

119

MINISTRIES

“The following is a direct script of a teaching that is intended to be presented via video, incorporating relevant text, slides, media, and graphics to assist in illustration, thus facilitating the presentation of the material. In some places, this may cause the written material to not flow or sound rather awkward in some places. In addition, there may be grammatical errors that are often not acceptable in literary work. We encourage the viewing of the video teachings to complement the written teaching you see below.”

Answering Your Questions (Circumcision, Long Hair, Tzitzits, Wedding Rings, and the Septuagint)

119 Ministries receives thousands of emails every year. And as you would expect, many of those emails contain questions. Quite often, we repeatedly receive various forms of the same questions. Ideally, we would like to have a teaching available for every question we receive, however, some questions can be answered rather briefly, and do not require a regular length teaching to serve as a response. That is the purpose of this teaching series, to offer an easily available vehicle to answer your common questions.

In this teaching series, we will read a collection of hand-picked questions that we have received via email. Then, for whatever it is worth, we will offer a brief response, hopefully leading those interested in the right direction to find the answers they are seeking.

So, let's get started. First question:

I have two questions I would ask you to consider and possibly address directly to me or in a future video.

Number one, why did the children of Israel not circumcise any of the children born in the wilderness? What type do you think this alludes too?

Number two, we know that all those who were preparing to enter the land were uncircumcised, how can we conclude they were keeping the Passover if that would be in direct defiance of God's law?

Regarding question #1, scripture does not explicitly say why Israel did not circumcise in the wilderness. Because of this, we are forced to speculate. Ancient Jews speculated as well. According to the Talmud (Yevamot 71–72), there are a couple reasons offered.

- 1) Because of the hardships of the way. A forty-year journey is most certainly a long journey. Since

it would have been dangerous for someone to get on the road right after circumcision, and they had no choice but to be on the road, they waited until the trek was over.

- 2) Because there was no "northern wind" upon them. The northern wind is considered a cure, and it would be dangerous to circumcise without this wind to cure them.

Contrary to the Talmudic speculations, we would submit that a reasonable possibility for why the Joshua generation was not circumcised was that their parents quite simply were disobedient and had neglected the command. The text in Joshua 5 is clearly contrasting the Joshua generation that inherits the land with the previous generation that died in the wilderness because of disobedience. The thrust of this narrative appears to be highlighting how the previous generation failed, but the new generation is acting in obedience. It's more like a refreshing of the covenant and starting anew.

But some might say, wouldn't YHWH or Moses have addressed the lack of obedience to circumcision? That is an interesting and reasonable question. But circumcision of the flesh represents circumcision of the heart. YHWH appealed to Israel several times to not be stiff necked and to be circumcised of the heart. The circumcision of the heart is to come before circumcision of the flesh. So why would YHWH appeal to the commandment of the disobedience to circumcision of the flesh when they would not even circumcise their hearts?

Regarding question #2, we would suggest that the 40 year wilderness equates to our current 2,000 year journey in the wilderness (40 x prophetic unit of a 50 Jubilee) in which many who claim to be in the faith have abandoned the marks of the covenant, such as circumcision and the Sabbath. Just as Joshua brought Israel into the land and restored the Torah to the people, when Yeshua returns and gathers us to the land, he will also reteach us the whole Torah. For more on this, we might suggest our teaching "[The Creation Prophecy](#)."

Also, we should note that while it is our speculative opinion, we would expect that Moses and other leaders and various Israelites obedient to circumcision and observed Passover. When scripture mentions that circumcision was not observed, it is likely speaking in general terms about the nation of Israel as a whole.

In our Passover teaching, in the 119 Mo'edim Series, we simply state that Passover was kept in the wilderness to prove that Passover was not kept only in the Promised Land. Passover might not have been kept every year in the wilderness, but we know it was kept at least once. See Numbers 9:

Numbers 9:1-3

The LORD [YHWH] spoke to Moses in the Desert of Sinai in the first month of the second year after they came out of Egypt. He said, "Have the Israelites celebrate the Passover at the appointed time. Celebrate it at the appointed time, at twilight on the fourteenth day of this month, in accordance with all its rules and regulations."

Let's move on to the next question.

