

THE BEARD IN JEWISH LAW

Zokon Yisroel K'hilchoso



By

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FORWARD

During recent centuries, we have witnessed an increasing laxity in many localities regarding the observance of laws surrounding the growth and removal of the beard.

Threat to Jewish life and physical well-being, tremendous economic pressures, and the influence of Reform movements digressing from traditional Judaism, caused the obligation, significance, and importance of wearing a full beard to be almost totally forgotten by the masses.

Moreover, obscured became the universally accepted axiom of the immense holiness contained in every hair of the Jew's beard — a holiness so magnanimous that it had become common usage in Torah literature to refer to the beard as "the G-dly image in man." Whole communities became oblivious to even such obvious simplicities as the historical fact that the beard has always guarded the Jew against assimilation and against transgression of Torah law in general.

This lack of knowledge of the subject caused even the most elite Jews to mistakenly assume that there exists an unqualified "heter" (halachic permission) to remove the beard by all methods other than the razor. This grave problem has become more acute in light of the development of the electric shaving machine, which has gained wide usage amongst even the most scrupulous individuals.

Recently, however, Jews have been awakened to the truth: that the majority of Halachic authorities throughout all generations concur that the conventional methods of removing the beard, such as with shears or depilatory powder, are in fact, forbidden.

Furthermore, and more severe, are the shaving machines in use currently. They are halachically equivalent to razor blades. This specific ruling has been agreed upon by the leading Torah giants of our generation, including such luminaries as the Chofetz Chaim, the Chazon Ish, and Rav Aharon Kotler.

Resultingly, once again today, the beard has begun to become commonplace in all Jewish circles. This renaissance has been accomplished particularly thanks to the publication of the eight hundred page encyclopedic work, which documents fully all aspects of our topic, **Sefer Hadrash Ponim-Zokon** (N.Y., 5738) by Rabbi Moshe Wiener. This sefer has won world-wide acclaim, and is crowned with fifty pages of approbations by the foremost Halachic authorities of our time.

It is the hope and prayer of the author that the present work (which originally appeared in Yiddish in 5739) will further contribute towards the enlightenment of the Jewish world and their increased arousal to the halachic implications revolving around the growth and removal of the beard.

In this merit, may we be worthy of the fulfillment of the Divine Promise: "I will lead you upright unto your land...", with the complete redemption of our people speedily in our time.

RABBI S.Y. GROSS
OF HOLMIN



HALACHIC STATEMENTS

concerning shaving the beard

To further emphasize and complete what has been mentioned (above in the "forward" and below Ch. 1:2) concerning the status of modern shaving machines, we are reproducing (in English translation) three of the many letters on the subject which appear in the Sefer "Hadrass Ponim-Zokon".

Rabbi Elozor Menachem M. Shach
Kiryat Yeshiva (Ponovez)
B'nei Brak, Israel

To the questioner, may he be well:

Concerning shaving the beard with electric shaving machines -

See the Sefer "Likutei Halachos" on tractate "Makos" (by the "CHOFETZ CHAIM"), page 14b ("Eyn Mishpot" loc. cit.) where he writes that it is prohibited, and one may not be lenient in this matter.

It is also well known that the "CHOZON ISH" o.b.m. ruled that the use of all shaving machines is forbidden.

This is my response
(Signed) *Elozor Menachem M. Shach*

Rabbi Moshe Stern
Chief Rabbi of Debrecyn
Author of Responsa "Be'er Moshe" (Six Volumes)
Brooklyn, New York

To the outstanding, and G-d fearing scholar, strong fighter who achieves wonders, Rabbi Moshe Wiener, Shlita:

I send you my most friendly greetings. Thank you for your letter which I was unable to answer till now.

It is most difficult for me to give my true opinion concerning the prohibition of shaving one's beard with electric shavers. I feel caught between my concern for doing G-d's will and coming out with the truth, and the proddings of Yetzer Hora not to speak out on the subject.

As a matter of fact, I have written a lengthy Halachic manuscript on the question, based on the Gemora (Makkos 21, Nozir 39a) and the Rishonim and Acharonim (including the Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah 181 where Rabbi Moshe Isserles - Ramo - brings from Terumas Hadeshen 295; also the Chasam Sofer Yoreh Deah 139-140, and Responsa of the Chidah - Rabbi Chaim Yosef Dovid Azulai - No. 52, and many more).

But to tell the sorry truth, I am afraid to publish it, for many have already become accustomed to being lenient in this matter, though they are Jews faithful to G-d and his Torah.

Halachically speaking, I have found no grounds for permitting such electric shavers.

