

Circumcise and Circumcision

By Yochanan Zaqantov

Circumcise in the Tanakh is so very important to the Yisraelite People. It is a mitzvah (commandment) from YHWH going back to Avraham. One could not eat of the Pesach zevach (Passover sacrifice) unless they were circumcised. So this is a very important topic in Tanakh.

One of the Hebrew words translated as circumcise is Namal (Nun-Mem-Lamed) and is verb. It is reference number 5243.

Bereshit/Genesis 17:11(9-14)

9 Elohim further said to Abraham, “As for you, you and your offspring (zar’akha) to come throughout the ages shall keep My covenant (beriytiy). 10 Such shall be the covenant between Me and you and your offspring to follow which you shall keep: every

male among you shall be **circumcised (himol 4135 הַמּוֹל)**. 11 [and] You shall

circumcise (un’malatem וְנִמַּלְתֶּם) the flesh of your foreskin (‘ar’lat’khem 6109

עַרְלַתְכֶם), and that shall be the sign of the covenant (לְאוֹת בְּרִית) for a sign of agreement) between Me and you. 12 And throughout the generations, every male

among you shall be **circumcised (yimol 4135 יְמוֹל)** at the age of eight days. As for the home born slave and the one bought from an outsider who is not of your offspring,

13 they must be **circumcised (yimol 4135 יְמוֹל)**, home born, and purchased alike.

Thus shall My covenant (beriytiy) be marked in your flesh (bib’sar’khem 1320

בְּבִשְׂרְכֶם) as an everlasting pact. 14 And if any male who is **uncircumcised**

(ve‘arel 6189 וְעֵרֵל) fails to circumcise (lo yimol) the flesh of his foreskin (ar’lato

עַרְלָתוֹ), that person shall be cut off from his kin; **he has broken My covenant.”** (et

beriytiy hefar 6565 אֶת־בְּרִיתִי הִפֵּר)

Looking at these verse will establish what words we need to study in order to get a understanding of what circumcision is and why we do it.

First, It was a covenant/agreement. YHWH and Avraham made a pact that if Avraham walked wholly with YHWH obeying his voice that he would give him the land he

sojournered on which is Caanan. As a sign that he would do this and his Heirs would also YHWH required a sign of the flesh. The removal of the foreskin. In this Avraham's descendants would be identifies by this mark. They would be circumcised but those around them would not be. The penalty for not doing this was removal from Avraham's descendants. Being uncircumcised was breaking or annulling the covenant. So if you are not circumcised you cannot be part of the covenant of Avraham.

Iyov/Job 14:2

2 He blossoms like a flower and withers (yimal יִמָּל); He vanishes like a shadow and does not endure.

Iyov/Job 18:16

16 His roots below dry up, And above, his branches wither (yimal יִמָּל).

Iyov/Job 24:24

24 Exalted for a while, let them be gone; Be brought low, and shrivel like mallows, And wither (yimalu יִמָּלוּ) like the heads of grain.

Tehillim/Psalms 37:2

2 for they soon wither (yimal יִמָּלוּ) like grass, like verdure fade away.

When first looking at these transliterated it would seem that yimol and yimal would be related but in the Hebrew they are not. So we see from these verse that this is cut-off in a way that cause something to shrivel up. So in contaxt with the forskin it allude to it shriveling up or cut off from it blood supply.

The next word is Mul, which we will see, in the earlier statement to Avraham. In is reference number 4135 and is (Mem-vav-lamed).

Bereshit/Genesis 17: 10, 12-14, 24-27

9 God further said to Abraham, "As for you, you and your offspring to come throughout the ages shall keep My covenant. 10 Such shall be the covenant between Me and you and your offspring to follow which you shall keep: every male among you **shall be circumcised.** (himol הִמּוֹל) 11 You shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin, and that shall be the sign of the covenant between Me and you. 12 And

throughout the generations, every male among you **shall be circumcised** (yimol ימול) at the age of eight days. As for the home born slave and the one bought from an outsider who is not of your offspring, **13 they must be circumcised.** (himol yimol המול ימול), home born, and purchased alike. Thus shall My covenant be marked in your flesh as an everlasting pact. **14** And if any male who is uncircumcised fails to circumcise (lo yimol לֹא-ימול) the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his kin; he has broken My covenant.”

