

Perspectives on Circumcision

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There are only two main views on circumcision amongst believers:

1. As believers today we must be circumcised to come in line with the commandment to Avraham in Genesis 17:13 and Exodus 12:43-47 where all gentiles who come alongside Israel must be circumcised.
2. As believers today we do not need to be circumcised as it was done away with and is now the circumcision of the heart that is needed.

These two stances are mutually exclusive and distinct, and whichever side one stands, the other side must be wrong and, by many people's opinions, anathema.

This topic is as hotly disputed today as it ever was, though in the west we tend to be ignorant of this fact and seem happy to remain so. However, for anyone whose desire is to understand and study scripture in its entirety, will at some point confront this issue. We tend to accept what we have been taught on the subject and not look any further, but to do any honest study, we must examine why these opposing views holds sway among so many people.

What I would like to do is examine the topic from its inception from Adonai's covenant with Avraham on through to today. Though there is a definitive line drawn in the sand on this today in the west, there must be reasons for the different understanding coming from each side. If scripture says it must be so, then it must be so. But if other scriptures appear to declare we do not need circumcision as gentile believers, then when did and eternal covenant made by Adonai change? What was eternal? Has it changed?

This topic has been the centre of much controversy, not only from the time of Avraham's descendants, but it is one that continues to be argued today. It could be assumed that because it is a well-established doctrine amongst modern believers here in the west, that the issue of circumcision was finalised and reconciled as doctrine according to discussions in the Brit Chadashah (New Testament).

Yet it is not as cut and dried as one would suppose. There are several branches within Christianity that insist on circumcision as part of becoming a believer, aside from a variety of Messianic groups. Today, circumcision is a customary practice among Christian groups not only in the west but also the Coptic, Ethiopian and Eritrean Orthodox churches who promote and perform circumcision as do some other denominations in Africa. The Nomiya fellowships in Kenya insist it is a requirement to gain membership to the fellowship.

It is also widely practiced in South Korea, Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, the Palestinians and Israel amongst the believers. However, within Israeli and other Messianic groups, along with the other countries mentioned, it is, in some cases, more a minority that insist on circumcision of gentiles, not the majority. There are several reasons these groups use circumcision and not all are biblically based, nevertheless it is an integral part of the practices of many fellowships.

When we examine scripture from the Tanach (Old Testament) a picture of this topic is clearly defined. The requirement of circumcision, when it is to be done and whom it is to be performed upon. When we examine these points, as we will shortly, we see a pattern set that is immutable and commanded to be done as an everlasting covenant. So, how can it change?

First, let us examine briefly the history of circumcision, biblically, to understand, where it came from and its significance. Then we will examine its divergence from a covenant of faith to a sign needed to declare salvation for the one having taken it.

Avraham

Genesis 17:10 (TS2009) “This is My covenant which you guard between Me and you, and your seed after you: Every male child among you is to be circumcised.

Genesis 17:11 (TS2009) “And you shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin, and it shall become a sign of the covenant between Me and you.

Genesis 17:12 (TS2009) “And a son of eight days is circumcised by you, every male child in your generations, he who is born in your house or bought with silver from any foreigner who is not of your seed.

This first mention of circumcision comes from Adonai Himself. This is not a man-made tradition to prove one has salvation. This is a covenant that was given as a sign to remind of the requirement of obedience, one that must be guarded and performed for this purpose. This is not an outward sign visible by all, showing to others that one is special, but a hidden sign to remind the man and his wife of the relationship that they are to have with Adonai, on a personal level. This leads to a national understanding of what is required by this sign.

This covenant was taken up by Avraham by his performing the act upon himself and every member of his household, whether of the Semitic race or not. Even those of the nations that were among his household were circumcised. This revealed that those brought on board were to be considered as part of the family and treated the same. In this act they were now partakers of all the family did, both for the blessings that came from obedience and the curses for disobedience. All that were adopted in were conjoined with the nation and all that is required of its people.

