her crowd, with all their graves around it, all of them uncircumcised, slain by the sword, because they instilled fear in the land of the living. And they shall not lie with the mighty who are fallen of the uncircumcised, who have gone down to the grave with their battle gear, and whose swords were laid under their heads. But their crookednesses are on their bones, because of the fear of the mighty in the land of the living. And you shall be broken in the midst of the uncircumcised, and lie with those slain by the sword."*

Why would the **"uncircumcised"** (those having foreskins) be lost? As Jerusalem and Yehudah are about to be judged, **Yirmeyahu / Jeremiah 6:10** says; *To whom shall I speak and give warning, so that they hear? See, their ear is uncircumcised, and they are unable to listen. See, the word of YHVH is a reproach to them, they do not delight in it.* The foreskins of their hearts do not allow the precepts of Yahweh penetrate their understanding. And, bringing it all together, Yahweh instructs the prophet as He is showing him the Millennial Hekal, in **Yehezqel 44:4-9**; *And He brought me by way of the north gate to the front of the House. And I looked and saw the esteem of YHVH filled the House of YHVH, and I fell on my face. And YHVH said to me, "Son of man, set your heart and see with your eyes and hear with your ears, all that I say to you concerning all the laws of the House of YHVH and all its Torot. And you shall set your heart to the entrance of the house, with all the exits of the set-apart place, and shall say to the rebellious, to the house of Yisra'el, 'Thus said the Master YHVH, "O house of Yisra'el, enough of all these abominations of yours, that you brought in sons of a foreigner, uncircumcised in heart and uncircumcised in flesh, to be in My set-apart place to profane it, My house! That you brought near My food, the fat and the blood, and you broke My covenant because of all your abominations. And you did not guard the charge of that which is set-apart to Me, but you have set others to guard the charge of My set apart place for you." 'Thus said the Master YHVH, "No son of a foreigner, uncircumcised in heart or uncircumcised in flesh, comes into My set apart place, even any son of a foreigner who is among the children of Yisra'el.*

So, Stephanos (Stephen), speaking to the Yehudim in his day, before they stoned him, said in **Acts 7:48-51**; *"However, the Most High does not dwell in dwellings made with hands, as the prophet says: 'The heaven is My throne, and earth is My footstool. What house shall you build for Me? says YHVH, or what is the place of My rest? Has My hand not made all these?' You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Set apart Spirit, as your fathers did, you also do.*

I love how Sha'ul puts it in **Romans 2:23-29**; *You who make your boast in the Torah, through the transgression of the Torah do you disrespect Elohim? For "The Name of Elohim is blasphemed among the gentiles because of you," as it has been written. For circumcision indeed profits if you practice the Torah, but if you are a transgressor of the Torah, your circumcision has become uncircumcision. So, if an uncircumcised one watches over the righteousnesses of the Torah, shall not his uncircumcision be reckoned as circumcision? And the uncircumcised by nature, who perfects the Torah, shall judge you who notwithstanding letter and circumcision are a transgressor of the Torah! For he is not a Yehudite who is so outwardly, neither is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. But a Yehudite is he who is so inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in Spirit, not literally, whose praise is not from men but from Elohim.*

Last week, we read about the dedication of the Tabernacle (the Mishkan) and the Kohen'im (Priests). We learned how both we cleansed and set-apart for their dedication. This all happened in the first eight days of the first month, Abib. Then we watched, as two of the sons of Aharon (Kohen'im) brought what was not ordained before Yahweh and were consumed by His fire, in **Wayyiqra 10**. Yahweh spends the rest of the Book of **Wayyiqra** (some 17 chapters) instructing us in making a distinction between the set-apart and the profane and that which is clean from the unclean. Then, in **B'midbar 1 ~ 4** He counts B'nei Yisra'el; first, all the tribes except Levi, seeing that the ½ sheqel atonement is given for each man over 20. Then, Yahweh counts the Levites and gives their genealogy. Then, in **Chapters 5 – 6**, we have more on being "**tahor**" or "**clean**". Then, we return to the cleansing and dedication of the Mishkan in **Chapters 7 and 8**. Finally, we read in **B'midbar / Numbers 9:1-5**; *And YHVH spoke to Mosheh in the Wilderness of Sinai, in the first month of the second year after they had come out of the land of Mitsrayim, saying, "Now, let the children of Yisra'el perform the Passover at its appointed time. On the fourteenth day of this month, between the evenings, perform it at its appointed time. According to all its laws and right-rulings you perform it." And Mosheh spoke to the children of Yisra'el to perform the Passover. So they performed the Passover on the fourteenth day of the first month, between the evenings, in the Wilderness of Sinai. According to all that YHVH commanded Mosheh, so the children of Yisra'el did.*

