TORAH STUDIES

Lech Lecha

Why Judaism Begins with the Body

How Brit Milah *Reveals Where the Deepest Connection to G-d Lives*

PARSHAH OVERVIEW

Lech Lecha

G-d speaks to Abram, commanding him, "Go from your land, from your birthplace, and from your father's house, to the land that I will show you." There, G-d says, he will be made into a great nation. Abram and his wife, Sarai, accompanied by his nephew Lot, journey to the land of Canaan, where Abram builds an altar and continues to spread the message of a single G-d.

A famine forces the first Jew to depart for Egypt, where beautiful Sarai is taken to Pharaoh's palace; Abram escapes death because they present themselves as brother and sister. A plague prevents the Egyptian king from touching her and convinces him to return her to Abram and to compensate the brother-revealed-as-husband with gold, silver, and cattle.

Back in the land of Canaan, Lot separates from Abram and settles in the evil city of Sodom, where he falls captive when the mighty armies of Chedorla'omer and his three allies conquer the five cities of the Sodom Valley. Abram sets out with a small band to rescue his nephew, defeats the four kings, and is blessed by Melchizedek, the king of Salem (Jerusalem).

G-d seals the Covenant between the Parts with Abram, in which the exile and persecution (*Galut*) of the people of Israel is foretold, and the Holy Land is bequeathed to them as their eternal heritage.

Still childless ten years after their arrival in the Land, Sarai tells Abram to marry her maidservant Hagar. Hagar conceives, becomes insolent toward her mistress, and then flees when Sarai treats her harshly. An angel convinces her to return and tells her that her son will father a populous nation. Ishmael is born in Abram's eighty-sixth year.

PARSHAH OVERVIEW

Lech Lecha

Thirteen years later, G-d changes Abram's name to Abraham ("father of multitudes") and Sarai's to Sarah ("princess") and promises that a son will be born to them. From this child, whom they are to call Isaac ("will laugh"), will stem the great nation with which G-d will establish His special bond. Abraham is commanded to circumcise himself and his descendants as a "sign of the covenant between Me and you." Abraham immediately complies, circumcising himself and all the males of his household.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Is the most urgent issue for a tiny newborn to cut the most intimate part of his body? And in public?

Wouldn’t it have been better to bring the child into the world of Judaism through some spiritual ceremony, like prayer or Torah study?

TEXT 1A

Genesis 17:1

וַיְהִי אַבְרָם בֶּן תִּשְׁעִים שָׁנָה וְתֵשַׁע שָׁנִים, וַיֵּרָא ה' אֶל אַבְרָם וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו אֲנִי אֵ-ל שַׁ-דַּי, הִתְהַלֵּךְ לְפָנַי וֶהְיֵה תָמִים.

And Abram was ninety-nine years old, and G-d appeared to him and said, “I am Almighty G-d: walk before Me and be perfect.”

QUESTION

What does it mean to be perfect in G-d's eyes?

ANSWER

Rashi: G-d wasn't referring to perfection in every area, but specifically to circumcision. Abraham was nearly complete: only this final *mitzvah* remained.

TEXT 1B

Rashi, ad loc.

"הִתְהַלֵּךְ לְפָנַי" — בְּמִצְוַת מִילָה. וּבְדָבָר זֶה תִּהְיֶה תָּמִים, שֶׁכָּל זְמַן שֶׁהָעָרְלָה בְּךָ אַתָּה בַּעַל מוּם.

"Walk before Me": in the *mitzvah* of circumcision. And by this you will be perfect, for as long as the foreskin is on you, you are blemished.

Some say the blemish was physical desire, but that could not apply to Abraham. Even when young, he focused on Sarah's soul, not her beauty. So his "blemish" was not lust.



TEXT 2

Midrash, *Tanchuma, Tazria*, chapter 5

מַעֲשֶׂה שֶׁשָּׁאַל טוֹרְנוּסְרוּפוּס הָרָשָׁע אֶת רַבִּי עֲקִיבָא, "אֵיזוֹ מַעֲשִׂים נָאִים, שֶׁל הַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא אוֹ שֶׁל בָּשָׂר וָדָם?"

אָמַר רַבִּי עֲקִיבָא, "שֶׁל בָּשָׂר וָדָם נָאִים".