This concept is further developed throughout the Tanach as still others are brought on board through circumcision:

Gen 34:14 And they said to them, “We are not able to do this matter, to give our sister to one who is uncircumcised, for that would be a reproach to us.

Gen 34:15 “Only on this *condition* would we agree to you: If you become as we are, to have every male of you circumcised,

Gen 34:16 then we shall give our daughters to you, and take your daughters to us. And we shall dwell with you, and shall become one people.

Gen 34:17 “But if you do not listen to us and be circumcised, we shall take our daughter and go.”

Gen 34:18 And their words pleased H̄amor and Sheḱem, H̄amor’s son.

Jos 5:6 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 יהוה, to whom יהוה swore not to show them the land which יהוה had sworn to their fathers that He would give us, “a land flowing with milk and honey.”

Jos 5:7 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.

Jos 5:8 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.

Jos 5:9 And יהוה 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.

Jos 5:10 And the children of Yisra’el camped in Gilgal, and performed the Pěsaḥ on the fourteenth day of the new *moon* at evening on the desert plains of Yeriḥo.

The reason they had to be circumcised are several at this point:

1. Their fathers upon leaving Egypt had not performed circumcision on the male children as commanded by Adonai and were not guarding the agreement with Adonai as commanded. This was only one of the acts of rebellion that stopped them entering the promised land.
2. We see in Exodus 12:43-47 that until they had been circumcised, they could not partake of the Pesach:

Exo 12:43 And יהוה said to Mosheh and Aharon, “This is the law of the Pěsaḥ: No son of a stranger is to eat of it,

Exo 12:44 but any servant a man has bought for silver, when you have circumcised him, then let him eat of it.

Exo 12:45 “A sojourner and a hired servant does not eat of it.

Exo 12:46 “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.

Exo 12:47 “All the congregation of Yisra’el are to perform it.

3. It is not until they are circumcised that are able to enter the promised land.

It is often assumed by believers today that the circumcision was negated as a requirement because we now have circumcision of the heart and no longer have need of a physical circumcision. But this is a misnomer! We will discuss this and its implications at the end of the article.

Circumcision of the flesh was a sign of the covenant, a way to remember it by the cutting of the flesh, a reminder that those that are in a relationship with Adonai can be cut off through rebellion. The circumcision that always matters to Adonai is first and foremost the circumcision of the heart throughout scripture:

Deu 10:12 “And now, Yisra’el, what is יהוה your Elohim asking of you, but to fear יהוה your Elohim, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, and to serve יהוה your Elohim with all your heart and with all your being,

Deu 10:13 to guard the commands of יהוה and His laws which I command you today for your good?

Deu 10:14 “See, the heavens and the heaven of heavens belong to יהוה your Elohim, also the earth with all that is in it.

Deu 10:15 “יהוה delighted only in your fathers, to love them. And He chose their seed after them, you above all peoples, as it is today.

Deu 10:16 “And you shall circumcise the foreskin of your heart, and harden your neck no more. (*Stop living in rebellion*)

Deu 30:6 “And יהוה your Elohim shall circumcise your heart and the heart of your seed, to love יהוה your Elohim with all your heart and with all your being, so that you might live,

Jer 4:4 "Circumcise yourselves unto יהוה, and take away the foreskins of your hearts, you men of Yehudah and inhabitants of Yerushalayim, lest My wrath come forth like fire and burn, with none to quench it, because of the evil of your deeds.”

Lev 26:40 ‘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,

Lev 26:41 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,

Lev 26:42 then I shall remember My covenant with Ya‘aqob, and also My covenant with Yitshaq, and also remember My covenant with Abraham, and remember the land.

Lev 26:43 ‘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.

Circumcision of the heart has always been the requirement for relationship with Adonai. Avraham first had faith followed by his trust, and obedience.

Throughout the Tanach we find the requirement of circumcision to be important relating to national identity and relationship to Adonai. However, as with anything man has ever had, he corrupts it. Circumcision started to go from being a sign to remind of a relationship, to a religious observance. During the intertestamental period we can see this in action.

