

Chapter Nine

The Nexus Between Anaguta and Jewish Circumcision Rituals

David Bahal Azomo
Nakam N. Kangpe

The practice of the rite of circumcision over the years among many ethnic groups has been well documented. However, among the Anaguta people of the Jos Plateau of Nigeria, little or no attention has been given to the significance of this rite and its comparison with what is enshrined in the Jewish Scripture. This chapter examines the significance of the rite of circumcision from the perspective of scripture, and the interplay between the Jewish and the Anaguta ritual practice. It draws similarities and dissimilarities between the two in terms of significance and meaning to both people within the context of its practice. Using a combination of library search and qualitative method of data collection, the researchers discuss the concept of circumcision, and the origin and practice of this rite to both the Jews and African people, particularly the Anaguta of Jos Plateau in Nigeria. Some similarities were given as they relate to the covenant between the Jews and *Yahweh* and the Anaguta with *Uweng*, the Supreme God. Using secondary sources and personal interviews, the research gives a vivid picture of the significance and necessity of this rite, which is practiced among many cultures around the world.

Key words: Ritual, Circumcision, Anaguta, and Jews

Introduction

The tradition of circumcision has been practiced for a very long period of time in Africa. Though there is no indication concerning the origin of the practice of circumcision among Africans, many cultures practice it and in fact, it is one of the rites one must undergo in his lifetime as a man. Some cultures practice female circumcision, Female Genital Mutilation

(FGM) or clitoridectomy, which is prevalent in African cultures.³⁸⁸ But from Jewish scriptures, circumcision is only for men, which has its origin in Genesis 17. Myers ascertains that the earliest reference to the rite of circumcision is found in Genesis 17:10–14, where God commanded Abraham to circumcise (Heb. *mālal*) himself and all other males of his household, including his male slaves.³⁸⁹ Prior to that time, there is no indication that it was practiced, as no verse in scripture says anything about it.

With this rite being practiced then and now, this chapter comparatively discusses the tradition of circumcision in the light of scripture and the African understanding, particularly among the Anaguta people and in a few other African ethnic groups. It also examined the importance, spiritual obligations, similarities and dissimilarities of the practice in the Jewish scripture, especially the Pentateuch (*Torah*) and the Anaguta to enlighten about African understanding.

Conceptualization

According to the *Dictionary of Theology and World Religions*, circumcision is the cutting-off of the prepuce in males or the internal labia in females as a religious rite. The Hebrew word for circumcision is *milah*.³⁹⁰ According to Neusner, et al, circumcision is termed:

berit milah (“the covenant of circumcision”), which consists of the removal of the foreskin from the penis of a baby boy, with the purpose of initiating him into the “covenant of Abraham.” The term borrowed from the Rabbinic reading of Genesis 17, where Abraham and all his male heirs in perpetuity are told to practice circumcision as a sign of the covenant that God establishes with the people of

³⁸⁸ Rebecca Stallings and Emilian Karugendo, “Female Circumcision and HIV Infection in Tanzania: For Better or for Worse.” <http://www.femalecircumcisionandhivinfectionintanzania.pdf>. Accessed 15th June 2017.

³⁸⁹ A. C. Myers, *The Eerdmans Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1987), 218.

³⁹⁰ F. Brown, S. R. Driver and C. A. Briggs, *Enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, 2000), xiii.

Israel. As the physical and ritual rite of initiation into the covenant, circumcision is thus performed also on male converts to Judaism, regardless of their age. Already circumcised male converts undergo a shortened form of the ritual entitled *hatafat dam*, literally “a drop of blood.” In this ritual, a single drop of blood is drawn from the penis as a representation of circumcision, which is performed not merely as a surgical procedure but as a religious act that brings about entry into the Jewish covenant.³⁹¹

According to Derouchie, the circumcision word-group in the Masoretic Text (BHS) is made up of six Hebrew lexemes, together occurring eighty-five times: “to circumcise” (thirty-one times), “to circumcise” (one time), “circumcision” (one time), “to treat as one having foreskin” (two times), “foreskin” (15 times), and “having foreskin” (thirty-five times). Forty instances are in the Pentateuch, forty four times in the Prophets, and one in the Writings.³⁹² This shows that circumcision in Jewish culture is one of the fundamental rites that indicates manhood, belonging to the nation and a mark of being a covenant member with Yahweh.

