

# Rav Kook Torah

by Rabbi

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## Mamrei's Advice

The Sages made an astounding statement about Avraham and the mitzva of brit mila (circumcision). According to the Midrash (Tanchuma Vayeira 3), Avraham only circumcised himself after consulting with his friend Mamrei.

“Why did God reveal Himself to Avraham on Mamrei’s property? Because Mamrei gave Avraham advice about circumcision.”

Could it be that Avraham, God’s faithful servant, entertained doubts whether he should fulfill God’s command? What special difficulty did circumcision pose that, unlike the other ten trials that Avraham underwent, this mitzva required the counsel of a friend?

### Avraham’s Dilemma

Avraham was afraid that if he circumcised himself, people would no longer be drawn to seek him out. The unique sign of mila would set Avraham apart from other people, and they would naturally distance themselves from him. Additionally, people would avoid seeking his

instruction out of fear that Avraham might demand that they too accept this difficult mitzva upon themselves. As the Midrash in B'reishit Rabba (sec. 47) says:

“When God commanded Abraham to circumcise, he told God, ‘Until now, people used to come to me; now they will no longer come!’”

This side effect of brit mila deeply disturbed Avraham. It negated the very goal of Abraham’s life and vision – bringing the entire world to recognize “the name of God, Lord of the universe” (B'reishit 21:33). If isolated, Avraham would no longer be able to carry on with his life’s mission.

This then was Avraham’s dilemma. Perhaps it was preferable not to fulfill God’s command to circumcise himself. On the personal level, Avraham would lose the spiritual benefits of the mitzva, but the benefit to the entire world might very well outweigh his own personal loss.

### Mamrei’s Advice

Mamrei advised Avraham not to make calculations regarding a direct command from God. God’s counsel and wisdom certainly transcend the limited wisdom of the human mind.

For his sage advice, Mamrei was

rewarded in like measure, mida kneged mida. Since Mamrei respected the ultimate importance of God's commands, placing them above human reasoning, he was honored with the revelation of divine prophecy on his property.

## **God's Plan**

In fact, Avraham's fears of isolation were realized. From the time of Yitzchak's birth, people began to avoid him. Avraham himself sent away the children of his concubines "from before his son Yitzchak" (B'reishit 25:6), and God commanded him to send away Yishmael.

All of this was the Divine plan. God wanted Avraham to concentrate his energies in educating Yitzchak. For in Yitzchak resided the seed for repairing and completing the entire world. It was necessary, however, to first nurture the initial sanctity of the Jewish people. The enlightenment and elevation of the world that Avraham so desired would be realized through the spiritual influence of his children.

*Gold from the Land of Israel, pp. 42-43*

*Adapted from Midbar Shur, p. 197*