אָמַר לוֹ טוֹרְנוּסְרוּפוּס, "הֲרֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהָאָרֶץ, הַאִם יָכוֹל אָדָם לַעֲשׂוֹת כַּיּוֹצֵא בָּהֶם"?

אָמַר לוֹ רַבִּי עֲקִיבָא, "אַל תֹּאמַר לִי דָּבָר שֶׁהוּא לְמַעְלָה מִן הַבְּרִיוֹת, אֱמוֹר דְּבָרִים שֶׁהֵם מְצוּיִים בִּבְנֵי אָדָם".

אָמַר לוֹ טוֹרְנוּסְרוּפוּס, "לָמָּה אַתֶּם מוֹלִין?"

Turnus Rufus the Wicked once asked Rabbi Akiva, “Whose deeds are more beautiful: those of G-d or those of humans?”

Rabbi Akiva answered, “Those of humans are more beautiful!”

Turnus Rufus said, “Look at the heavens and the earth—can a person make anything like them?”

Rabbi Akiva said, “Don’t give me examples that are beyond human capacity. Speak of things found among people.”

Turnus Rufus asked, “Then why do you circumcise?”

TEXT 2

Midrash, *Tanchuma, Tazria*, chapter 5

אָמַר לוֹ, "יָדַעְתִּי שֶׁעַל דָּבָר זֶה אַתָּה שׁוֹאֲלֵנִי וּלְכָךְ הִקְדַמְתִּי וְאָמַרְתִּי לְךָ שֶׁמַּעֲשֶׂה בְּנֵי אָדָם נָאִים מִשֶּׁל הַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא". הֵבִיא לוֹ רַבִּי עֲקִיבָא שִׁבֳּלִים וְעוּגוֹת מוּכָנוֹת וְאָמַר, "אֵלּוּ מַעֲשֶׂה הַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא וְאֵלּוּ מַעֲשֶׂה יְדֵי אָדָם".

Rabbi Akiva replied, “I knew that this is what you were really asking, and therefore I told you in advance that human deeds are more beautiful than those of the Holy One, blessed be He.” Rabbi Akiva brought him stalks of wheat and prepared loaves and said, “These are G-d’s work, and these are human work [and the human work is more beautiful].”

QUESTIONS

1. Is the foreskin really a blemish that makes us flawed, and how does removing it bring the body to perfection?

2. The body is G-d's creation: why change it? How can it be considered not good enough or needing repair?

TEXT 3

Rabbi Avraham ibn Ezra, Genesis 17:1

"הִתְהַלֵּךְ לְפָנַי וֶהְיֵה תָמִים", שֶׁלֹּא תִּשְׁאַל לָמָּה הַמִּילָה.

“Walk before Me and be perfect” means don’t ask why you need to circumcise.



POSSIBLE ANSWER

“Be perfect “ means circumcise in the perfect way without questioning. That is what makes it a perfect *mitzvah*.

OPTIONAL

TEXT 4A

Genesis 26:5

עֵקֶב אֲשֶׁר שָׁמַע אַבְרָהָם בְּקֹלִי, וַיִּשְׁמֹר מִשְׁמַרְתִּי, מִצְוֹתַי חֻקּוֹתַי וְתוֹרֹתָי.

Because Abraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My instructions.

QUESTION

If Abraham was so careful with all the other *mitzvot*, why did he **wait** until ninety-nine to be **circumcised**?



OPTIONAL

TEXT 4B

Rashi, ad loc.

"מִשְׁמַרְתִּי", גְּזֵרוֹת לְהַרְחָקָה עַל הָאַזְהָרוֹת שֶׁבַּתּוֹרָה, כְּגוֹן שְׁנִיּוֹת לָעֲרָיוֹת וּשְׁבוּת לַשַּׁבָּת.

"מִצְוֹתַי", דְּבָרִים שֶׁאִלּוּ לֹא נִכְתְּבוּ רְאוּיִין הֵם לְהִצְטַוּוֹת, כְּגוֹן גָּזֵל וּשְׁפִיכוּת דָּמִים.

