

What does it mean to have a circumcised heart?

This weeks reading is a double portion from Parshiot Behar and Bechukotai (*Vayikra / Leviticus 25:1-27:34*). In the reading from Parashat Behar (“on the mountain”) we find the mitzvah to observe the year of Jubilee. During this year, the land is to be fallow, (25:1-12), all property is to revert back to its original owner (25:13-28), all slaves are to be set free (25:39-54), and all debts are to be released. Parashat Bechukotai begins with God stating to observe His Mitzvot (Commandments) so that the rains will come and the land will produce its fruit in its seasons (26:3-5). Walking in God’s ways will bring peace to the land, remove harmful beasts, and no sword will pass through the land (26:6). The scriptures say that when we obey God’s Mitzvot our enemies will run and fall before us (26:7-8) and God will make His dwelling among us (26:11). The Scriptures go on to say that if the people fail to keep His commandments and reject His statutes (26:14-15) He will appoint a sudden terror, a consumption, and a fever over them, and the sowing of seed will be useless because your enemies will eat it up (26:16), the people will fall before their enemies and the people will flee even when no one is pursuing them (26:17). Continuing in sin results in the increase in punishment (26:21-29), the Lord will lay waste to the cities (26:31), and scatter the people among the nations (26:33). While studying the Scriptures we read that when one obeys God and His mitzvot the Lord will make his dwelling among His people and walk among them saying “and I will be their God and they will be my people.”

שדוקה יבתח / The Holy Scriptures

<p>ספר ויקרא פרק כו</p> <p>מא אף-אני אלד עמם בקרי והבאתי אתם בארץ איביהם אז-אז יפנע לבכם הערל ואז ירצו את-עונם: מב וזכרתי את-בריתי יעקוב ואף את-בריתי יצחק ואף את-בריתי אברהם אפכר והארץ אזכר:</p>	<p><i>Vayikra / Leviticus 26:41-42</i> 26:41 I also was acting with hostility against them, to bring them into the land of their enemies or if their uncircumcised heart becomes humbled so that they then make amends for their iniquity, 26:42 then I will remember My covenant with Jacob, and I will remember also My covenant with Isaac, and My covenant with Abraham as well, and I will remember the land. (NASB)</p>
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Studying these Scriptures we read the consequences of living in sin before the Lord Almighty, obeying God results in rain coming in its season, and our land being free from wild beasts and our enemies. On the other hand, disobeying God’s word will cause prosperity to stop and our enemies to attack. The Lord God says that if the people, who were brought into the land of their enemies would humble their “*uncircumcised heart*” and repent the Lord would remember His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. In the Torah we read in various places God speaking of the circumcision of the heart. What does it mean to have a circumcised heart? Circumcision was a part of the covenant that God made with Abraham. Circumcision required that loose skin be removed from the male body which was done when a boy is 8 days old in a ritual known as a “brit milah.” According to the passage here, God speaks of the circumcision of the heart and not of the body. What the Lord is saying here that it isn’t enough to just change one part of your body, you must also change your heart on the inside too. During circumcision, generally speaking, one cuts off the loose foreskin and pulls the skin back and then puts everything together into a new shape. This is the imagery that is described is needed for our hearts. We must allow the Spirit to cut off the loose areas of our hearts. In a boy’s circumcision the part that is cut off is discarded. Upon coming to the Lord, there are parts of our hearts that must be cut off and discarded, such as hate, violent-tendency, lust, greed, pride, malice, discontent, prejudice and much more. All of these things must be circumcised and cast away. Similar to male circumcision our circumcised hearts must take on a new shape upon discarding the old. In Yeshua the Messiah, our hearts are shaped to love God and others. When the Messiah walked this earth, a rich man asked him what is the greatest commandment. Yeshua responded saying that one must love the Lord God with all his heart, mind, and strength, and to love his neighbor as himself. By the power and indwelling of the Holy Spirit that God enables us to do just that. In *2 Thessalonians 1:5-9* Paul speaks of the Lord’s return saying “*This is a plain indication of God’s righteous judgment so that you will be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which indeed you are suffering. For after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,*” Here Paul says the Lord is returning to deal out retribution who do not know God and who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. What does it mean to “*obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus?*” According to the Hebrew text in *Devarim / Deuteronomy 28:1*, listening, harkening (שמע תשמע) is synonymous to obeying and doing the command of God. How does one obey the gospel of our Lord Yeshua? How does one live with a circumcised heart before God?