1 Corinthians 11:14 quotes the apostle Paul saying that nature teaches that it is a shame for a man to have long hair. I am a man with shoulder-length hair and some people use this verse to claim that my hair is contrary to Yahweh's teachings. But I have heard that in Paul's day, women never cut their hair; that they grew their hair out their entire lives; and that "uncut hair" is a better translation than merely "long hair." Is this true or not?

This is an interesting question. Obviously Paul viewed the Nazarite Vow as an exception to his own teaching here since he took on such vows himself. So the idea that Paul is giving some kind of universal command that men shouldn't have long hair isn't an option.

We think Paul is giving culturally-specific halachic instruction here to address some specific issues that the Corinthian church was dealing with.

Halacha is not the same as "Torah." Torah comes from God, is eternal and unchanging, etc. Halacha is an interpretation or application of the Torah that comes from man. It is not eternal. It can change and is not universal. Paul is not creating new Torah commands. He is drawing a principle from Torah (Deuteronomy 22:5) and giving congregation-specific instruction to deal with local issues. This is like elders of a church creating a dress code for services as a means to deal with a perceived congregational issue on the matter.

In reading 1 Corinthians, we see that Paul appears to be addressing many questions or concerns expressed by the local congregation, the details of which we are not privy to.

One of his main points in the context of his comments on long hair seems to be the need to make a clear distinction between male and female. When Paul argues from "nature," he is likely referring to the cultural norm of his day in which shorter hair for men was common. It was an appeal to the cultural norm. This could be paraphrased as: *"Doesn't society itself teach you that long hair on men is disgraceful?"*

This does not contradict the Nazarite Vow, which would simply be an exception to the rule. Paul is likely arguing a principle based on Deuteronomy 22:5 that men should not try to look like women. Culture has to be taken into account in observing this commandment since culture often determines styles and fashion. So Paul is making a general halachic rule based on Deuteronomy 22:5 that men should generally not wear long hair, and he appeals to the cultural norm ("nature") to substantiate his argument.

The point Paul is trying to make is that men should look like men and women should look like women. In today's culture, it is not uncommon for men to have long hair. However, in Corinth, that was not so. So Paul made the recommendation to not have long hair for those in Corinth. However, we do not have the same culture regarding Corinth and long hair, so his recommendations do not really apply to us.

They do not "literally" apply to us because our culture is different, but the principles behind his teaching can be recontextualized to apply to us. The principle is that men shouldn't try to look like women and vice versa. So while the principles behind his teaching are relevant, his specific recommendations to Corinth do not apply today in a strict literal sense

Continuing on to the next question...

Is Numbers 15 about Tzitzits written to only men because it is written in masculine singular?

The way Hebrew grammar works is if you are referring to a mixed group of men and women, you will always use masculine verbs and pronouns. This is also true with singular verbs and pronouns if the gender of the person you are talking to is not specified. The feminine form is reserved only for groups of women or a specific woman.

The next question is also related to women and *tzitziyot*.

I've heard that Judaism forbids women from wearing tzitzits. Does this view have any biblical warrant?

The thing people seem to miss is that the majority of Judaism's view that women are exempt from wearing *tzitziyot* didn't come about until later. Earlier Jewish literature says that at least some rabbis thought women should wear them. Judaism is not some monolithic entity and never was. The later decision to exempt women from wearing them is based on some perceived exemption clause—and even that it isn't a ban but exemption— not because anyone ever believed the commandment was given only to men. Only recently have people started claiming that the command was given only to men and not ever intended for women.

Many of the early Sages taught that women were actually to wear them:

In Menachot 43a it says, "*Everyone is obligated in the mitzva of ritual fringes, including priests, Levites, Israelites, converts, women, and Canaanite slaves.*"

It also says that Rav Yehuda, who was apparently the chief redactor and editor of the Mishnah, "*would affix white and sky-blue strings to the garment [pirzuma] of his wife. And every morning he would recite the blessing: To wrap ourselves in garments with ritual fringes.*"

<https://www.sefaria.org/Menachot.43a?lang=bi>

There seems to be disagreement within the rabbinic literature itself concerning whether or not women were exempt from the commandment. The argument from the "women are exempt" crowd seems to be based on the idea that the command is "time-bound" (only worn during the day when they could be "looked at," Num 15:39), and some rabbis believed women were exempt from time-bound commandments generally. For instance, since women were ritually impure every month, they were exempt from performing certain commandments regarding the tabernacle during those times. Some rabbis, through a series of mental gymnastics, applied this time-bound status to wearing *tzitziyot* and thus declared that women are exempt from wearing them. Eventually, this became the prevailing opinion in rabbinic Judaism, but it was not always like that and not everyone agreed.