There were Jews who were non-believers during this period found the Greek way of life preferential to the practices of the religious. In the book of Maccabees, a non-canonical book but still historically correct gives a clear picture of what was occurring during that time.

1Ma 1:1 In those days came there forth out of Israel transgressors of the Law, and persuaded many, saying, let’s go and make a covenant with the Gentiles that are round about us; for since we were parted from them many evils have befallen us.

1Ma 1:12 And the saying was good in their eyes.

1Ma 1:13 And certain of the people were forward herein and went to the king, and he gave them licence to do after the ordinances of the Gentiles.

1Ma 1:14 And they built a place of exercise in Jerusalem according to the laws of the Gentiles;

1Ma 1:15 and they made themselves uncircumcised, and forsook the holy covenant, and joined themselves to the Gentiles, and sold themselves to do evil.

The Greeks had sporting events that were the precursor to our Olympics. The major difference was that all the athletes were men and they performed naked. It was offensive to the Greeks to have the glans of the penis uncovered, which is what circumcision does. So, the Jews who were rejecting the faith for a Greek way of life to partake of the games, had to become uncircumcised, as a result they performed a procedure called *Epispasm*. This was a practice of re-stretching the foreskin to again cover the glans.

There were enough of these non-believing Jews who loved their sports so much that they rejected Adonai and focused on sport. Enough to help promote the building of a sport stadium in Jerusalem. A symbol of idolatry and paganism that went against the teachings of the Torah and offensive to the believing Jews. Not to mention the disruptive noise coming from the stadium disrupting temple activities.

In retaliation to this, the religious Jewish leaders, because of this attitude of the rebellious ones, developed the idea that you must be circumcised to prove you believe in Adonai and therefore, saved. This was to negate the whole concept of performing Epispasm which was a direct defiance of an agreement made with Adonai, a powerful form of rejection and rebellion.

1Ma 2:40 And one said to another, If we all do as our kindred have done, and fight not against the Gentiles for our lives and our ordinances, they will now quickly destroy us from off the earth.

If we continue in the way of the gentiles, surely as a people we will be lost.

1Ma 2:41 And they took counsel on that day, saying, whoever shall come against us to battle on the Sabbath day, let's fight against him, and we shall in no wise all die, as our kindred died in the secret places.

Those of our brethren who refuse to partake of the Sabbath must be brought back into the fold or surely, we will all die as they will (In rebellion) as we see happening many times in the Torah with those who rebelled against Adonai.

1Ma 2:42 Then were gathered together to them a company of Hasidaeans, mighty men of Israel, every one that offered himself willingly for the law.

1Ma 2:43 And all those who fled from the evils were added to them, and became a stay to them.

Those Jews that repented were returned to the nation and those that were not previously circumcised became so as proof they had returned.

1Ma 2:44 And they mustered an army, and struck sinners in their anger, and lawless men in their wrath: and the rest fled to the Gentiles for safety.

1Ma 2:45 And Mattathias and his friends went round about, and pulled down the altars;

1Ma 2:46 and they circumcised by force the children that were uncircumcised, as many as they found in the coasts of Israel.

If they were to be left uncircumcised, they were seen as rebellious, and circumcision had now become a sign of identity with Israel and religious requirement, even if forced upon the people.

The choice was circumcision or death to these rebellious Israelites running to hide amongst the nations, fleeing from this forced religious zealotry. It was repent and be circumcised or die, it seems many preferred the gentile lifestyle so fled to the nations to live in freedom (Rebellion).

1Ma 2:47 And they pursued after the sons of pride, and the work prospered in their hand.

1Ma 2:48 And they rescued the law out of the hand of the Gentiles, and out of the hand of the kings, neither suffered they the sinner to triumph.

By force they have returned these children of Israel back to the nation and the proof that they had returned was the sign of circumcision. Circumcision was now evidence that one is part of Israel and accepts the Torah/ Laws, whether one truly does or not.