Origin and Practices of Circumcision

Though there is no precise date or time when circumcision began, Lawrence Besserman opines that it dates to prehistoric times and was practiced among various ethnic or aboriginal peoples. In biblical tradition, circumcision as a Jewish religious ritual of initiation (Hebrew *berit malah*) began with Abraham, who, at the age of ninety-nine, circumcised himself in fulfilment of a divine commandment.³⁹³

³⁹¹ J. Neusner, A. J. Avery-Peck, W. S. Green and Museum of Jewish Heritage, *The Encyclopedia of Judaism* (New York: 2000), 189.

³⁹² Jason S. Derouchie, “Circumcision in the Hebrew Bible and Targums: Theology, Rhetoric, and the Handling of Metaphor” *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 14:2 (2004), 175–203.
<http://www.bulletinforbiblicalresearchinthehebrewbibleandtargums.pdf>
Accessed on 13th June, 2017

³⁹³ Lawrence Besserman in *Dictionary of Biblical Tradition in English Literature* (D. L. Jeffrey ed., Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1992).

Circumcision in Ancient Times

According to Smith, circumcision in the ancient world was peculiarly, though not exclusively, a Jewish rite. It was enjoined upon Abraham, the founding father of Israel, by God, as the institution and as the token of the covenant, which assured to him and his descendants the promise of the Messiah (Genesis 17).³⁹⁴

According to Elwell and Comfort, the rite of circumcision in the ancient world is far older than the Hebrew people. Cave paintings give evidence that it was practiced in prehistoric times. Egyptian temple drawings show that the operation was common in 4000 BC and probably earlier.³⁹⁵ From the above discourse, therefore, circumcision predates the circumcision of Abraham. Although it is not clear if it was done as a religious rite, it was certainly practiced among non-Jewish nations.

Circumcision in the Old Testament

In the Old Testament, the practice of circumcision began in Genesis 17 as a sign of the covenant between God and Abraham. Elwell and Comfort stress that God promised Abraham a land and, through a son yet to be conceived, numerous descendants, from whom kings would come. Blessings would come upon Abraham and through him to all nations (Gen. 12:1–3). After the covenant was formally inaugurated (Gen. 15), God sealed it, ordering Abraham to be circumcised along with all the males in his household (Gen. 17:9–13, 27).³⁹⁶ Not only to the household of Abraham, but the practice is to be for his generation, the Jewish nation. At that time that Abraham was circumcised together with all his household, when Ishmael was thirteen years old, while Isaac was circumcised years later at the age of eight days (vs. 24, 25; 21:4)

Circumcision took place in Shechem, when all males in that city were circumcised, after the son of the ruler of the city raped Dinah, Jacob's daughter. As a prerequisite for her marriage to him, they were told to circumcise, which they did (Gen. 34:24). Also, Moses' son was circumcised when God was about to kill him (Moses). His son Gershon,

³⁹⁴ W. Smith, *Smith's Bible Dictionary* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997).

³⁹⁵ W. A. Elwell and P. W. Comfort, *Tyndale Bible Dictionary* (Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, 2001), 285.

³⁹⁶ Elwell & Comfort, *Tyndale Bible Dictionary*, 285.

was circumcised to prevent God from killing Moses (Exo. 4:24-25). In Joshua 5:1-9, God commanded Joshua to circumcise the Israelites at Gilgal. No sooner than the ritual had been performed that God pronounced that he had taken the reproach of Egypt from among them. From there onward, the rite of circumcision became the practice of the Israelites since they settled in the land promised them.

Circumcision during the Intertestamental Period

During the Intertestamental Period, circumcision was practiced as a means of ethnic identity between Jews and non-Jews. Freedman, et al, asserts that circumcision became the most critical distinguishing mark separating the Israelites from surrounding peoples. It was a requirement of God's covenant (Gen. 17:9-14), along with Sabbath observance and food laws.³⁹⁷ This is to say those who were not circumcised could not observe the Sabbath and were also excluded from some laws regarding food. In as much as other nations practiced circumcision, their views of it may have differed.

By the time of the Maccabees, as Freedman, et al, further notes, circumcision was intimately bound up with Israel's identity as the covenant people of God (1 Maccabees 1:14-15, 60-61; 2 Maccabees 6:10). It was the most significant boundary marker, which distinguished Jew from Gentile, those within the covenant from those outside it.³⁹⁸

Circumcision in the New Testament

In the New Testament, there were many instances that the rite of circumcision was practiced. For instance, both John (Luke 1:59) and Jesus were circumcised (Luke 2:21). In the time of Christ, he taught a lot concerning circumcision, drawing its importance, such as in John 7:22-23. Circumcision is also mentioned in the Stephen narrative in Acts 7:8. During the New Testament era, Elwell and Beitzel summarize that:

Many Jews misunderstood the significance of circumcision, believing that the physical act was necessary for and a guarantee of

³⁹⁷ D. N. Freedman, A. C. Myers and A. B. Beck, *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 2000), 256.

