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Circumcision in the Talmud

Source Sheet by Max DuBoff

The Talmud, the most important collection of the Oral Law, discusses circumcision many times. Here are several representative, fascinating, strange, and disturbing examples. The ancient rabbis view circumcision as a very important commandment, one which often but not always takes precedence over other commandments. To the ancient rabbis, circumcision marks (male) Jewishness, demonstrates faith, and has cosmic consequences. Since these voices have helped shape our tradition, understanding some of their perspective is crucial for us our thinking about circumcision today.

Questions to consider:

1. How do the ancient rabbis relate to circumcision? Is there a difference based on whether a text is halakhic (legal) or aggadic (narrative)?
2. What reasons does the Talmud give for circumcision, and what might motivate them?
3. How does circumcision stack up against other laws, for general order of priority and when exceptions need to be made?

Mishnah Shabbat 18-19

And all the requirements of

משנה שבת י"ה-י"ט

circumcision may be performed for a baby whose eighth day of life occurs **on Shabbat**.
Rabbi Eliezer says: If he did not bring an implement for circumcising the child **on Shabbat eve, he brings it on Shabbat itself uncovered** so that it will be clear to all that he is bringing a circumcision scalpel. **And in times of danger**, when decrees of persecution prohibit Jews from circumcising their children, **one covers it in the presence of witnesses** who can testify that he transported the scalpel to perform a mitzva. **And furthermore, Rabbi Eliezer said** with regard to this issue: **One** may even **cut down trees to prepare charcoal** in order **to fashion iron tools** for the purpose of circumcision. Rabbi Eliezer's approach was not universally accepted, and **a principle was stated by Rabbi Akiva: Any prohibited labor that can be performed on Shabbat eve does not override Shabbat**, including transporting the circumcision scalpel. However, any prohibited labor involved in the mitzva of **circumcision itself that cannot be performed on Shabbat eve overrides Shabbat....**

If there is **uncertainty** whether or not to circumcise a baby, **and**

וְכָל צָרָכֵי מִילָה עוֹשִׂין בְּשַׁבָּת:
רַבִּי אֱלִיעֶזֶר אוֹמֵר, אִם לֹא הֵבִיא
כָּלִי מְעַרְב שַׁבָּת, מְבִיאוֹ בְּשַׁבָּת
מְגֻלָּה. וּבִסְכָּנָה, מְכַסְּהוּ עַל פִּי
עֲדִים. וְעוֹד אָמַר רַבִּי אֱלִיעֶזֶר,
כּוֹרְתִין עֲצִים לַעֲשׂוֹת פְּחָמִין
וְלַעֲשׂוֹת כָּלִי בְרוֹזֵל. כָּלֵל אָמַר רַבִּי
עֲקִיבָא, כָּל מְלֶאכֶה שְׁאֵפְשָׁר
לַעֲשׂוֹתָהּ מְעַרְב שַׁבָּת אֵינָהּ דוֹחָה
אֶת הַשַּׁבָּת, וְשְׂאֵי אֵפְשָׁר לַעֲשׂוֹתָהּ
מְעַרְב שַׁבָּת דוֹחָה אֶת הַשַּׁבָּת:
סָפֵק וְאַנְדְּרוּגִינוֹס אֵין מַחְלְלִין עָלָיו
אֶת הַשַּׁבָּת, וְרַבִּי יְהוּדָה מַתִּיר
בְּאַנְדְּרוּגִינוֹס:
אֵלוֹ הֵן צִיצִין הַמְעַכְּבִין אֶת הַמִּילָה,
בְּשָׂר הַחֹפֶה אֶת רֹב הָעֵטָרָה. וְאֵינוֹ
אוֹכֵל בְּתְרוּמָה. וְאִם הָיָה בְּעַל בְּשָׂר,
מִתְקַנּוּ מִפְּנֵי מְרֵאִית הָעֵינַן. מִלּוֹ וְלֹא
פָּרַע אֶת הַמִּילָה, כְּאֵלוֹ לֹא מִלְּ:

likewise in the case of a **hermaphrodite** [*androgynos*] baby, who possesses both male and female genitals, **one does not desecrate Shabbat** to perform the circumcision, since it is not certain that the circumcision is required. **And Rabbi Yehuda permits** doing so **for a hermaphrodite** baby.... **These are the shreds** of flesh **that invalidate the circumcision** if they are not cut. The essential element of circumcision is the removal of **the flesh that covers most of the corona**, and a child that was not circumcised in this manner is considered uncircumcised, **and he does not eat *teruma* offerings. And if** he was properly circumcised but **he was fleshy**, and it appears as though he has not been properly circumcised, the circumcisor should **correct it** by circumcising more than necessary, to avoid the **appearance** of transgression, so he will not appear uncircumcised. If **one circumcised but did not uncover** the flesh at **the** area of the **circumcision** by folding back the thin membrane beneath the foreskin, **it is as if he had not circumcised.**