It has now gone from a personal sign between the people and Adonai as a remembrance, to a proof that one is agreeing with the religious leadership that circumcision proves you obey the Law. The commandment to guard the practice remains, but it is their understanding of why it is required that had changed.

Circumcision has now come to the end of its transitional stage from one type of sign to another, a transition from a sign of remembrance of a relationship with Adonai, to one of proof you are in the faith, without circumcision one cannot be recognised as a believer.

Consequently, by the time of Yeshua, Sha'ul and the apostles, the practice of circumcision had become a symbol of righteousness and no longer a sign of remembrance. The leadership had now placed it as a final proof and requirement of salvation through their traditions. A teaching that was hard to get past for most because it was instilled in them through their studies with the teachers of the Torah from an early age.

Missing information

Whilst these historical events were occurring, there was another set of events running parallel that must be considered. Without the knowledge of these parallel events some mistaken and misguided opinions are made and adhered to by both sides of the discussion.

In the book of Exodus, we discover that Adonai started a system, that up until that time had not existed within the nation of Israel in a structured formal manner. The sacrificial system, which is run by a priesthood that Adonai declares and puts into place. A specific people to do the sacrifices, and only in the place that Adonai declares they are to be done.

Exo 28:1 “And you, bring near Aharon your brother and his sons with him, from among the children of Yisra’el, for serving as priest to Me: Aharon, Naḏab and Aḇihu, El’azar and Ithamar, the sons of Aharon.

The rest of chapter 28 then goes on to describe the garments needed for the High Priest, the only one that will be allowed into the Lord’s presence. Until we reach the last verse where the people are still afraid that they are still to be held accountable for doing things the wrong way, they were afraid they would be held responsible for any errors in the practice according to Adonai’s standard. Adonai informs them that now all the requirements for sacrifice belong to Aaron and the priests and they are responsible and not the people if something goes wrong.

Exo 28:43 “And they shall be on Aharon and on his sons when they come into the Tent of Appointment, or when they come near the slaughter-place to attend in the Set-apart Place, so that they do not bear crookedness and die – a law forever to him, and to his seed after him.

The only people after this point are Aaron his line, the priests. This priesthood can only be passed from father to son in this family line only. No one else is now allowed to perform a sacrifice other than the priests, and only the High Priest access to the Holy of Holies and into the presence of Adonai.

This is clear in the celebration of ordination of Aaron and his sons:

Exo 29:27 “And from the ram of ordination you shall set apart the breast of the wave offering which is waved, and the thigh of the contribution which is raised, of that which is for Aharon and of that which is for his sons.

Exo 29:28 “And it shall be from the children of Yisra’ël for Aharon and his sons by a law forever, for it is a contribution. And it is a contribution from the children of Yisra’ël from the slaughters of their peace offerings – their contribution to יהוה.

Exo 29:29 “And the set-apart garments of Aharon are for his sons after him, to be anointed in them and to be ordained in them.

Exo 29:30 “The priest from his sons in his place, puts them on for seven days, when he enters the Tent of Appointment to attend in the set-apart place.

Exo 29:31 “And take the ram of ordination and cook its flesh in a set-apart place.

Exo 29:32 “And Aharon and his sons shall eat the flesh of the ram, and the bread that is in the basket, by the door of the Tent of Appointment,

This ordination ceremony demonstrated to the people that *only* the priesthood could now perform a sacrifice, while prior to this it was the heads of the family that would perform them.

Unlike in Egypt when the heads of each family sacrificed and manipulated the blood onto the doorposts and lintel of each house. Now only the priests are allowed to manipulate the blood. Only a priest could sprinkle the blood on the altar, only a priest could perform a sacrifice and give it as an offering. Anyone not a priest cannot perform a sacrifice. Anyone can slaughter an animal to eat, but the blood is not to be manipulated in any way, it must be poured on the ground and covered. When I say manipulated, I mean it could not be used in any way that a priest could use it. A non-priest cannot sprinkle the blood on an altar nor can anyone today in remembrance of the Passover kill an animal and put blood on their doorposts. This manipulation of the blood is forbidden to anyone not of the line of Aaron and ordained to the purpose.

