

פרשת תזריע מצורע (טהור)

"A woman who conceives and gives birth to a boy" - "אשה כי תזריע וילדה זכר"

Why did the Torah have to say a woman **who conceives** and gives birth to a boy? Why didn't it just say, a woman who gives birth to a boy – without mentioning conception? The Zohar says that from the moment of conception a mother hopes and wishes that the child inside her will be a boy. This is why it says "אשה כי תזריע" - to teach that when a woman conceives - "וילדה זכר" - her hopes are that she will give birth to a boy.

The woman craves to have a son even more than her husband. Why does the woman have such a strong desire to have a son? The obligation of פרו ורבו - to have children - is on the man not on the woman. When a woman has a baby she enables her husband to get this Misvah, but she herself receives credit only for **assisting** him. However in the event that she gives birth to a boy, she will ultimately get credit for the Misvah of פרו ורבו (when her son grows up and has a child himself) since she brought into the world a boy who fulfilled the Misvah. Only her sons will have the obligation to have children, but not her daughters. The mother will fulfill the Misvah through her son and for this reason at the time of conception she craves a boy, so that she too will ultimately eventually perform the Misvah through this pregnancy.

When someone would ask Hacham Baruch z'l, how someone who has no children can fulfill the obligation of פרו ורבו, he would advise them to support schools to educate the children, and in this way he will get credit as if he had fathered them. When he was asked how someone that only had boys or only had girls was to perform the Misvah (the obligation to have children is to have at least one girl and one boy), he would explain that a person can fulfill the Misvah through his grandchildren. When his son has a daughter it is as if the person himself had the daughter - "בני בנים כבנים" - "grandchildren are like children". We see that the offspring of the children are credited to the grandparents as well, and therefore the mother desires to have a son even **more than her husband**, since

the husband immediately fulfills the Misvah with this child even if it is a girl. The mother however, will fulfill it only through having a son.

This explains the נוסח (text) of the ceremony of the Brit Milah. It says "ישמח" "let the man rejoice with his *offspring* and the woman with the *fruits of her womb*". The man's rejoicing begins when his offspring is born- whether it is a boy or girl- because he accomplished a Misvah, but the woman had been yearning and awaiting this boy -from the moment of conception in the womb- so that she will accomplish the misvah! Therefore the text refers to the "fruits of her womb".

The Brit Milah that is performed on a baby boy has a tremendously profound and immediate spiritual impact on the child. The name of Hashem ש-ד-י is revealed upon the spot of the Brit, and the child attains an instant holiness that will remain with him for the rest of his life. Like It says in the Beracha of the Mila: "the seal of the Berit that he put in our flesh" - צאצאיו חתם באות ברית קדש... בריתו אשר שם בבשרנו ש-ד-י that he put in our flesh. (We see this name of ש-ד-י used primarily for protection and for having children. It is used for protection by the Mezuzah which has this name on the outside of it. ש-ד-י stands for "שומר דלתות ישראל" - "the guardian of the doors of Israel". We also see it used several times in the Torah in regards to having children [by Abraham, by Yaakov, and by Yosef] like it says "ואל ש-ד-י יברך אתך ויפרך וירבך". One reason why specifically the name of ש-ד-י is used with regard to having children is because the man has 248 limbs and the woman (who has the womb etc.) has 252 which total 500. The 'גמט' (numerical value) of the "inner" letters of ש-ד-י are:

$$\begin{array}{rcl} 60 & = & \text{ש-י} \\ 430 & = & \text{ד-ל} \\ \underline{10} & = & \text{י-וד} \\ & & 500 \end{array}$$

500 corresponding to the 500 combined limbs of a man and wife.

In addition if we take the last letters of יוד, דלת, שין it equals 454 which is the same 'גמט' as the words בן-בת a son and a daughter [having a son and daughter]

is the obligation of **כפרו ורבו**]. This is also why we have a Mezuzah that contains this name on the doorways of our bedrooms-the place of conception).

During the week we wear Tefillin. The Tefillin contain the name of **ש-ד-י**. The **ש** is on the Shel Rosh, the **ד** is the knot of the back of the Shel Rosh, and the **י** is the knot of the Shel Yad. What about on Shabbat when we don't put on Tefillin? How do we have the **ש-ד-י**? We have this holiness through our Berit Milah, which contains this name of **ש-ד-י**.