³⁹⁸ Freedman et al, *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, 256.

salvation. Thus, for Jews, the observance became not only a symbol of religious privilege, but a source of racial pride (Philippians 3:4–6). These Jews associated the ceremony with the Mosaic Law rather than the promise to Abraham (John 7:22; Acts 15:1). Because Greeks and Romans did not practice circumcision, Jews had come to be called “the circumcision” (Acts 10:45; 11:2; Romans 15:8; Galatians 2:7, 9; Ephesians 2:11; Titus 1:10), and following Old Testament practice (Ezekiel 28:10; 31:18, 19; 32:19–32), Gentiles were termed “the uncircumcision” (Galatians 2:7; Ephesians 2:11).³⁹⁹

Figurative Use of Circumcision in Scripture

In scripture, there are several passages in which we find figurative use of circumcision. Few examples as given by Lewis and Armerding include the time of the conquest, when God told the Israelites that for three years after the settlement in Canaan the “fruit of the land” was to be considered as “uncircumcised” in Leviticus 19:23.⁴⁰⁰

Lewis and Armerding further comment that in another passage, such as in Exodus 6:30, Moses with characteristic of humility described himself as a man of “uncircumcised lips.” Jeremiah likewise charges his contemporaries with having their ears uncircumcised (Jer. 6:10) and also their hearts (9:26). In both instances, the meaning seems to be that the organ so described is closed to hearing and consequently to obeying God’s command.⁴⁰¹

Circumcision among the Anaguta of the Jos Plateau, their neighbours and in some African Cultures

The origin of circumcision remains unknown in the African context. However, according to Junod, it is believed that it might have started in Egypt or the Middle East (probably among the Jews). Many of the Eastern and Southern African ethnic groups agreed on that because they

³⁹⁹ W. A. Elwell and B. J. Beitzel, *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1988), 464.

⁴⁰⁰ T. Lewis and C. E. Armerding, *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Revised*. (G. W. Bromiley ed., Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 2002), 702.

⁴⁰¹ Lewis and Armerding, 702.

believe that they share some cultural practices in common with Semitic groups.⁴⁰²

In a research on some selected ethnic groups in Northern Nigeria, C. K. Meek, a colonial anthropologist comments that: “The operation of circumcision is general but not always closely associated with the initiation rites by which boys are formally admitted to membership of the tribe”.⁴⁰³ Circumcision in most ethnic groups of Northern Nigeria is a private affair. It is not necessary a feature of initiation. Some ethnic groups, who circumcise combine it with initiation while some closely associate it with initiation. For instance, among the Afizere (or Izere) people of the Jos Plateau, circumcision is done separately from initiation. In some cases, those who have not been circumcised can do so during initiation to manhood.⁴⁰⁴ Among the Maguzawa people, circumcision is practiced. Depending on some cultures, Meek comments that:

It is done to children between the ages of seven and nine. Others do it much earlier especially the pagan Hausas. Girls are not circumcised in Hausa land. Circumcision is regarded as an initiation to manhood. Among the Rukubas and Angas, circumcision is very important. In the morning of the circumcision, the boys go through ‘baptismal’ ceremony with cold water in a stream.⁴⁰⁵

The cold-water treatment is performed to reduce too much flow of blood.⁴⁰⁶ Generally, the median age for circumcision ranged from 13 to 20 years, with considerable variation within and among ethnic groups, depending on the traditions of different groups. In some settings, circumcision may take place at an earlier age, especially when parents have their sons circumcised in a clinical setting in anticipation of fewer complications.⁴⁰⁷

⁴⁰² Henri A. Junod, *The Life of a South African Tribe* (New York: University Books Incorporated, 1962), 72-73.

⁴⁰³ Meek, *The Northern Tribes of Nigeria*, 84.

⁴⁰⁴ Ada Gwom Izang in an Interview on 2nd October, 2018.

⁴⁰⁵ Meek, *The Northern Tribes of Nigeria*, 88

⁴⁰⁶ Amabu Markus in an Interview on 3rd October, 2018.

