

# A CAREER OF MITZVOS

by Rabbi Label Lam

*HASHEM spoke to Moshe saying, "Speak to the Children of Israel saying, "When a woman conceives and gives birth to a male...On the eighth day, the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised..." (Vayikra 12:1)*

It's hard to fathom! A brand new baby boy is born into a Jewish family and on the eighth day they are submitting the little fellow to a surgical procedure and then celebrating with a sumptuous meal. I'm waking early tomorrow just to participate in such an occasion. If I didn't know better, I'd think it was barbaric and cruel, but we know that the Jewish people are characterized by the Talmud as possessing the trait of mercy. Why then have loving parents from the time of Avraham, for 3600 years, gleefully introduced their infants to this operation?

Twenty-two years ago my wife gave birth to our oldest son on the Parshas Tazria where we are commanded about circumcision. I was wondering then about the benefit of this action. Avraham was the pillar of kindness in the world. Although he may have been tested to do something that went against his natural tendency, there must also be some ultimate kindness involved or The Almighty would never prescribe it for all generations. What could be the reason? At my son's Bris ago I offered two approaches.

The Yeshiva was learning a Tractate of the Talmud known as Baba Metzia. At the risk of oversimplifying it has to do with "lost and found". It analyzes thoroughly when possessions are considered to have exchanged ownership. There is a notion that if someone lost an object and someone else finds it, the finder can only take it for his own if it can be determined that the original owner has given up on it. For example, if a coin is found in the street, we can assume that the loser of that coin, when he discovers the hole in his pocket and that his generic coin is gone he'll lose hope of ever recovering it. The coin is then considered available to the new owner. However, if one finds something with an identifiable mark or package or placement, then the owner is presumed to have not given up on it.

The same concept may be applied to the circumcision. HASHEM had commanded us to put an identifiable mark on every Jewish male. This informs us that even if a Jewish child goes lost from his heritage and is lost in the culture of the street, the owner never gives up. G-d does not lose hope. There is always a chance the child will find his way back home. This is a great gift for a Jewish child to have this stamp upon his flesh as a sign that he is always a Jew.

Another idea! Tractate Shabbos tells us of an unusual incident regarding King David. He found himself at the bath house and became shockingly aware that he has no Mitzvos around him. No Mezuzah on the bath house door, no Tefillin, no Tzitzis! He became anxious until he remembered that he has this permanent Mitzvah of circumcision and that somehow consoled him.

What bothered David? He understood that as with Jacob's dream of the ladder, angels were ascending and descending. None were parked. One is either going up or going down spiritually. There is no such thing as standing still. The Mishna in Pirke Avos tells us, "Mitzvos bring about Mitzvos and violations cause more violations." In an environment without Mitzvos, David presumed he was sinking.

How does one break the momentum of a downward spiral? Where does the first Mitzvah come from that will lead him in the direction of even more Mitzvos? To find a light in a black out we need a light. To make money you need money. To get a job, you need to have had a job? How do we maneuver ourselves again and again in the direction of Mitzvos? King David came to appreciate at that moment the benefit of that permanent Mitzvah that has been installed on our flesh. With that, every Jewish male has been invested with a Mitzvah in order to help him start when his heart awakens to a career of Mitzvos. DvarTorah, Copyright © 2007 by Rabbi Label Lam and [Torah.org](https://torah.org).