24 Abraham was ninety-nine years old **when he circumcised** (behimolo בְּהִמְלוֹ) the flesh of his foreskin, **25** and his son Ishmael was thirteen years old **when he was circumcised** (behimolo בְּהִמְלוֹ) in the flesh of his foreskin. **26** Thus Abraham and his son Ishmael were **circumcised** (nimol נִמּוֹל) on that very day; **27** and all his household, his home born slaves and those that had been bought from outsiders, were **circumcised** (nimol נִמּוֹל) with him.

In these verse is shows the verb mul as cutting of the foreskin. We know this was to be a marking of the flesh in the end it must wither as we seen in the previous verb. But how much was cut.

Bereshit/Genesis 34: 15, 17, 22, 24

14 and said to them, “We cannot do this thing, to give our sister to a man who is uncircumcised, for that is a disgrace among us. **15** Only on this condition will we agree with you; that you will become like us in that every male among **you is circumcised** (lehimol לְהִמּוֹל). **16** Then we will give our daughters to you and take your daughters to ourselves; and we will dwell among you and become as one kindred. **17** But if you will not listen to us and **become circumcised** (lehimol לְהִמּוֹל), we will take our daughter and go.”

22 But only on this condition will the men agree with us to dwell among us and be as one kindred: that all our males become **circumcised** (lehimol לְהִמּוֹל) as they are **circumcised** (nimolim נִמּוּלִים). **23** Their cattle and substance and all their beasts will be ours, if we only agree to their terms, so that they will settle among us.”

24 All who went out of the gate of his town heeded Hamor and his son Shechem, and all males, all those who went out of the gate of his town, were circumcised (vayimolu וַיִּמְלוּ).

The story here shows that the foreskin is to be made different than it was born with. The Other forms of this verb will show us that this was also something cut or cut off like namal was.

Bereshit/Genesis 21:4

4 And when his son Isaac was eight days old, Abraham **circumcised** (yayimol וַיִּמְלוּ) him, as Elohim had commanded him. As YHWH commanded Avraham he did it with his son Yitzchak.

Shemot/Exodus 12:44, 48

43 YHWH said to Moses and Aaron: This is the law of the passover offering: No foreigner shall eat of it. 44 But any slave a man has bought may eat of it once he has **been circumcised** (umol'tah וּמִלְּתָהּ). [and you shall circumcise]

The owner must ensure that the servant bought must be circumcised. Just like for Avraham and now over 400 years later for the children of Yisrael.

48 If a stranger (ger) who dwells (yigur) with you would offer the passover to the YHWH, all his males **must be circumcised** (himol הִמּוֹל); then he shall be admitted to offer it; he shall then be as a citizen of the country. But no **uncircumcised** (arel) person may eat of it.

Again just like the instructions in Bereshit 17 for Avraham his seed must continue on the covenant that was made earlier. They are told to do it the same way with all males of their household. To eat of the pesach they must also be circumcised.

Vayiqra/Leviticus 12:3

1 YHWH spoke to Moses, saying: 2 Speak to the Israelite people thus: When a woman at childbirth bears a male, she shall be unclean seven days; she shall be unclean as at the time of her menstrual infirmity.—3 On the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin **shall be circumcised** (yimol יִמּוֹל).

His foreskin must be cut off.

Devarim/Deuteronomy 10:16

16 Cut away (umol'them **וּמְלִתָּם**), therefore, the thickening (foreskin ar'lat) about your hearts and stiffen your necks no more.