Lev 17:10 ‘And any man of the house of Yisra’ël, or of the strangers who sojourn among you, who eats any blood, I shall set My face against that being who eats blood, and shall cut him off from among his people.

Lev 17:11 ‘For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the slaughter-place to make atonement for your lives, for it is the blood that makes atonement for the life.’ *(The blood is manipulated to a purpose)*

Lev 17:12 “Therefore I said to the children of Yisra’ël, ‘No being among you eats blood, nor does any stranger who sojourns among you eat blood.’

Lev 17:13 “And any man from the children of Yisra’ël, or from the strangers who sojourn among you, who hunts and catches any beast or bird, which is eaten, shall pour out its blood and cover it with dust,

Lev 17:14 for it is the life of all flesh. Its blood is for its life. And I said to the children of Yisra’ël, ‘Do not eat the blood of any flesh, for the life of all flesh is its blood. Anyone eating it is cut off.’

Only a priest can manipulate the blood, anyone can kill a clean animal to eat, but the blood must be covered over on the ground and nothing else is to be done with it.

This might seem a strange divergence, but it is important in understanding the issues behind circumcision that are not considered but are important. I will be referring to this sacrificial offering later in our discussion.

New Testament/Brit Chadashah

Today, the issue of circumcision as only for the Jews, and we as gentiles are exempt use several scriptures to justify this.

This argument goes thus:

1Co 7:18 Was anyone called while circumcised? Let him not become uncircumcised. Was anyone called while uncircumcised? Let him not be circumcised.

1Co 7:19 The circumcision is naught, and the uncircumcision is naught, but the guarding of the commands of Elohim *does matter!* Footnote: See Rom 2:26-29.

Also, Romans 2:26-29

Rom 2:26 So, if an uncircumcised one watches over the righteousneses of the Torah, shall not his uncircumcision be reckoned as circumcision?

Rom 2:27 And the uncircumcised by nature, who perfects the Torah, shall judge you who notwithstanding letter and circumcision are a transgressor of the Torah!

Rom 2:28 For he is not a Yehudi who is *so* outwardly, neither is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh.

Rom 2:29 But a Yehudi 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.

And of course, Acts chapter 15 which appears to declare, circumcision is done away with alongside all the other Torah requirements.

From the perspective of those promoting one must be circumcised, and placed in different context, acts 15 declares something else. Remember we discussed earlier how the idea of circumcision went from a sign to remind of relationship and need of a circumcised heart, to a sign of salvation to the pharisees.

This understanding gives a bit more clarity on what is happening at the Jerusalem council.

Act 15:1 And certain men came down from Yehudah and were teaching the brothers, “Unless you are circumcised, according to the practice of Mosheh, you are unable to be saved.”

Act 15:2 So when Sha’ul and Barnaba had no small dissension and dispute with them, they arranged for Sha’ul and Barnaba and certain others of them to go up to Yerushalayim, to the emissaries and elders, about this question.

Act 15:3 So, being sent on their way by the assembly, they passed through Phoenicia and Shomeron, relating the conversion of the nations. And they were causing great joy to all the brothers.

Act 15:4 And having arrived in Yerushalayim, they were received by the assembly and the emissaries and the elders. And they reported all that Elohim had done with them.

Act 15:5 And some of the *believers* who belonged to the sect of the Pharisees, rose up, saying, “It is necessary to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the Torah of Mosheh.”

Act 15:6 And the emissaries and elders came together to look into this matter.

Act 15:7 And when there had been much dispute, Kěpha rose up and said to them, “Men, brothers, you know that a good while ago Elohim chose among us, that by my mouth the nations should hear the word of the Good News and believe.