For more on this topic, we would recommend our teaching "[Should Women Wear Tzitzits?](#)"

Let's proceed to the next question...

My wife and I would like to know if you have a teaching about wedding rings, and what your position is on this question?

That is a good question. In our best understanding of this topic, for whatever that is worth, we do not take any issue with wedding rings. Some point to the fact that the wedding ring tradition may have come from Roman practices, and thus, express concern. However, that is not a Biblical way to determine whether YHWH is concerned about a particular tradition. YHWH says to not worship false gods, nor worship YHWH in the ways that false gods are being worshipped (Deuteronomy 12). Wedding rings are not used to worship God, nor do they appear to have been used to worship false gods. Thus, from a Torah perspective, there is no problem.

Rings in general are also mentioned in the scriptures, such as a signet ring that kings would wear. YHWH even makes mention of that relating to himself in Jeremiah 22:24. So, when all is considered, wedding rings appear to be a harmless tradition.

Next question...

My question is how reliable is the Greek Septuagint (LXX) we have today. Is it the same Septuagint the Hebrews read 300 years before Christ? Anti-missionaries will say that the Greek Septuagint we have today is not the same as the original. The one we have today only writes about the five books of Moses, Genesis to Deuteronomy, the rest of the books of the Old Testament Septuagint are inaccurate. So what's the truth about the Greek Septuagint we have in our possession today, is it reliable as a whole or is it not?

We would recommend Tim Hegg's book "*How We Got Our Bible*." Hegg has an entire section on the history of the LXX (Septuagint) and what we know about it. Hegg says that it is the generally accepted opinion that the Torah was translated into Greek in the 3rd Century BCE, which is compatible with the early date of several papyrus and leather fragments of the Torah in Greek (some from Qumran) dated to the middle or end of the 2nd Century BCE (4QLXXLeva, 4QLXXNum, Pap. Fouad 266, Pap. Rylands Gk. 458 [Tov, TC, p. 136]).

The translation of the books of the Prophets, Hagiographa (writings) and the apocryphal books came after that of the Torah, but exactly how long after is not clear. The grandson of Ben Sira, who lived at the end of the 2nd Century BCE, knows of the Greek translation of the Prophets and some of the Writings. From this we may assume that the translating process took place somewhere between 170-150 BCE.

The LXX is important. That's why scholars place a ton of value on it in their work of textual criticism. Some counter-missionaries state that the Masoretic Text is the "original" and the LXX is a corruption of the text. The vast majority of scholars reject this view. The Dead Sea Scrolls, for example, gives 233 instances where the Dead Sea Scrolls agree with the Septuagint against the Masoretic Text:

<https://web.archive.org/web/20110101004531/http://mysite.verizon.net/rgjones3/Septuagint/spapendix.htm>

The Dead Sea Scrolls community certainly were not Christians!

Contrary to the counter-missionary claims, the truth is that both the Masoretic Text and LXX stem from a source now lost to us. The claim that the Masoretic is "original" and should therefore be preferred is false and the claim that the LXX is "corrupt" is false. Both the Masoretic Text and LXX are important in the work of textual criticism and ascertaining the original words.

If this series and presentation format interested you, there are many more questions we will be covering in the subsequent parts of this teaching series. As always, if you have questions for 119 Ministries, please use the Contact Us page offered on our website, <http://119ministries.com/contact-us>. And if you do contact us, thank you for your patience as our team works to respond.

We pray you have been blessed by this teaching. Remember, continue to test everything. Shalom!

For more on this and other teachings, please visit us at www.testeverything.net

Shalom, and may Yahweh bless you in walking in the whole Word of God.

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