

הלכות עבודת פוכבים • פרק י"ב

Complete Word-for-Word Interlinear • Navy & Gold Edition

CHAPTER PREVIEW

In this chapter, the Rambam takes us into the holy boundaries of our physical appearance, showing how a Yid must carry himself with yiras Shamayim even in how he cuts his hair and trims his beard. Hashem separated us from the ways of the goyim and their idolatrous priests, commanding us not to destroy the corners of our heads or our beards. We will learn the exact definitions of these prohibitions, who is obligated in them, and how they apply to men, women, and those of doubtful gender status.

We will also learn about other prohibitions that set us apart from the surrounding nations, such as the prohibition against tattooing our skin, making gashes in our flesh as a sign of mourning, or shaving our heads in grief. Through these halachos, the Torah teaches us to treat our bodies with holiness and dignity, keeping us far removed from the dark practices of avodah zarah.

All introductions, summaries, and contextual notes are the editor's commentary and are not part of the original text.

ה"א

אסור הקפת פאתי הראש

Halacha 1 • The Prohibition of Shaving the Corners of the Head

אין מגלחין פאתי הראש כמו שהיו עושין עובדי פוכבים שנאמר
as it is said stars worshipers of doing that they were like the head the corners of shave We do not
ויקרא יט כז "לא תקפו פאת ראשך". וחיב על כל פאה ופאה.
and corner corner each for and he is liable your head" the corner of round "Do not 27 19 Vayikra
לפיכך המגלח שני צדעיו אפלו בבת אחת והתראה אחת לוקה שתיים.
twice is lashed one and warning one at once even temples his two one who shaves therefore
אחד המגלח הפאות בלבד ומניח שער כל הראש ואחד המגלח כל
all of who shaves and one the head all of the hair of and leaves alone the corners who shaves one
הראש פאחד לוקה הואיל וגלח הפאות. במה דברים אמורים באיש
regarding the man are said words In what the corners he shaved since is lashed as one the head
המגלח אבל איש המתגלח אינו לוקה אלא אם כן סייע למגלח.
the one who shaves he assisted . . unless lashed is not who is shaven the man but who shaves
והמגלח את הקטן לוקה:
is lashed the minor — and one who shaves

This halacha details the prohibition of rounding the corners of the head, the liability for each temple, and the status of the person being shaven.

ה"ב

פטור האשה וחיוב עבדים בהקפת הראש

הָאִשָּׁה שֶׁגִּלְחָה פָּאֵת רֹאשׁ הָאִישׁ אוֹ שֶׁנִּתְגַּלְחָה פְּטוּרָה שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר וַיִּקְרָא

Leviticus as it is said is exempt who was shaven or the man the head of the corner of who shaved A woman

יט כז "לֹא תִקְפוּ פָּאֵת רִאשְׁכֶּם" וַיִּקְרָא יט כז "וְלֹא תִשְׁחִית פָּאֵת

the corner of destroy and do not 27 19 Leviticus your head the corner of round Do not 27 19

זְקָנָה" כָּל שֶׁיִּשְׁנֹו בְּבֵל תִּשְׁחִית יִשְׁנֹו בְּבֵל תִּקְרֶה, וְאִשָּׁה שֶׁאִינָהּ

who is not and a woman round in do not is destroy in do not who is everyone your beard

בְּבֵל תִּשְׁחִית לְפִי שֶׁאִין לָהּ זָקֵן אִינָהּ בְּבֵל תִּקְרֶה. לְפִיכָךְ הָעֲבָדִים

the slaves therefore round in do not she is not a beard to her that there is not because destroy in do not

הוּאִיל וַיֵּשׁ לָהֶם זָקֵן אֲסוּרִין בְּהִקְפָּה:

in rounding are forbidden a beard to them and there is since

This halacha explains that women are exempt from the prohibition of rounding the head because they lack beards, while slaves are obligated.