"חֻקּוֹתַי", דְּבָרִים שֶׁיֵּצֶר הָרָע וְאֻמּוֹת הָעוֹלָם מְשִׁיבִין עֲלֵיהֶם, כְּגוֹן אֲכִילַת חֲזִיר וּלְבִישַׁת שַׁעְטְנֵז, שֶׁאֵין טַעַם בַּדָּבָר אֶלָּא גְּזֵרַת הַמֶּלֶךְ וְחֻקּוֹתָיו עַל עֲבָדָיו.

"וְתוֹרֹתָי", לְהָבִיא תּוֹרָה שֶׁבְּעַל פֶּה, הֲלָכָה לְמֹשֶׁה מִסִּינָי.

"My charge" refers to the protective decrees to distance us from the Torah prohibitions: for example, the secondary prohibitions that prevent incest from occurring and the rabbinic decrees to safeguard the prohibitions of Shabbat.

"My commandments" refers to things that, had they not been written, would have been fit to be commanded: for example, prohibitions against robbery and bloodshed.

"My statutes" refers to matters about which the evil inclination and the nations of the world object, such as eating pork and wearing garments of wool and linen, for which no reason is given, but these are the decrees of the King over His subjects.

"My instructions" (plural) includes the Oral Law, the laws given to Moses from Sinai.

We learn from this that Abraham kept every law, even the Oral Laws that were enacted later.



TWO POSSIBLE ANSWERS

1. Abraham did *mitzvot* voluntarily, but he knew they would gain greater status once commanded. Since circumcision is a one-time *mitzvah*, he waited for G-d's instruction.

2. It is a *brit*—a covenant that requires two sides. Abraham waited to be commanded so he could formally enter into it with G-d.

OPTIONAL

TEXT 5A

Genesis 9:5

וְאַךְ אֶת דִּמְכֶם לְנַפְשֹׁתֵיכֶם אֶדְרֹשׁ.

But your blood, I will demand of your souls.

ANSWER

Any harm to the body without G-d's command is forbidden, even spilling a drop of blood, so circumcision is only permitted when commanded.

OPTIONAL

TEXT 5B

Rashi, ad loc.

אֶת דְּמְכֶם אֶדְרֹשׁ מֵהַשּׁוֹפֵךְ דַּם עַצְמוֹ.

Your blood I will demand of one who sheds their own blood.

This prohibition was given to Noah and bound all his descendants, so Abraham had to wait for G-d’s command.



OPTIONAL

TEXT 5C

The Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, *Likutei Sichot* 5, p. 146

אִיז מֵהַאי טַעֲמָא הָאט אַבְרָהָם ניט גֶעטָארְט זִיךְ מָל זַיין כָּל זְמַן שֶׁלֹּא נִצְטַוָּוה. וַיְיל דַאן וָאלְט עֶס גֶעווֶען כַּארְבּוּנְדָן מִיטָן אִיסּוּר פוּן שְׁפִיכַת דָמִים, וָאס וֶועְרְט כַּארְאוּרְזַאכְט דוּרְךְ זַיין מָל זַיין זִיךְ. (וּבִפְרָט אַז דָאס בְּרֶענְגְט לִידֵי אוּן מְ׳קֶען קוּמֶען אוֹיךְ לִידֵי סַכָּנָה).

דַאקֶעגְן לְאַחַר שֶׁנִצְטַוָּוה עַל הַמִילָה, אִיז דֶער צִיווּי מְפוֹרָש פוּן מִילָה דוֹחֶה דֶעם אִיסּוּר פוּן שְׁפִיכַת דָמִים.

Abraham was forbidden to circumcise himself before he was commanded because it would have caused him to lose blood (and brought about illness and danger): which he was forbidden to do.

Once he was explicitly commanded regarding circumcision, the commandment overrode the prohibition.

This shows how **important** it is to protect the body G-d gave us.

QUESTIONS

What makes circumcision so special that it allows altering the body, and why is it the first *mitzvah*?



The *brit* is a **physical mark** of Jewish identity on the body, the closest and most permanent to our sense of self.

