

Avraham made a great feast on the day that Yitzchak was weaned. (21:18)

Tosfos (*Shabbos* 130A) teach that the Hebrew word, *higamel*, translated as “weaned,” can be broken up to read “was circumcised on the eighth day.” *Higamel* is comprised of four letters: *hay*, *gimmel*, *mem*, *lamed*. The first two letters – *hay*, *gimmel* – are read separately, and their *gematriya*, numerical equivalent, which is eight, is duly noted. The second two letters – *mem*, *lamed* – spell *mal*, which means circumcise. Thus, this *pasuk* can be read as, “On the eighth day, when Avraham *Avinu* circumcised Yitzchak, he made a festive celebration.” *Tosfos* derive from here that on the eighth day of his life, Yitzchak was ushered into the covenant/*Bris* of Avraham, and he was also weaned. They further derive that, on the day that one circumcises his son, he should celebrate with a feast, marking this joyful milestone occasion.

Horav Levi Yitzchak, zl, m'Berditchev explains this statement allegorically. When Avraham circumcised himself, Hashem added a *hay* to his name (Avram became Avraham). Noticeably, Avraham's progeny (*Zera Avraham*, his true descendants) descend principally from Yaakov *Avinu*, who fathered twelve sons/tribes, which form the foundation of *Klal Yisrael*. Of Avraham's descendants, the only one, the first child born after he circumcised himself, Yitzchak *Avinu*, is the individual from whom the Jewish Nation has descended. Avraham's other children are not in the picture.

Veritably, the only reason the *Shivtei Kah*, Twelve Tribes, did not descend from Avraham was that he himself was not circumcised at the age of eight days. Yitzchak was not able to be the progenitor of the Twelve Tribes, because he descended from Avraham who did not have a *Bris Milah* on the eighth day. (*Chasam Sofer* explains that, when Yitzchak saw how red Eisav was at birth, he feared for his life if he were to be circumcised at that time. Later on, when Yitzchak was made aware that not all his sons would carry on Avraham's lineage, he decided that Eisav was no different than Yishmael and could have his *bris* at the age of thirteen.)

Yaakov *Avinu* fulfilled the perfect criteria for carrying on the name of Avraham. His father, Yitzchak, had a *bris* on the eighth day, and he also had a *bris* on the eighth day. Thus, he was able to be the progenitor of *Shivtei Kah*. Therefore, it follows that the effect of the *hay*, which was added to Avraham's name when he was circumcised was realized through his grandson Yaakov, who was a second-generation child to be circumcised on the eighth day.

The *Berditchever* further explains that, since Yitzchak was the first to have his *bris* on the eighth day, the *geulah ha'asidah*, future Redemption, will come from him. This coincides with *Chazal* (*Shabbos* 89b) who teach that, when Hashem redeems the Jewish people from their final exile, they will say to Yitzchak, rather than to Avraham or Yaakov, “You are our father” (*Yeshayah* 63:16), which alludes to the Redemption. Why is this? Why is Yitzchak the one who intercedes on behalf of his descendants? *Chazal* explain that Avraham and Yaakov will not attempt to exonerate them.

Yitzchak, however, will go to bat for them, interceding on their behalf. In recognition of this, *Klal Yisrael* will thank him for his fatherly concern.

The additional *hay* that changed Avraham's name was completed through Yaakov, who was the first descendant of the first descendant to be circumcised on the eighth day. We now have a new perspective on the *hay*, *gimmel* – *mal*/circumcised. The letter *hay* which transformed Avraham *Avinu* to *Av hamon goyim*, father of all nations, was fulfilled by *gimmel* -- the third of the *Avos* -- Yaakov, to be circumcised. He was the first to be circumcised on the eighth day who descended from a father who also was circumcised on the eighth day.

What is so special about the eighth day or the number eight? We are taught that while the number seven represents the completion of nature (seven days of the week), the number eight represents miracle or transcending the limitations of nature. Observing the covenant of the eighth day expresses the notion that the Jewish People are not bound by the limitations of nature. Our relationship with Hashem allows for us to exceed these boundaries. We- and only we -- through our complete devotion to Hashem -- are able to catalyze the reversal of nature and bring about the Redemption.