The Sages taught in a *Tosefta* that one who circumcises a child recites: Who has made us holy through His commandments, and commanded us concerning circumcision. The father of the circumcised child recites: Who has made us holy through His commandments, and commanded us to bring him into the covenant of Abraham, our father. Those standing there recite: Just as he has entered into the covenant, so may he enter into Torah, marriage, and good deeds. And the one who recites the additional blessing says: Who made the beloved one holy from the womb, marked the decree in his flesh, and gave his descendants the seal and the sign of the holy covenant. Therefore, as a reward for this, the living God, our Portion, commanded to deliver the beloved of our flesh from destruction, for the sake of His covenant that He set in our flesh. Blessed are You, Lord, Who establishes the covenant. One who circumcises converts says: Blessed are You, Lord, our God, King of the universe, Who made us holy with His commandments, and commanded us concerning circumcision. And the one who recites the additional blessing

תָּנוּ רַבָּנָן, הַמָּל אֹמֵר: "אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ עַל הַמִּילָה". אָבִי הַבֵּן אֹמֵר: "אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ לְהַכְנִיסוֹ בְּבְרִיתוֹ שֶׁל אַבְרָהָם אָבִינוּ". הָעוֹמְדִים אֹמְרִים: "כָּשֶׁם שֶׁנִּכְנַס לְבְרִית, כִּי יִכְנַס לְתוֹרָה לְחֻפָּה וּלְמַעֲשֵׂים טוֹבִים". וְהַמְּבָרֵךְ אֹמֵר: "אֲשֶׁר קִידֵשׁ יָדִיד מִבֶּטֶן, חוֹק בְּשֵׂארוֹ שָׁם, וְצִאָצְאוֹ חֶתֶם בְּאוֹת בְּרִית קִדְּשׁ. עַל כֵּן בְּשִׁכְרֵךְ זֹאת אֵל חַי חֵלְקֵנוּ [צוּרָנוּ], צְוֶה לְהַצִּיל יְדִידוֹת שֵׂאֲרֵינוּ מִשַּׁחַת לְמַעַן בְּרִיתוֹ אֲשֶׁר שָׁם בְּבִשְׂרָנוּ. בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' כּוֹרֵת הַבְּרִית". הַמָּל אֶת הַגֵּרִים אֹמֵר: "בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מְלֶכֶךְ הָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ עַל הַמִּילָה", וְהַמְּבָרֵךְ אֹמֵר: "אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ לְמוֹל אֶת הַגֵּרִים וּלְהַטִּיף מֵהֶם דָּם בְּרִית, שְׂאִילְמָלֵא דָם בְּרִית לֹא נִתְקַיְּמוּ שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: 'אִם לֹא בְרִית יוֹמָם וְלַיְלָה חוֹקוֹת שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ לֹא שִׁמְתִּי'. בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' כּוֹרֵת הַבְּרִית".

recites: Who has made us holy with His commandments, and commanded us to circumcise converts, and to drip from them covenantal blood, as were it not for the blood of the covenant, the heaven and earth would not be sustained, as it is stated: “If My covenant would not be with day and night, the ordinances of heaven and earth I would not have placed” (Jeremiah 33:25), which is interpreted to mean that were it not for the covenant of circumcision that is manifest both day and night, the world would cease to exist. He concludes the blessing with the phrase: **Blessed are You, Lord, Who establishes the covenant.**

Chullin 5a:6-9

Let us say that the following *baraita* **supports** the opinion of Rav Anan, who says that it is permitted to eat from the slaughter of a Jew who is a transgressor with regard to idol worship: **Everyone slaughters, and even a Samaritan, and even an uncircumcised man, and even a Jewish transgressor.** The Gemara analyzes the *baraita*: **This uncircumcised man, what are the circumstances? If we say** that he is an uncircumcised man **whose**

חולין ה' א:ו'-ט'