The name **ש-ד-י** has a connotation of limiting- **די**- which means “enough” as if to say **ש-אומר די** -“he says- **enough**”. It represents us limiting our lusts and desires, and specifically targets the primary organ of desire and keeps the lust “in check” by saying **enough!** This is not permitted!

We cut the foreskin of the Berit to minimize our physical urges and passion.

To the other extreme, the word **ש-ד-י** also limits us and restrains us when it comes to coming **too** close to Hashem, for example: the Ramah Mipano needed his students to constantly surround him and talk to him because his Neshama yearned so much to be close to Hashem that it wanted to “go up” and leave his body. His students therefore had to keep him “grounded” and tried “to take his mind off” of connecting too closely, to prevent his Neshama from jumping up to Hashem. The Milah helps keep a person “grounded”, so that when he wants to connect himself too strongly, it tells him **די-enough** take it easy, keep your Neshama in your body and stay alive!

This explains the Pasuk in Tehilim **"יקר בעיני ה' המותה לחסידיו"** -“it is precious in the eyes of Hashem, the death of his devout ones”-Why is the death of the righteous precious to Hashem? Because ultimately when the time comes for the righteous to pass on, Hashem allows the Neshama- that had been yearning to come closer to Hashem- to finally come up to him and leave the body. This desire to come near him is very precious in the eyes of Hashem!

This also explains the Gemarah in Nedarim Daf 32a that says that at first, when Avraham was told by Hashem that he needed to circumcise himself, he became very afraid. When Hashem told him that this was to be a covenant between himself and Avraham, this eased Avraham's tensions. Why was Avraham afraid when Hashem commanded him to do the Berit Milah? Since the Milah represents **די**-limiting and minimizing the physical pleasures. It seemed that Hashem was implying that Avraham needed more control in this area, and that is

why he required the Berit Milah. After Hashem explained that it was a covenant between them, he realized that it was quite the opposite. The Milah was needed to insure that Avraham remained in this world, and not get **too** close to Hashem, even though he was about to experience a treaty with him. Upon realizing this Avraham was calmed.

This concept explains a seemingly “puzzling” Midrash. The Midrash is on the Pasuk וידם אהרן-when Aharon was silent upon the death of his two sons. The Midrash asks: what could Aharon have said that he did not say? He could have said "וביום השמיני ימול בשר ערלתו"-"on the eighth day-circumcise the flesh of the foreskin". What is this Midrash saying? Why would this Pasuk have been the claim of Aharon?? We now understand that Aharon could have claimed that the Milah should have protected his sons! Nadav and Avihu had offered a fire in the Mikdash and their Neshamot had too much desire to be with Hashem and therefore left them. Why didn't the Milah keep his sons from desiring to connect with Hashem too closely?! Even so, Aharon kept silent and realized there death had been decreed from above.

The question is asked; why are we permitted to perform the circumcision of the Milah? There is a rule that even if there is a small chance of danger we do not take the risk, if so, why do we perform a Brit Milah, after all it **is** a small סכנה-danger to the child?! The answer is that since it is a Misvah- and we have a rule that someone who is doing a Misvah will be protected- the Misvah will protect him. For this reason we do the Berit Milah and trust in the protection of the Misvah.

This explains why Avraham did not do the Berit Milah on himself before Hashem commanded him to do so, even though he kept all the other Misvot in the Torah. Since he was not commanded, it was not a Misvah, and he would not have had the protection of a Misvah. Therefore he had no right to put himself in danger by performing the Berit Milah!

This also explains why we do the Berit Milah on the eighth day even though it is a Shabbat (the Berit Milah overrides the Shabbat that would normally prohibit such acts). The Law is that a Milah done on the seventh day is also kosher- after the fact. If so, why do a Milah on Shabbat, why not do it on Friday-the seventh day- thereby obviating the need to override the Shabbat? We now

understand that since the Misvah is to do it on the eighth day, that is when we have the protection. However since on the seventh day we are not yet required to circumcise, we do **not** have the special protection (the Milah is only valid **after the fact** if it is done on the seventh day). For this reason we perform a Berit Milah on the eighth day even when it falls out on a Shabbat.

