

How important is Circumcision today?

This weeks reading is from Parshiot Nitzavim and Vayelech (*Devarim / Deuteronomy 29:9-31:30*), Moshe writes of the future when the people are scattered to the nations because of their rebellion, and come to their senses, and the Lord will remember the covenant and have compassion (mercy, רַחֲמִים) and restore them from captivity by gathering them from all the nations. (*30:1-3*) According to the Scriptures, in this repentant-remembrance of the Lord God, the Lord will circumcise their hearts according to *Devarim / Deuteronomy 30:6*, ומל יהוה אלהיך את-לִבְּךָ וְאֶת-לִבְּךָ וְאֶת-לִבְּךָ וְאֶת-לִבְּךָ לְאֱלֹהֶיךָ כְּכֹל-לִבְּךָ וּבְכָל-נַפְשְׁךָ לְמַעַן חַיֶּיךָ, *30:6 'Moreover the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, so that you may live. (NASB)* The scriptures use the term “uncircumcised heart” as a reference to those whose stubbornness and pride make it impossible to obey God’s Commandments. The uncircumcised heart does not submit to God’s will and it is the person’s uncircumcised heart, his flesh, which guides and directs the will. God’s promise to circumcise the heart of His people results in an inward change that facilitates the removal of the “flesh centered will” in order to allow the Spirit of God to lead, guide, and direct. The Scriptures also say that the Lord will cross over into the Promised land ahead of the people and Joshua will lead the people to take the Land (וַיִּרְשְׁתֶּם יְהוּשָׁע) (הוא עֵבֶר לְפָנֶיךָ כְּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר יְהוָה) indicating the people’s role in taking the land. Examining these verses regarding circumcision and taking possession of the Land of Promise, how important is circumcision for us today?

שְׂדוּקָה יִתַּח / The Holy Scriptures	
ספר דברים פרק ל	<i>Devarim / Deuteronomy 30:6</i>
וּמֵל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֶת-לִבְּךָ וְאֶת-לִבְּךָ וְאֶת-לִבְּךָ וְאֶת-לִבְּךָ לְאֱלֹהֶיךָ כְּכֹל-לִבְּךָ וּבְכָל-נַפְשְׁךָ לְמַעַן חַיֶּיךָ:	<i>30:6 'Moreover the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, so that you may live. (NASB)</i>

Reading through this week’s double portion we are told that the Lord will circumcise our hearts (*Devarim / Deuteronomy 30:6*) whereas earlier we read in Parashat Ekev that Moshe told the people to circumcise their own hearts (*Devarim / Deuteronomy 10:16*). Studying the context, in *Devarim / Deuteronomy 10:16*, Moshe is retelling the story of the children of Israel who sinned before the mountain of Sinai with the golden calf, and God tells Moshe to make two more stone tablets. Moshe then says in *Devarim / Deuteronomy 10:12-15, 10:12 “Now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require from you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways and love Him, and to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, 10:13 and to keep the Lord’s commandments and His statutes which I am commanding you today for your good? 10:14 Behold, to the Lord your God belong heaven and the highest heavens, the earth and all that is in it. 10:15 Yet on your fathers did the Lord set His affection to love them, and He chose their descendants after them, even you above all peoples, as it is this day. (NASB)* Israel is a unique people and therefore they are to fear the Lord, to serve the Lord, and walk in His ways. In *Devarim / Deuteronomy 30*, Moshe is explaining to the people the blessings and the curses that will come if they do not love and obey. The Lord God Almighty will transform (cut away at) their hearts so that they will love the Lord their God and not depart from His commandments. At the end of the book of Leviticus in Parashat Bechukotai, the Lord says in *Vayikra / Leviticus 26:40-42, 26:40 ‘If they confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their forefathers, in their unfaithfulness which they committed against Me, and also in their acting with hostility against Me 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)* The Scriptures indicate that if the people repent the Lord will remember His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and save them. According to these Scriptures, repentance is also a part of this heart circumcision process. Moshe said in *Devarim / Deuteronomy 10:16 “... and stiffen your neck no longer,”* meaning be humble before God. In *Vayikra / Leviticus 26:41*, Moshe speaks of people who have uncircumcised hearts and if they would humble themselves the Lord would return them to the land. In addition to this, prophetically speaking (*Jeremiah 31:30*) the purpose of the New Covenant, made by faith in Yeshua the Messiah, was so that God would circumcise our hearts. The way this would be accomplished is by the Lord writing His Law upon our hearts (see *Jeremiah 31*) so we would desire to obey Him. According to these verses, it appears that it is the Lord God who enables us to love Him with all of our heart, mind, and strength (וְאֶת-הַבָּהֶם אֶת יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ כְּכֹל-לִבְּךָ וּבְכָל-נַפְשְׁךָ וּבְכָל-מְאֹדֶךָ) just as we are supposed to do according to *Devarim / Deuteronomy 6:4-5*. Under the covenant of Moshe we brought the sacrifice of atonement before God; whereas under the new covenant, the Lord God Himself brought atonement for our sins in His Word, according to His Word, and by His Word (*John 1:1-14*). This understanding is so essential for us today, the Lord is telling us that He will circumcise our hearts, to illustrate the inward transformation that He will implement when we seek to draw near to Him in true repentance and in the Messiah Yeshua. In addition to this, in *Psalms 25:4-5*, David says *25:4 Make me know Your ways, O Lord; Teach me Your paths. 25:5 Lead me in Your truth and teach me, For You are the God of my salvation; For You I wait all the day. (NASB)* David seeks the Lord to cause him to know his ways, this is beyond an individual seeking to know God’s ways, he is asking the Lord to actively participate in His life to make him know God’s ways. Have you ever asked the Lord to work in your life so that you can know His ways and draw nearer to Him? Do we seek the Lord like David did? The take home point for this week is to seek the Lord’s help, that He would purposefully lead us into his truth so that we might know the Salvation that He has made available to us in Yeshua the Messiah. A life filled with resurrection power!