לימא מסייע ליה הכל שוחטין
ואפילו כותי ואפילו ערל ואפילו
ישראל מומר האי ערל ה"ד אילימא
שמתו אחיו מחמת מילה האי
ישראל מעליא הוא אלא פשיטא
מומר לערלות אימא סיפא ואפילו
ישראל מומר ה"ד אי מומר לדבר
אחד היינו מומר לערלות אלא לאו
מומר לעבודת כוכבים וכדרב ענן
לא לעולם אימא לך מומר לעבודת

brothers died due to circumcision and the concern is that he might suffer a similar fate, clearly one may eat from what he slaughters, as **he is a full-fledged Jew** and not a transgressor at all. **Rather**, it is **obvious** that he is **a transgressor with regard to remaining uncircumcised**, as he refuses to be circumcised. **Say the latter clause** of the *baraita*: **And even a Jewish transgressor. What are the circumstances? If he is a transgressor with regard to one matter, that is identical to the case of a transgressor with regard to remaining uncircumcised. Rather, is it not that he is a transgressor with regard to idol worship, and it is in accordance with the opinion of Rav Anan?** The Gemara rejects that proof: **No, actually I will say to you that a transgressor with regard to idol worship may not slaughter, as the Master said: Idol worship is a severe transgression, as with regard to anyone who denies it, it is as though he acknowledges his acceptance of the entire Torah.**

Nedarim 32a:5-11

It is taught in a *baraita*: **Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi says: Great is the**

כוכבים לא דאמר מר חמורה
עבודת כוכבים שכל הכופר בה
כמודה בכל התורה כולה

נדריים ל"ב א:ה'-י"א

תנא רבי אומר גדולה מילה שאין

mitzva of **circumcision**, for there is **no one who was engaged in mitzvot like Abraham our Patriarch, and yet he was called wholehearted only due to the mitzva of circumcision, as it is stated: “Walk before Me and you should be wholehearted”** (Genesis 17:1), and it is written in the next verse: **“And I will make My covenant between Me and you”** (Genesis 17:2), and Abraham was then commanded with regard to circumcision. This indicates that he was not called wholehearted until he performed circumcision.

Alternatively, so great is the mitzva of circumcision that it is equal to all the mitzvot of the Torah, as it is stated at the giving of the Torah: **“For according to these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel”** (Exodus 34:27), and “covenant” refers to circumcision.

Alternatively, so great is the mitzva of circumcision that if not for circumcision heaven and earth would not have been established, as it is stated: “If My covenant be not with day and night, I would not have appointed the ordinances of heaven and earth” (Jeremiah 33:25), and the covenant that exists day and night is the covenant of circumcision, as it is always found on the person’s body. The Gemara

לָךְ מִי שֶׁנִּתְעַסַּק בְּמִצְוֹת כְּאַבְרָהָם
אָבִינוּ וְלֹא נִקְרָא תָמִים אֲלֵא עַל שֵׁם
מִלָּה שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר הִתְהַלֵּךְ לִפְנֵי וְהָיָה
תָמִים וְכָתִיב וְאֶתְנָה בְרִיתִי בֵּינִי
וּבֵינֶךָ דְבַר אַחֵר גְּדוּלָה מִלָּה
שֶׁשֶׁקוּלָה כְּנֶגֶד כָּל הַמִּצְוֹת שֶׁבַתּוֹרָה
שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר כִּי עַל פִּי הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה
וְגו’ דְבַר אַחֵר גְּדוּלָה מִלָּה
שֶׁאֵילְמָלֵא מִלָּה לֹא נִתְקַיְּמוּ שְׁמַיִם
וְאָרֶץ שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר אִם לֹא בְרִיתִי יוֹמָם
וְלַיְלָה וְגו’ וּפְלִיגָא דְרַבִּי אֱלִיעֶזֶר
דְּאָמַר רַבִּי אֱלִיעֶזֶר גְּדוּלָה תּוֹרָה
שֶׁאֵילְמָלֵא תּוֹרָה לֹא נִתְקַיְּמוּ שְׁמַיִם
וְאָרֶץ שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר אִם לֹא בְרִיתִי יוֹמָם
וְלַיְלָה חֻקוֹת שְׁמַיִם וְאָרֶץ לֹא שִׁמְתִי
וְגו’ אָמַר רַב יְהוּדָה אָמַר רַב בְּשַׁעָה
שֶׁאָמַר לוֹ הַקְדוּשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא
לְאַבְרָהָם אָבִינוּ הִתְהַלֵּךְ לִפְנֵי וְהָיָה
תָמִים אֶחָזְתוּ רַעְדָה אָמַר שְׁמָא יֵשׁ
בִּי דְבַר מְגוּנָה כִּיּוֹן שֶׁאָמַר לוֹ וְאֶתְנָה
בְרִיתִי בֵּינִי וּבֵינֶךָ נִתְקַרְרָה דְעָתוּ...
אָמַר רַבִּי יִצְחָק כָּל הַמִּתְמִים עֲצָמוּ
הַקְדוּשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא מִתְמִים עָמוּ
שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר עִם חֶסֶד תִּתְחַסֵּד עִם גְּבוּרָה
תָמִים תִּתְמָם אָמַר רַבִּי הוֹשַׁעְיָא כָּל
הַמִּתְמִים עֲצָמוּ שְׁעָה עוֹמְדֵת לוֹ
שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר הִתְהַלֵּךְ לִפְנֵי וְהָיָה תָמִים
וְכָתִיב וְהָיִיתָ לְאָב הַמּוֹן גּוֹיִם