This idea is very significant. A person takes his son and does the will of Hashem by circumcising him and trusts in Hashem's protection. The Milah is an act of **מסירת נפש**-self sacrifice that is done on a baby of only eight days old, and it imbues in the child an ability to be **מוסר נפש** and sacrifice for Hashem, that lasts throughout his life!

When something is done in a certain manner from the outset, it remains throughout. (this is why the Baal Shem Tov advised that the first thing a person should do when he wakes up in the morning is praise Hashem. This will "set the tone" for his day and he will be praising Hashem throughout the day). The Berit Milah puts into a baby this ability to sacrifice his pleasures and desires, and if necessary, even his life for Hashem. Serving Hashem necessitates this sacrifice. We keep kosher, wake up early to pray and learn etc. Judaism is about sacrificing for Hashem and the Milah sets the tone. This is why the father of the baby declares "Shema Yisrael" just before the Berit is performed, Shema Yisrael is what people say just before they die **על קידוש ה'**-to sanctify Hashem's name. When we say the Shema we are supposed to have in mind that we are willing to give our lives to sanctify Hashem's name. The father says Shema to show that the Misvah of the Milah that he is about to perform will infuse the child with this ability to be **מוסר נפש לה'**.

The Pasuk in Tehilim says; "כי עליך הרגנו כל היום"- "for you we sacrifice ourselves throughout the day" -showing that serving Hashem requires sacrifice. We now understand that we have the **ability** to sacrifice constantly for Hashem **from the Milah** that was performed with self sacrifice even though it was dangerous. The Milah gives us the strength to overcome **any** test that we are faced with.

The first person to ever have a Berit Milah on the **eighth day** was Yishak Avinu. It is no coincidence that he was also the first person who sacrificed his life to perform the command of Hashem by the Akeidah. When he requested to be

bound tightly to be properly slaughtered and give his Neshama back to Hashem. The name יצחק stand for:

י = 10- he was Avraham's tenth test of the Akeidah

צ = 90- the age of Sarah his mother when he was born

ח = 8- the eighth day, the day of his Berit Milah

ק = 100- the age of Avraham when he was born

The 'י and 'ח are the reason for one another. He was only able to be Avraham's tenth test **because** of the Milah that was performed on the eighth day. This is why some Mohels have the custom to bind the baby very tightly, to allude to the binding of Yishak and the ability to sacrifice for Hashem that is obtained at this moment.

This concept provides another understanding to the Pasuk mentioned previously, in which Avraham was first overcome with fear when he was commanded to do the Berit Milah. He realized that the Berit Milah was to inject self sacrifice, but why would Hashem imply that he needed "help" in sacrificing for Hashem by commanding him to do a Berit Milah? Avraham epitomized sacrificing for Hashem ! (He even jumped into a fire for Hashem!). Only after Hashem explained that in his case it was for a different reason (a covenant for him and his children)- and that his מסירות נפש was fine- was Avraham calmed.

This also explains why it says in Halacha that almost anything is kosher to us as a tool to cut the foreskin for the circumcision- glass, rock, etc... but the מצוה המובחר-the best way to perform the Misvah is to use metal (a metal knife). Why specifically metal? The answer given is that since when King David faced Goliath he used his slingshot to shoot a rock at Goliath's head. Goliath was wearing a metal helmet but the rock penetrated the metal and killed Goliath, and in appreciation to the metal, we use it for Mila.

What does this episode have to do with the Berit Milah?? Why was Mila the reward of the metal?

It says that Goliath used to terrorize the Jews השכם והערב - "in the morning and evening" during the times that the Jews would recite Shema Yisrael. Goliath disrupted the Jews so that they would not be able to say Shema with the proper concentration. Goliath realized the value of reciting the Shema, and tried to

disrupt it. David Hamelech came to do battle with Goliath with five stones and his slingshot. These six items (five stones and the sling shot) were corresponding to the six words of Shema Yisrael. David Hamelech was attacking Goliath with the Shema Yisrael. The Shema represents the self sacrifice of the Jews(as mentioned). When David Hamelech slung the stone at the forehead of Goliath, the metal helmet initially did not want to give way for the stone to penetrate. Hashem promised the metal that from now on it will be the primary tool used to perform the Berit Milah. When the metal heard this, it gave way to the stone and allowed it to penetrate, thus killing Goliath.

