



UNCIRCUMCISED

The Law of Uncircumcised Fruit

When Israel entered the land of promise, God gave them a command that may have seemed unusual. He told them that when they planted fruit trees, they were not to eat the fruit for the first three years. That fruit was to be counted as *uncircumcised*; forbidden and not fit for use. In the fourth year, the entire harvest was to be holy, set apart as a praise offering to Yahweh. Only in the fifth year and onward could they finally eat the fruit and enjoy it as their own. This pattern was not just about farming; it was a living parable about holiness, patience, and covenant obedience.

The first three years represented waiting. In those years the fruit was called *uncircumcised* because it was unfit, undedicated, and not yet covenant-sanctioned. The Hebrew word used is (**arel**), a word also applied in Scripture to uncircumcised lips (Ex. 6:12), uncircumcised ears (Jer. 6:10), and uncircumcised hearts (Lev. 26:41). The picture is clear: the fruit had not yet been set apart for holy use. It was not “dirty” in the sense of filth, but it was incomplete, not dedicated, and not yet purified by time and growth.

God used this law to train His people in holiness and patience. The natural instinct of a farmer is to taste the very first fruits of his labor, yet the Lord asked Israel to restrain themselves. Just as the tree needed time to strengthen its roots and branches, so Israel needed to learn discipline, self-denial, and trust in God’s timing. Waiting on God was part of their covenant identity. Deuteronomy 8:3 reminds us that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of Yahweh. For Israel, the uncircumcised fruit was a test: would they obey, or would they grasp too soon?

There were natural reasons for this command. Fruit in the first three years is usually weak, watery, and unwholesome. Removing it actually strengthens the tree, allowing energy to flow into root and branch rather than into premature fruit. Gardeners even today prune young trees for this very reason. Spiritually, this was a picture of God pruning His people. Not everything that grows is immediately ours. Some things must be restrained until God declares them sanctified. Just as a male child was not under the covenant until circumcision on the eighth day (Gen. 17:12), so the tree was not covenant-fit until its fourth year. The fruit was “unclean, immature, and incomplete,” not yet worthy to be offered or enjoyed.

So, what did Israel eat in those first three years? God had already provided for them. Deuteronomy 6:10-11 reminds them that they inherited houses, wells, vineyards, and oliveyards they did not plant. Joshua 5:11-12 shows that they ate of the old corn of the land when the manna ceased. Their survival did not depend on the young fruit trees. The uncircumcised fruit was not about starvation; it was a test of obedience and holiness. God was teaching them to trust Him, not their appetites.

The text also makes it plain: they were not to eat it, but it does not say it must remain on the tree. Likely, they plucked it off and discarded it so the tree would grow stronger. Just as foreskin is cut away and cast aside, the early fruit was cut off and thrown away, teaching them to wait for maturity. It could not be eaten, sold, or used in any way. It was counted as unclean and forbidden. This was God's training in holiness: to set apart what is not yet ready, to learn patience, and to honor His covenant order.

The fourth year was different. Then, the fruit was to be wholly consecrated to Yahweh as an offering of praise. This meant that the first mature and acceptable yield belonged to God alone. The entire crop was considered holy. It could be given to the priests, shared with the poor, or eaten in a thanksgiving feast before the Lord; but always with the purpose of glorifying His name. Numbers 18:12-13 speaks of the firstfruits being given to the priests. Deuteronomy 14:23 shows how Israel was to eat in joy before the Lord in His chosen place, learning to fear Him. Deuteronomy 26:10 records the confession of the worshiper: "Behold, I have brought the firstfruits of the land, which You, O Lord, have given me." All of this shows that the fourth year's fruit was an act of worship.

Why was this so important? Because it reminded Israel that the land was the Lord's and that fruitfulness comes from His hand alone. Psalm 24:1 declares, "The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof." Psalm 65:9-11 praises God as the One who waters the land, crowns the year with bounty, and makes the pastures rich. By giving the entire fourth year to Yahweh, Israel confessed that all increase is His gift, not their achievement. They learned that praise must come before enjoyment. Only after honoring God with the first acceptable fruits could they freely enjoy their harvest.