We could end it right here. However, Torah goes on to tell us in **verses 6-14**; *But there were men who were defiled (tame') for a being of a man (some translate "dead body" although in Hebrew it's "nefesh Adam" or having the "soul of a man" or having sins not atoned for), so that they were not able to perform the Passover on that day. So they came before Mosheh and Aharon that day, and those men said to him, "We are defiled for the being of a man. Why are we withheld from bringing near the offering of YHVH at its appointed time among the children of Yisra'el?" And Mosheh said to them, "Wait, let me hear what YHVH commands concerning you." And YHVH spoke to Mosheh, saying, "Speak to the children of Yisra'el, saying, 'When any male of you or your generations is unclean for a being, or is far away on a journey, he shall still perform the Passover of YHVH. 'On the fourteenth day of the second month, between the evenings, they perform it – with unleavened bread and bitter herbs they eat it. They do not leave of it until morning, and they do not break a bone of it. According to all the laws of the Passover they perform it. But the man who is clean and is not on a journey, and has failed to perform the Passover, that same being shall be cut off from among his people, because he did not bring the offering of YHVH at its appointed time – that man bears his sin. And when a stranger sojourns among you, then he shall perform the Passover of YHVH. He shall do so according to the law of the Passover and according to its right ruling. You have one law, both for the stranger and the native of the land.'* "

Even though we're in the dispersion, we are to remember and keep the Passover, according to Yahweh. We are to set ourselves apart, repent and become "**tahor**" or "**clean**" and perform His Passover, as He instructs, even though we might be late or unable to go to Jerusalem. We see this played out in **Dibre ha Yamim / 2 Chronicles 30**, when Hezekiah (**Hizqiyahu**) puts out the call to all Yisra'el to perform the Passover. We read in **verses 2-3**; *But the sovereign and his leaders and all the assembly in Yerushalayim had taken counsel to perform the Passover in the second month. For they were unable to perform it at its time, because not enough priests had set themselves apart, and the people had not gathered at Yerushalayim.* Today, as a people, we are prevented from going to Jerusalem. Most of us are prevented economically from

going to Israel at all. But, we are still to observe the Passover, even if we cannot make the offering in the City where Yahweh placed His Name. We'll talk more on this during our Passover service.

You know, when we go home, we will all become circumcised in heart and ears and lips. And, the men will be circumcised in the flesh, as a “**sign**” of our acceptance of the Covenant for our families. You see, **after** their sojourn and trials in the wilderness, the men of B’nei Yisra’el were circumcised, says Scripture. We read in **Yehoshua / Joshua 5:2-10**; ***At that time YHVH said to Yehoshua, “Make knives of flint for yourself, and circumcise the sons of Yisra’el again the second time.” So Yehoshua made knives of flint for himself, and circumcised the sons of Yisra’el at the Hill of Foreskins. And this is why Yehoshua circumcised them: All the people who came out of Mitsrayim who were males, all the men of battle, had died in the wilderness on the way, after they had come out of Mitsrayim. For all the people who came out had been circumcised, but all the people who were born in the wilderness on the way as they came out of Mitsrayim had not been circumcised. For the children of Yisra’el walked forty years in the wilderness, till all the nation – the men of battle who came out of Mitsrayim—were consumed, because they did not obey the voice of YHVH, to whom YHVH swore not to show them the land which YHVH had sworn to their fathers that He would give us, “a land flowing with milk and honey.” And Yehoshua circumcised their sons whom He raised up in their place; for they were uncircumcised, because they had not been circumcised on the way. And it came to be, when they had completed circumcising all the nation, that they stayed in their places in the camp till they were healed. And YHVH said to Yehoshua, “Today I have rolled away the reproach of Mitsrayim from you.” So the name of the place is called Gilgal to this day. And the children of Yisra’el camped in Gilgal, and performed the Passover on the fourteenth day of the month at evening on the desert plains of Yeriho.***

