

# THE PERFECT COVENANT

by Rabbi Pinchas Winston

## FRIDAY NIGHT:

*When Avram was ninety-nine years old, G-d appeared to Avram and said to him, "I am E"l Shadd"ai; walk before Me and be perfect." (Bereishis 17:1)*

On the heels of the perfect storm comes the perfect covenant, for what follows next is the Bris, the covenant between G-d and man that changed history. Not only Avraham's history, but the history of the whole world and of all of the generations that would ever be, including our own. For the covenant described at the beginning of Jewish history is really for the reality at the end of Jewish history, of which we are now a part of.

To understand the end we must first understand the beginning. Why was Bris Milah so important to history? As the following reveals, it is the source of Malchus (of kingship), and therefore, the Final Redemption.

And Yosef said to his brothers, " 'Please come near to me,' and they came near to him and he said . . ." (Bereishis 45:4). Why did he call them if they were already next to him? Because when he told them, "I am Yosef your brother" (Ibid.), they were in shock to see his royal position. He told them that his royalty was a direct result of this. (Zohar 1:93b)

What was Yosef referring to? The Zohar explains:

" 'Please come near to me,' and they came near to him": He showed them that he upheld Bris Milah, saying, "By keeping this intact, I was able to attain royal status." From here we learn that whomever keeps this sign intact will merit royalty. (Ibid.)

In other words, Yosef was saying that his royal status had been conferred upon him by Heaven for having resisted the advances of his master's wife, Aishes Potiphar. Such intimacy would have been forbidden to him, and though he had been tempted at the time, in the end he had overcome his yetzer hara and had run out of the house, risking her vicious retribution that followed.

However, the Zohar is not finished yet, and backs up its statement with the following:

>From where else do we know this? From Boaz, as it says, "As Hashem lives, lie down until the morning" (Rus 3:13). His evil inclination was enticing him, so he made this oath to keep his bris intact. (Ibid.)

In other words, while he was secluded with Rus, he desired her then. However, intimacy with her then was improper, and therefore he made the oath to safeguard himself against a sinful relationship. If she was to be his wife, Boaz reasoned with himself, it had to be after all the halachic conditions had been satisfied. Thus the Zohar concludes:

It was because of this that he merited to become the progenitor of kings who rule over all other kings, and ultimately the progenitor of Melech HaMoshiach, whose name is linked with The Holy One, Blessed is He. (Ibid.)

Thus, we learn from the Zohar, that Bris Milah is really a two-part process: the actual physical procedure on the eighth day after birth, and physical intimacy based upon the guidelines of Torah. And, both are necessary to bring the redemption and to be a part of it.

### **SHABBOS DAY:**

*And He delivered them into the hands of Sisera. (I Shmuel 12:9)*

He, as in G-d, them, as in the Jewish people, and Sisera, as in the general of the army of Chatzor.

*Then they cried out to Hashem, "We have sinned! For we have forsaken Hashem . . ." (Ibid. 10)*

Explains the Zohar:

They had literally abandoned G-d until Devorah came and made it obligatory upon all of Israel to keep this vow. It was only then that they were able to defeat their enemies. (Zohar 1:93b)

In other words, the Zohar is explaining that it is the proper execution of Bris Milah that affects Israel's military capabilities. At that time, the Jews had only performed the first stage of Milah, removing the foreskin but not performing Periah, the subsequent removal of the mucous membrane underneath the foreskin.

According to the Zohar, to not perform Periah causes the Four-Letter Name of G-d to divide into two parts, and this is what the Jews meant when they said they had sinned and abandoned G-d. It was therefore, this negligence that gave strength to the enemies of Israel until Devorah made the Jewish people fulfill the obligation of Periah and complete the Milah.

How can such a small technical detail make such a major military difference? Because everything that happens down here in our physical world is just a reflection of what is happening up in the spiritual world, in the realm of the Sefiros. Simply put, when Periah is not performed, the flow of Divine light is prevented, and this gives strength to our enemies.