The Almighty Himself will bear witness that I have toiled to find some justification for those who are lenient in this question and whom nobody has the courage to rebuke. And yet, despite all my efforts and constant searching, I could find no reliable grounds to support it.

My heart feels broken within me when I consider: what will the saintly Rabbis and scholars of our time reply when an answer will be demanded of them why they did not announce in public **at the very least** that there are grave doubts concerning the permissibility of electric shavers?

Whoever seeks to protect his soul will most certainly keep away from them!

I am especially upset by the question of how our Jewish brothers who use these shaving machines will possibly overcome their habit of so many years and stop using them. I just don't know where to turn when I think about their predicament.

At the time when I wrote my observations on the aforementioned Gemora passages (of Makkos and Nozir), I considered in my mind and decided that it must be that I am making a mistake to think such wrong thoughts that all those using shaving machines are G-d forbid transgressing grave and severe prohibitions almost every day. Now, however, I see that my own conclusions correspond to the true majority of Halachic opinions of past and present, as you, my esteemed Rabbi, have shown (in Sefer "Hadrass Ponim—Zokon").

In light of the above, it would be totally wrong to remain silent and say "it is better for them to transgress unknowingly (than to transgress willfully)" for in a matter concerning the Jewish public in a specific Torah prohibition in which many are ensnared and receive no rebuke this rule does not apply. Particularly in a situation where the younger generation will be misled by the previous generation it is certainly forbidden to say this....

I do not, G-d forbid, wish to bring any blame against those of our generation who are ensnared in this sin. But I must express my deep pain on this subject. Perhaps they will find some justification for what they do. If, however, they do not, then the saintly and scholarly Rabbis of our generation, Shlita, must do their duty and publicize the importance of avoiding this prohibition.

Incidentally, the lenient ruling on this point which is supposed to emanate from the outstanding authority, Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, Shlita, is not understood by me, nor do I believe it true that he indeed ruled thus.

I will conclude with a wish that "G-d grant peace, goodness and blessing" - "Prosper and ride forth for words of truth!" May you be privileged to bring merit to the Jewish public, and may their merit be attributed to you.

Moshe Stern
Rabbi of Debrecyn

Rabbi Moshe Sternbuch
Dean of "Rosh HaAyin" Rabbinical Institutions
Author of "Moadim U'zmanim" (7 vol.)
B'nei Brak, Israel

To the distinguished and G-d fearing Rabbi, who brings merit to the Jewish public, Rabbi Moshe Wiener, Shlita:

I have received your letter, with the enclosed material documenting opinions of Halachic authorities on the question of whether one may use shaving machines on the beard. You request also my own observations.

As a matter of fact, the **Chazon Ish**, of blessed memory, ruled that such machines are prohibited. Who then, after his ruling, can dare to rule leniently on a Torah question that involves transgressing the Torah prohibition against shaving the beard for which both the one who shaves and the one who is shaved are equally liable, amounting to a total of ten sins (if one shaves oneself)?

Rabbeinu Nissim of Gevona (the Ran) writes that a sin that incorporates several prohibitions is even more severe than desecration of the Shabbos (which carries capital punishment by 'stoning'). Just imagine, then, the consequences of violating every day **ten** prohibitions by shaving on a **day to day** basis! Who would want to place himself into such a position?

Anyone aware of the severity of this transgression and its punishment will keep far away from these machines. I am sure that if we will explain the problems involved, and present the opinions of the outstanding authorities of our time who ruled that shaving machines are prohibited (including the saintly **Chofetz Chaim**, **Chazon Ish**, and **Rabbi Aharon Kotler**, of blessed memory), then anyone with the slightest degree of Yiras Shomayim will keep far away from these machines and totally avoid their use.

There is nothing more for me to add. It is obvious that you, my dear most honored rabbi, have been afforded the great merit of publicizing the serious problems involved in this question. Even if your **Sefer** (Hadras Ponim-Zokon) will help to improve the situation only partially, your reward will still be great. Happy is your lot that you are bringing merit to the Jewish public. May G-d grant that you will indeed bring merit to great numbers of Jews who will be saved from sin through your **Sefer**.

May the Holy One, blessed be He, purify our hearts that we may be privileged to return to Him in complete repentance, which will bring about our speedy redemption for the sake of His Name. I await, with longing, divine salvation and divine mercies.

