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Parshas Ki Seitzei, Elul 5784

Tiferes Shlomo on the Parsha

כי תצא מחנה על אויבך ונשמרת מכל דבר רע
When your camp goes out against your enemies, you shall guard yourself from all evil.

This Pasuk alludes to the judgement of Rosh Hashana, when the camp of the Satan and the forces of negativity (Sitra Achara) stand against the Jewish people.

The primary preparation that we can make in the lead up to the Day of Judgment is through ensuring that there is brotherly love and unity amongst the Jewish people.

This is alluded to in the verse in Tehillim בהצוצרות וקול שופר הריעו לפני המלך ה'. Literally the verse reads “with trumpets and the sound of the Shofar, rejoice before the King Hashem.”

The word הריעו is related to the word רעות, meaning friendship. The Pasuk is alluding that when we come before Hashem as the King on Rosh Hashana, with the sounding of the Shofar, we must come with friendship and love amongst ourselves.

This is the allusion contained in our verse. דבר רע can also mean evil words. The Pasuk is warning us that when we come to face the camp of the Satan in the judgement of Rosh Hashana, we must guard ourselves from any evil speech; to not speak badly about, or even see negativity in our fellow Jew.

מי האיש ההפץ הייבת “who is the man who desires life?”. This alludes to Rosh Hashana when we beseech Hashem to grant us life. The verse continues with the answer מרע לשונך . If we desire to be blessed with life, we must “guard your tongue from (speaking) evil.”

When we view our fellow Jews as Tzaddikim, we will be recorded in the Book of Tzaddikim.

From Captive Soul to Beautiful Bride

Ki Seitzei opens with the bizarre Mitzvah of the Yefas Toar. In short the Torah prescribes the process by which a man may come to marry a woman that he finds amongst the captives at war.

The Zohar explains that this Mitzvah has a unique spiritual application. The circumstances described in the Torah is a parable for the journey of the Baal Teshuva, who seeks to reclaim the purity of his soul and reconnect himself to his Creator.

When you go out to war against your enemies: The battle referred to in the verse is the battle which we must all wage against our evil inclination. The Torah tells us that the Yetzer Hara is an enemy who seeks to destroy us and therefore we must constantly be on the offensive. The Zohar explains that our weapon in this battle is the study of Torah, whose words of fire will melt away the negativity of the Yetzer Hara.

And you will see amongst the captives a beautiful woman: At various stages in our lives, our Neshama finds itself subjugated to the Yetzer Hara, trapped and unable to express its own G-dly desires. The Neshama is the beautiful woman who is found amongst the captives that we save in the course of our battle.

You shall shave her head... you shall remove the garments of her captivity: The Neshama’s enslavement leaves her defiled and tainted and not in any state to be “married”. Like the Yefas Toar, the Neshama must have her hair shaved off and her clothes changed.

In Kabbalah, hair represents the impure forces known as Kelipah. The garments of the soul as described in the Tanya are a person’s deeds in thought, speech

and action. These may either be the soiled and ugly ‘clothes’ of impurity or the clean and beautiful garments of the Neshama. The Neshama must be stripped of all the negative affects of the Yetzer Hora and its sinful ways, represented by the hair and clothing of captivity.

She shall sit in your house... and cry for her father and her mother for a month of days: Afterwards, the Neshama must sit in your house which, says the Ohr Hachayim, refers to the Beis Medrash where the Neshama can be purified by the words of Torah.

There the Neshama must cry for her father and her mother for a month of days. The Zohar explains that this is the month of Elul, a month which is opportune for the tears of Teshuva expressed by the remorseful soul. The tears are for her father - Hashem and her mother, the Jewish people. The sins of the Neshama not only weaken her relationship with Hashem but also adversely effect the entire Jewish people. The tears of Teshuva mend this spiritual damage.

After the month of Teshuva has been completed, the husband may take the Yefas Toar as his wife. This is the culmination of the Teshuva process on Yom Kippur. After our spiritual preparations and repentance during the month of Elul ‘beauty’ and purity of our Neshama radiates outwardly. Then on Yom Kippur the awaited marriage-like union between Hashem and the Neshama can take place.

This is a timely message as we enter the final half of the month of Elul. With our ‘cry’ of Teshuva from the depths of our hearts, removing the soiled garments of sin and committing ourselves to increasing our Torah study, we will be ready and pure to reunite our souls with Hashem, our Beloved.

