

THE BRIDEGROOM OF BLOOD

EXODUS 4:25

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The story of Moses, sent by God to Egypt to free Israel from Egyptian slavery, speaks of a strange encounter with God who wanted to kill Moses, either directly or with some disease (C. F. Keil).¹ Nahum Sarna thinks that God wanted to kill Moses' firstborn son, whose name was Gershom, with 'a deadly ailment.'² Scripture indicates that it was Moses whose life was in danger (Ex. 4:24). Both Keil and Sarna rightly state that God's wrath was occasioned by Moses' neglect to circumcise his son:

²⁴“And it came to pass on the way, at the encampment, that *Yahveh met him and sought to kill him*. ²⁵Then Zipporah took a sharp stone and *cut off* the foreskin of her son and touched the feet of Moses with it and said, ‘Surely you are a bridegroom of blood to me!’
²⁶So God let him alone. Then she said, ‘You are a bridegroom of blood!’ because of the circumcision.” (Exodus 4:24-26)

Keil thinks that it was Eliezer, the second born son of Moses, who was the object of the circumcision. He suggests that Gershom, the firstborn son, had previously been circumcised, but that by the time Eliezer came along, Moses hadn't circumcised Eliezer. Some think from what Zipporah says, in calling Moses a bridegroom of blood, that she despised circumcision, and so, she didn't want her son circumcised, but this, as we'll see, may be reading more into her words than is justified.

Sarna believes it was Gershom, the firstborn son, who was circumcised because circumcision is theologically linked to the sparing of the firstborn Sons of Israel in Egypt at the Passover. It would seem strange, though, if that's the case, for when did the second son, Eliezer, get circumcised? He's obviously with the family (Ex. 4:20). As we'll see, the idea of the firstborn son does weave itself into this divine scriptural tapestry.

Whichever son was circumcised that day, the incident is theologically linked to two significant events in Scripture. The first is the *blood* covenant that God made with Abram (Gen. 15:1f.). Two chapters later God changes his name to Abraham and makes circumcision the *sign* of that covenant (Gen. 17:1-14). Any male who wasn't circumcised would be cut off from his people.

The second event is the Passover: the firstborn son was saved from God's *wrath* in Egypt by the *blood* of the Passover lamb. God's *firstborn* Son Israel (Ex. 4:22) was spared from death while the *wrath* of God destroyed all of Pharaoh's *firstborn* sons (all the firstborn sons of his kingdom including his own firstborn son; Ex. 12:1f.). *God then interweaves the requirement of circumcision* for any Gentile who wanted to keep Passover (i.e. to become part of God's redeemed people Israel; Ex. 12:43-49). It's here that Sarna's thought on Moses' *firstborn* son being circumcised finds support. It was the *wrath* of God that had threatened Moses with death (Ex. 4:24) and it was the blood of the circumcision that spared him. The *blood* of

¹ C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, vol. 1, *The Pentateuch* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2001), pp. 298-299.

² Moses had two sons: the firstborn was Gershom (Ex. 2:22; 18:3; spelled Gershon in 1st Chron. 23:15) and the second was Eliezer (1st Chron. 23:15).

Nahum M. Sarna, *Exodus* (The JPS Torah Commentary; Accordance electronic ed. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1991), pp. 24-26. Note 35: So R. Simeon ben Gamaliel in Ned. 32a; TJ Ned. 3:16 (38b), Exod. R. 5:8; so Targ. Jon., Shadal. Samuel ben Hofni, Saadia, Ramban take the victim to be the second son.

the *circumcision* and the *wrath* of God tie the incident of Moses into the Passover. The failure of Moses to circumcise his son was a matter of life and death,³ but why would God require Moses' life and not that of his uncircumcised son? Also, if circumcision was so important to God why does He forbid circumcision to the Gentile believer in the New Testament?

X MARKS THE SPOT FOR CIRCUMCISION AND THE FIRSTBORN

Sarna makes an ingenious schematic comparison of scriptures that tie into the incident of Moses. Note how it forms an X with 'Firstborn' and 'Circumcision' (below). Both he and Keil also speak of God commanding Israel to be circumcised after their 40 years of Wilderness wanderings once they had entered into the Promised Land (Josh. 5:1f.) as a way of re-emphasizing the importance of circumcision. Sarna states:

‘The featuring of the circumcision episode following the reference to the first-born provides an artfully wrought literary framework for the entire narrative, one that encompasses the struggle for liberation from Pharaoh’s oppression. That struggle begins with Moses’ setting out to return to Egypt’ (Ex. 4:20) ‘and its successful conclusion is signaled by the death of the Egyptian first-born (12:29-36). *This latter is followed immediately by the law requiring circumcision as the precondition for participation in the paschal sacrifice (12:43-49), which in turn is followed by the law of the first-born (13:1, 11-15).* The effect is a thematically arranged chiasm:⁴