We now understand the connection. The Shema Yisrael- that was represented by the stones and slingshot of David -stood for the self sacrifice of the Jews. They **needed** to penetrate the armor of Goliath who was trying to stop the self sacrifice of the Jews by disrupting the Shema Yisrael. As a reward to the metal for giving way, it is now used to **instill** the self sacrifice in every Jew by the Berit Milah.

The Berit Milah is performed by all factions of Judaism, no matter how secular they may be. The reason for this is that the Misvah of Berit Milah was accepted by the Jews with Simchah-joy and it says in the Gemarah Shabbat that any Misvah that is accepted with joy will always remain. The father declares at the Berit "שש אנכי על אמרתך כמוצא שלל רב" - **rejoice** over your word like finding great spoils".

We bless the baby at the Berit כשם שנכנס לברית כך לתורה לחופה למצות "just as you entered the Berit so may you enter a life of Torah, marriage, Misvot, and good deeds". What is the link between the entrance to the Berit and the rest of the boy's life of Torah and marriage? כשם-כך (**just as-so too**)- as if we are wishing the baby should grow to be a good Jew **in the same way** he is receiving his Berit Milah, implying a direct connection between the two. What is this connection??

One answer is that we are blessing the baby with life! There is a story in the time of the Gemarah about a man who made a Berit Milah for his son and after the Milah; he gave out some good wine to the people who attended the ceremony. The people made the blessing on the wine then blessed the baby that

just as they are drinking wine and celebrating now at his Berit Milah, so too may they drink and celebrate at the boy's wedding! When one of the sages left the Berit he encountered the Satan who looked despondent. What's wrong; asked the sage? The Satan replied that he was upset because he was supposed to kill this little baby boy very soon, but since the people blessed the baby that he should live to get married, the decree in heaven has been annulled! So we too bless the child at the Berit to insure that he lives!

Another connection between the Berit and the Misvot the boy will do in his life is that; just as the boy had the Berit Milah done on him without any hesitation or contemplation by his parents, so too his parents should not contemplate whether or not to send their son to the proper yeshivot, nor should the boy himself have any hesitation in doing the Misvot and behaving as an observant Jew should. In addition, just as the parents happily perform the Berit on their son, so too should they happily walk their son down the aisle to a befitting bride.

The Misvah of Milah is למעלה מן השכל-it is "above logic", we take a child, tie him up, then cut him, and everyone says Mazal Tov and celebrates!! It sets the tone for the boy's life, that he should not be "too smart" when it comes to performing Misvot, and his thoughts should not perplex him to ask why it is necessary to fulfill certain Misvot, rather his service of Hashem should be done באמונה פשוטה - with simple faith. For this reason the Milah is done on the eighth day, since the number eight represents למעלה מן הטבע - above nature (the number 7 represents nature and the number 8 represents **above** nature). We notice that things that have to do with - השכל ומן הטבע are associated with the number eight. The Milah being done on the eighth day is one example of a Misvah "above logic". Another example is that the **eighth** day of the inauguration of the Mikdash was the day chosen to be the first time for many of the services that were done and - as we learnt last week (see notes on Parashat Shemini) - it was a day fitting for the redemption.

We also find that תשובה - repentance is something that is above logic (since logic dictates that if a person sinned he should be punished immediately but תשובה overrides this). תשובה was facilitated by the Kohen Gadol in the times of the Bet Hamikdash and the Kohen Gadol wore **eight** priestly garments to signify that the Teshuvah he was effecting was above logic.

As mentioned, the Berit Milah instills the **נפש-מסירות** self sacrifice needed for the boy to be a good Jew, and this too is the connection between **כשם-כך**. Just as he is having the Berit done to him with self sacrifice, so too may he have the will, and the self sacrifice to serve Hashem throughout his life.

The Misvah of the Milah is a Misvah that remains with the person throughout his life, and is the symbol of an enduring Misvah. The Pasuk says **מי יעלה בהר ה' ומי יקום במקום קדשו** "who shall ascend into the mountain of Hashem and who shall remain in his holy place". Its one thing to have a spiritual uplift and feel close to Hashem, but it is another to **remain** on that high level. The Milah is the Misvah that symbolizes stability, and the ability to "stay on top of the mountain". Life is full of spiritual "ups and downs". We should focus on the "ups", and when we feel a spiritual uplift we should try to **maintain** our excitement and enthusiasm, and "stay connected" to Hashem to do his will and to serve him with a complete heart. Amen.