

מצות פריעה בברית מילה

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The Torah tells us of an episode which happened as Moshe traveled with his family back to Mitzrayim. The Chumash says, "ויהי בדרך במלון ויפגשוהו ה' ויבקש המיתו. ותקח צפרה צר ותכרת את-ערלת בנה ותגע לרגליו ותאמר כי חתן- (שמות ד, כד-כו) דמים אתה לי. וירף ממנו אז אמרה חתן דמים למולת" (שמות ד, כד-כו) Hashem wanted to kill Moshe because he had not given a *bris mila* to his son. Tzipora took a rock and performed the *bris mila*, and said her husband would have been killed on account of *bris mila*. Two obvious questions stand out in these *pesukim*. Firstly, why did she repeat herself by saying "חתן דמים" twice? Additionally, why does she use the plural form of "למולת"?

The Talmud Yerushalmi, in *דר"א דמילה* as well as in *מס' שבת פ' הערל* (the two *perakim* which discuss *bris mila*), answers the latter question by explaining the two cuts in a *mila*. There is the outer, thicker *ערלה* skin which is called *mitzvas mila*, and the lower, more *aduk* skin we cut which is called *mitzvas pri'a*. Both are absolutely necessary and if one does not perform *pri'a* then it is as if the person did not get a *mila* at all. The Yerushalmi sources this second part of *mila* to Avraham Avinu, when Hashem commands him "המול ימול..." (בראשית י, יג) – the double-*lashon* teaches us the two parts of *bris mila*. However, this works only for the opinion in *Shas* who holds that the Torah speaks *בני אדם*. The other opinion, says the Yerushalmi, learns the *mitzvah* of *pri'a* from our story with Tzipora. Her usage of the plural "למולת" refers to *mila* and *pri'a*.

This leads us to another question. If Avraham Avinu was not commanded in *pri'a*, and therefore the source is not found where he is commanded to perform *bris mila*, it is a little interesting that all of the sudden in the desert on the way back to Mitzrayim it should be added as a part of *bris mila*? As well, when referring to the *mitzvah* of *bris mila* it is generally called "*mila*," not "*mila-pri'a*." Why, then, does Tzipora call it "למולת"?

Rabbeinu Bachaye's *peshat* explains everything: When Tzipora saw the *malach* come to kill Moshe, she immediately understood that it was account of the *bris mila* for their son. She then performed only the *mila* part, and said "חתן דמים אתה לי". Then, when she saw that Moshe was still in danger, she realized that she wasn't finished yet and performed *pri'a*. This is why, "אז אמרה חתן דמים למולת". Our original two questions are both answered. She repeated herself because it was really a two-part sequence. As well, she used the plural form because she was referring to *mila* and *pri'a*.

The only question which bothers me is why didn't Tzipora do *pri'a* the first time? I am not satisfied with saying that she was not a professional *mohel* and just didn't know how to do a *bris mila* correctly, because it would be strange for the Torah to record a whole story just to show that. What is the whole *chashivus* over here?

I believe the *peshat* is as follows. The *גמ' יבמות עא :* says that R. Yitzchok holds *mitzvas pri'a* was not given to Avraham Avinu. [Rishonim point out that there are others who disagree with R. Yitzchok, such as the Yerushalmi we quoted above, but the Bavli only brings R. Yitzchok's opinion.] The big question is, when was the *mitzvah* of *pri'a* introduced? We do see a *remez* in the Gemara there, that just before Klal Yisroel entered Eretz Yisroel the *posuk* states, "ושוב מל את-בני-ישראל שנית" (יהושע ה, ב). The *lashon* of "שוב" means that even those who already had a *bris mila*, must add on *pri'a* before moving on.

