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JEFF EDELSTEIN: Anti-circumcision group stages Princeton protest, and they're right to do so

by Jeff Edelstein

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Brother K of Sacramento CA., founder of the anti-circumcision group The Bloodstained Men, holds up signs as pedestrians cross Nassau Street in Princeton Wednesday Sept. 23, 2016. About a dozen protesters, who are planning 14 regional demonstrations around the northeast, wore bloodstained pants and carried signs calling attention to what they say are negative medical consequences of circumcision. (JACKIE SCHEARÓTHE TRENTONIAN)

There was no real decision to be made. Of course we were going to circumcise our son. There was some quick debate as to whether we'd have it done in the hospital or the traditional Jewish way, which consists of a man called a "mohel" who does the deed. (And then everyone eats whitefish, and I'm not really kidding.)

In the end, we decided to go the hospital route. Personal choice.

But in the hours leading up to it, a panic set in. All of a sudden, chopping off a piece of our newborn son seemed wrong. Very wrong. And wrong no matter what, whichever side of the "god vs. nature" fence you sit on.

After all, he came complete with this part we were about to slice and dice.

Didn't make sense. Seemed barbaric.

We did it anyway. To this day, I'm still not sure why, exactly. I mean, I had it done (too much information?) so maybe that's it. Maybe it's because it seems to be the "thing" to do. It's just the way it is.

Well, if you happened to be strolling around Princeton last Wednesday, there was a group protesting this male rite of passage. They call themselves Bloodstained Men, and they were protesting in quite a memorable way: They were wearing all-white outfits with what appeared to be a splatter of blood over their franks and beans. They had signs and everything, things like "I DID NOT CONSENT!" and "STOP CUTTING BABY PENIS." Hard to miss.

And while I wasn't present at the protest, it has struck a chord.

I mean, sure, according to the Mayo Clinic, there are some risks involved in keeping the ol' foreskin around — higher rates of penile cancer, for instance, which I didn't know was a thing, but now that I do will cause me to never sleep peacefully again.

But really: There's risks involved in keeping any body part. They can all go south on you. We're not cutting out brains at birth to cut the risk of brain cancer.

The whole idea of circumcision is really ... weird, when it comes right down to it. I mean, how did it even begin, anyway? Who had the bright idea to start doing this?

GROG: Hey Oog, c'mere a second. Put your disco stick over here on this rock. I want to see something.

OOG: Yeah, no. Not gonna happen.

GROG: I just want to take a little off the top.

OOG: {running to the hills}Of course, in the Torah (the Old Testament to you non-Jews) God himself demands the procedure be done. He told Abraham, and Abraham passed it along. Again, though, I can't imagine the first batch of foreskin fleecing going too well ...

ABRAHAM: Hey Bernie, c'mere a second. I was talking to God the other day and ... well, just put your schmeckle over here on this rock. I want to see something.

BERNIE: Yeah I uh, I uh got a bush burning back at the ranch, gotta run.

Fast forward a few thousand years, and we're still doing it.

I think the Bloodstained Men have a valid point. If it's a religious thing for you, who am I to say to stop. But for the rest of us? I don't know. Seems wrong if you think about it for more than 10 seconds. Oog definitely agrees.

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