comments: **And** this statement **disagrees** with the words of **Rabbi Eliezer, for Rabbi Eliezer said: Great is the Torah, for if not for Torah, heaven and earth would not have been established, as it is stated: “If My covenant be not with day and night, I would not have appointed the ordinances of heaven and earth”** (Jeremiah 33:25). According to Rabbi Eliezer, the covenant that exists day and night is the Torah, as it says: “You should contemplate it day and night” (Joshua 1:8). **Rav Yehuda said that Rav said: At the time that the Holy One, Blessed be He, said to Abraham our Patriarch: “Walk before Me and you should be wholehearted”** (Genesis 17:1), a sensation of **trembling seized him and he said: Perhaps there is something disgraceful about me** due to a transgression that I committed, and therefore I cannot be called complete. **When God said to him: “And I will make My covenant between Me and you”** (Genesis 17:2), **his mind was set at ease**, since he understood that the removal of the foreskin that he was now commanded to do was the reason he had not yet achieved completion.... **Rabbi Yitzhak said: Anyone who conducts himself with wholeheartedness, the Holy**

One, Blessed be He, treats him with wholeheartedness, as it is stated: “With the devout You act devoutly, and with the one who is strong in his wholeheartedness You act wholeheartedly” (II Samuel 22:26). Rabbi Hoshaya said: Anyone who acts wholeheartedly, time will stand for him, i.e., he will be successful, as it is stated: “Walk before Me and you should be wholehearted” (Genesis 17:1), and it is written: “And you shall be the father of a multitude of nations” (Genesis 17:4).

Nedarim 32b:1-2

The letters of the term **the Satan** [*haSatan*] in numerical value is **364**, which equals the number of days of the year, except for Yom Kippur, during which he has no power. **And Rami bar Abba said: It is written “Abram,”** and after he was commanded to perform circumcision **it is written “Abraham”** (Genesis 17:5). **Initially the Holy One, Blessed be He, enthroned him as ruler over 243 limbs**, which is the numerical equivalent of the letters of the word Abram. **And in the end**, after he was circumcised, **He enthroned him as ruler over 248 limbs**, which is the

נדרים ל"ב ב:א'-ב'

השָׁטָן בְּחוֹשְׁבֵינֵיהּ תִּלְתַּת מָאָה וְשִׁיתִין
וְאַרְבָּעָה וְאָמַר רַמִּי בַר אַבְרָא כְּתִיב
אַבְרָם וְכְתִיב אַבְרָהָם בְּתַחֲלָה
הַמְּלִיכוֹ הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא עַל
מְאֵתִים וְאַרְבָּעִים וְשִׁלְשָׁה אַבְרָם
וְלְבִסוּף הַמְּלִיכוֹ עַל מְאֵתִים
וְאַרְבָּעִים וְשִׁמוֹנָה אַבְרָם אֱלוֹהֵינוּ
שְׁתֵּי עֵינַיִם וְשְׁתֵּי אָזְנוֹתַי וְרֵאשׁ
הַגּוּיָהּ

numerical equivalent of the letters of the word Abraham. **These are** the additional limbs: **Two eyes, and two ears, and the tip of the sex organ.** Following his circumcision, he had total control over them, and they performed only according to his will.