Isn't the sum of what we've been learning, on this walk in the wilderness, that in order to go into our inheritance, Eretz Yisra'el, that we are to become set-apart and circumcised to our Creator and Husband, Yahweh? We've all read that we will observe Sukkot in the Millennial Reign of Mashiach. But, did you know that we'll keep Passover also? **Yehezqel 45:21-24** tells us; ***“In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month, you have the Passover, a festival of seven days, unleavened bread is eaten. And on that day the prince shall prepare for himself and for all the people of the land a bull for a sin offering. And during the seven days of the festival he prepares a burnt offering to YHVH, seven bulls and seven rams, perfect ones, daily for seven days, and a male goat daily for a sin offering. And he prepares a grain offering of one Ephah for each bull and one Ephah for each ram, together with a hin of oil for each Ephah.*** But then, there will be no Lamb, for it has been fulfilled. Baruch HaShem Yahweh.

It is by His commands that we repent and set ourselves apart to Yahweh and circumcise our hearts. Then, we can come and eat at His table the Passover. We are not to take this lightly. Anyone whose “**circumcision**” has been made “**uncircumcision**” runs a terrible risk in coming before Yahweh. As we spend these next two weeks cleaning the “**leaven**” from out of our dwelling places, think on your circumcision and ask Yahweh to remove that which separates Him from you. This is indeed a work of the Spirit that produces fruits in both our spirit and our flesh.

I will close with part of Sha'ul's letter to the synagogue in Rome. In **Romans 4:1-25** he wrote; ***What, then, shall we say Avraham our father, to have found, according to the flesh? For if Avraham was declared right by works, he has ground for boasting, but not before Elohim. For what does the Scripture say? “Avraham believed Elohim, and it was reckoned to him for righteousness.” And to him who is working, the reward is not reckoned as a favor but as a***

debt. And to him who is not working but believes on Him who is declaring right the wicked, his belief is reckoned for righteousness, even as Dawid also says of the blessedness of the man to whom Elohim reckons righteousness without works: Blessed are those whose lawlessnesses are forgiven, and whose sins are covered, blessed is the man to whom YHVH shall by no means reckon sin.” Is this blessing then upon the circumcised only, or also upon the uncircumcised? For we affirm: Belief was reckoned unto Avraham for righteousness. How then was it reckoned? Being in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision but in uncircumcision. And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the belief while in uncircumcision, for him to be a father of all those believing through uncircumcision, for righteousness to be reckoned to them also, and the father of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision, but who also walk in the steps of the belief which our father Avraham had in uncircumcision. For the promise that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Avraham or to his seed through the Torah, but through a righteousness of belief. For if those who are of the Torah are heirs, belief has been made useless, and the promise has been nullified, for the Torah works out wrath, for where there is no Torah there is no transgression. On account of this it is of belief, that it be according to favor, for the promise to be made certain to all the seed, not only to those who are of the Torah, but also to those who are of the belief of Avraham, who is father of us all – as it has been written, “I have made you a father of many nations” – in the presence of Him whom he believed, even Elohim, who gives life to the dead and calls that which does not exist as existing, who against all expectation did believe, in expectation, so that he should become father of many nations, according to what was said, “So shall your seed be.” And not having grown weak in belief, he did not consider his own body, already dead, being about a hundred years old, and the deadness of Sarah’s womb, he did not hesitate about the promise of Elohim through unbelief, but was strengthened in belief, giving esteem to Elohim, and being completely persuaded that what He had promised He was also able to do. Therefore also “it was reckoned to him for righteousness.” And not because of him alone was it written that it was reckoned to him, but also because of us, to whom it shall be reckoned, to us who believe in Him who raised up Yahshua our Master from the dead, who was delivered up because of our trespasses, and was raised for us to be declared right.

Baruch HaShem Yahweh!