

## **Thought for the Day 5<sup>th</sup> June 2020 from Tony Whatmough (St Michael's)**

### **Joshua 5:2-end.**

“The Lord said to Joshua, ‘Make flint knives and circumcise the Israelites a second time.’ So Joshua made flint knives, and circumcised the Israelites at Gibeath-haaraloth.”

Gibeath-haaraloth, translated, means ‘The hill of the foreskins.’ I can’t imagine that it became a significant tourist attraction! In any case, it’s not clear exactly where it was located.

Today, this story must rank alongside the campaign against FGM. Similar to Female Genital Mutilation, some one-third of males worldwide are circumcised. It is most common among Muslims and Jews, for religious reasons, but also in the United States and other areas in the world.

It used to be thought that there were legitimate medical reasons for performing it, but these seem to be discounted today. The principle reason was religious, to mark men out as belonging to God. It was, and is, a rite of passage for boys.

Whilst the Roman Catholic Church banned it, some other Christian Churches either tolerate it or still require it.

It should give us pause for thought. Undoubtedly religion can enhance our lives, giving us support and encouragement, reassuring us that we are loved unconditionally by God. But sometimes it can also give us burdens that are too heavy to bear.

At a time when many are bowed down by fear and uncertainty, when our churches are closed for formal worship, it might be a good opportunity to review the practice of our faith. Are we laying burdens too heavy to bear on ourselves or on others? As I friend of mine wrote the other day, ‘What is your greatest wish for your well-being today?’ It is a question we can ask for others too.

Elsewhere in the Old Testament we find these words: Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no longer stubborn. (Deuteronomy 10:16).

Let us pray that our hearts may always be open to the well-being of others.