(signed) *Rabbi Moshe Sternbuch*

THE BEARD IN JEWISH LAW (Zokon Yisroel Kihilchaso)

Chapter I

1. The Sefer (book) Hadras Ponim-Zokon is an encyclopedic work which documents the opinions and decisions of every leading Halachic authority of past and present generations concerning the cutting and growth of the beard. The overwhelming majority forbid all methods of removing the beard, including the use of scissors (which is sometimes misconceived as being permissible).¹

2. Those authorities who are of the opinion that the prohibition of shaving is limited to a razor (or razor blade) nevertheless agree that the use of any type of shaving machine currently in use is strictly forbidden. Since these machines shave extremely close to the skin, there is no halachic difference between them and a razor.² There exists no halachic precedent to permit any device which leaves the face entirely smooth.³ The use of a shaving machine is considered so severe a transgression that the Chazon Ish ruled it forbidden to sell or give a shaving machine even to someone who otherwise shaves with a razor.^{3*}

3. Many Poskim forbid the removal of the beard even by means of a depilatory powder (chemicals applied on the skin to

1. Hadras Ponim-Zokon Part II, chapter 2 quotes all leading poskim on this subject, among them: Rambam, R. Yehuda Hachosid, Responsa Min Hashamayim, Sefer Hachinuch, Sefer Hamanhig, Rashbo, Migdal Oz, R. Bechayeh, Meharshal, Arizal, Bach, Maaseh Rokeach, Markeves HaMishneh, Rav Akivah Eiger, Tzemach Tzedek, Divrei Malchiel, Rogatchover Gaon, B'nai Yesoschor, Meharsham, Darchei Teshuva, and many more.

2. H.P.Z. Part II, chapter 1 quoting Chofetz Chaim, in Likutei Halochos - Makos 21; Responsa Tzur Yaakov, the Gaon R. Chaim Ozer; the Chazon Ish; Rav Yonoson Steif; Tzebiner Gaon; R. Aharon Kotler; Responsa Chelkas Yaakov; Responsa Minchas Yitzchok; Rav Shach; Rav Kaneivski - Steipler Rov; Rav Shmuel Vozner; Rav Sternbuch; Klotzenberger Rebbe; Pupa Rav; Debretziner Rav; Kashever Rav; Rav S. Z. Auerbach, and other authorities.

3. H.P.Z. Parts I and II at length.

3*. Letter of Steipler Gaon in H.P.Z. p. 17. Cf. Responsa Minchas Yitzchok vol. 4 no 113.

remove the hairs) since this is also viewed as a transgression of the Biblical prohibition against removal of the beard.⁴

4. Many Poskim forbid the use of a scissor or powder to remove the beard since by doing so one transgresses the Biblical commandment: "A man shall not don the clothes of a woman" (Devorim 22:5.)⁵

5. A number of authorities include removing the beard within the prohibition forbidding imitation of the non-Jewish world (Vayikra 18:3; 20:23). Since the prevailing custom among Gentiles is to be clean-shaven, a Jew who is forbidden to follow the customs of the non-Jew in any manner (Yoreh Deah 178) is neither permitted to shave his beard nor to remove it with close-cutting scissors or powder.⁶

6. Despite the difference in opinion as to which methods constitute forbidden removal of the beard, this remains purely a theoretical question. Adherents to both sides have ruled out the practice of removing the beard for two totally independent reasons: 1) Since it is not feasible for the onlooker to ascertain whether the shaven person used a razor, powder, or shears; and since the use of the razor is widespread; the onlooker might think the razor had been used. It is forbidden by the Torah for one to bring himself under suspicion of having transgressed a law of the Torah.⁷ 2) Seeing a clean-shaven face, the layman might assume that the use of the razor is permitted, since there is no visible distinction between the effects of razors and other means

4. Tosefos; S.M.K. - Nazir 48; Beth Hillel-Yoreh Deah 181; Magid Taalumos - Berachos 11; Meharsham Part II, 243; Darchei Teshuva and other poskim quoted in H.P.Z. Part II chapter 9.

5. Zohar; Targum Yonoson; Ravan; Sefer Hamanhig; Rabenu Yonah; Rashboh; Shevulei Haleket; Avudraham; Abarbanel; Chacham Zvi; Sidur R. Yaakov Emdin; Responsa Tzemach Tzedek; Bnei Yesoschor; Rav Yehoshua Leib Diskin; Sdei Chemed; Chofetz Chaim. See also H.P.Z. part II, chapter 3 which quotes tens of poskim who forbade the removal of the beard in any manner due to this reason (see there for explanation).

6. Medrash Rabbah; Even Ezra; Raven; Rokeach; Abarbanel; Seporno; Keser Torah; Shnei Luchos Habris; Bayis Chodosh (Bach); Sidur R. Yakov Emdin; Hafloah; Tzemach Tzedek; Minchas Chinuch; Komarner Rov; Sedei Chemed; Responsa Meharsham; Chazon Ish. H.P.Z. part II chapter 4 quotes these opinions and many more.