A. First-born (4:22-23)..... B. Circumcision (12:43-49)

B. Circumcision (4:24-26)..... A. First-born (13:1, 11-15)

‘In addition to the literary structure, there is also a functional correspondence between *the blood of circumcision* and the visible sign of *the blood on the paschal sacrifice*. In both instances, *wrath* ‘is averted on account of it (4:26; 12:7, 13, 22-23). This inextricable tie between *circumcision and the Passover*, as plainly set forth in 12:43-49, is also unmistakably operative in’ Joshua 5:1f;— ‘after crossing the Jordan into the promised land a mass circumcision ceremony was performed as a *prelude* to the first celebration of the *Passover* feast inside the country (vv. 2-11).’⁵

Circumcision (*blood covenant*), Passover (*blood redemption-salvation of the firstborn; the essence of a family or nation*), and the averting of God’s wrath are all theologically interrelated by the blood. Interesting, too, is that the Hebrew who didn’t keep the Passover was *cut off* from his people (Num. 9:13), which makes Passover and circumcision interrelated at that point, also.

Keil rightly believes that Moses was the recipient of the bloody foreskin, while Sarna thinks that it was

³ Sarna, *Exodus*, pp. 24-26, note 33: Cf. Gen. 21:4; 34:14; Lev. 12:3; Judg. 14:3.

⁴ From http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chiastic_structure: “Chiastic structure (also called chiastic pattern or ring structure) is a literary structure used in ancient literatures including epic poetry (Odyssey and Iliad); scripture (the Torah, the Bible), as well as in the texts of other pre-modern cultures texts. Concepts or ideas are placed in a special symmetric order or pattern in a chiastic structure to emphasize them.” The pattern is usually found in an X form, as above with Sarna’s firstborn and circumcision. “When read left to right, up to down, the first topic (A) is reiterated as the last, and the middle concept (B) appears twice in succession.”



⁵ Sarna, *Exodus*, pp. 24-26.

his firstborn son. Sarna also notes that ‘feet’ can be a euphemism in Scripture for genitals,⁶ which means that he thinks that the bloody foreskin of the son was applied to the genital (procreative) region of Moses.⁷

THE BRIDEGROOM OF BLOOD

Keil writes that the phrase, ‘a bridegroom of blood,’ was spoken by Zipporah because by performing the circumcision she had saved Moses from God’s *wrath* (death). In this way she had ‘gotten him back’ as her husband, so to speak. Keil states,

“the words, ‘a blood-bridegroom art thou to me,’ were addressed to Moses, and not to the boy. Zipporah calls Moses a blood-bridegroom, ‘because she had been compelled, as it were, to acquire...him anew as a husband by shedding the blood of her son’ (*Glass*). ‘Moses had been as good as taken from her by the deadly attack which had been made upon him. She purchased his life by the blood of her son; she received him back, as it were, from the dead, and married him anew; he was, in fact, a bridegroom of blood to her’ (*Kurtz*).”

Sarna insightfully connects the Hebrew word for *cut off* in Ex. 4:25 (‘cut off the foreskin’) with the *penalty* for not being circumcised (to be *cut off* from Israel):

“*cut off*...The unique use of the Hebrew *k-r-t* for this action rather than the otherwise invariable *m-w-l* may reflect Midianite terminology. But there may also be a double word play here, for *k-r-t berit* is the Hebrew term for making a covenant,⁸ and in Genesis 17:9-14 *circumcision* is called ‘the sign of the *covenant*.’ Further, in that same text (v. 14) it is stated that he who fails to fulfill the rite—the first command in the Torah specifically enjoined upon Abraham and his descendants—‘shall be *cut off* from his kin; he has broken My *covenant*.’ The Hebrew term for the prescribed penalty is *karet*” (*k-r-t*). “An uncircumcised Israelite who thereby alienates himself from the community of Israel would be excluded from the Passover and from the redemption from Egypt. Joshua 5:5 explicitly records that all the males who came out of Egypt had undergone the rite. It would have been ironically paradoxical indeed” if the “central figure in the story of the Exodus”⁹ had an uncircumcised son.

Sarna is saying that *k-r-t* (cut) is used in the Hebrew phrase ‘to make; literally to *cut* a covenant’ and that circumcision, the *cutting* of the flesh, is the sign of the Abrahamic covenant. Any Hebrew who failed to have the *sign* was *cut off* from the *cut* covenant, and also, Passover with its subsequent redemption. Moses, having an uncircumcised son, was walking outside the covenant of Abraham by not having circumcised him, but why did God want to kill Moses and not the boy, as the penalty states (Gen. 17:14)?