⁴⁰⁷ Wilcken et al quoting Bailey R. C., Egesah O., Rosenberg S. “Male Circumcision for HIV Prevention: A Prospective Study of Complications in Clinical and Traditional Settings in Bungoma, Kenya. *Bulletin of the World*

In some ethnic groups, female circumcision is visible. Female circumcision, also referred to as Female Genital Cutting (FGC) or FGM, is prevalent among some African countries.⁴⁰⁸ Among some of the ethnic groups that practice female circumcision are some sections of Yoruba, Eggon (of Nigeria), Egyptian and Somalian, societies among others. The major reason normally given borders on controlling the sexual appetite of women and thereby enforcing chastity.

*Circumcision in Anaguta Traditions*⁴⁰⁹

The Anaguta people are predominantly found in Jos North Local Government of Plateau State. The Anaguta chiefdom consists of the larger section of the present Jos North Local Government Area, with a paramount head known as the *Ujah Anaguta*. The chiefdom is divided into five major clans, namely: Nabor, Andoho, Rigiza, Targwong, and Nagohom, each with a district head. The dialect the Anaguta people speak is *Iguta*. Commenting on the population of Anaguta, Meek says that by 1971, the population was about three thousand two hundred and eighty-two persons.⁴¹⁰ Today, the population is more than this, even though there is no accurate record of Anaguta demography.

One of the prominent Anaguta areas known locally and internationally is the famous Naraguta (a Hausa synonym/mispronunciation for Anaguta). This area is known for its Hausa pottery and leather works. Though these professions are phasing out, yet there are some few clusters of the pottery and leather work ongoing. The area is also home to the prestigious University of Jos, especially the Old and Naraguta Campuses.

Health Organisation 2008; 86: 669-77
doi: 10.2471/BLT.08.051482pmid:18797642.)

⁴⁰⁸ Rebecca Stallings and Emilian Karugendo, "Female Circumcision and HIV Infection in Tanzania: For Better or for Worse." <http://www.femalecircumcisionandhivinfectionintanzania.pdf>. Accessed 15th June 2017.

⁴⁰⁹ There has been little or no writing regarding circumcision in Anaguta land. Most of the information used is from interviews and personal experiences of the writer. Regarding the vivid history of the origin of Anaguta people, reference can be made to Dr. Yakubu Y. Sanda's NCE Projects (College of Education Akwanga, 1990), 1-8.

⁴¹⁰ Meek, *The Northern Tribes of Nigeria*, 185.

The Anaguta people possess a rich cultural and traditional heritage. The ethnic group has various dance groups such as *Isharuwa* (found among the Nagohom and Andoho clans), and women dance groups found in all the five clans mentioned earlier, *Tirhaetu* horn music, performed mostly for traditional rulers on special occasions, and *ipyambu* a flute made from reed. They celebrate various festivals such as *Tikunku*, *Tikang* (performed during the rainy season, praying to the gods for a bumper harvest), *Mansu* (local wrestling), and *Rigisau* newly married couples, among other local festivals.

One important traditional ceremony worth mentioning is the *rishende ra kpwo* (circumcision). This is performed on young boys between ages three and seven. The boys are grouped together and the person performing the circumcision performs the rituals on the boys one after the other. It is considered bravery if one does not cry or show any sign of pains. This ceremony is staged once every seven years for boys of the same age group, who are also considered ‘circumcision age mates.’⁴¹¹

In Anaguta tradition, circumcision is performed as an initiation rite, rite of passage from boyhood to adulthood, or both depending on the age of the neophyte.⁴¹² It is also tied to religious obligations, as the chief priest leads the young candidates in a procession to the shrine for the circumcision. It was a taboo for the rite to take place at home.⁴¹³ During the event, no woman is expected to be at the circumcision venue as stiff penalties can be meted on such a woman or her husband. Parents of the candidates are expected to slaughter a goat each, and the intestines, head and legs are exclusively given to the boys who were circumcised. Food such as *tipara*, *gusgus* made from fonio (acha, hungry rice or *digitalis exilir*) is cooked and shared among invited quests and relations.⁴¹⁴ Special care or attention is also given to the boys so that no dirt or infection affects the quick process of healing.

⁴¹¹ Yakubu Sanda in an interview on 19th November, 2018.

⁴¹² Bailey et al observe that in many African societies, male circumcision is carried out for cultural reasons, particularly as an initiation ritual and a rite of passage into manhood. When carried out as a rite of passage into manhood, traditional male circumcision is mainly performed on adolescents or young men.