TEXT 6

Rabbi Aharon Halevi of Barcelona, *Sefer Hachinuch*, *Mitzvah* 2

רָצָה הַשֵּׁם יִתְבָּרַךְ לִקְבּוֹעַ בָּעָם אֲשֶׁר הִבְדִּיל לִהְיוֹת נִקְרָא עַל שְׁמוֹ, אוֹת קָבוּעַ בְּגוּפָם. לְהַבְדִּילָם מִשְּׁאָר הָעַמִּים בְּצוּרַת גּוּפָם, כְּמוֹ שֶׁהֵם מוּבְדָּלִים מֵהֶם בְּצוּרַת נַפְשׁוֹתָם, אֲשֶׁר מוֹצָאָם וּמוֹבָאָם אֵינֶנּוּ שָׁוֶה.

וְנִקְבַּע הַהֶבְדֵּל בְּגוּלַת הַזָּהָב לְפִי שֶׁהִיא סִיבָּה לְקִיּוּם הַמִּין.

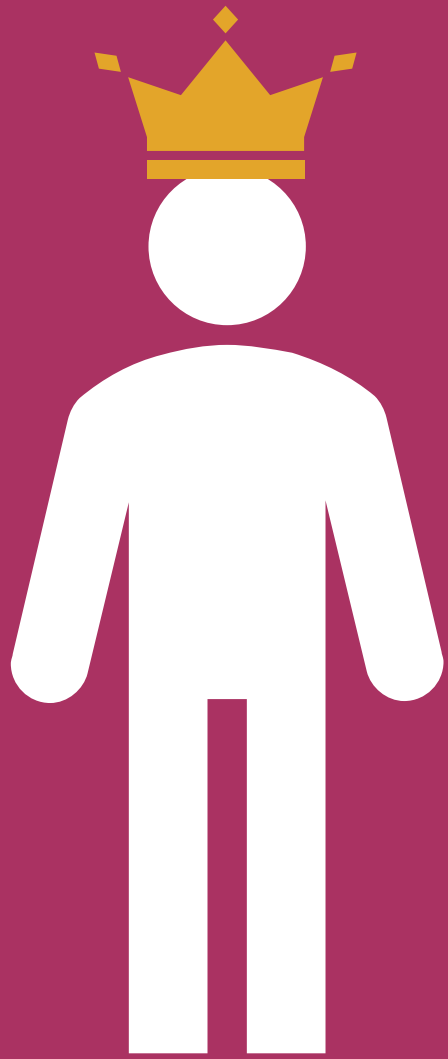
G-d wanted to establish a permanent sign in the bodies of the people whom He set apart to be called by His name. This would distinguish their bodies from those of other nations, as they are distinguished in soul, to indicate that their mandates and journeys are not the same.

The distinction was fixed in the “golden goblet” because it is the cause of the species’s continuation.

The *brit* is placed on the body's most intimate part, which symbolizes the deep desire for life and continuity.



This organ is seen as the body's **crown**, representing our deepest drives, and it marks Jewish identity publicly, showing a child's life begins openly Jewish.



TEXT 7

The Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, *Sefer Hamaamarim Melukat, Torat Menachem* 3, p. 119

אִיתָא בַּמִּדְרָשׁ שֶׁאָמַר אָדָם הָרִאשׁוֹן, "אֲנִי נָאֶה לִהְיִקָּרֵא אָדָם, מִשּׁוּם שֶׁנִּבְרֵאתִי מִן הָאֲדָמָה" (בְּרֵאשִׁית רַבָּה, יז ד).

וּמְבוֹאָר בַּחֲסִידוּת דְּזֶה שֶׁקָּרָא אָדָם הָרִאשׁוֹן שְׁמוֹ עַל שֵׁם הַחוֹמֶר (הַגּוּף שֶׁבָּא מֵהָאֲדָמָה) וְלֹא עַל שֵׁם הַצּוּרָה (הַנֶּפֶשׁ שֶׁקִּינְנָה בְּקִרְבּוֹ), כִּי אָדָם הִשִּׂיג בְּחָכְמָתוֹ דְּזֶה שֶׁגּוּפוֹ נוֹצָר מִן הָאֲדָמָה [דּוֹמֵם] יֵשׁ בָּזֶה יִתְרוֹן גַּם לְגַבֵּי מַעֲלַת נִשְׁמָתוֹ, כִּי כָּל הַגָּבוֹהַ יוֹתֵר נוֹפֵל לְמַטָּה יוֹתֵר.

The Midrash tells us that Adam declared, “It is correct that I be called Adam because I was created from the *adamah* (earth)” (*Bereshit Rabah* 17:4).

