This week’s Torah portion is Tazria-Metzora, and focuses largely on purity of the body. However, I find traction with a particular line of this parsha, rather unrelated to the primary subject of purity accompanying the overall text, that line is as follows, “And on the eighth day, the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised,” from Leviticus 12:3, referencing the Brit Milah, or circumcision that accompanies the birth of a boy.

 This is not the first time that the Bris appears as a commandment of G-d; this same order from G-d occurs in Genesis 17:714 and is, “And God said unto Abraham: 'And as for thee, thou shalt keep My covenant, thou, and thy seed after thee throughout their generations. This is My covenant ... every male among you shall be circumcised. And ye shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of a covenant betwixt Me and you..”

Why is this Commandment of circumcision repeated twice, in two different parts of the Torah? In English class, what do your teachers impart to you regarding repetition? Repetition is a rhetorical strategy, it is a mode of argument. And “everything’s an argument”, as my AP English-centered mind reminds me all too often, even the Torah. G-d wrote every word of the Torah with intention, much like writers of our time write every word, every punctuation mark with purpose, from a dash to a semicolon. G-d would not simply repeat something “just ‘coz”. The repetition here, the rhetorical strategy, is emphasis. G-d is employing emphasis, underscoring the covenant, the relationship between the mundane, humankind, and the Divine, G-d.

G-d is reminding us, is urging us to recall that the Brit Milah is a covenant, it is a promise of a relationship, a vow of loyalty between the Jew and G-d. The Jewish people keep their part of the Bris, to continue to undergo circumcision and to show true loyalty to G-d, and G-d upholds the other half of that Covenant, to protect and instill hope in the Jewish people.

When I joined this school, I joined a covenant, as did we all; one between ourselves as individuals and this insitution. In return for keeping our part of the Brit, our school works every single day to create an environment that fosters safety, love and warmth under an overarching theme of learning. When I say Emery I mean the staff, I mean our teachers, I mean our administration. But we still have to uphold our part of the Bris. Included in that is utilizing the shared moral code that this school imparts on us every day. And in the context of today, I mean fighting for what is right. Fighting to save the lives of teenagers like us. Teenagers who have their own covenants, their own relationships, with their schools, with their parents, with their friends, with themselves. Teenagers who have been or could be victims of gun violence. Our part of the bris with our school and with our world as a whole, is to be the voice for the voiceless. That is why I stand in front of you today. To remind you, just as G-d does with repetition, that you have a covenant to honor. Don’t let the Never Again movement fade.