This event was recorded in Acts 9:9-28. If it was already set as a practice that the Torah and its dietary laws were done away with in Peter’s vision, he would have explained this here and clearly defined that Adonai had told him this was so. However, had he promoted this and said such a thing, he would have been disfellowshipped as someone going into the realms of what we call today, heterodoxy.

If the dietary laws were done away with, there would be no further discussion needed because gentiles need have nothing to do with Torah. But as we will see, this is not the result of the council.

Act 15:8 “And Elohim, who knows the heart, bore witness to them, by giving them the Set-apart Spirit, as also to us,

Act 15:9 and made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by belief.

Act 15:10 “Now then, why do you try Elohim by putting a yoke on the neck of the taught ones which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?

What is this yoke? Is it the Torah of Moshe that is the foundation of all understanding within Judaism and the foundation of Scripture? Or is it the Oral Traditions the rabbis had imparted as rulings to protect the Written Torah which had become a Burdon on the people because of all the legalistic requirements within them.

Mat 11:30 “For My yoke is gentle and My burden is light.”

Rom 7:12 So that the Torah truly is set-apart, and the command set-apart, and righteous, and good.

Act 15:11 “But through the favour of the Master ישוע Messiah we trust to be saved, in the same way as they.”

Through faith and not the works as we have been taught by the leaders following the Oral Traditions laid down by the fathers.

Act 15:12 And all the crowd was silent and were listening to Barnaba and Sha’ul declaring how many miracles and wonders Elohim did among the nations, through them.

Act 15:13 And after they were silent, Ya’aqob answered, saying, “Men, brothers, listen to me:

Act 15:14 “Shim’on has declared how Elohim first visited the nations to take out of them a people for His Name.

Act 15:15 “And the words of the prophets agree with this, as it has been written:

Act 15:16 ‘After this I shall return and rebuild the Booth of Dawid which has fallen down. And I shall rebuild its ruins, and I shall set it up,

Act 15:17 so that the remnant of mankind shall seek יהוה, even all the nations on whom My Name has been called, says יהוה who is doing all this,’

Act 15:18 who has made this known from of old. Amo 9:11-12.

Act 15:19 “Therefore I judge that we should not trouble those from among the nations who are turning to Elohim,

Act 15:20 but that we write to them to abstain from the defilements of idols Exodus 20:3-6, and from whoring Deuteronomy 22:22, and from what is strangled Blood remains in body, and from blood Deuteronomy 12:16,23.

These are all acts in the Torah Adonai finds an abomination, as a result, gentiles are to stop these practices at once. After this very basic requirement that gentiles must adhere to showing they are serious about the faith, they will then follow up by:

Act 15:21 “For from ancient generations Mosheh has, in every city, those proclaiming him – being read in the congregations every Sabbath.”

To further clarify the stance of the pro-circumcision argument, Romans chapter 2 is also discussed to bring it in line with Judaic biblical context.

The explanation goes like this:

To understand what is spoken of in Romans chapter 2 we must start at the end of chapter 1 to see who is being spoken to so to set the scene.

Rom 1:24 Therefore Elohim gave them up to uncleanness in the lust of their hearts, to disrespect their bodies among themselves,

Rom 1:25 who changed the truth of Elohim into the falsehood, and worshipped and served what was created rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Aměn.

Rom 1:26 Because of this Elohim gave them over to degrading passions. For even their women exchanged natural relations for what is against nature,

Rom 1:27 and likewise, the men also, having left natural relations with woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing indecency, and receiving back the reward which was due for their straying.

Rom 1:28 And even as they did not think it worthwhile to possess the knowledge of Elohim, Elohim gave them over to a worthless mind, to do what is improper,

Rom 1:29 having been filled with all unrighteousness, whoring, wickedness, greed, evil; filled with envy, murder, fighting, deceit, evil habits; whisperers,

Rom 1:30 slanderers, haters of Elohim, insolent, proud, boasters, devisers of evils, disobedient to parents,

Rom 1:31 without discernment, covenant breakers, unloving, unforgiving, ruthless;

Rom 1:32 who, though they know the righteousness of Elohim, that those who practise such deserve death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practise them.