⁴¹³ Yakubu Sanda in an interview on 19th November, 2018.

⁴¹⁴ Awuh Ladi Sanda in an interview on 20th November, 201.

It is worthy of mention that in Anaguta traditions, FGM is unknown. In fact, there is no mention of any woman who have ever been circumcised among the Anaguta people. This is considered a taboo.

From the above submissions, one can summarize that in the Anaguta culture, as in any other African culture, circumcision has socio-religious and political implication. It is a rite of passage or life cycle ritual for politically, socially, economically, religiously and spiritually admitting a boy into membership of the ethnic group. He is politically prepared for future leadership role and initiated into the warrior-head hunting cult of the ethnic group for defending its borders. Socially, the neophyte is permanently attached to his circumcision group, within which he would farm, work in community development, and marry. Religiously and spiritually, he is regenerated and affiliated with ethnic ancestors or the tutelary genius.⁴¹⁵

Significance of Circumcision

Circumcision is significant in Jewish traditions in many ways. It is germane for the Jews spiritually, ethically, envisaging Israel's return to the Promised Land, religious and politically:

Spiritual Significance

Elwell and Beitzel note that the act of circumcision symbolized the need for cleansing if the Holy God was to enter into relationship with an unholy people. At first it was God's intention to let the ritual teach its own lesson.⁴¹⁶ In Genesis 17:11, the observance merely serves as the covenant seal between God and Abraham.⁴¹⁷ Furthermore, circumcision was a seal of the righteousness of the faith that he might be the father of all those who believe, though, they are uncircumcised, that righteousness might be imputed to them also (Romans 4:11).⁴¹⁸ Circumcision was to be an expression of faith that God's promises would be realized. It was a permanent reminder of God's covenant promises placed on Abraham's body and the bodies of his male descendants (17:11). This sign was so

⁴¹⁵ Sanda, Yakubu in an interview on 19th November, 2018.

⁴¹⁶ Elwell and Beitzel, *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*, 463.

⁴¹⁷ J. MacArthur, *The MacArthur Topical Bible: New King James Version* (Nashville, Tennessee: Word Publication, 1999), 226.

⁴¹⁸ MacArthur, 226.

closely related to God's covenant promise that the rite itself could be termed the "covenant" (Gen. 17:10; Acts 7:8).⁴¹⁹ This indicates that circumcision is spiritually significant as it relates to one's faith in God and salvation in one's relationship with God.

Ethical significance

Circumcision is significant ethically as Elwell and Beitzel observe that by the time of the exodus, it became evident that circumcision had to do with ethical as well as physical considerations. In Deuteronomy 10:16, Moses exhorted the people to circumcise the foreskins of their hearts, and in Deuteronomy 30:6, this command assumes the form of a promise: "The Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul."⁴²⁰

Return to the Lord

Circumcision is significant because it has to do with teaching on return to the Lord. Elwell and Beitzel comment that sin in the lives of the chosen people made their circumcision meaningless before God. Thus, Moses told the Israelites to humble their uncircumcised hearts (Lev. 26:41). The prophets further develop this teaching. Jeremiah urged the citizens of Judah to remove the foreskins of their hearts to avoid God's wrath because of their evil ways (Jer. 4:4), warning that the "uncircumcised ears" of Israel were not sensitive to the word of the Lord (Jeremiah 6:10).⁴²¹

In many scriptural passages, circumcision is connected to, as ascertain by Eichrodt, ceasing to do evil and learning to do good (Isa. 1:17), being ready to obey (Isa. 1:19), amending one's ways and one's doings, and stressing the necessity of a changed inner attitude (Jer. 7:3; 36:13). It also means inclining one's heart to Yahweh (Josh. 24:23), acquiring a new heart (Ezek. 18:31), circumcising oneself before Yahweh and removing the foreskin of the heart (Deut. 10:16; Jer. 4:4),

⁴¹⁹ Elwell and Comfort, *Tyndale Bible Dictionary*, 285.

⁴²⁰ Elwell and Beitzel, *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*, 463.

⁴²¹ Elwell and Beitzel, *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*, 463.

breaking up fallow ground (Hos. 10:12; Jer. 4:3); washing one's heart from evil (Jer. 4:14), and washing and purifying oneself (Isa. 1:16).⁴²²

Political and Religious Significance

One of the significances of circumcision especially among the Jews is the political and religious benefits that one gets. Bromiley comments that in biblical times, the rite of circumcision was a precondition of the enjoyment of certain political and religious privileges as seen in Exodus 12:48 and Ezekiel 44:9.⁴²³ To be relevant both politically and religiously, one must be circumcised.

