

HIS FORESKIN SHALL BE CIRCUMCISED*

וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁמִינִי

יִמּוֹל בְּשָׂר עֶרְלָתוֹ:

And in the eighth day
the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised.

And in the eighth day—That is, eight days after the birth of a male child, when the seven days of his mother’s ritual impurity have passed, and regardless of whether the eighth day falls on Shabbat. *The flesh of his foreskin*—The sign of the covenant shall be “in the organ whereby the species is perpetuated” to symbolize the “continuity of the covenant among later generations” [following Abraham and Sarah] (Sforno, Gen. 17:13). *Shall be circumcised*—The mark of the covenant is the beginning of the individual’s moral career; yet initially it has far greater impact among the community in which the family resides—whose members become individually and jointly responsible for that career—because “every child of such a [Abrahamitic household, whether the child is male or female] is born to, and acquired by, the Abrahamitic community. . .” (S.R. Hirsch, Gen. 17:10).

* Leviticus 12:3 (in Tazria)