In speaking of what happened with the foreskin after Zipporah *cut it off* her son, Sarna connects what she did with it to *how* the blood of the Passover was placed upon the lintels and doorpost (smeared). Then he

⁶ Ibid., note 38: “Cf. Judg. 3:24; 1 Sam. 24:3; 2 Kings 18:27 = Isa. 36:12; 7:20; cf. Deut. 28:57; Ezek. 16:25; Ruth 3:4, 7.” It’s hard to imagine, as Sarna presents (Ruth 3:4, 7), that Ruth would have uncovered the genitals of Boaz. It would have made her more of a lewd woman than a virtuous one (3:11). Her laying down at his feet was a picture of her desired submission to him to become his wife.

⁷ It hardly seems possible that the ‘daubing’ of the blood (and foreskin) would be upon the son as there was already blood upon him from his own circumcision. There would seem to be little in symbolic value for the foreskin to be placed upon either his feet or his genitals.

⁸ Literally, *k-r-t berit* means to ‘cut a covenant,’ which refers to the animals slaughtered and sacrificed to make a covenant (see Gen. 15:1f.).

⁹ Sarna, *Exodus*, pp. 24-26.

speaks of the blood, in both instances, averting God's wrath:

“the Hebrew verb used here (rendered ‘touched;’ Ex. 4:25) is the same as that used for the daubing of the blood of the paschal lamb on the lintel and doorposts in 12:22 (rendered ‘apply’). In both cases, the purpose would be the same: The blood would act as a protective sign against” the *wrath*; “the Destroyer would not smite” (Ex. 12:13, 22).¹⁰

Sarna also notes that there's no known ancient usage of Zipporah's phrase, *bridegroom of blood*, outside of its use in Ex. 4:25-26. He then says that in Arabic the word for ‘bridegroom’ means both *to circumcise* and *to protect*. This certainly harkens back to Zipporah, with both meanings coming from the commandment of circumcision, and its penalty of being *cut off* averted. Sarna writes:

“*a bridegroom of blood*...This is the traditional English rendering of the unique Hebrew phrase *hatan damim*, for which, so far, *no parallel has been found in ancient Near Eastern literature*...*Hatan damim* may be a linguistic fossil...the meaning of which has been lost. However...in Arabic the stem *h-t-n*” (bridegroom), “denotes ‘to circumcise’ as well as ‘to protect.’ This latter is also its meaning in Akkadian. Hence, the enigmatic phrase could convey, ‘You are now circumcised (and so) protected for me by means of the blood—the blood of circumcision.’ Curiously, *p-s-h*, the Hebrew stem behind Passover, can also mean ‘to protect.’”¹¹

The blood of the circumcision certainly protected both the son and the father from the wrath of God, but it seems that Zipporah was speaking to Moses, not the child (as Sarna thinks) when she said, ‘**You** are a *bridegroom* of blood to me,’ after she had placed (not disrespectfully *cast*, as some English translations have) the bloody foreskin on Moses. Sarna rightly concludes that the brief passage in Exodus 4:24-26,

“underscores the paramount importance of the institution of circumcision and the surpassing seriousness of its neglect.”¹²

YESHUA'S WATER BAPTISM AND GENTILE CIRCUMCISION

If circumcision was so important in the days of Abraham, Moses and King David, and it was, why does God, in the New Covenant, nullify circumcision for the male *Gentile* believer in Yeshua? Circumcision is nullified for the Gentile because both the covenant and the sign have changed. Covenants are made through the shedding of blood. The blood of the physical, covenantal circumcision is linked to the blood sacrifices of the animals of the covenant that God made with Abraham by making circumcision the *sign* of that covenant (Gen. 15:1f; 17:1f.; cf. Ex. 24:1-8f.). The eight day old Hebrew infant, unbeknownst to him, but chosen by God, was brought into the covenant of Abraham by the shedding of his own blood in the act of circumcision. This linked him back to the animals sacrificed when God made His covenant with Abraham. Before the believer comes to Messiah, also unbeknownst to him, he was also chosen by God. Yeshua said:

“You did not choose Me, *but I chose you* and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

may give you.” (John 15:16)

“And He said, ‘Therefore, I have said to you that *no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father.*’” (John 6:65)

The covenant of circumcision with Abraham included redemption (future salvation) from Pharaoh and Egyptian slavery, and entry into the Promised Land (Gen. 15:12-14; Ex. 6:1-8). It was the prototype of God’s New Covenant with Israel (Jer. 31:31-34) in which His Son’s blood sacrifice, as the Lamb of God, brings about Israel’s redemption from Satan and slavery to carnality, and entry into the eternal Kingdom of Messiah. The *sign* of the New Covenant is not physical covenantal circumcision, but *water baptism* in the name of Messiah Yeshua,¹³ with having been Born Again (John 3:3, 5) as the spiritual foundation, with Holy Spirit baptism ensuing, if the person hasn’t already been filled with the Spirit. Yet, how does *water baptism* link the believer to the *blood* of Yeshua’s sacrifice?