The Connection between the Circumcision of the Anagutas with that of the Jews

In African cultures, especially the Anaguta people, there are similarities in terms of circumcision with that of the Jews, especially as seen from Biblical perspective.

First, it is a mark of a covenant between the gods and human beings for the Anaguta, which is related to the Biblical concept of a seal or sign of the covenant between God and Abraham and all his descendants. Second, it was a sign of Abraham's faith (Rom. 4:11). God ordered it, for Abraham as his descendants, and it demands our obedience of Christians as children of God (Gen. 17:10). The Anaguta hold a similar view, as circumcision is also a sign of obedience to *Uweng*, the Supreme God.⁴²⁴

Third, it is done so that one should take part in the Passover celebrations as the uncircumcised are not allowed to participate in it (Exo. 12:48). Similarly, there are many cultural celebrations performed in the Anaguta culture that are exclusively for those who have been circumcised. These only are considered real men, and such ceremonies are reserved for them, especially *Tikunku*, which is the greatest cultural festival of the Anaguta people.

⁴²² Walther Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament* Vol. 2 (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1967), 466.

⁴²³ G. W. Bromiley, *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Rev. ed. (William. B. Eerdmans, 2002), 700.

⁴²⁴ Dumbari Abamu in an interview on 6th November, 2018.

Fourth, circumcision is a special mark of identity among the Jews. Every male child is circumcised when he is eight days old (Lev. 12:3). The Anaguta people carry out such practices in their cultural rituals. To be a true son of the soil in Anaguta land, circumcision is needed and the rite must be performed. The biblical notice of the rite describes it as distinctively Jewish; such that the New Testament frequently uses “the circumcision” and “the uncircumcision” as synonyms for Jews and Gentiles, respectively.⁴²⁵ The Anaguta too nurture this same idea of seeing the Anaguta man distinct from those who are not circumcised. Fifth, every Israelite who is not circumcised, is to be “cut off from his people” as having “broken My covenant” as commanded by Yahweh (Gen. 17:14).⁴²⁶ Not being circumcised in Anaguta land is considered a violation of the order given by *Uweng* and heavy penalty is meted on the parents of the uncircumcised boy. He (the boy) is secluded from his age mates and become an object of scorn. Sixth, as time goes on, the Israelites were commanded to circumcise their hearts, which signifies total dependence on God and their submission to him (Deut. 10:16; 30:6).

Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the nexus between Anaguta and Jewish traditions of circumcision looking at the points of convergence. It is clear that there are similarities in this rite such as a covenant between Abraham and his descendants with Yahweh, the Anaguta with *Uweng*, the supreme Being. It is worthy of note that circumcision is of utmost significance as it unites God and his people. To end this important issue as given by Unger, et al, circumcision of the child on the eighth day seems to have been founded on the significance attached to the number seven, so far as that number denotes a period of time. On the eighth day, when a new cycle of life begins, the child enters into covenant with God. Again, it is believed it is until the eighth day that the child is supposed to possess an independent existence. The writers agree with Unger et al that:

⁴²⁵ Smith, *Smith's Bible Dictionary*.

⁴²⁶ M. F. Unger, R. K. Harrison, H. F. Vos, C. J. Barber and M. F. Unger, *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary*. Revision of: Unger's Bible dictionary. 3rd ed. (Rev. and updated edition. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1988).

As Christians, we are said to be circumcised in Christ (Col. 2:11). This circumcision is asserted to be “circumcision made without hands,” that is, a spiritual reality and not a physical rite, the antitype and not the type. Physical circumcision was a putting off of a part of the flesh as a symbol of covenant relationship of God’s people with a holy God. Christian circumcision is “removal of” not a part, but the entire “body of the flesh.” “The body of the flesh” is the physical body controlled by the old fallen nature that all possess, saved as well as unsaved. The “removal of” is positional truth, that is, truth that arises as a result of the believer’s being placed in Christ by the Spirit’s baptizing work. Because the sin nature was judged by Christ in His death, so the believer by virtue of his organic union and identification with his Lord shares that “removal” that Christ accomplished, just as he shares Christ’s fullness and is declared to be “complete” in Him.⁴²⁷

⁴²⁷Unger et al., *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary*.