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| 1. Vayikra 19:27 | 9. Tur Yoreh Deah 181 | 18. Hilchos Avodah Zarah 12:6 | 24. Shevuos 2b |
| 2. Rambam Hilchos Avodah Zarah 12:1, Chinuch Mitzvah 251 | 10. Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah 181:4. See Raavad on Hilchos Avodah Zarah 12:1 | 19. Tashbetz 2:100 gives a calculation that this is the approximate shiur of a Karcha – the prohibition of making a bald spot, based on the size of a spot for Tzaraas. | 25. Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah 181:9 |
| 3. Rambam ibid | 11. Tur Yoreh Deah 181 | 20. Tur Yoreh Deah 181 | 26. Darkei Teshuvah 181:13. Presumably it refers to the original hairline in the case of one who has a receding hairline. |
| 4. Rambam ibid, Chinuch 251, Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah 181:2 | 12. See Beis Yosef 181. See Ram”o who brings a disputing opinion | 21. This version of the Rambam is highly questionable. See Tashbetz 2:100 | 27. Ariza”l, Tzemach Tzedek, quoted in the name of the Rebbe |
| 5. Yoreh Deah 181 | 13. Makkos 3:5 | 22. See Kesef Mishna who explains that the Tosefta is no contradictory to the Rambam. The Rambam discusses the size or area of the Peyos that are meant to be left. The Tosefta discusses how many hairs must be removed to be punishable. | 28. Taamei Hamitzvos – Ariza”l Kedoshim. |
| 6. See Beis Yosef who defends the Rambam. The Rambam accepts that ultimately every Mitzvah is a Gezeiras Hakasuv, but we are still adjured to seek to understand reasons behind them. The Bach explains that the Rambam came to his conclusion from seeing the hairstyles of the idolatrous priests in his time. | 14. This itself is a matter subject to dispute. The Tzemach Tzedek in Yoreh Deah 93 clearly rules that even cutting the beard short with scissors violates the Biblical prohibition. | 23. Yoreh Deah 181:9 | 29. Rosh and Tosfos Shevuos 2b |
| 7. Tosfos Shevuos 3a | 15. Rosh Makkos Siman 2-3, Chinuch 251, Rabbeinu Yerucham, Sema”k 71. | | 30. Sefer Peas Zekanecha. See also Hadras Panim Zekein p365 |
| 8. Makkos 20b | 16. Yoreh Deah 181:3 | | 31. Igros Kodesh 20:10 |
| | 17. Rambam ibid | | 32. Recorded in the name of Rav Shalom of Belz |
| | | | 33. Torah Lishma 389 (Ben Ish Chai) |
| | | | 34. Ben Ish Chai |

The Weekly Halacha Analysis

Mullets, Fades and Peyos

Rabbi Yonason Johnson

Dedicated by the Klein family in honour of the wedding anniversary of Ephraim and Rochel Carlebach

Two Mitzvos are recorded adjacently in the same Pasuk in Parshas Kedoshim¹; “You shall not round off the edge of your head and you shall not destroy the edge of your beard.” This article will focus on the first prohibition which is the Issur of removing the hair of the Peyos at the side of one’s head.

Some of the commentaries explain that this Mitzvah, like many others, is to distance us from the practises of idolaters². Idolaters and their priests would shave their Peyos³. Even though the idolatrous hairstyle would leave the hair on the top and back of the head, the prohibition of removing the Peyos also apply if one shaved their entire head⁴.

The Tur⁵ writes that this reason is not stated in the Torah and we do not need to go and seek reasons for the Mitzvos. We observe them as the decrees of the King even if we do not know their reason⁶.

From the phrasing of the prohibition in plural terms⁷, we learn that the prohibition is violated by both the one who cuts the Peyos and the one whose Peyos are being cut⁸. The one whose Peyos are being cut only violates a Biblical prohibition if they incline their head to make the Peyos accessible to the one cutting them⁹. If the one whose Peyos are being cut does nothing to assist, it is still Rabbinically forbidden¹⁰.

The prohibition on the one whose Peyos are cut, applies even if the one cutting is not Jewish¹¹. A Jewish hairdresser may cut the Peyos of a non-Jew¹².

Further, there is a separate Biblical violation for each of the two Peyos¹³ and one who removes both of them violates two prohibitions.

