

Parshiot Tazria-Metzorh -2015, 5775

Our parsha mentions a very important Mitzvah, seemingly in a passing manner, *U'vayom HaShemini Yimol Besar Or'lato*, (12:3), On the Eighth Day, the Mitzvah of *Brit Milah*; (Circumcision) Should be Performed. While many halachot of *milah* are learned from parshat Lech Lecha, it is precisely from our parsha that *Chazal* derive that classic chiddush that *milah* is performed even on Shabbat (Shabbat 132a).

In parshat Lech Lecha circumcision is not only called a *brit* but an **OT BRIT**, a sign of a covenant (Bereishit 17:11). Shabbat is also referred to as an **OT**, *Beini U'Vein Bnei Yisrael OT Hee Le'olam*, Between Me and the Children of Israel it is a sign forever (Shemot 31:17). Then there is a third mitzvah that is called **OT**, and that is the mitzvah of *Tefillin*, as it is written, "*Ve'haya Lecha L'OT Al Ya'decha, U'letotafot Bein Einecha*" (Shemot 13:9) And It Will Be For You a Sign On Your Arm, and A Reminder Between Your Eyes. The common denominator between these three Mitzvot is that one who observes these Mitzvot is demonstrating his total dedication and belief in HaKadosh Baruch Hu. No one would submit himself or his son to a Brit Milah if he was not absolutely convinced that we are totally connected to HaShem. Likewise, no one would observe all the stringencies of Shabbat, or put on Tefillin every morning if he was lacking in Emunah. It is not coincidental that these three Mitzvot are designated with an **OT**.

The mitzvah of Tefillin does not apply on Shabbat and Yom Tov. According to Rabbi Akiva (Menachot 36a) who derives this from the fact that *Tefillin* are called an **OT** and since Shabbat and Yom Tov have their own **OT** there is no need for the **OT** of *tefillin*. Rabbeinu Bechaya explains that between the three signs, the *milah*, the Shabbat and the *Tefillin*, a Jew must always be connected to two of them, for they are testimony to the oneness of HaShem and the basis of Emunah, and testimony is to be comprised of two witnesses. Therefore, on Shabbat and Yom Tov *Tefillin* are unnecessary, and therefore not desirable, for it would indicate that the existing two witnesses are for some reason defective or insufficient. On Shabbat, it is correct to enter the infant into the *brit* and attach the OT specifically onto the Kedusha of Shabbat, so that from this point on he will always be in possession of the two signs when Shabbat arrives.

The Tzitz Eliezer (14:4) uses this concept to explain why the *minhag* in some circles is for the father at a *brit* to have his *Tefillin* on when it falls during the week. Without the **OT** of Shabbat it is appropriate for the *milah* to be done with another **OT** present. The Shach in Yoreh Dei'a (265:24) says that all men present should keep their *tefillin* on during the entire *milah* when it is done right after *Shacharit*. The rationale is that in this way all assembled join with the father in connecting the two **OTOT**. (I am grateful to Rav Yosef Carmel for sharing some of these thoughts with me.)

We look forward to the day that just as the great majority of our people are connected and careful to perform the mitzvah of *milah* so will they, in the near future, attach themselves to the other two **OTOT**, that of Tefillin and Shabbat.