Baptism in water signifies the believer’s death in dying to self (Rom. 6:1f.), *which symbolically speaks of the shedding of his blood.* This is the ‘blood’ of water baptism, which is the *physical sign* that both Jew and Gentile must have. The hope of every ancient righteous Hebrew was that his circumcised infant son would grow into a man who would love Yahveh and keep His commandments, like King David (cf. Psalm 119). Baptism in water speaks of that same hope, but now, with the blood and Spirit of Messiah, one is able to love God with all his heart and keep His commandments and overcome sin *by God’s Spirit within.* This new power to overcome our sinful carnal nature is available to us in the name of Yeshua. Being Born Again, symbolized in water baptism, brings this new reality with it—the circumcision of the heart. In Dt. 10:16 God *commanded* Israel to circumcise their *hearts* and to no longer resist Him and His ways by their stubbornness (carnal nature), but in Dt. 30:6 God said that *He* would circumcise the hearts of Israel so that they would no longer be stubborn, but instead, love Him, and consequently, delight to keep His commandments, statutes and ordinances (which is one of the reasons for the New Covenant; Jer. 31:33; cf. Ezk. 36:24-27; Rev. 14:12).

With the shedding of the sacrificial blood of Yeshua, both circumcised (male) Jew and uncircumcised (male) Gentile are able to enter into the New Covenant, by faith in *Messiah’s* shed blood. It is *this* blood that God requires of us in order to keep Passover in the Kingdom of His Son, and it is *this* blood that will avert God’s wrath on Judgment Day, not the blood of physical circumcision, nor the blood of Abram’s sacrificial animals, although both pictured it. Messiah’s blood is given to every believer in the ‘death to self’ of water baptism, and the consequent¹⁷, circumcision of one’s heart (Col. 2:11). This is what links the believer, both Jew and Gentile, to the blood sacrifice of Messiah Yeshua. A Jew who is only physical-ly covenantally circumcised cannot enter into Messiah’s Kingdom, nor participate in His Passover.

The New Creation

Water baptism has another significant aspect to it, which further emphasizes its potent spiritual reality. This leads to a question first, though—*why* was Yeshua baptized in water? Certainly not, as some think, for identification with Israel *in her sins*, and it certainly wasn’t for His need for cleansing, for He was sinless.¹⁴ Even though He is the quintessential Israeli, representing all Israel as its King and Head, Israel must identify with Him. The water baptism of Messiah was *a symbolic, physical reenactment* of how Yeshua, God the Son,¹⁵ *came forth* from the Father¹⁶ and the Holy Spirit on Day One of Creation week,

¹³ Acts 2:38; 8:36-39; 10:47; Heb. 10:22; 1st Pet. 3:20.

¹⁴ John 8:46; 2nd Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 4:15; 1st John 3:5; 1st Peter 2:22.

¹⁵ See *Yeshua—God the Son* at <http://seedofabraham.net/Yeshua-God-the-Son.pdf> for the Hebraic concept of how Yeshua is deity, along with His Father (and the Spirit).

¹⁶ Psalm 2:7; 89:26-37; John 1:14, 18; 3:16; with John 16:27-28 and 17:8 having Yeshua saying that He ‘came forth’ from the Father. John 8:42 has the identical concept, that Yeshua ‘proceeded forth’ from the Father. See

(not created, but begotten), and how we become a new creature (2nd Cor. 5:17), like Him. Therefore, all who follow Yeshua in this physical-spiritual *sign* of ‘death to self’ are not only saying that their ‘death to self blood’ links them to Yeshua’s blood sacrifice, but that symbolically and spiritually they are *coming forth from God the Father and the Holy Spirit* as Yeshua did on Day One, which means that they are a new creature. One day, the Father promises that we will be like Yeshua is now—glorified.¹⁷ Baptism in water pictures all this and why it is important for believers to be baptized (immersed) in water.

In the Beginning, Yeshua *came forth* from the Father and the Spirit. If we look at the very first words recorded in Scripture that the Father uttered (‘Let there be Light!’ Gen. 1:3) we are privy to seeing Yeshua *come forth* from the Father and the Spirit. Yeshua *was not created*, but *came forth*—as a baby comes forth from the womb of its mother, begotten of the father. The *waters* of Genesis 1:2 picture the Father.¹⁸ The verse speaks of the Spirit of God *hovering* over the *waters* ‘like a bird...with fluttering wings...that moves its wings back and forth constantly.’¹⁹ This beautiful picture speaks of the active involvement of the Holy Spirit in both the Son coming forth, and the Creation of the universe (Prov. 8:1-2, 22-31f., where the Holy Spirit is seen as Wisdom).