This law also separated Israel from the pagan nations around them. Pagan people often dedicated the first fruits of trees to their idols through rituals, sacrifices, and superstitions. By calling Israel to treat the first three years as

forbidden and the fourth year as holy to Yahweh, God cut His people off from idolatrous customs. Instead of idol feasts, they had feasts of thanksgiving. Instead of dedicating new fruit to Baal or Asherah, they dedicated it to Yahweh. This law marked them as a distinct, holy nation.

The promise of blessing came in the fifth year. After waiting three years, after dedicating the fourth year to Yahweh, only then could Israel finally eat the fruit for themselves. But with this permission came a promise: “that it may yield unto you the increase thereof: I am the Lord your God” (Lev. 19:25). God promised that obedience in this pattern would lead to greater abundance in later years. By restraining their appetite and honoring God first, they would receive multiplied blessing. Increase would not come from nature alone but from the covenant hand of God.

There is a beautiful order in this law. The first three years represented restraint and waiting; like death to appetite. The fourth year represented consecration and praise - life given wholly to God. The fifth year represented grace and increase - God’s blessing poured out after holiness. This echoes a pattern seen often in Scripture: life comes through waiting, consecration, and grace. The numbers themselves carry meaning. Three years (restraint), the fourth year (holiness completed), the fifth year (grace released). God was embedding His spiritual order in the very cycles of planting and harvest.

In the end, the law of uncircumcised fruit was much more than agricultural advice. It was covenant training. It taught Israel to see fruit as holy, to give God His rightful portion, to wait with patience, to reject pagan customs, and to live in faith that blessing comes from Yahweh alone. It reminded them that not all that grows is immediately theirs to enjoy. Some things must be cut off, some things must be consecrated, and only then comes the fullness of joy.

Thus, Leviticus 19:23-25 was not a burdensome law but a gracious lesson. God was shaping His people to be holy, patient, and thankful. The forbidden fruit of the first three years reminded them that life must be pruned and prepared. The consecrated fruit of the fourth year reminded them that glory belongs to God. The blessed fruit of the fifth year reminded them that increase comes only by obedience. And in every part of it, God stamped His authority: “I am the Lord your God.”

The Reality Fulfilled in Israel

Leviticus 19:23-25 gave Israel a law about fruit trees. For three years their fruit was forbidden, called “uncircumcised.” In the fourth year, the fruit was holy, consecrated entirely to Yahweh as praise. Only in the fifth year could they finally eat the fruit, with God’s promise of increase. Behind this law was a prophetic pattern pointing to Christ, Adam, Israel, and the Kingdom to come. It was more than farming instruction; it was a hidden timeline of salvation.

Three Years - Christ’s Ministry

For about three and a half years, Jesus ministered among Israel. He preached, healed, and called them to repentance, yet found little fruit. Just as the early fruit of a tree was unfit, Israel’s spiritual state was “uncircumcised in heart and ears” (Acts 7:51). They rejected their Messiah, showing themselves barren. Jesus Himself used this very imagery: “Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none” (Luke 13:7). His words echoed the law of Leviticus. For three years He sought fruit in Israel, but it was not ready, and so judgment came.

This barrenness was not new. From Adam onward, mankind had failed to yield fruit fit for God. Romans 5:12 explains, “By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so, death passed upon all men.” Adam’s disobedience made the entire tree of humanity uncircumcised, unfit for covenant life for 3000 years since Adam. Just as the fruit of the first three years was forbidden, the fruit of fallen man was corrupted, unclean, and unworthy of God.

The Fourth Day of Creation - Christ the Firstfruit

On the fourth day of creation, God made the sun, moon, and stars to give light and to mark seasons (Gen. 1:14-19). This was no accident. The fourth day corresponds with the fourth thousand years from Adam, when Christ appeared. John 1:9 calls Him the “true Light, which lighteth every man that

cometh into the world." Just as the heavenly lights appeared on the fourth day, Christ came as the Light of the world at the appointed time.