Zevachim 22b:3-6

The mishna teaches that a priest who is **uncircumcised** disqualifies sacrificial rites he performs. The Gemara elaborates: **From where do we derive this? Rav Hisda says: We did not learn this matter from the Torah of Moses, our teacher; rather, we learned it from the words of the prophet Ezekiel, son of Buzi: “No stranger, uncircumcised in heart or uncircumcised in flesh, shall enter into My Sanctuary to serve Me”** (Ezekiel 44:9). **And from where do we derive that he desecrates the service after the fact? As it is written: “In that you have brought in strangers, uncircumcised in heart or uncircumcised in flesh, to be in My Sanctuary, to profane My house”** (Ezekiel 44:7). **The Sages taught:** The verse states **“stranger”**; one might have

זבחים כ"ב ב:ג'-ו'

ערל: מנלן אמר רב חסדא דבר זה מתורת משה רבינו לא למדנו מדברי יחזקאל בן בוזי למדנו (יחזקאל מד, ט) כל בן נכר ערל לב וערל בשר לא יבא אל מקדשי (לשרתני) ומנלן דמחלי עבודה דכתיב (יחזקאל מד, ז) בהביאכם (את) בני נכר ערלי לב וערלי בשר להיות במקדשי לחלל את ביתי: תנו רבנן בן נכר יכול בן נכר ממש תלמוד לומר ערל לב אם כן מה תלמוד לומר בן נכר שנתנכרו מעשיו לאביו שבשמים ואין לי אלא ערל לב ערל בשר מנין תלמוד לומר וערל בשר וצריכי דאי כתב רחמנא ערל בשר משום דמאיס אבל ערל לב דלא מאיס אימא לא ואי אשמעינן ערל לב משום דאין לבו לשמים אבל ערל בשר דלבו לשמים אימא לא צריכי:

thought that this is referring to **an actual stranger**, i.e., a gentile. Therefore, **the verse states:** **“Uncircumcised in heart,”** to indicate that it is referring to a priest rather than a gentile. **If so, what is the meaning when the verse states: “Stranger”?** It is referring to one **whose actions are considered estranged from his Father in Heaven**, i.e., an apostate, who sins regularly. **And I have derived only that one uncircumcised in heart is unfit to serve; from where is it derived that one uncircumcised in flesh is unfit as well? The verse states: “Or uncircumcised in flesh.”** The Gemara notes: **And both phrases in the verse are necessary. As, had the Merciful One written only: “Uncircumcised in flesh,”** one might think that only he is unfit **because he is disgusting** in that he possesses a foreskin, **but concerning one uncircumcised in heart, who is not disgusting, I will say that he is not unfit. And had the verse taught us only that one uncircumcised in heart is unfit,** one might think that only he is unfit, **because his heart is not directed toward Heaven, but one uncircumcised in flesh, whose heart is directed toward Heaven, I will say that he is not unfit.** Therefore, both phrases **are**

necessary.

Yevamot 46

The Sages taught in a *baraita*: With regard to a convert who was circumcised but did not immerse, Rabbi Eliezer says that this is a convert, as so we found with our forefathers following the exodus from Egypt that they were circumcised but were not immersed. With regard to one who immersed but was not circumcised, Rabbi Yehoshua says that this is a convert, as so we found with our foremothers that they immersed but were not circumcised. And the Rabbis say: Whether he immersed but was not circumcised or whether he was circumcised but did not immerse, he is not a convert until he is circumcised and he immerses. The Gemara questions the opinions in the *baraita*: But let Rabbi Yehoshua also derive what is required for conversion from our forefathers; why didn't he do so? And let Rabbi Eliezer also derive the *halakha* from our foremothers; why didn't he do so? And if you would say that Rabbi Eliezer did not derive the *halakha* from our foremothers because he holds one cannot derive