In Genesis 1:2-3 we see the Father and the Spirit...and then the Son comes forth as both the *Word* of God,²⁰ *alive!*,²¹ and the *Light* of God; two titles of Messiah Yeshua that we find in the first few verses of John’s Gospel (1:1-9).

This, then—how Yeshua *came forth* from the *Waters* of the Father is *why* Yeshua was baptized in water almost 2,000 years ago. It was a *living reenactment* of His coming forth from the Father and the Spirit on Day One, and as such, a picture of us being Born Again in His Image:

“Yeshua answered, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of Water *and* the Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God.’” (John 3:5)

“Yeshua answered and said to him, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is Born Again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.’” (John 3:3)

“For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn *among many brethren*.” (Rom. 8:29)

“And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man.” (1st Cor. 15:49)

When Yeshua *came forth from the waters of His baptism*, the Father *spoke* and the Spirit *descended* upon Him *like a dove*, reminiscent of Three on Day One:

“When He had been baptized, Yeshua came up immediately *from the water*, and behold!

also Acts 13:33; Heb. 1:5; 5:5; 1st Jn. 4:9.

¹⁷ For the Gift that the Father holds out to the world through salvation in Messiah Yeshua, see *Salvation—The Promise!* at <http://seedofabraham.net/Salvation-The-Promise.pdf>.

¹⁸ The ‘waters’ of Genesis 1:2 picture of the Father (see Psalm 104:3; 148:4; Is. 8:6; 55:1; Jer. 51:16; Ezk. 1:24-26f; 2nd Peter 3:5). The waters in Gen. 1:2 are not the waters of the oceans of the Earth because on Day Two (Gen. 1:6-8) these waters are divided by a ‘firmament,’ which God calls ‘Heaven.’ Creation of the universe took place in the waters *under* Heaven, while God *dwells* in the waters *above* the firmament, above Heaven. This may be why Paul can say that he was caught up to the third Heaven (2nd Cor. 12:2).

¹⁹ Ludwig Koehler, Walter Baumgartner, and J. J. Stamm, authors; M. Richardson, translator, *The Hebrew-Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* vol. 3 (Boston, MA USA: Brill Academic Publishers, 2002), pp. 1219-1220. The Hebrew word in Gen. 1:2 for the Spirit *hovering* over the waters is מִרְיָאֵן *mira’cheh’fet* and it speaks of the motion made by the wings of a dove or an eagle as they hover over an object (Dt. 32:11).

²⁰ In Hebrew the first words of the Father were, ‘*Be Light!*’ which makes Yeshua both the living *Word* of God and the *Light* (of the world; John 1:1-9; 8:12; 1st John 1:1-4; Rev. 19:13).

²¹ God’s living *Word* came forth from the *Waters* (which picture the Father). This living *Word* was the *Light* of Day One. This *Light* wasn’t the sun, moon or the stars, for they were created on Day Four (Gen. 1:14-19).

Heaven was opened to him (John) and he saw the Spirit of God *descending* like a dove and alighting upon Him (Yeshua), and suddenly, *a Voice came from Heaven*, saying, ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased!’” (Matthew 3:16-17)

This is why God commands us to be immersed in water—it’s a spiritual picture of our *coming forth* from the Father and the Spirit; like Yeshua—of being *begotten* (John 1:14, 18; 3:16, etc.), although, technically, we’re created—it’s the new creation (2nd Cor. 5:17). This is why water baptism is important and why physical covenantal circumcision (PCC), although symbolizing this, is not the *sign* of the New Covenant. When salvation in the name of Messiah Yeshua was first proclaimed it was immediately linked to water (and Spirit) baptism. Now we know why Peter said:

“Repent! Let every one of you *be baptized in the name of Yeshua the Messiah* for the remission of sins and you shall receive the Gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your sons, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.” (Acts 2:38–39; see also 10:44-48)

Water baptism, with its multifaceted spiritual pictures, is the *sign* of the *New Covenant* and also why the Gentile *must not* be *physically* circumcised for theological/covenantal and/or religious reasons.²²

No Gentile Circumcision

Both Jew and Gentile enter into the New Covenant not by the sign of physical covenantal circumcision, but by being Born Again, which water baptism is a sign of. Unfortunately, there are some today who don’t understand this and teach that the Gentile must be physically (covenantally) circumcised, but this teaching negates God’s word in the New Testament and tramples over the shed blood of Yeshua’s sacrifice. *Physical covenantal circumcision marks entry into the Old Covenant and links the Gentile to the wrong sacrifice.* Circumcision of the flesh brings the Gentile to the animals of Abram’s sacrifice, which cannot make anyone into Messiah’s Image, nor make him acceptable for celebrating Messiah’s Passover. Those who teach Gentile circumcision are *adding* to what the Father has done in sacrificing His Son.

