

Maamarei Mordechai

הסבר לפי ממש פשוט

Parshas Tazria 5784

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The Torah continues to teach the laws of tumeh and tahara.

וביום השמיני ימול בשר ערלתו:

“And on the eighth day [of life], his foreskin flesh shall be circumcised.” (Vayikra 12:3).

This psauk seems to be a non-sequitur. True, it relates to a child being born. However, that is not the purpose or the flow of the pesukim. The Torah is not talking about the child but the mother. The Torah is focusing on tumeh and tahar. Why does the Torah interrupt here to talk about a halacha that the child must have milah? Does milah have to do with such kedusha status? Even if so, the Torah has been focusing on the status of the mother, so where does the child's obligations come in here?

The Torah, sometimes, will go off on a tangent when talking about one topic. Since the Torah mentioned the birth of a boy, the Torah went on a one-pasuk tangent to talk about the mitzvah of bris milah. However, it still seems like an odd tangent because the law of milah can be learned elsewhere. Since the Torah is not meant to be read with isolated parshios, but to be taken as a whole in context, it would create no inconvenience to the reader. One would learn the laws of the mother's tahara status here and then learn about the baby boy's obligations elsewhere.

The Torah, though, did state it here purposely. There is a lesson to be learned by the Torah adding this in here. What can be learned out from the Torah adding in a single pasuk within an entire section (that takes up several parshios) about tahara laws, that it alone has nothing to do, specifically, with tahara status? It is a standout pasuk that is off topic, so what is the Torah teaching?

At first blush it appears that the Torah is teaching that the obligation to circumcise a boy is the mother's obligation. The Torah says, “When a woman bears a male child...” (Ibid 12:2). “On the eighth day his foreskin shall be circumcised.” (Ibid 12:3). Further, it says in this same parsha, **ובמקלאת | ימי טהרה לבן או לבת תביא כבש בן־שנתו לעלה ובן־יונה או־תר לתטאת** “Upon the fulfillment of the days of purity for a son or a daughter, she shall bring a year-old lamb for a burnt offering, and a hatchling of a pigeon or turtledove for an expiation, to the Kohen at the entrance of the Ohel Moed.” (Ibid 12:6). These korbanos are the woman's obligation. Just like she is obligated to count the days of her blood-purity, so too, she is obligated to bring these korbanos. And just as those obligations are hers, then the bris of her son is hers, too.

There is other precedent that a bris is the mother's obligation. The Torah says, **ותקח וצפורה צר ותקרת את־ערלת בנה** “And Tziporah took a flint and she circumcised the foreskin of her son.” (Shmos 4:25). It was Tziporah, wife of Moshe, that gave the bris to their son.

The mitzvah of milah is originally given to Avraham. (Bereishis 17:11). He was instructed to circumcise himself. Then Hashem commands him, **ובן־שמנת ימים ימול לכם כל־**

זָכַר לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶם יֶלֶד בְּיֹם וּמִקְנֵת-כֶּסֶף מִכָּל בְּוֵנְךָ אֲשֶׁר לֹא מִזְרַעְךָ הוּא: “And as for sons on their eighth day, they shall be circumcised for you, every male, for generations, the male children of your house and those acquired with money from all foreign sons, that are to you not your offspring.” (Ibid 17:12). This pasuk is being taught to Avraham, but it does not say “you shall circumcise” or “a father shall circumcise.” It says, males must be circumcised. This is mirrored in the pasuk about Korban Pesach when the Torah says, “As for male strangers who dwell with you and will make Pesach for Hashem, all his males shall be circumcised.” (Shmos 12:48). If they want to share in the korban Pesach then it is the foreigner’s obligation to get a bris milah, not the head of the household to give them one. The Torah clarifies further. וְעָרַל אֲשֶׁר לֹא-יְמוּל אֶת-בְּשָׂר עָרְלָתוֹ וְנִכְרְתָה הַגֶּפֶשׁ הַהוּא מֵעַמִּיּהָ אֶת-בְּרִיתִי. הַפָּר: “If the foreskin of any male that is not circumcised the flesh of the foreskin, he shall be cut off from his people and has defamed the covenant.” (Bereishis 17:14). This obligation is on the child himself. If his parents do not bring him to bris he has to do it himself. The father is not cut off, the child is.

Now, the Torah does say “Avraham gave a bris to Yishmael.” (Ibid 17:23). And if one would think that is only because Yishmael’s mother was not there, the Torah says, “And Avraham gave a bris milah to Yitzchok.” (Ibid 21:4). Sarah was alive and well, and yet, Avraham gave the bris. The procedure by a bris milah is that the father circumcises the child or, more prevalently, makes the mohel his shliach. Is the obligation both on the father and the mother?

Really, the bris of a son is a mother’s obligation. The Torah needn’t repeat the law of bris milah when it was very clearly given in Bereishis. Also, the fact that it was taught amidst the mother’s obligation regarding her taharah and her korbanos makes it clear that it is the mother’s duty to have her son get a bris milah. She can, of course, have the father do the bris. Practically, it is easier for the father to do the bris, especially if it is in a public ceremony. There is more than practicality, here, though.

The obligation to count the days of purity is not only upon the woman. It is the husband’s duty to aid in the counting, as well. A man should know the days he is pure to his wife. Further, her husband may own all their assets. Therefore, she takes from her husband’s assets to bring the korbanos. The Torah talks in the perspective of the woman because there may be times when there is no husband. He may have died, traveled, or they may have divorced prior to the birth. There is no case, however, that a baby boy can be born from anyone other than a mother. Therefore, the Torah finds it more accurate to speak in terms of the mother’s perspective.

Further, the Torah is teaching that the bris milah is not just a covenant between man and Hashem. It makes the baby boy pure. It is what makes him have kedusha. Without it he is not only cut off from his people (kores) but he is impure and cannot make Korban Pesach. Such a duty to assure that their son is pure falls upon the father, too. Avraham took up the mantle with Yitzchock because he was already experienced in bris milah, having performed his own and Yishmael’s. Tziporah gave bris milah to her son because Moshe was talking to Hashem. (Shmos 4:24). Thus, the obligation is on both parents and is necessary to assure the tahara and kedusha of the child.