Indeed, regarding Bris Milah the Zohar teaches:

Come and see: Until Avraham was circumcised, he was spoken to [by G-d] only through a vision (machazeh), as it says, "The word of G-d came to Avram in a vision" (Bereishis 15:1). (Zohar 1:91a)

What is a machazeh? Basically, when Malchus is in its proper position, it reveals the six sefiros of Zehr Anpin (Chesed, Gevurah, Tifferes, Netzach, Hod, and Yesod), which in turn reveals the Divine light. However, as long as the orlah (foreskin) remains, it blocks the flow of light, and it therefore blocks prophecy as it makes its way from the level of Yesod to Malchus. Consequently, the amount of Divine revelation that makes its way into the world is very limited, and therefore the reality of G-d is felt less.

The sod of the Bris, explains the Zohar, is that it is associated with the sixth sefirah of Zehr Anpin (Yesod), which also corresponds to Yosef, the channel for the light of the sefiros that are above it. This is the connection of Yosef to Avraham Avinu, though historically he was only a great-grandson, and why it is Moshiach Ben Yosef who clears the way for the Final Redemption, and why the Final Redemption is described in terms of Bris Milah:

G-d, your G-d, will circumcise your heart, and the heart of your descendants, so you may love G-d . . . (Devarim 30:6)

And also why Moshiach did not come in the first five millennia, but will come in the sixth millennium:

The [ninth sefirah called] Yesod divided into two "kings" (that is, sefiros), Yesod and Atarah (Crown). The Atarah is relevant to [the tenth sefirah] Malchus, since it is her crown, which is why it is called Atarah. Therefore, the Yesod and the Atarah became two; however, after the tikun (i.e., Creation), Yesod and the Atarah became one in order to join Zehr Anpin and the Nukveh (Malchus) together forever. This is the sod of Yemos HaMoshiach being at the end of the sixth millennium, the time when the Atarah governs and gives off light for Yemos HaMoshiach; Yesod governs the time of exile until Yemos HaMoshiach. Since the Atarah is rooted in an independent "king" and the Yesod divided into two, the sixth millennium, which corresponds to Yesod, is also divided into two. During the time that corresponds to the Yesod, there will still be destruction and exile. However, the time that corresponds to the Atarah will be Yemos HaMoshiach. (Hakdamos v'Sha'arim, p. 172)

### **SEUDOS SHLISHIS:**

*He [G-d] has said, "Because the hand is upon the Throne of G-d it is a war for G-d with Amalek in each generation." (Shemos 17:16)*

A fundamental of Kabbalah is how the four letters of G-d's Four-Letter Ineffable Name correspond to the Ten Sefiros. Everything in the physical world is just a function of what exists in the spiritual world, and the entire spiritual world is made up of various names of G-d, each one describing a different sefirah, or system of sefiros, and therefore, a different level of revelation of Divine Light.

The Yud corresponds to the sefirah called Chochmah (Wisdom), while the first Heh corresponds to the sefirah after it, Binah (Understanding). The Vav is associated with the six sefiros of Chesed through Yesod, and the final Heh corresponds to Malchus. Keser, the first and most esoteric of the Ten Sefiros, can only be hinted to, and in this case only by the crown of the Yud.

In general, though we talk about the potential division between the first two letters of G-d's Holy Name, G-d forbid, and the final two letters, the real division is between the first three and the final Heh, or between the top nine sefiros and the tenth sefirah, Malchus. Thus, the Arizal explains, the word for repentance, teshuvah, really means "teshuv-HEH," return the Heh. For, a sin causes the final Heh to become separate from the upper three letters, whereas teshuvah causes it to return to its rightful place (Sha'ar HaGilgulim, Ch. 21).

Thus, the letter Heh was added to Avram's name to make it Avraham, and thus it was Amalek about whom it is said:

He [G-d] has said, "Because the hand is upon the Throne (Chof-Samech) of G- d (Yud-Heh) it is a war for G-d with Amalek in each generation." (Shemos 17:16)

Why is "Throne" written Chof-Samech and not Chof-Samech-ALEPH? And why is G-d's [Four-Letter Ineffable] Name divided in half? The Holy One, Blessed is He, swears that neither His Name nor His Throne will be whole until the name of Amalek is completely eradicated. (Rashi)

The army of Amalek threw the Bris Milah heavenward of the Jews they attacked, mocking G-d and the relationship with the Jewish people that it represented. The Four-Letter Name of G-d goes hand-in-hand with Bris Milah, which is why it was E"l Shadd"ai Who commanded the mitzvah to be performed, but it was Y-H-V-H Who appeared to Avraham after it was performed (Bereishis 17:1).