7. Ritvah; Bach; Beis Meir; Yafeh L'Lev; Sedei Chemed; Saba Kadisha; Meharsham; Chofetz Chaim; Darchei Teshuva; Klei Chemda. See H.P.Z. part II chapter 6 at length.

of hair removal on the face; nor can the average layman comprehend a difference between the razor, powder, and close-cutting shears. One who removes his beard is thus contributing to the widespread transgression of shaving with a razor.⁸

7. Many Poskim cite the injunction, "Forsake not the teachings of thy mother" (Proverbs 1:8) as a basis for the prohibition of removing the beard. This age-old admonition is generally accepted as a warning to uphold the traditions of the Jewish people. Those who believe that halachic leniencies may be found for certain methods of removing the beard also agree that one who originates from a country where Jews customarily wore beards may not remove his beard.⁹

8. The Chofetz Chaim, o.b.m., lists numerous reasons to refrain from removing the beard. His entire lifetime, the Chofetz Chaim rebuked people orally and in writing regarding the serious violations involved in shaving the beard. In fact, he wrote a whole book on the subject (*Sefer Tiferes Adam*).¹⁰

9. The following clearly illustrates the views of the Chofetz Chaim: "Today, when regrettably many Jews transgress the commandment set forth in our holy Torah by shaving with a razor, it is especially urgent and a mitzvah for every observant Jew to refrain from removing his beard in any manner whatsoever, thus showing the world how dear to us are the commandments of G-d."¹¹

10. The holy Zohar states: "Woe to him who dares disturb his beard in any manner".¹²

8. Rav Yehudo Hachosid; Divrei Chachomim; Maaseh Rokeach al Mishnayoth; Sedei Chemed; Resp. Meharsham; Chofetz Chaim; Darchei Teshuva; Resp. Divrei Malchiel; Rav Yosef Chaim Sonenfeld; Rav Y. E. Henkin. See H.P.Z. part II chapter 5 at length.

9. Responsa Divrei Yosef; Sefer Zokan Avraham; Shulchan Gevoha; Responsa Chasam Sofer; Sedei Chemed; Chofetz Chaim; Responsa Divrei Malchiel; Kol Mevasser; Amidei Arazim; Chelkas Yakov. H.P.Z. part II, chapter 8 at length.

10. Son of Chofetz Chaim in "Michtvei Chofetz Chaim".

11. Tiferes Odom

12. Part III, 130b.

11. "The beard is one of the symbols of the purity of a Jew. He who removes his beard removes this symbol of purity."¹³

12. The Sefer "Yayin Meshumer" writes that those Rabbis and Torah scholars who permit the use of scissors or depilatory powder cause the lay public to sin, since the average layman (who does not fathom the difference between the razor and other methods) will mistakenly conclude that a razor is permitted.

13. A great many authorities write that any Jew who removes his beard should not be permitted to be a shochet (ritual slaughterer).¹⁴

14. The Chasam Sofer explains how the first Jews to remove their beards began doing so:

The origins of a Jew removing his beard came about through force, and not free will. Close to nine hundred years ago, the Jews of Germany were exposed to grave physical danger, suffering, and tribulation due to the cruel, barbaric Crusaders. In order to enable the Jews who were employed as travelling merchants to escape physical abuse and persecution, the Rabbis permitted a change in the mode of dress, and removal of the beard. The non-Jewish population at that time had dispensed with the wearing of the beard. The Jewish merchants were no longer conspicuous because of physical appearance, and were thus saved from the merciless attacks of the anti-Semites. When these beardless Jews returned from their travels, they were quite different from their fellow Jews. This slowly caused more Jews to remove their beards. The Rabbis and Scholars, who remained in their hometowns the year round, did, however, retain their Jewish appearance, while the great majority of German Jewry was clean-shaven. Those Jews who left Germany prior to the year 4856 (when the removal of beards began) and settled in

13: Ayin Yakov, Avodah Zoroh, 2b.

14. Responsa Chaim B'Yad; S'dei Chemed; Darchei Teshuva; and other poskim quoted in H.P.Z. part II, chapter 18, section c.

Poland were not included in the lenient halachic decision, and have indeed retained their beards down to this last century, while in Germany beards were almost non-existent.¹⁵

(Ed. note: From these words of the Chasam Sofer, it is clearly seen that the original dispensation to allow the removal of beards was issued only under extremely hard-pressed conditions. Today, when there is no longer physical danger involved in wearing a beard, this leniency is no longer applicable).