יבמות מ"ו

תָּנוּ רַבֵּנּוּ גַר שֶׁמָּל וְלֹא טָבַל רַבִּי
אֶלְיעֶזֶר אוֹמֵר הֲרִי זֶה גַר שֶׁכֵּן מְצִינוּ
בְּאֲבוֹתֵינוּ שֶׁמָּלוּ וְלֹא טָבְלוּ טָבַל וְלֹא
מָל רַבִּי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ אוֹמֵר הֲרִי זֶה גַר שֶׁכֵּן
מְצִינוּ בְּאֲמָהוֹת שֶׁטָּבְלוּ וְלֹא מָלוּ
וְחֻכְמִים אוֹמְרִים טָבַל וְלֹא מָל מָל
וְלֹא טָבַל אֵין גַּר עַד שְׂיִמוּל וְיִטְבּוֹל
וְרַבִּי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ נִמְי גִּילָף מְאָבוֹת וְרַבִּי
אֶלְיעֶזֶר נִמְי גִּילָף מְאָמָהוֹת וְכִי
תִּימָא אֵין דְּנִין אֶפְשָׁר מְשָׂאֵי
אֶפְשָׁר... אֶלָּא בְּטָבַל וְלֹא מָל כּוּלֵי
עֲלָמָא לָא פְּלִיגֵי דְמַהֲנֵי כִי פְּלִיגֵי
בְּמָל וְלֹא טָבַל רַבִּי אֶלְיעֶזֶר יִלִּיף
מְאָבוֹת וְרַבִּי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בְּאָבוֹת נִמְי
טְבִילָה הִוָּה... אָמַר רַבָּה עוֹבְדָא
הִוָּה בֵּי רַבִּי חֲזִיא בֵּר רַבִּי וְרַב יוֹסֵף
מִתְנִי רַבִּי אוֹשְׁעִיא בֵּר רַבִּי וְרַב
סְפָרָא מִתְנִי רַבִּי אוֹשְׁעִיא בֵּר רַבִּי
חֲזִיא דְאֵתָא לְקַמִּיהָ גַר שֶׁמָּל וְלֹא
טָבַל אָמַר לִיהָ שְׁהֵי כָּאן עַד לְמַחַר
וְנִטְבְּלִינָה שְׁמַע מִינָה תִלְתָּ שְׁמַע
מִינָה גַר צָרִיךְ שְׁלִשָּׁה וְשְׁמַע מִינָה
אֵינוּ גַר עַד שְׂיִמוּל וְיִטְבּוֹל וְשְׁמַע
מִינָה אֵין מְטְבִילִין גַּר בְּלִילָה

the **possible from the impossible**, i.e., one cannot derive that men do not require circumcision from the *halakha* that women do not require it, because for women it is a physical impossibility, that claim may be refuted.... The Gemara concedes: **Rather**, the *baraita* must be reinterpreted as follows: **With regard to one who immersed but was not circumcised, everyone**, i.e., both Rabbi Yehoshua and Rabbi Eliezer, **agrees that** the *halakha* is derived from the foremothers that immersion alone **is effective**. **Where they disagree is with regard to one who was circumcised but had not immersed; Rabbi Eliezer derives** that it is effective **from the forefathers, and Rabbi Yehoshua disagrees** because he maintains that **in the conversion of the forefathers there was also an immersion.... Rabba said: There was an incident in the house of Rabbi Ḥiyya bar Rabbi, and as Rav Yosef teaches it, Rabbi Oshaya bar Rabbi was also present, and as Rav Safra teaches it, a third Sage, Rabbi Oshaya, son of Rabbi Ḥiyya, was also present, in which a convert came before him who was circumcised but had not immersed. He said to the convert: Remain here with us until**

tomorrow, and then we will immerse you. Rabba said: **Learn from this incident three principles: Learn from it that a convert requires a court of three people to preside over the conversion, as Rav Safra taught that the case involved three Sages. And learn from it that one is not considered to be a convert until he has been both circumcised and immersed. And learn from it that the court may not immerse a convert at night,** as they instructed him to remain there until the following day.

Sanhedrin 39a:10

The Gemara relates: **The emperor said to Rabbi Tanḥum: Come, let us all be one people.** Rabbi Tanḥum said: **Very well. But we, who are circumcised, cannot become uncircumcised as you are; you all circumcise yourselves and become like us.** The emperor **said to** Rabbi Tanḥum: In terms of the logic of your **statement, you are saying well, but anyone who bests the king in a debate is thrown to the enclosure [labeivar] of wild animals. They threw him to the enclosure but the animals did not eat him,** as God protected him. **A certain heretic said to** the emperor:

סנהדרין ל"ט א"י

אמר ליה קיסר לר' תנחום תא
ליהוו כולן לעמא חד אמר לחיי אנן
דמהלינן לא מצינן מיהוי כוותייכו
אתון מהליתו והוו כוותן א"ל מימר
שפיר קאמרת מיהו כל דזכי
למלכא לשדיוה לביבר שדיוה
לביבר ולא אכלוה א"ל ההוא מינא
האי דלא אכלוה משום דלא כפין
הוא שדיוה ליה לדידיה ואכלוה

This incident, **that they did not eat him**, happened **because they are not hungry. They then threw the** heretic into the enclosure **and** the animals **ate him.**

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