No break and change of topic here, it is a continuation

Rom 2:1 Therefore, O man, you are without excuse, everyone who judges, for in which you judge another you condemn yourself, since you who judge practise the same *wrongs*. (*The same wrongs just mentioned in chapter 1*)

Rom 2:2 And we know that the judgment of Elohim is according to truth against those who practise such *wrongs*.

Rom 2:3 And do you think, O man, you who judge those practising such *wrongs*, and doing the same, that you shall escape the judgment of Elohim?

Those that are hypocrites and self-righteous – these are those that have a sense of superiority because of their traditions, whether they be from a gentile or Jewish background.

Rom 2:4 Or do you despise the riches of His kindness, and tolerance, and patience, not knowing that the kindness of Elohim leads you to repentance?

Repentance – Teshuva. To turn from the practices and tradition of men to the commandments of Adonai.

Rom 2:5 But according to your hardness and your unrepentant heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of Elohim,

Rom 2:6 who “shall render to each one according to his works”:

Rom 2:7 everlasting life to those who by persistence in good work seek for esteem, and respect, and incorruptibility;

Those that look to do the will of Adonai and be obedient because they love Him.

Rom 2:8 but wrath and displeasure to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness;

Those that disobey the Torah, the righteous lifestyle and commandments of Adonai in rebellion

Rom 2:9 affliction and distress on every human being working what is evil, of the Yehudi first, and also of the Greek;

Evil is disobedience to Adonai, whether Greek (of the nations) or the Jew. But this punishment will come first to the Jew because they know better but reject the truth.

Conversely:

Rom 2:10 but esteem, respect, and peace to everyone working what is good ^{being obedient}, to the Yehudi first and also to the Greek.

Rom 2:11 For there is no partiality with Elohim.

There is no special attention given to one over the other because one is a Jew or a Greek.

Rom 2:12 For as many as sinned without Torah shall also perish without Torah, and as many as sinned in the Torah shall be judged by the Torah.

Those that sinned or were disobedient because they did not have the Torah will perish without it because they had no obedience to Adonai or knowledge of Him and what He desires of men. They have no chance, why? Because Israel was meant to be a light to the nations sharing with them the good news of salvation with Adonai the creator of the universe. How could they know if they are not told?

But those claiming obedience and relationship with Adonai will be held to a higher standard. They will be judged by what they do and how they behave – is it according to Adonai's righteous standard or not.

Rom 2:13 For not the hearers of the Torah are righteous in the sight of Elohim, but the doers of the Torah shall be declared right.

We are judged by Adonai by how we behave and act. Is it in the way He declares, or in a way man has decided is right?

We are judged by how we live and what we do in respect to Adonai's commandments.

Rom 2:14 For when nations, who do not have the Torah, by nature do what is in the Torah, although not having the Torah, they are a torah to themselves,

We are now being given an analogy, not a commandment.

We are still being told here to obey the Torah, to live the righteous lifestyle. It would be a contradiction to say this is referring to the commandment to be circumcised is not for gentiles when the commandment to Avraham was to him and his household. His household included people born in other nations but accepted as part of the family.

Something Has Changed

The discussion being promoted by the pro-circumcision lobby for gentiles and their arguments are persuasive, and the logic in the interpretation is sound.

However, there is a qualification:

We examined earlier a brief overview of the sacrificial system and how only the priests could manipulate the blood on the altar and only the sons of Aaron had this right given to them.

Knowing this brings in another aspect to the discussion neither side seem to be discussing in their arguments. When Avraham performed a sacrificial offering, he was allowed. When the heads of the household of Israel sacrificed a lamb and daubed the doorposts and lintels of the house, they were allowed. When Moshe performed the first Pesach and slaughtered the lamb and fulfilled Adonai's command to be sure all males were circumcised to partake of it, he was allowed.