15. The illustrious "Chida" (Rav Yosef C. D. Azulai) writes in a similar vein:

In the times of the Talmud, removal of the beard was unheard of. Later in Europe, this practice was introduced as a result of persecution by the non-Jews.¹⁶ Even when removing the beard under such extreme circumstances, the forgiveness of G-d must still be sought.¹⁷

(Therefore, even though halachic leniencies may be found, one should not rely upon them except in time of threat to physical well-being.)

16. The Kashover Rav, Rav Shmuel Broch, obm, states in the name of Don Yitzchok Abarbanel, that in his time (400 years ago) there were no Jews who removed their beards, even by means of scissors or depilatory powder.¹⁸

17. The Chazon Ish, obm, writes on this subject in a letter:

"Depilatory powder used to remove the beard is not the powder of life. It disturbs me greatly and is hard for me to bear the sight of a Jew who removes his beard. It is immodest, unJewish, and a deed which was learned from the Gentiles. Removal of the beard lessens the holiness of the Jew.¹⁹"

15. Responsa Chasam Sofer, O. CH. no. 159.

16. Responsa Chaim Shoal, part II, no. 23.

17. Avodas Hakodesh, Morah B'Eitzbah, 4:135.

18. Avos al Bonim, chapter 3:13.

19. Igeroth Hachazon Ish - part I no. 197.

18. The Chazon Ish states further in a second letter:

"I have never accepted the behavior of those Jews who remove their beards, since this was a forbidden practice in previous times. It was considered as grave as if he had walked in the street bareheaded, or changed his mode of dress. Although shaving the beard has now become commonplace, even amongst Torah scholars, this by no means decreases the severity of the transgression. This practice literally burns me up with rage".²⁰

19. Those who remove their beards cause G-d to withhold his kindness from the world.²¹

20. The Sefer "Hakoneh", and many other authorities, write that a Cohen who has no beard should not be permitted to recite the Priestly Blessings, even if he has reached the age of one hundred years.²²

21. The Even Ezra writes that since the beard was created to enhance the physical appearance of man, its removal is forbidden.²³

22. The Sefer Chassidim²⁴ states that the beard should not be shorn, even in a time of physical danger.

23. Our Holy seforim (books) narrate a story which involved Rav Yehuda Hachosid:

There was once a wealthy Jew who was accustomed to removing his beard with a scissor. Rav Yehuda Hachosid requested of him many times that he refrain from this sinful practice. The man refused to follow the Rav's advice, giving the excuse that he could not bear the feeling of a beard on his face.

20. Op cit., no. 198.

21. Rokanti - Parshas Kedoshim; Yayin Meshumer.

22. P. 28; Radvaz in Taamei Hamitzvos no. 78; Even Ezra, Abarbanel. See H.P.Z. part II, chapter 18, Section B.

23. Even Ezra: VaYikra 19.

24. Par. 199.

The Rav replied bitterly, "Your end will be tragic. After your death, demons will come to you in the form of cows and trample over the face you hold so dear. Such is the punishment for those who remove their beards." Soon after the man died, the Rav summoned his Neshamah (soul). The departed one publicly told the Rav of his punishment: "Immediately after my death, a demon in the form of a cow came to me with a vessel filled with mud and filth, and placed my soul into it. An angel then took it before the heavenly tribunal for judgment. A Bible was brought and I was forced to read the verse, 'Thou shalt not shave thy beard.' I didn't know what to say-how to vindicate myself. The verdict was to have my soul placed in the lowest depths of Gehenom (Purgatory)."²⁵

24. Since the punishment for this sin is so terrible, one should conduct himself according to the most stringent halachic rulings.²⁶

25. A great sage of the post-Talmudic period writes in his responsa that he once inquired of the Heavenly Tribunal about the permissibility of removing the beard. He received the reply that it is forbidden to shave the beard, even with a scissor. Those who persist in destroying their beards will be asked: "Where is the Creator and King Whom you have forgotten by disregarding a mitzvah so easy to fulfill?"²⁷

26. The sight of a beard is a reminder for the young to respect their elders. A white beard inspires repentance.²⁸

27. The beard is one of the symbols created by Hashem to differentiate between men and women. Since the beard has been created for a specific reason, it is in direct opposition to Hashem's will to remove it.²⁹

25. Yayin Hameshumar; Shevet Mussar. For further documentation of the details of this incident, see H.P.Z. p. 95 ff.

26. Yosef Ometz Laws of Peyoth.

27. Responsa M'n Hashamayim, no. 36.

28. Yesodos Ohalim, Parshas Noso as quoted in H.P.Z. pg. 206.

29. Rabenu Bechayeh, VaYikra chapter 19, verse 27; Sefer Meah Shearim; Shevet Musar;

28. The Ari z.l. advises against touching the beard in order to guard against tearing out any hairs.³⁰

29. Those who remove their beards should not be called to the Torah.³¹ The sextons of the synagogues should unite in resolving not to call up a Jew who removes his beard. Should such a Jew wish to buy the honor, the price should be driven high enough to prevent him from succeeding.³²