Here it is figuratively showing the removal of a covering over your heart. But in the figurative we see what was done in the literal circumcision. The literal foreskin was a covering over the male member. Some might even say a protective layer. YHWH commanded them to remove this layer. If it was not completely removed then their would be some remaining and therefore the figurative meaning here would not make sense to the people who heard it and understood it literally well. They were to expose their hearts to him so that they might learn from YHWH. If it was partial then would they be partially open to him.

Devarim/Deuteronomy 30:6

6 Then YHWH Eloheykha **will open up** (umol **וּמַל**) your heart and the hearts of your offspring to love YHWH Eloheykha with all your heart and soul, in order that you may live.

Again like with the previous passage the removal of foreskin was complete because for them to understand this they physical must match the figurative here for the peasant Yisraelim to understand.

Yehoshua/Joshua 5:2-5, 7-8

2 At that time YHWH said to Joshua, “Make flint knives and proceed with a second (and return) **circumcision** (**מִל**) of the Israelites.” 3 So Joshua had flint knives made, and the Israelites were **circumcised** (**vayimol וַיִּמַּל**) at Gibeath-haaraloth (hill of the foreskins). 4 This is the reason why Joshua had the **circumcision** (**מִל**) performed: All the people who had come out of Egypt, all the males of military age, had died during the desert wanderings after leaving Egypt. 5 Now, whereas all the people who came out of Egypt had been **circumcised** (**מִלִּים מְלִים**), none of the people born after the exodus, during the desert wanderings, had **been circumcised**. (**lo molu לֹא-מְלוּ**) 6 For the Israelites had traveled in the wilderness forty years, until the entire nation—the men of military age who had left Egypt—had perished; because they

had not obeyed YHWH, and YHWH had sworn never to let them see the land that YHWH had sworn to their fathers to assign to us, a land flowing with milk and honey.
7 But He had raised up their sons in their stead; and it was these that Joshua

circumcised (mol מול), for they were uncircumcised (arelim), not having been

circumcised. (lo molu לא-מולו) on the way. 8 After the circumcising (lehimol

להמול) of the whole nation was completed, they remained where they were, in the camp, until they recovered.

There are several important points to consider with this passage. One, the children of Israel leaving Egypt were circumcised and so could keep the Pesach. They were also part of the covenant with Avraham. Now because of the rebellion and YHWH literally cutting them off from the agreement/covenant land. It appears that circumcision was also not practiced after that point. Thus, the reason Yehoshua did it to the children of those who came out of the wilderness. That would also mean for 40 years no Pesach was kept since no one uncircumcised could eat it. Also, the covenant was reestablished with the children. Thus, in the wilderness they were exiles like us today. Therefore they were told to return (shuv) not do a second circumcision was the translation seem to indicate.

YHWH has cut them off because as a nation they rebelled and so by not being circumcised were they part of the Avraham covenant until the were circumcised at Gikal? I don't believe they were because of what it says in Bereshit 17.

Yermiyahu/Jeremiah 4:4

4 Open your hearts (himolu הַמְלוּ) to YHWH, Remove (set aside) the thickening (ar'lot foreskins) about your hearts—O men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem—Lest My wrath break forth like fire, And burn, with none to quench it, Because of your wicked acts.

Again they are told to remove the covering over their hearts.

Yermiyahu/Jeremiah 9:25(24)

24 Lo, days are coming—declares YHWH—when I will take note of everyone circumcised (mul מול) in the foreskin [punish all circumcised in foreskin]: **25** of Egypt, Judah, Edom, the Ammonites, Moab, and all the desert dwellers who have the hair of their temples clipped. For all these nations are uncircumcised (arelim), but all the House of Israel are uncircumcised (ar'ley) of heart.

He will punish those of both uncircumcised of heart and are physically uncircumcised.

Tehillim/Psalms 58:7 (8)

8 let them melt, let them vanish like water; let Him aim His arrows that they be cut down (yitmolalu יִתְּמֹלְלוּ);

The idea is that circumcise it to cut down something.