Those who teach Gentile circumcision *assume* that since it’s commanded in the Old Testament it must also be kept in the New. They refuse to hear the many New Testament Scriptures that forbid and deny it. Their sin is the deadly sin of presumption. They *assume* that God wants something when He doesn’t, *even though He may have wanted it earlier.*

An example of this is God wanting Israel to conquer Canaan after coming out from Egypt. Because Israel believed the faithless witness of 10 of the 12 spies, God told Israel ‘to turn around’ and go back into the Wilderness where they would die over the next 40 years because of their unbelief and contempt for Him (Num. 14:11, 27). After the incident some of the Hebrews said that they wanted to obey God and go into the land, but Moses *warned them not to go* because God had *redirected* them, and neither Yahveh, nor the Ark of the Covenant, nor Moses was going with them (Num. 14:42, 44). Moses said to them, ‘Why do you transgress the commandment of Yahveh?!’ (Num. 14:41) They insisted, however, on ‘obeying’ what God had *previously* said, and many of them were killed by the Amalekites and the Canaanites (Num. 14:1-45; cf. Dt. 1:19-46). It’s not a superficial sin to presume upon God and His word, *but this is exactly what those who teach Gentile circumcision are guilty of:*

‘the person who does anything *presumptuously*, whether he is native-born or a stranger,

²² Many Gentiles were circumcised by their parents for medical-health reasons and that’s alright because it is not the same reason as the theological, covenantal circumcision of Gen. 17:9-14 and Ex. 12:43-49.

Any Gentile, though, who has wrongly followed the teaching (that he must be circumcised in order to keep the Passover, etc.), has grievously sinned against God. He should repent and ask God the Father, who is rich in mercy, to forgive him, in the name of Yeshua.

that one brings *reproach* on Yahveh, and *he shall be cut off from among his people* because he has *despised the word of Yahveh* and has broken His commandment—that person shall be *completely cut off*. His guilt shall be upon him!’ (Num. 15:30-31; see also Dt. 1:19-43)

The New Testament *never modifies* the decision of Acts 15, which struck down Gentile covenantal circumcision in order to be saved, to make allowance for Gentile circumcision for Passover and/or to fulfill the commandment given to Abraham, etc., because God has given a New Covenant and changed both the sacrifice and the sign for it.

The Old sign means nothing in terms of entry into the New Covenant, or the keeping of Messiah’s Passover. Circumcision of the flesh didn’t change the Hebrew infant’s nature, but circumcision of the heart, the sign of which is baptism in water, does change our nature for it reflects the New Birth. What physical circumcision pointed to, the circumcision of the heart (Dt. 30:6), baptism in water symbolizes by being Born Again. This is why covenantal circumcision of the flesh doesn’t do a Gentile any good, but rather, much harm to his salvation, and why Paul wrote:

“But *as God has distributed to each one*, as the Lord has called each one, so let him walk, and so, *I ordain in all the assemblies*. Was anyone called while circumcised? Let him not become uncircumcised!²³ Was anyone called *while uncircumcised*? *Let him not be circumcised!* Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing’ (in terms of entering Messiah’s Kingdom) “but keeping the commandments of God is what matters! Let each one remain in the same calling in which he was called.”²⁴ (1st Corinthians 7:17-20)

The sign of covenantal circumcision given to Abraham has given way to water baptism. Physical circumcision has given way to the reality that God promised in Dt. 30:6—the circumcision of the heart. Those who insist on PCC for the male Gentile are walking in the sins of presumption and rebellion against God and His word in the New Covenant.

Gentile covenantal circumcision is a false and dangerous heresy. This is one reason why the Apostle Paul wrote against it, and why he said:

“Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the *false* circumcision, *For we are the circumcision*, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Messiah Yeshua and *have no confidence in the flesh*, though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so—*circumcised* the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews! (Philippians 3:2-5; see also vv. 17-19).

Paul was saying that he, too, could have *confidence in the flesh* (physical covenantal circumcision) if that was what God wanted, but that is not what God wants. The Old has given way to the New. The sign has given way to the reality.

The Gentile believer is a new creature in Christ, filled with the Holy Spirit and circumcised in his heart, to the glory of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit and is able to partake of Messiah’s Passover without PCC.