30. It is a tradition stemming from the time of Moshe Rabbeinu that the wearing of a beard awakens the thirteen attributes of mercy of Hashem.³³

31. It is a mitzvah incumbent upon every Jew to let his beard grow. Unlike halachic stringencies which apply more to a scholar than to anyone else, each and every Jew, regardless of his Torah scholarship, is required to grow his beard.³⁴

32. The majority of those Jews who seek a lenient halachic ruling to justify removal of their beards are not firm in their Jewish belief. The truly G-d-fearing Jew will never remove his beard in any manner.³⁵

33. There are Poskim who hold that a Jew who shaves should not be permitted to lead the Congregation in prayer.³⁶

34. "If you see a bearded poverty-stricken Jew, be advised that his poverty is a punishment for his sins. If he would have no

Abarbanel, *ibid*; Rav Yaakov Emdin in *Sidur* (Chalon Hamitzri); Avudrohom in explaining the blessing of "Asher Yotzar" decries the removal of the beard on the grounds of destroying the beauty of the face.

30. *Sefer Shzas Hamincha*, Parshas Kedoshim; *Shulchan Aruch HoAri Z.L. Dinei Erev Shabbos*, Din 11; *Tamei Haminhagim*; *Likutei Torah Kedoshim*; *Or Tzaddikim* no. 42; *Responsa Kesones Yosef Yoreh Deah* no. 1; *Meorei Or*. See H.P.Z. part II, chapter 12.

31. *Megaleh Amukos*, Kedoshim; *Responsa Tzur Yaakov*. See H.P.Z. part II, chapter 18, section 4.

32. *Tzevoh Mechayim* par. 15. See H.P.Z. p. 235.

33. *Bnei Yesoschor*, Elul.

34. *Noheg K'tzon Yosef*.

35. *Sefer Or Hamitzvos* chapter 3, *Mitzvoh* 44.

36. *Minchas Aharon* no. 12, 20; *Responsa Chaim BiYad* no. 1; *Elaf Hamogen* on the *Match Efraim*, 581: 51. *K'vod Chachomim* p. 169; *Darchei Tshuvah Yoreh Deah* no. 2: 89; *Magid Taalumos Berachos* p. 11; *Responsa Simcha L'Ish* in the name of *Resp. Heshiv Moshe*. See at length H.P.Z. part II, chapter 18, section a.

beard, his poverty would not be nearly enough punishment.”³⁷

35. It is plainly seen that one of the main reasons that assimilation, heresy, and non-Jewish ideas were so rampant in Germany, was because they had entirely done away with the wearing of beards. According to our Holy Seforim, removing the beard in any manner is an affront to Hashem. It is nearly impossible to measure or contemplate the holiness involved in the beard of a Jew. Similarly, the extent of the punishment is beyond assessment, since shaving is an act which destroys one of the foundations of our holy religion. The beard is conducive to Yiras-Shomayim, (the fear of Hashem) which, in turn, is the vessel through which the blessings of Hashem are channelled to this world. The beard distinguishes the Jew. One who denies the existence of Hashem - Heaven forbid-and the unity of the Jewish people will remove his beard.³⁸

36. The Sefer “Peleh Yoetz” writes:

“It is improper for a G-d fearing Jew to cut away any part of his beard, including the part under the chin, since nothing but misfortune and evil to his soul will result from this. Should not every Jew conduct himself according to our Holy Rabbis and Tzaddikim? What harm could possibly befall him by doing so? Why shouldn’t he honor Hashem by fulfilling a mitzvah so important yet so simple?

37. It is even worse for a prestigious or well-known person to shave his beard than for a common man to do so, since this is an act of chillul Hashem, as well.³⁹

38. Those who remove their beards thereby exhibit signs of slowly slipping away from Torah Judaism.⁴⁰

39. The holy sage, Rav Shlomo Eliezer Alfondri, obm, did not allow a clean-shaven Jew to enter his home. If one nevertheless

37. Yismach Moshe Parshas Emor.

38. As quoted in the sefer Lekutei Halochoh (By Rav Nachman of Breslav) Laws of the Beard.

39. Responsa Imrei Eish Yoreh Deah no. 55.

40. Responsa Tirosh Veyitzhor no. 68 in the name of the Malbim; Chofetz Chayim in Tiferes Adom, chapter 5; Responsa Divrei Malchiel part V no. 61. See H.P.Z. part II, chapter 4, note 4.