Chasidut points out that Adam called himself by the name of his material substance (the body, which comes from the earth) rather than by his form (the soul within him). This is because Adam grasped with his wisdom that the fact that his body was formed from earth (an inanimate object) lifted him even higher than his soul’s loftiness. For the higher something is, the lower it falls.



Chasidut: The body is closer to G-d than the soul. What seems low or distant actually comes from a very high source that can reach so low.



We often see the body, especially this organ, as low, but Judaism teaches that it holds a higher power than the brain, **partnering** with G-d in creation and the deepest life force.

OPTIONAL

TEXT 8

Rabbi Shalom Dovber Schneersohn, *Sefer Hamaamarim* 5769 (Brooklyn, N.Y.: Kehot Publication Society, 2012), pp. 3–4

יָדוּעַ הַהֶפְרֵשׁ בֵּין הַשְׁפָּעַת הַשֵּׂכֶל מֵרַב לְתַלְמִיד שֶׁהִיא שֶׁפַע רוּחָנִיוּת וּבֵין הַשְׁפָּעַת הַטִּיפָּה שֶׁהִיא הַשְׁפָּעָה גַּשְׁמִית.

דְּהַשְׁפָּעַת הַשֵּׂכֶל הוּא שֶׁנִּשְׁפַּע רַק הָאָרָה לְבַד, וְלֹא שֶׁעַצְמוּת וּמַהוּת הַמּוֹחִין נִשְׁפָּעִים בְּהַשְׁפָּעָה זוּ. וְהָרְאָיָה שֶׁאֵינוֹ נַעֲשָׂה מִזֶּה מְצִיאוּת חֲדָשָׁה. דְּמִי שֶׁאֵינוֹ בַּעַל מוֹחִין וּבַר שֵׂכֶל בְּעֶצֶם כַּמָּה שֶׁיַּשְׁפִּיעַ לוֹ לֹא יוֹעִיל לוֹ מְאוּמָה כוּ' וּכְמַאֲמַר הָעוֹלָם: "אַ קָאפּ קֶען מֶען נִיט אַרוּף שְׁטָעלִין" כוּ'. וְאִם הָיָה עֶצֶם מַהוּת הַמּוֹחִין נִשְׁפָּע בְּהַשְׁפָּעָה זוּ, הֲרֵי גַּם אִם לֹא יֵשׁ שֵׂכֶל אֵצֶל הַמְקַבֵּל הָיָה צָרִיךְ לְהִתְהַוּוֹת אֶצְלוֹ שֵׂכֶל. אֶלָּא בְּהֶכְרֵחַ לוֹמַר שֶׁאֵינוֹ נִשְׁפָּע הַמַּהוּת כִּי אִם הָאָרָה לְבַד כוּ'.

It's well known that the transmission of intellect from teacher to student, which is a spiritual transmission, is different from the transmission of a drop of sperm, which is a physical transmission.

The transmission of intellect is only a ray from the teacher's mind, not the mind itself. The proof is that nothing is created through it. A person who lacks intelligence will gain nothing, no matter how much they are taught. As people say, "You can't put a head on someone." If the mind were actually transmitted through teaching, that intellect would replicate within the recipient—even if they originally possessed no intellect at all. We're compelled to say that only a *ray* of intellect is transmitted, not its essence.

OPTIONAL

TEXT 8

Rabbi Shalom Dovber Schneersohn, *Sefer Hamaamarim* 5769 (Brooklyn, N.Y.: Kehot Publication Society, 2012), pp. 3–4

מָה שֶׁאֵין כֵּן בְּהַשְׁפָּעָה גַּשְׁמִית הַנִּזְכֶּרֶת לְעֵיל, הֲרֵי נִשְׁפַּע מַהוּת הַמּוֹחִין שֶׁלּוֹ מַמָּשׁ עַד שֶׁמּוֹלִיד נֶפֶשׁ שָׁלֵם בְּמוֹחִין וְכָל כֹּחוֹת נַפְשׁוֹ, הַכֹּל כַּאֲשֶׁר לַכֹּל. הֲרֵי נַעֲשֶׂה בְּהַבֵּן כְּמוֹ בְּהָאָב, שֶׁמּוֹלִיד בְּדוֹמֶה לוֹ מַמָּשׁ כו'. וְהַיְינוּ מִפְּנֵי שֶׁהָעֶצֶם נִמְשָׁךְ בְּהַשְׁפָּעָה זוּ לָכֵן מִתְהַוֶּה מִזֶּה הֲוָיָה חֲדָשָׁה בְּדוּגְמָתוֹ מַמָּשׁ כו' . . .