Tehillim/Psalms 90:6

6 at daybreak it flourishes anew; by dusk it withers (yemolal יִמּוֹלֵל) and dries up.

Again the word mul is causing something to be cut off from what is go nourishment from or in the case of foreskin blood.

Tehillim/Psalms 118:10-12

10 All nations have beset me; by the name of YHWH I will surely **cut them down (emiylam)**. 11 They beset me, they surround me; by the name of YHWH I will surely **cut them down (emiylam)**. 12 They have beset me like bees; they shall be extinguished like burning thorns; by the name of YHWH I will surely **cut them down (emiylam)**.

Here we see that again YHWH will cut off or remove them.

From this verb is drawn the Feminine Noun molah (mem-vav-lamed-hey. It is reference number 4139.

Shemot/Exodus 4:26

25 So Zipporah took a flint and cut off (vetikh'rot וַתִּכְרֹת) her son's foreskin (ar'lat), and touched his legs with it, saying, "You are truly a bridegroom of blood to me!" 26 And when He let him alone, she added, "A bridegroom of blood because of the circumcision (lamulot לַמּוֹלֵת)."

While the phrase bridegroom of blood is not known to me the act of circumcision was the removal of foreskin.

Also from the same verb is Mul as a masculine noun (Meme-vav-lamed). It is reference number 4136.

Shemot/Exodus 18:19

19 Now listen to me. I will give you counsel, and Elohim be with you! You represent the people **before** (**mul מוֹל**) Elohim: you bring the disputes before Elohim,

In front of Elohim or before him at the point of approach.

Shemot/Exodus 26:9

9 Join five of the cloths by themselves, and the other six cloths by themselves; and fold over the sixth cloth at the front (**mul מוֹל**) of the tent.

The cloths were placed in front.

Shemot/Exodus 28:25, 27, 37

25 Then fasten the two ends of the cords to the two frames, which you shall attach to the shoulder-pieces of the ephod, at the front (**mul מוֹל**).

27 And make two other rings of gold and fasten them on the front (**mul מוֹל**) of the ephod, low on the two shoulder-pieces, close to its seam above the decorated band.

37 Suspend it on a cord of blue, so that it may remain on the headdress; it shall remain on the front (**mul מוֹל**) of the headdress.

So all these are on the front of the object. Which would see to coincide to were the foreskin was.

Shemot/Exodus 34:3

3 No one else shall come up with you, and no one else shall be seen anywhere on the mountain; neither shall the flocks and the herds graze at the foot (**mul מוֹל**) of this mountain.”

4 So Moses carved two tablets of stone, like the first, and early in the morning he went up on Mount Sinai, as YHWH had commanded him, taking the two stone tablets with him.

The front of the mountain could be the base or edge of its starting. It would definitely not be its tip.

Shemot/Exodus 39:25

25 They also made bells of pure gold, and attached the bells between the pomegranates, all around the hem of the robe, between the pomegranates:

Next we will also look at foreskin. What does Tanakh say it is? Sometimes it is translated as uncircumcised. Now there are three words which are used as foreskin we will look at two of them. Arel the adjective and orlah the feminine noun. Arel is reference number 6189 and orlah is reference number 6190.

Bereshit/Genesis 17:14

14 And if any male who is **uncircumcised** (ve'arel וְעֵרֵל) fails to circumcise the flesh of his foreskin (, that person shall be cut off from his kin; he has broken My covenant.”

Bereshit/Genesis 34:14

14 and said to them, “We cannot do this thing, to give our sister to a man who is **uncircumcised** (or'lah עֵרְלָה), for that is a disgrace among us.

Shemot/Exodus 12:48

48 If a stranger who dwells with you would offer the passover to YHWH, all his males must be circumcised; then he shall be admitted to offer it; he shall then be as a citizen of the country. But no **uncircumcised** (arel עֵרֵל) person may eat of it.