There is a *machlokes* how to understand this Gemara. The Ramban and Ritva understand it simply that before this day in Yehoshua, there was no *mitzvas pri'a*. What about the rule, "איך נביא בא ומחדש דבר"? They answer that Moshe Rabbeinu was told so on Har Sinai, that before Klal Yisroel enter the Land *mitzvas pri'a* will begin. Tosafos disagrees, and posits that *mitzvas pri'a* was a *Halacha l'Moshe m'Sinai* which went into effect immediately, but it was only recorded in Yehoshua as an *asmachta*. The BeHaG has a third opinion, and he explains that Avraham Avinu did not get *mitzvas pri'a*, but Moshe Rabbeinu received it in Mitzrayim. He does not say exactly when or where that happened, but I saw the following explanation from R. Meir Soloveitchik. The BeHaG refers to the Mechilta (mentioned by Rashi in *Parshas Bo*) which says that on Pesach night in Mitzrayim, Hashem

gave Bnei Yisroel two mitzvos- דם מילה and דם פסח, like the *posuk* says, "בדמיך חיי בדמיך חיי". If they already had *bris mila* from Avrohom Avinu, what mitzvah did Hashem give them that night? R. Meir says that *peshat* in the BeHaG is Hashem added on *mitzvas pri'a* at that time.

According to the opinion in the Yerushalmi, that *mitzvas pri'a* started by Tzipora, we can understand that Tzipora performed the *bris mila* which Klal Yisroel had done until then— without *pri'a*. She realized at that moment that things had changed and she must also perform *pri'a*, which she saw was correct because the *malach* left Moshe alone. The question we should ask is, what changed then and there that *mitzvas pri'a* should suddenly come into effect?

If we look at all of our above options of when *mitzvas pri'a* started, the one which sounds very logical is that Avrohom Avinu was commanded to do it. *Bris mila* was given to Avrohom Avinu in its entirety. To say it began at Matan Torah is also a logical option. We got the full mitzvah of *mila* when we received the Torah. Why should the mitzvah change in Mitzrayim? Our other options are that it came as Moshe returned to Mitzrayim during the *shibud*, it was introduced just before *Yetziyas Mitzrayim*, or just before Klal Yisroel entered Eretz Yisroel. Why should it change at any of those points in time?

I would like to suggest that the *yesod* to explain this is from the Gemara in : מס' ברכות דף מח. R. Nosson says that in the second *bracha* of *birkas hamazon*, which is about the Land of Yisroel, we must mention *bris mila*. Rashi explains that *bris mila* and Eretz Yisroel are tied one to another. Hashem tells Avrohom Avinu to perform *bris mila* which will cause his descendants to gain Eretz Yisroel. In different Midrashim, we find the idea that to be on the ultimate *madreiga*, we need the *bris* to be fully connected to Hashem. When we are not yet holding at that level, that is to say we are "*galus Yidden*" because we still have what to fix up, we cannot reach the full "יהיה תמים" of the *bris*.

This is the *peshat* as to why *mitzvas pri'a* would be introduced just before entering Eretz Yisroel. Only when we are holding by actually entering the Land could we complete our *bris mila*. This applies, as well, to *pri'a* starting as Moshe Rabbeinu returns to Mitzrayim to start the process of leaving the *shibud* or to immediately prior to the actual *Yetziyas Mitzrayim*. To the former, Hashem tells Moshe Rabbeinu that his job is to tell Bnei Yisroel they are going out to reach Eretz Yisroel, and at the latter time it is imminent. Again, the *yesod* is that *bris mila* is completed as an impetus to be *zoche* to Eretz Yisroel.

I believe this really illuminates why this entire episode is recorded in the Chumash. Everything in the Torah is to tell us Klal Yisroel's *toldos*; there are no personal stories of Moshe Rabbeinu's life. The lesson is to tell us that *bris mila* is integral to Eretz Yisroel, which is why Moshe was *chayiv misa* for his son not having it. Hashem just told him that he's going back to Mitzrayim to bring Klal Yisroel to Eretz Yisroel. The *sefer "Mincha Belula"* asks why Moshe was *chayiv misa* for being a little *nisrashed* in a *mitzvas ase*? The answer is that lack of *bris mila* was in fact holding up the entire *Geula*! The connection and mutual dependency of *bris mila* to Eretz Yisroel makes it a very grave *aveira* indeed.

[There is an added dimension to this. Moshe Rabbeinu made this mistake and does not end up taking Bnei Yisroel into Eretz Yisroel. Hashem already told him so before he even goes down to Mitzrayim. Yehoshua is the one who actually takes them in, and he also completes *bris mila* for Klal Yisroel just before entering, as we said above.]