entered, the Rov would not look at him, much less speak to or learn Torah with him.⁴¹

40. It is an accepted practice to abstain from abusing the beard in any manner.⁴²

41. In practice, every faithful Jew should follow the examples set by the holy sages of every generation, and grow his beard.⁴³

42. It is a great embarrassment to see Gentiles who grow their beards, while Jews, who are commanded by Hashem to do so, do not. Those who stand up and protest this breach of our holy faith should be acclaimed and encouraged. It is sad to say that those scholars and rabbis who do not protest this violation of the Torah are obviously lacking in Yiras-Shomayim (fear of Hashem). Such Jews are included in the Torah's curse: "Cursed be he who does not uphold the words of the Torah." On the other hand, those who strengthen Torah observance, especially regarding this mitzvah, are included in the blessing: "Blessed be he who upholds the words of the Torah."⁴⁴

43. It is clearly seen that the origins of many sins stem from the removal of the beard. One who wishes to remove himself from the yoke of Torah and mitzvos will begin by shaving his beard.⁴⁵

44. Similarly, many Poskim write that once a Jew removes his beard, the road is clear for him to transgress the rest of the Torah; for example, the laws of the Sabbath and the mitzvah of Tefillin.⁴⁶

45. There occurred a breach of tradition where a Jew had the audacity to shave off his beard. The Nodoh Beyehudo reprimanded him severely, but to no avail. The Rov warned him

41. Amudei Arozim p. 52.

42. Oruch HaShulchan 151:10.

43. Responsa Levush Mordchai indexes to part I, Yoreh Deah 99.

44. Responsa Divrei Malchiel, part IV, par. 66.

45. Op cit., part V, par. 81.

46. Responsa Tirosh VeYitzhor no. 68; Sefer Olam Asiyah; Tiferes Odom; Meshech Chochma; Resp. Divrei Malchiel. See H.P.Z. part II, chapter 5, section 4.

that aside from his own sin, others would follow his example, and likewise shave their beards.

"The responsibility for their sins will be shared by you," the Rov informed him.

Shortly thereafter, the man passed away after a lengthy illness. The burial society prepared for his funeral. As the procession passed the main street of the town, the Rov requested the funeral to be halted. To the astonishment of all present, the Rov called for the local barber and ordered him to shave the deceased's face. Explaining his shocking action the Rov declared:

"This man, who caused so much sin by shaving his beard, should appear before the Heavenly Tribunal with a clean-shaven face."⁴⁷

46. Today's generation (1800's) is, thank G-d, more worthy with regard to the prohibition against shaving the beard, since every chosid who visits a Rebbe is most careful in this respect.⁴⁸

47. He who shaves his beard brings upon himself the spiritual impurity of the Gentile world.⁴⁹

48. The Chofetz Chaim, obm, writes that those who shave their beards in order to "look better" may very well fall into the sin of illicit relationships.⁵⁰

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47. Sefer Mofes Hador, p. 16b.

48. Sefer Bris Moshe. See Sefer H.P.Z., p. 269 which quotes a letter from Rav Z. S. Dworkin Shlita, stating (in part):

"It was well known that the Chofetz Chaim z.l. experienced great pain due to the fact that his own disciples were accustomed to disregarding his wishes by removing their beards. In the year 5670, a convention of the leading Rabbonim of Russia took place in Petersburg which brought together many of the great Torah luminaries of that era, among them, the Chofetz Chayim obm., the Rebbe 'Rashab' of Lubavitch obm, and the Brisker Rov obm.

The Chafetz Chayim took the opportunity to ask the Lubavitcher Rebbe to reveal the secret of how he convinces his disciples to allow their beards to grow fully.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe answered that among his 'chassidim' it is naturally understood, and never needs to be mentioned at all!"

49. Toras Aleph from the Shoproner Rov, obm.

50. Tiferes Odom, chapter 6.

Let us conclude this chapter with the words of the Chofetz Chaim, obm, from his sefer concerning the beard (Tiferes Odom):

"The test determining whether a man possesses Yiras-Shomayim when considering marriage or other associations with him is whether or not he has a beard."



Chapter 2 .

COMBING THE BEARD.