The Rambam learns that just as the Biblical prohibition on shaving the beard only applies to a razor blade which completely destroys the hair - as opposed to cutting with scissors¹⁴, so too the prohibition on cutting Peyos does not apply to cutting them with scissors, even if cut close to the skin (מספריים כעין תער)

However, most Poskim¹⁵ distinguish between the Peyos and the beard. Only the prohibition on cutting the beard uses the term “destroy”. The prohibition on Peyos applies to any manner of rounding the edges of the head, including scissors. This is the ruling of the Shulchan Aruch¹⁶.

The Chachamim do not specify a Shiur for the Peyos¹⁷.

The Rambam¹⁸ writes that the tradition received from his elders, is that if one leaves 40

hairs in the area of the temple, they do not violate the prohibition¹⁹. Others²⁰ have a version of the Rambam as writing 4 hairs²¹.

However, the Beis Yosef records the opinions of the Semag and others, that one violates the prohibition by even removing just 2 hairs, (the same Shiur for Gozez on Shabbos or for a Nazir). The Semag supports this with a Tosefta²². This is brought as the Halacha in Shulchan Aruch²³.

Where are the Peyos?

The Gemara explains that the Peyos of the head are at the end of the head. The Gemara clarifies that the prohibition is to even out the hair of the back of their ears to the hairline at the forehead. i.e removing the area of the temples by the ear.

Rashi²⁴ explains that the area of the Peyos is where the skull meets the jaw i.e. the temples. The whole width of this area is forbidden²⁵. This area is measured by drawing an imaginary line from the upper corner of the forehead down to the top of the ear. The area beneath this line are the Peyos (See diagram A). The measure of the forehead is based on each person²⁶.

It extends down to the place where “the hair of the beard begins”. Some define this as being beneath the ear, which is where the lower jawbone protrudes²⁷. Others understand that the Peyos extend only down to the top of the cheek bone.

Some have the custom of leaving extra hair above the area of the Peyos as a precaution to ensure that they do not cut the area of the Peyos themselves²⁸ (See diagram B). Some also leave an area of hair behind the ear as a precaution.

How long does the hair have to be?

The hair must be long enough to be grasped between one’s fingers²⁹. This measure is also the length required to be able to fold back the top of the hair to the base of the hair.

In practical measurements, the Poskim³⁰ say that this is a minimum of 5mm. This would allow for using a size 2 clippers – being approximately 6mm. A size 1 or less may not be used.

The Rebbe references that the Ariza”l is recorded to have trimmed his Peyos. The reason for this was so that the hair of the Peyos not mix with the hair of the beard. Kabbalistically this would be mixing different Tikunim. The Rebbe³¹ writes that the question is not why Chabad Chassidim cut their Peyos short, but why others grow their Peyos long, in contradiction of the recorded practise of the Ariza”l.

The basis for those who grow their Peyos long is to distance oneself from those who destroy their Peyos³². It is also an expression

of beautifying the Mitzvah and showing that the Mitzvos are precious to us by ensuring that the Peyos stand out³³. This applies even to those who trim their Peyos, who still grow them longer than the minimum measure of being able to grab the hairs between one’s fingers.

The Peyos are the sign of being a Jew. There are those who say that the two Peyos are like to witnesses that testify to our Jewishness. They are like a crown of royalty adorning our head³⁴. Based on this, having noticeably longer Peyos is a matter of Geon Yaakov (Jewish pride) and Veniflinu, distinguishing ourselves from the gentiles.

Based on the above, many secular hairstyles will be categorically forbidden. This includes shaving the entire head with less than a number 2 clipper. It also includes many mullet hairstyles where the hair of the Peyos are shaved or cut very short. It would also include any “temple fade” or shaved “undercut” haircuts.

Even if the Peyos of these hairstyles are left intact, there is still a problematic issue of emulating the ways and styles of the non-Jews.

Unfortunately, it is more common to see many observant youth who are cutting their hair with these styles and unknowingly violating the Mitzvah of Peyos. For children under Barmitzva, it is the parents Halachic responsibility to ensure that their children’s haircuts comply with Halacha.

In all types of haircuts, one should take extreme care when trimming the hair around the ear with scissors, to not cut them too short.

Those who rely on the Poskim who permit shaving with an electric razor, may not shave the area of the Peyos which includes the hair that grows from the side of the ear i.e. the sideburns.

Sources on reverse