Thus, the Final Redemption is described the prophet Zechariah in terms of the reunification of the Name of G-d:

On that day, Y-H-V-H will be One, and His Name One. (Zechariah 14:9)

For, G-d will circumcise the hearts of the Jewish people, remove the orlah that prevents the flow of Divine light from Yesod to Malchus, and prophecy will once again return. Amalek will be destroyed, promiscuity will end, holiness will return, and G-d will be known to all - to all those who survive the transition, that is.

### **MELAVE MALKAH:**

And all Your people are righteous; they shall inherit the land forever; they shall be the branch of My planting, the work of My hands that I may be glorified. (Yeshayahu 60:21)

Thus, everything in life and history, in general, comes down to unifying the Malchus with the Yesod, the tenth sefirah with the ninth, and also to the eight above it. Bris Milah is both, the process that achieves this and represents this on a larger scale. That is why in both words, Milah and Periah, the letters Yud-Heh are present, to allude to the upper level of light to which both provide access.

Says the Zohar:

Why does the posuk say, "And all Your people are righteous" (Yeshayahu 60:21)? Is all of Israel really

righteous? See how many transgressors are among Israel! See how many sinners and evildoers who transgress the mitzvot of the Torah! Rather, it is learned in the secret Mishnah: Happy are Israel who bring a favorable sacrifice before The Holy One, Blessed is He . . . who offer their sons on the eighth day. (Zohar 1:93a)

Thus, the performance of Bris Milah as a mitzvah with all the joy it entails, counts before G-d as if the father has in fact, brought a sacrifice. There is never permission to knowingly transgress the Torah in a rebellious manner, but even when one has transgressed, the Zohar says, the mitzvah of Bris Milah has tremendous weight in Heaven to mitigate the judgment of sinners. They can even be called "righteous," if you can imagine that, for "the righteous one is the foundation (Yesod) of the world" (Mishlei 10:25).

"Therefore, they shall inherit the earth" . . . that is, Malchus, which is also called "earth," and through the performance of Periah, we gain access to Yesod, and achieve the status of "Tzaddik." "The branch of My planting" . . . Those who circumcise their children merit access to Malchus and Zehr Anpin via Yesod. A branch from that planting which The Holy One, Blessed is He, planted in the Garden of Eden. (Ibid.)

There is another name associated with the sefirah of Yesod in Kabbalah: Tzion. Thus, when the posuk says:

*You will arise and show Tzion mercy, for the time to favor her, for the appointed time will have come. (Tehillim 102:14)*

It means on a Sod-level, that G-d will show mercy to the sefirah of Yesod, which yearns to give its light over to the Malchus. It also means that He will let Moshiach Ben Yosef come (Yesod), so that he can open the gate for Moshiach Ben Dovid (Malchus).

No wonder that G-d, in this week's parshah, makes Eretz Yisroel an integral part of the Bris:

*"I will establish My covenant between Me and you, and with your descendants after you throughout the generations . . . I will give to you and to your descendants after you the land in which you now live - the entire land of Canaan, as an eternal possession. I will be their G-d." (Bereishis 17:7-8)*

Like the sefirah of Yesod, Eretz Yisroel is the conduit for the light of G- d. Like the sefirah of Yesod, it requires a real Malchus to receive and project its light. Thus, when the posuk concludes:

*For your servants have CHERISHED HER STONES and FAVOR HER DUST. (Tehillim 102:15)*

Stones and dust must refer to the Divine light being channeled through the Yesod and through Eretz Yisroel, and more specifically through what Ya'akov Avinu referred to as the "Gates of Heaven", and what we refer to today as the Temple Mount.

No wonder it was Yishmael who received the mitzvah of Milah instead of Eisav, who captured and built upon Har HaBayis. And, no wonder Har HaBayis is in the hands of Israel, who received the

mitzvah of Periah, and not in the hands of Yishmael who did not receive that mitzvah, so that Har HaBayis will fall (perhaps literally) eternally.

Have a great Shabbos,  
PW

---

Text

Copyright © by [Rabbi Pinchas Winston](#) and Project Genesis, Inc.

Rabbi Winston has authored many books on Jewish philosophy (Hashkofa). If you enjoy Rabbi Winston's Perceptions on the Parsha, you may enjoy his books. Visit Rabbi Winston's [online book store](#) for more details! [www.thirtysix.org](http://www.thirtysix.org)