וְהַשְׁפָּעָה זוּ נִמְשֶׁכֶת בְּטִיפָּה גַּשְׁמִית דַּוְקָא, מִשּׁוּם דְּהַמְשָׁכַת הָעֶצֶם אִי אֶפְשָׁר לִהְיוֹת נִמְשָׁךְ בִּבְחִינַת הָרוּחָנִיוּת כִּי אִם בְּגַשְׁמִיוּת דַּוְקָא, דְּ"נָעוּץ תְּחִילָתָן בְּסוֹפָן".

By contrast, through the physical transmission mentioned above, the very essence of the father's mind is transmitted and gives rise to a complete soul in the child that has a mind and all the faculties of the soul, everything in full. The child becomes just like the father; this child, in turn, becomes a parent to one just like themself. The father's essence is transmitted; therefore, an entirely new being in the likeness of the father comes into existence. . . .

This transmission is drawn forth specifically through a physical drop. Why? Because the essence cannot come about through a spiritual conduit but only through physicality. For "the beginning is wedged in the end."

OPTIONAL

Intellect and speech can’t transmit life or create a new person.



Through a single drop, parents create a whole new human being.



What seems purely physical carries life, soul, and continuity.

TEXT 9

The Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, correspondence, www.chabad.org/6489131

By the Grace of G-d

5th of Tevet, 5725 [Dec. 19, 1964]

Brooklyn, N.Y.

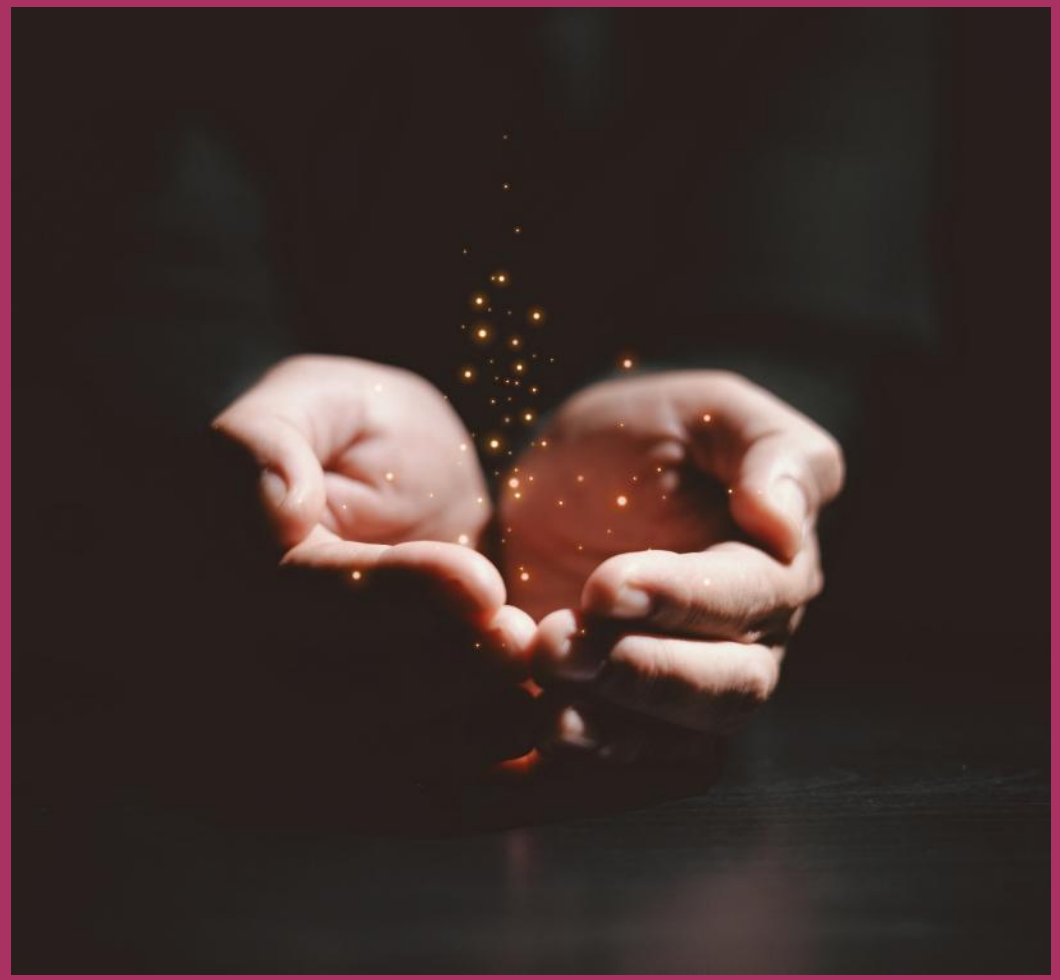
Greetings and Blessings:

