

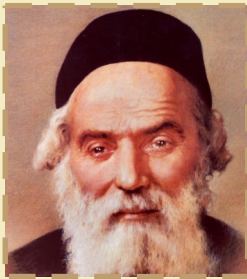
# DAAS TORAH

## Regarding the Cutting & Growth of the Beard

by Maran HaGaon  
**Rabbi Chayim Kanievsky, shlita**  
 excerpted from his sefer *Orchos Yosher* (p.19)



The Gemora (Shabbos 152a) states: "Hadras Ponim — the splendor of the countenance — means a beard." [With this our Sages ridiculed the Sadducee whose beard could not grow, saying to him "Blessed is the Omnipresent who has prevented you from having this [a beard]" (refer to the Gemora)]. Throughout our history, it has been a disgrace for anyone not to have a beard. It is only in recent generations that some have started to treat this irreverently, having learned this from the non-Jews.



**Chayim** in his Sefer Hamitzvos Hakotzer (Prohibitions 177).



The Chazon Ish was very strict about shaving machines of all kinds, and did not permit selling one even to a Jew who shaves with a razor in order to save him from the prohibition of using a razor, but instructed [the inquirer] to sell it to a non-Jew.



Targum Yonoson states that one who does this transgresses the prohibition of "A man shall not wear woman's dress," which means even if he cuts his beard using scissors. Sefer Hachinuch states the same, adding that one transgresses also the prohibition of "You shall not follow their [non-Jewish] rules." This is quoted by the **Chofetz Chayim**

Our teacher the **Chazon Ish** was highly displeased with this practice. His displeasure was not only with the shaving machines used today, about which the **Chofetz Chayim** has already written — in Likkutei Halochos, Makkos 21b, in Ein Mishpot 7 — that one transgresses the prohibition of "They shall not shave the corner of their beard."

My father and teacher [Rabbi Yaakov Yisroel Kanievsky, the **Steipler Gaon**], of blessed memory, was also very strict about this, saying it is very likely that [a shaving machine] is considered literally a razor, so that one transgresses five prohibitions for using it.

Our teacher, the Gaon Rabbi **Elozor Menachem M. Shach**, writes the same: "Regarding shaving the beard with an electric shaver, refer to Likkutei Halochos on tractate Makkos by the **Chofetz Chayim**, p.14b in Ein Mishpot there, where he writes that it is forbidden and that one should not be lenient in this. It is also known that the Chazon Ish, of blessed memory, prohibited using any such machine." [In addition, the Chazon Ish] was highly displeased even with those who shave using a depilatory cream — called in Hebrew "sam" [chemical].

The **Chofetz Chayim** wrote an entire work on this subject called Tiferes Odom, where he writes: "It is proper to take care not to cut the beard even with scissors, for the Kabbalists write that thereby one uproots the channels of [the flow of] Kedusha from Above. Our fathers and ancestors in our land were accustomed to observing this strictly. Especially today when many of the lawless elements of our nation have the practice of shaving with a razor, it is a great Mitzva for the whole Jewish people to reinforce this observance and not to trim the beard even with scissors, thereby showing everyone that the commandments the Torah has given us to distinguish the Jewish man [from the non-Jew] are precious to us and that we are not ashamed of them, G-d forbid."

In Kovetz Igros (volume I, #197) of our teacher, the **Chazon Ish**, he writes about the "sam" [depilatory cream]: "If it is not a "sam hamovess" [poison], it is not a "sam hachayim" [lifegiving potion] either, and I find this matter very painful, for it is against the [Jewish] quality of modesty and is not the Jewish style of dress but [Jews] have learned it from the non-Jews during their exile, thereby negating Kedusha." In another letter (#198) he writes: "I have never accepted the behavior of those who remove their beards [with scissors] similar to [the effect of] a razor [close cutting], for I am accustomed to this being prohibited since the previous generations, and [the prohibition] was very severe — like walking in the street with one's head uncovered — and was considered like changing one's clothing from the Jewish style of dress. Although this sickness has spread even among Torah scholars, may they be well, the issue has not changed as a result of this, and therefore my soul burns with rage because of this practice."

He [the Chazon Ish] once said that when someone who removes his beard..comes in to see him, he feels so sick that he almost vomits..

May Hashem Yisborach give us the privilege of observing the Jewish appearance according to the Torah's requirements.

For a comprehensive treatment of this subject, see:

**Sefer Hadrash Ponim Zokan** / by Rabbi Moshe Wiener / The Cutting and Growth of the Beard in Halachic Perspective / Published with the Endorsements of the Leading Halachic Authorities of our Times / 1024 pages (in expanded third edition)