As members of the family, to be able to partake of the Pesach, everyone approaching to partake of it had to be circumcised because the head of the family or leader performing the sacrifice is responsible to see it is done correctly. All who come along to partake of the Pesach or approach the tabernacle or temple had to approach in the agreed manner, in other words, circumcised.

Once we get the sacrificial system being inaugurated by Adonai, the situation changes. It is no longer possible for any family head to kill the Passover lamb. Only the priests of the house of Levi to which Aaron was included, and only his sons and their sons, and so on, had the right to do this, and only in the place appointed by Adonai.

This changed everything, by the time we get to the temple period and Yeshua. The Passover sacrifice was to all people a remembrance of what happened in Exodus. No one, neither Jew nor gentile could enter the area only the priests could enter where the sacrifice occurred. The people could not eat of this lamb as that was the purview of the priests only.

The families could kill a lamb and eat of it, but this is only a remembrance of what has been performed in the temple. The people could kill the lamb for food, but the blood must be spilled on the ground and covered over. This lamb is not a sacrifice but a remembrance. Only a priest could manipulate the blood.

In the temple, the gentiles who were training to be followers of the teachings of the rabbis and seeking after Adonai, until they had been circumcised at the end of their training period as proselytes, they could not enter the temple beyond the court of the gentiles. Once their training had been completed and approved by whichever teacher handled them, they would be circumcised, fully accepted as part of the nation and could enter beyond the court of the gentiles. The final sign accepted as proof of their religious duty was to have circumcision proving they were saved according to the mandates of the teachers.

Yeshua upon His death broke down this wall of partition between Jew and gentile in the courtyards of the temple. Those that were as yet uncircumcised could now share in the entire courtyard with the Jews. This does not change the fact that neither could enter the holy sacrificial area of the priests. Therefore, all who partake of the Passover, whether Jew or gentile can do so in the condition they are in, because neither is offering a sacrifice, nor can they perform a sacrifice they have no authority to do but can practice a remembrance.

The lamb killed and eaten today is not a sacrifice, therefore gentiles can partake without circumcision. Circumcision is not a sign of salvation as had been misconstrued by the religious leaders but a sign to remind of the need to circumcise the heart.

Conclusion

Circumcision: Must we have it as gentiles?

My answer is yes and no.

No, we do not have to be circumcised as gentiles to partake of the Passover or to have access to the sacrificial system as Yeshua was the final sacrifice. He became our High Priest, and it is by His authority that He was able as the heavenly high priest to manipulate the blood this final time. No one else has authority to manipulate it.

There is no longer need for circumcision to partake of the Pesach, or the shared relationship with Israel through Messiah. Therefore, circumcision of the flesh is no longer necessary for gentiles, even though it was prior to the Aaronic priesthood. However, this does not negate the requirement of the rest of Torah that relates to righteous living and being obedient.

It is this obedience to the righteous lifestyle described in the Torah that comes from the circumcision of the heart, the desire to be obedient and walk in the way we are expected. To be a set-apart people adopted into His family behaving as a member in the described manner.

If a gentile feels the need to be circumcised, this is not wrong, unless it is done for the wrong reasons. If it is to identify with Israel and as a symbol that they are saved, then the premise they are approaching with is skewed by the very same teachings being put forward by the Pharisees in Acts 15. Circumcision as a sign of salvation.

However, if the approach is: I wish to have this symbol to always remind me that I am to have a circumcised heart and what my responsibilities are in my relationship with Yeshua. Then yes, it is ok. It is not the circumcision, but why one is circumcised that is important. Is it like Abraham because of belief and a sign to remind of his duties and responsibilities to Adonai, or is it used as a sign to prove something to others?

It is not necessary to be circumcised to partake of the remembrance of the Pesach or fellowship with Jewish believers. Those teaching that we must be circumcised as gentiles to attend any fellowship are trying to do what the pharisees did and equate circumcision with salvation. Circumcision is ok for gentiles, but the reason behind their requirement for it is wrong.

Bible versions used:

The Scriptures 2009

King James Version with Apocrypha