1) It is permissible to comb the beard, ¹ although many are careful not to do so (since one might inadvertently tear some hairs from the beard).²

LONG BEARDS

2) It is not proper to tie or pin the beard beneath the chin, as many Jews with long beards are accustomed to doing.³

TRIMMING THE MOUSTACHE

3) That part of the moustache directly over the lips may be shortened if it grows so long that it interferes with eating. The following reasons are cited in Halacha :

- a. One who wears a long moustache combed to the sides of the mouth resembles the non-Jews who do so.⁴

1) Yad Ne'eman 14a, S'dei Chemed (Klallim, Gimel Par. 75), Responsa K'sonas Yosef (Y. D. 1); Hadrass Ponim Zokon (Part II ch. 12) at length.

2) See Zichronos Eliyahu (Y. D., Zayin, Alef); Rav Akivah Eiger (cited in Hadrass Ponim Zokon Pg. 223-224); Match Efrayim 426:8; cf. Likutei Sichos vol. 7, pg. 325. See Hadrass Ponim Zokon Part II loc cit. at length.

3) Rav Yosef Chaim of Baghdad ("Ben Ish Chai") and Rebbe "Rashab" of Lubavitch, quoted in H. P. Z. loc. cit. pg. 522.

4) Shulchan Gavoaah (Y. D. par. 17); H. P. Z. part II, Ch. II.

- b. Particles of food may remain in the moustache, causing meat and dairy to mix near the mouth.⁵
- c. According to the Zohar, the mouth should be completely clear and unobstructed. During prayer, hair should be removed from the area of the mouth⁶.
- d. Hair which interferes with eating is detestable, and defiles one's food ⁷.

PROPERTIES OF THE BEARD

4) The Gaon and Tzadik, Rav Shlomo Kluger, obm., was once approached by an individual who had lost all his children in their infancy. The Tzadik advised him:

“Pay heed, my son! A baby naturally grabs his father's beard. Since you have no beard your children have nothing upon which to take hold. Allow your beard to grow, and your children's lives will be sustained”.

The Gaon's advice was followed, and G-d blessed the man with offspring who grew to maturity⁸.



5) Shulchan Gavoah loc. cit.

6) Ibid.; Emek Hamelech; Responsa Torah Lishmoh 391; H. P. Z. loc. cit.

7) Rav Yakov Emden (in recently discovered manuscript quoted in H. P. Z. loc. cit. p.514).

8) Shema Shlomo (Shalshes Hayuchsim).

CHAPTER 3

SELF - SACRIFICE TO PRESERVE THE BEARD

1. The beard should not be removed even in a time of physical danger!.¹

2. The self-sacrifice Jews displayed by retaining their beards while enslaved was one of the merits which brought about the Redemption from Egypt.²

3. A Jew conscripted into the military should not remove his beard, even if he might thereby suffer a large monetary loss, and even if because of his steadfastness the non-Jews might ridicule and scorn him.³

4. Even if every other Jew in the entire town or province transgresses and has no beard, Heaven forbid, and one will be the only Jew with a beard; nevertheless, it is forbidden for him to remove his beard.⁴

5. In Poland, in the year 5606 (1846), a decree was issued by the government prohibiting the Jewish mode of dress and ordering the removal of the beard. The two leading Gaonim and Poskim of the time proclaimed that it was forbidden to remove the beard even under threat of death. The great Gaon and Tzaddik, Rav Yitzchok Meir Alter, the first Gerer Rebbe, along with the great Gaon, Rav Avrohom of Tzechonov; declared:

“Yehorag V'al Ya'avov” (Rather be killed than to transgress this Holy Mitzvah.).⁵

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1) See Sefer Chasidim par. 199; H. P. Z. Part II, Ch. 14 at length.

2) Shaar Yissochar (Nisan, 59).

3) Chofetz Chaim in “Machne Yisroel” ch. 13. See H. P. Z. Part I, pp. 262-264 for further elucidation.

4) Rav Zalman Sorotzkin (Aznaïm Latorah, K'doshim 19:27).

5) Meir Eyney Hagolah (I, par. 399; II, p. 41) cf, Sipuri Chasidim (Emor).

CONCLUDING NOTE

"One who witnesses the sin of removing the beard by any means should raise his voice in rebuke like a shofar! He should not hesitate, despairing that since the practice of this transgression is now widespread his reprimand will be unheeded. He should rather realize that within each Jew is a Divine Spark which may be awakened by brotherly admonition. If even one Jewish soul is saved from this sinful practice it is as if a whole world were saved.

"One of the great rabbis of our generation spoke unceasingly of the gravity of this sin his entire lifetime, thus saving many Jews from continual transgression.

"May G-d make us worthy to bring the multitudes to righteousness and merit in doing that which causes nachas ruach (gratification and pleasure) to our Creator, Blessed be His Name".⁶



6) S'dei Chemed (Kilallim, Lamed, Par. 116).