On the other hand, the Jew must continue to physically covenantally circumcise his sons because he is

²³ Paul’s admonition to the Jewish believer to not become uncircumcised was a real prohibition. In Paul’s day there was a surgical operation that attached some skin to the remaining foreskin of a Jew so that the Jewish man would look like he hadn’t been circumcised—in other words, to look like a Gentile. Gentiles would be naked in their gymnasiums, and so, any Jew who was with them would automatically be seen to be Jewish (and despised in Gentile eyes) unless he had the operation. This operation was prevalent about 200 years earlier in the days of the Maccabees. See 1st Maccabees 1:15; 1:2f; Josephus, Antiquities xii. 241.

²⁴ Some might say that Gen. 17:9-14 and Ex. 12:43-49 are part of the commandments of God for Gentile believers, but this totally negates what God says about it in the New Covenant.

born into the covenant that God made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and all their descendants. The Old Covenant and God's promises to ancient Israel²⁵ will be gloriously fulfilled in the thousand year reign of King Yeshua, the Son of David (Lk. 1:31-33) from Jerusalem, to the glory and praise of God the Father.

CONCLUSION

The circumcision of Moses' son brought out two theologically interwoven events: the covenant that God made with Abram and the First Passover (which spared Israel's firstborn sons). Both are linked together by blood sacrifice, the sign of circumcision, and the averting of God's wrath. These two biblical rivers flow into the Second Passover (Mt. 26-28) and the sign of water baptism. The Second Passover established the New Covenant by the blood sacrifice of God's Firstborn Son Yeshua so that all God's other firstborn sons would be spared from His wrath.

As circumcision protected the child from being *cut off* from Israel, and also, being a part of redeemed Israel, so too, water baptism. Circumcision personally linked the infant (or man), by the shedding of his own blood, back to the sacrificial covenant that God had made with Abram. It was a blood covering for every male. Water baptism personally links the believer, by the shedding of his own blood (dying to self), to the sacrifice of Yeshua, another blood covering for every believer and makes them part of redeemed Israel. Interesting to note, God ordained circumcision for the eight day old infant, and all those who believe in Yeshua are *Born Again*, which means that they are spiritual infants, but instead of being circumcised, God requires the infinitely more powerful spiritual sign of water/Spirit baptism—the circumcision of the heart.

Water baptism pictures both Jew and Gentile dying to self—presenting their own life's blood, so to speak, which links them to both the Sacrifice of Messiah, and also, how Yeshua *came forth* as God the Son on Day One. Water baptism is the sign of the New Covenant and rightfully so.

Water baptism's spiritual reality also averts the wrath of God on Judgement Day as well as connecting the 'blood of water baptism' to the salvific blood of the Passover Lamb. This makes both Gentile and Jew acceptable to God the Father and able to partake of Yeshua's *Passover* Body and Blood, which averts God's wrath on Judgment Day (just as circumcision and the First Passover did).

What circumcision pointed to, the circumcision of the heart; the transformation of the carnal nature and total consecration to Yahveh, water baptism, through the blood of Messiah and the power of the Holy Spirit, fulfills. Believers become new creatures in Messiah, 'circumcised' by God. Yahveh hinted at this in Deut. 30:6 when He said that *He would circumcise the hearts* of Israel. This is why God nullifies physical circumcision for the New Covenant Gentile—it has nothing to offer him except damnation.

The Gentile who becomes physically circumcised negates God's design of eternal redemption. The Gentile has violated God's will—His word in the New Testament. Gentile circumcision is an act of pride and presumption, rebellion, ignorance and works righteousness because it's clear to see that the New Testament forbids it and never modifies the ruling of Acts 15 'in order to keep Passover,' etc. Any Gentile who has been circumcised in order to keep God's commandments in Genesis 17 and Exodus 12 needs to repent and to seek the Lord for forgiveness of his grievous sin.

The sign of the covenant that God made with Father Abraham was very important to God, so much so that anyone failing to keep the sign would be cut off from the covenant and Israel. Is the sign of water baptism of any less importance to God? As the New Covenant is the flowering and fulfillment of the Old, so is water baptism to physical circumcision and why all who call upon the name of Yeshua need to be

²⁵ Genesis 12:7; 13:14-15; 15:7, 12-16, 18-21; 17:7-8, 19-22; 24:7; 26:2-5; 28:3-4, 13-15; 35:9-13; 48:3-4; 50:24-25; Ex. 3:7-10, 14-17; 6:1-8; 12:21-25; 13:3-5, 11-12; 23:20-33; 32:7-14; Ezk. 40-48; Rev. 20:3-6.

immersed in water, not sprinkled (and certainly not immersed in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit).²⁶ We are immersed in Yeshua's name; into Yeshua's death (Rom. 6:1f.). Neither the Father, nor the Spirit died for us. We are to be immersed in the name of Yeshua/Jesus.