After the considerable interval, which already made me wonder at your prolonged silence, I was pleased to receive your letter of the 3rd of December.

I was particularly pleased to note that you are back at work, now that you have returned from abroad. May G-d grant that you should continue your work to a ripe and happy old age, and thus utilize the gift with which you have been blessed to animate, so to speak, even the inanimate. And as you no doubt expect me to connect this with the concepts of our Torah, I can indeed say that it is one of the foundations of our Torah, Toras Chaim, to “spiritualize” the material, inasmuch as everything in this world has to be used as an instrument to glorify the Name of our Creator.

The *brit* sanctifies the body itself, showing that even flesh can be holy. Unlike other *mitzvot* done with the body, it is done on the body, making it sacred.





We can’t see it, but this *mitzvah* fills the baby’s body with a hidden spiritual light: like a signal that only a “light detector” or a sensitive soul can perceive.

TEXT 10

The Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, *Likutei Sichot* 3, pp. 759–760

דִּי אֵיין מִצְוָה פּוּן דִּי אָבוֹת וָואס הָאט מַמְשִׁיךְ גֶעוָוען קְדוּשָׁה אוֹיךְ אִין גַּשְׁמִיוּת, אִיז גֶעוָוען מִצָוַת מִילָה, דִּי מִצָוַת מִילָה צַיְיכְנָט זִיךְ אוֹיס דֶערְמִיט וָואס זִי מַאכְט־אוֹיךְ קְדוּשָׁה אִין דֶעם דָּבָר הַגַּשְׁמִי, אוּן דִּי זֶעלְבֶּע קְדוּשָׁה בְּלַיְיבְּט אוֹיךְ אוֹיךְ שְׁפֶּעטֶער. וּוי עֶס שְׁטֵייט: "וְהָיְתָה בְּרִיתִי בִּבְשַׂרְכֶם", דָּאס זָאל זַיְין מַיְין פַּארְבּוּנְד מִיט אַיְךְ אִין אֵייֶער גַּשְׁמִיוּת׳דִיקֶן פְּלֵייש, "לִבְרִית עוֹלָם" (בְּרֵאשִׁית יז, ג), צוּ אַ בּוּנְד וָואס בְּלַיְיבְּט אוֹיךְ אֵיְיבִיק.