Yehoshua/Joshua 5:7

5 Now, whereas all the people who came out of Egypt had been circumcised, none of the people born after the exodus, during the desert wanderings, had been circumcised.

6 For the Israelites had traveled in the wilderness forty years, until the entire nation—the men of military age who had left Egypt—had perished; because they had not obeyed YHWH, and YHWH had sworn never to let them see the land that YHWH had sworn to their fathers to assign to us, a land flowing with milk and honey. 7 But He had raised

up their sons in their stead; and it was these that Joshua **circumcised** (mol מָלַ), for they

were **uncircumcised** (arelim עֵרְלִים), **not having been circumcised** (lo-malu

לֹא-מָלוּ) on the way. 8 After the circumcising (lehimol לְהִמּוֹל) of the whole nation was completed, they remained where they were, in the camp, until they recovered.

Shofetim/Judges 14:3

- 3 His father and mother said to him, “Is there no one among the daughters of your own kinsmen and among all our people, that you must go and take a wife from **the uncircumcised (ha’arelim הַעֲרִלִים)** Philistines?” But Samson answered his father, “Get me that one, for she is the one that pleases me.”

The Philistines did not have a practice of circumcision.

Shofetim/Judges 15:18

- 18 He was very thirsty and he called to YHWH, “You Yourself have granted this great victory through Your servant; and must I now die of thirst and fall into the hands of **the uncircumcised (ha’arelim הַעֲרִלִים)?**”

Here Samson calls out for help from YHWH. Refers to the Philistine as uncircumcised ones and therefore not our Elohim’s covenant.

Shemu’el Aleph/I Samuel 14:6

- 6 Jonathan said to the attendant who carried his arms, “Come, let us cross over to the outpost of **those uncircumcised (ha’arelim הַעֲרִלִים)** fellows. Perhaps YHWH will act in our behalf, for nothing prevents YHWH from winning a victory by many or by few.”

Shemu’el Aleph/I Samuel 17:26, 36

- 26 David asked the men standing near him, “What will be done for the man who kills that Philistine and removes the disgrace from Israel? Who is that **uncircumcised (he’arel הָעֲרִל)** Philistine that he dares defy the ranks of the living Elohim?”

- 36 Your servant has killed both lion and bear; and **that uncircumcised (he’arel הָעֲרִל)** Philistine shall end up like one of them, for he has defied the ranks of the living Elohim.

Shemu’el Aleph/I Samuel 31:4

4 Saul said to his arms-bearer, “Draw your sword and run me through, so that **the uncircumcised (ha’arelim הַעֲרִלִים)** may not run me through and make sport of me.” But his arms-bearer, in his great awe, refused; whereupon Saul grasped the sword and fell upon it.

Yeshayahu/Isaiah 52:1

52:1 Awake, awake, O Zion! Clothe yourself in splendor; Put on your robes of majesty, Jerusalem, holy city! For the **uncircumcised (arel עֲרִל)** and the unclean Shall never enter you again.

Yermiyahu/Jeremiah 9:24-25

24 Lo, days are coming—declares YHWH—when I will take note of everyone **circumcised (mul מוּל)** in the foreskin: 25 of Egypt, Judah, Edom, the Ammonites, Moab, and all the desert dwellers who have the hair of their temples clipped. For all these nations are **uncircumcised (arelim הַעֲרִלִים)**, but all the House of Israel are **uncircumcised (areli עֲרִלִי)** of heart.

The differentiations of the people in Yisrael’s sphere of influence were uncircumcised and did not have a relationship with YHWH and therefore there was a separation. If Benei Yisrael had kept all that was commanded then that relationship would work to their favor. However, Benei Yisrael kept admiring those uncircumcised nations and became uncircumcised in the heart. A circumcision is not the only thing which keeps us in the covenant of Abraham, Yissac, and Yaaqov and their children but obedience to that which was spoken by Moshe and YHWH servants the prophets.