In this same pattern, the fourth year's fruit in Leviticus was holy and wholly consecrated to God. This points directly to Christ. Paul calls Him the "last Adam" (1 Cor. 15:45) and the "firstfruits of them that slept" (1 Cor. 15:20). Where Adam's fruit was rejected, Christ's fruit was accepted. At the close of four thousand years of human history, Christ was offered wholly to God, a perfect consecrated sacrifice. Romans 5:19 declares, "By the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." The first acceptable harvest after centuries of barrenness belonged entirely to God, and it was Christ.

The Fifth Year - Grace and Increase

Leviticus promised that in the fifth year the fruit could finally be eaten, and it would yield increase (Lev. 19:25). In Scripture, the number five often points to grace and abundance. The Torah itself contained five books; God's covenant gift to Israel. Jesus fed five thousand with five loaves, showing divine provision. Daniel describes a fifth kingdom - the everlasting Kingdom of God, established through Christ (Dan. 2:44).

This fifth year points to the Kingdom Age, the thousand-year reign of Christ & the peaceable kingdom, when mankind will at last enjoy the increase of His ransom. Romans 5:18 declares, "By the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life." After the waiting and consecration, the fruit is finally given to man. Abraham's seed; natural Israel and all who are of faith (Gal. 3:29) will partake in this abundance. It is then that the ransom's merit will be fully applied, bringing life and restoration to the world. The increase comes not from man's labor, but from God's grace released in His Kingdom.

Adam, Christ, and the Tree

The tree in Leviticus 19 can also be compared to Adam and humanity. Adam was the tree, and his early fruit was called uncircumcised; unfit, unclean, forbidden for 3000 years from Adam. Though Adam was created "very good" (Gen. 1:31), his disobedience made his fruit corrupt. The early fruit of mankind, like the first three years, was unusable to God. But in the fourth stage, Christ

appeared as the “last Adam,” holy and consecrated on the 4th thousand year. His fruit was acceptable and offered wholly to God. Finally, in the “fifth year,” the Kingdom, mankind will eat of the increase and enjoy the abundance of life.

This hidden comparison shows the order: Adam’s fruit = corruption; Christ’s fruit = consecration; mankind’s future fruit = abundance. Death through Adam, life through Christ, fullness in the Kingdom.

The Fourth Generation - Israel’s Pattern

This same pattern was given to Abraham. God told him in Genesis 15:16, “In the fourth generation they shall come hither again.” Israel would not inherit the land immediately after Egypt, but in the fourth generation. And indeed, when they came out, they were consecrated as a nation of priests: “You shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Exod. 19:6). Just like the tree in the fourth year, Israel was offered to God as His holy portion in the land.

This was no coincidence. Israel’s story followed the same rhythm: waiting, consecration, and then increase. The fourth generation belonged wholly to God, just as the fourth year’s fruit was holy. And in the future, the fifth year picture will be fulfilled when Israel and the nations share in the abundance of Christ’s Kingdom.

The Secret of Numbers in the Pattern

The numbers themselves reveal the hidden wisdom of God. Three years of forbidden fruit symbolize the long ages of fallen humanity; unfit, uncircumcised, unholy. The fourth year belongs to God - Christ, the Firstfruit, wholly consecrated. The fifth year is for man; grace, abundance, and blessing. This same order is written in the whole story of redemption: sin and waiting, consecration in Christ, and then the abundance of grace in the Kingdom.

Paul captures this in Romans 8:21: “The creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.” That liberty corresponds to the “fifth year,” when fruit is multiplied and enjoyed at last.

Thoughts

Israel was uncircumcised in heart during Christ's ministry; like the early fruit. After four thousand years, Christ came as the true Firstfruit, holy and consecrated to God. He alone was fit for the altar, the perfect offering. In the "fifth year," the Kingdom to come, the abundance of His ransom will be shared with all mankind. The law of trees in Leviticus was not about gardening; it was about God's timeline of redemption. It was about Adam and Christ, Israel and the Church, waiting and consecration, judgment and blessing. The land itself preached the order of salvation: three years of waiting, the fourth to God, and the fifth for man. And over it all, God declared: "I am Yahweh your Elohim."

In Him

Stephen