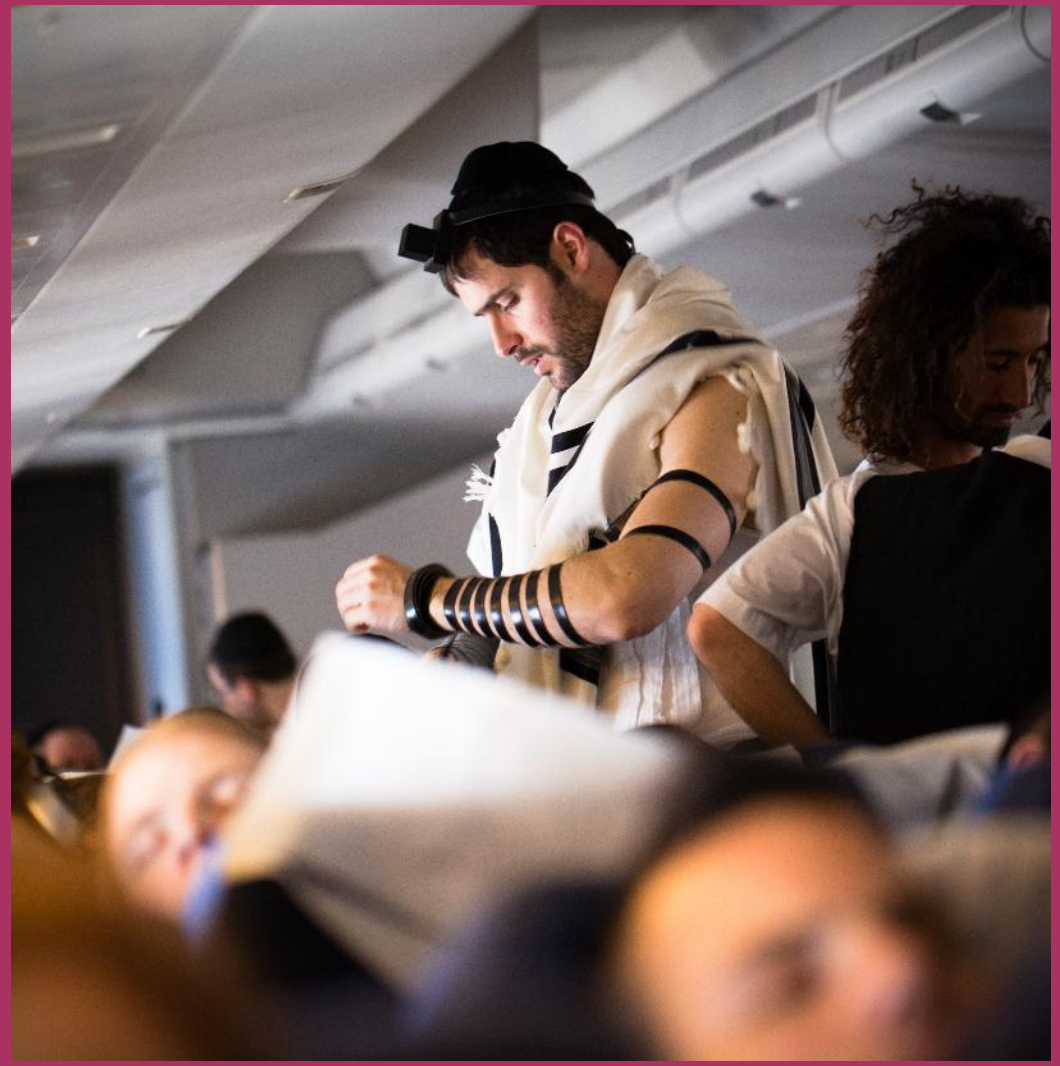
The only *mitzvah* through which the patriarchs drew holiness into physicality was that of circumcision. This *mitzvah* was unique in that the holiness penetrated the physical flesh itself. That holiness remained afterward, as it says, “My covenant shall be in your flesh as an eternal covenant” (Genesis 17:13). This will tie Me to your physical flesh forever.

ANSWER

He waited until ninety-nine because this *mitzvah* was impossible without a direct command. It gave him the power to transform physicality and unite it with G-dliness, unlike his other *mitzvot* which remained symbolic.

ANSWER

Circumcision was given first because it establishes that the connection to G-d must be in the physical flesh itself, not just in thought or feeling. Before it, the body remains separate: this lack of physical connection is the “blemish.”



Judaism is about action, not inspiration. True connection to G-d comes through using the physical world itself. Even the most physical parts of life are dedicated to Him, showing that nothing is separate from G-d.

KEY POINTS

1. G-d created us with a blemish: while our souls can connect with G-d, our bodies cannot.

2. For this, G-d gave us *mitzvot*, which achieve the impossible: they create a bridge between the infinite G-d and the finite us.

3. The first *mitzvah* that headlines all of Judaism is circumcision because it penetrates the flesh itself, turning the physical body into a sacred *mitzvah* object.

4. Circumcision serves as a signature of our Jewish identity, declaring that even in our basest desires—our yearning to self-perpetuate—we are holy.

5. Moreover, the lowest comes from the highest. Circumcision declares that despite appearances, we are not creatures of base desires: we are creatures of Divine holiness.


JLI