Why did God want to kill Moses? After all, it says nothing about the father dying because his son was not circumcised, but only that the son was to be cut off. Moses would become the greatest *picture* of Messiah Yeshua of all the people of the Old Testament, and therefore, he, more than any other, had to obey God. Because of his incredible intimacy with Yahveh, Moses would be held to a greater accountability than any other man.²⁷

In not having circumcised his son, Moses was corrupting the holy picture of Messiah Yeshua. It was not acceptable to God that Moses had a son in his house that wasn't circumcised because God says in Dt. 30:6 that He would circumcise the Sons of Israel so that they would love Him and that they might not be stubborn anymore (Dt. 10:16), which implies the keeping of His commandments. This means that God's House, built by Messiah (Zech. 6:12-13; 1st Peter 2:1-5f.), would be 'in order,' and so, Moses had to have his house 'in order,' too. The (firstborn?) son of Moses is a picture of all of us who believe in Yeshua. *In Messiah Yeshua*, we, as Firstborn Sons of God *are all circumcised in our hearts by the Spirit of Yeshua*:

"In Him you were also circumcised *with the circumcision made without hands*, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, *by the circumcision of Messiah*, buried with Him in *baptism*, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead." (Colossians 2:11-12)

"But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and congregation of the *Firstborn* (Sons) who are registered in Heaven; to God the Judge of all; to the spirits of righteous men made perfect; to Yeshua, the Mediator of the New Covenant." (Hebrews 12:22-24)

The phrase *bridegroom of blood* points to Moses being spared from the wrath of God when Zipporah circumcised their son. Therefore, she 'gained back' her husband through the bloody sign of circumcision when God sought to kill Moses because he hadn't circumcised his son. Moses truly became a bridegroom of blood to Zipporah, *but Zipporah was also speaking prophetically of Yeshua as our Bridegroom of Blood*.

By Yeshua's blood sacrifice He has made Himself *the* Bridegroom of Blood. Just as *circumcision* saved the son of Moses from being cut off from Israel, so too, the *circumcision of our hearts* (pictured in the 'bloody' waters of 'death to self' baptism) connects us to Yeshua and saves us from being *cut off* from the Bridegroom of the New Jerusalem. Yeshua has made a way for us to be with Him for eternity. Truly, we are truly the Bride of Messiah Yeshua.²⁸

Also, in terms of symbolism, Moses is a picture of Yeshua as the savior of Israel. Just as Moses' son *came from him*, so too, all believers come from Yeshua to make the Israel of God (Gal. 6:16; Ephesians 2:11f.), and Zipporah is a picture of the Holy Spirit as the circumciser of Israel's heart (the meaning of physical covenantal circumcision).

The Father, through His Son and by His Spirit, has fulfilled His promise to Israel. Israel's heart is circumcised and we are no longer stiff-necked against God and His Ways. *Glory to Yeshua!*

²⁶ The formula found in Mt. 28:19 (baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit) is not authentic, but was changed in the days of Constantine (4th century). Also, the Apostles always baptized in the name of Yeshua (Acts 2:38, 41; 8:12-13, 16, 36, 38; 9:18; 10:47-48; 16:15, 33; 18:8; 19:5; 22:16). For a paper on how Mt. 28:19 originally spoke of baptism in the name of Yeshua, ask for *Mt. 28:19—Father, Son & HS?*

²⁷ See Exodus 32:1-34:7f; Numbers 12:1-10f., Deuteronomy 34:10-12; Matthew 17:3.

²⁸ Believers in Messiah Yeshua are also known as His Bride (Rev. 21:2, 9; 22:17; see also Rev. 19:9).

Just as Moses carried Israel in the Wilderness for 40 years, so too, our Bridegroom carries us in the Wilderness of this world our entire earthly lives. As great as Moses would become after this incident in Ex. 4:24-26, his failure to follow the commandment of circumcision almost cost him his life and future commission as God's servant. It's an important lesson for all of us—we must be faithful to our God and not be swayed away from keeping His commandments and statutes, etc. The Father has chosen us, *all of us*, to pour out His great love upon and to reveal His faithful, forgiving, long suffering loving-kindness to. Be faithful to Him and His word, wherever you are and whomever you are—rich or poor, great or small, young or old—let His Light, the Light of His Son, shine through you for all the world in darkness to see.

“And *Yahveh your God will circumcise your heart* and the heart of your sons, to love Yahveh your God with all your heart and with all your soul, *that you may live.*” (Dt. 30:6)

“For Yahveh will not forsake His people, for His great name's sake, because it has pleased Yahveh to make you His people.” (1st Samuel 12:22)²⁹

²⁹ Revised on 2 July 2017.