ה'י ג

חִיּוּב נָשִׁים בְּמִצְוֹת עֲשֵׂה וְלֹא תַעֲשֶׂה

Halacha 3 · The Obligation of Women in Positive and Negative Commandments

כָּל מִצְוֹת לֹא תַעֲשֶׂה שֶׁבַּתוֹרָה אֶחָד אֲנָשִׁים וְאֶחָד נָשִׁים חִיּוּבִים

are obligated women or whether men whether that are in the Torah do not commandments of All

חוּץ מִ"פֵּל תִּשְׁחִית" ו"בֵּל תִּקְרֶה" ו"בֵּל יִטְמֵא כֹהֵן לַמֵּתִים"

to the dead" a Kohen become impure and "do not round" and "do not destroy" from "do not except

מִשְׁנֵה קִידוּשִׁין א ז . וְכָל מִצְוֹת עֲשֵׂה שֶׁהִיא מִזְמַן לְזְמַן וְאִינָהּ

and is not to time from time that is do commandment of And every 7 1 Kiddushin Mishnah

תְּדִירָה נָשִׁים פְּטוּרוֹת חוּץ מִקְדוּשׁ הַיּוֹם וְאֲכִילַת מַצָּה בְּלֵילִי

on the nights of matzah and eating of the day from sanctification of except are exempt women constant

הַפֶּסַח וְאֲכִילַת הַפֶּסַח וְשִׁחִיטָתוֹ וְהִקְהָל וְשִׂמְחָה שֶׁנָּשִׁים חִיּוּבוֹת:

are obligated which women and rejoicing and Hakhel and its slaughtering the Pesach offering and eating of the Pesach

This halacha delineates which Torah prohibitions and positive time-bound commandments apply to women.

ה'י ד

דִּין טְמֵטוֹם וְאַנְדְּרוֹגִינוֹס בְּמִצְוֹת

Halacha 4 · The Legal Status of a Tumtum and an Androgynous Regarding Mitzvos

טְמֵטוֹם וְאַנְדְּרוֹגִינוֹס הֵרִי הֵן סָפֵק, נוֹתְנִין עֲלֵיהֶן חֻמְרֵי הָאִישׁ

the man the stringencies of upon them we place are doubtful they behold and an androgynous A tumtum

וְחֻמְרֵי הָאִשָּׁה בְּכָל מָקוֹם וְחֻיּוּבִים בְּכָל. וְאִם עָבְרוּ

they transgressed and if in everything and they are obligated place in every the woman and the stringencies of

אֵינָם לוֹקִין:

lashed they are not

This halacha establishes that due to their doubtful gender status, a tumtum and an androgynous must observe the stringencies of both men and women.

ה'י ה

אף על פי שהאשה מתרת לגלח פאת ראשה הרי היא אסורה לגלח
to shave is forbidden she behold her head the corner of to shave is permitted that a woman though · Even
פאת ראש האיש. ואפלו קטן אסור לה לגלח לו פאה:
a corner for him to shave for her is forbidden a child and even a man the head of the corner of

This halacha discusses the prohibition for a woman to shave the corners of a man's or a male child's head, despite being permitted to shave her own.

הל"ו

שעור פאת הראש והתר מספרים

Halacha 6 · The Measure of the Corners of the Head and the Permission of Scissors

ופאה זו שמניחים בצדעים לא נתנו בו חכמים שעור ושמענו מזקנינו
from our elders and we heard a measure the Sages in it did give not at the temples that we leave this And corner
שאינו מניח פחות מארבעים שערו. ומתר ללקט הפאות
the corners to remove and it is permitted hairs than forty less leave that he does not
במספרים לא נאסר אלא השחתה בתער:
with a razor destruction except was forbidden not with scissors

This halacha discusses the minimum amount of hair that must be left on the temples and clarifies that the prohibition of shaving the corners of the head applies only to a razor.

הל"ז

אסור השחתת פאות הזקן בתער

Halacha 7 · The Prohibition of Shaving the Corners of the Beard with a Razor

דרך פהני עובדי פוכבים היה להשחית זקנם. לפיכך אסרה תורה
the Torah forbade therefore their beard to destroy was stars worshipers of priests of The way of
להשחית הזקן. וחמש פאות יש בו. לחי העליון ולחי התחתון מימין
from the right the lower and cheek the upper cheek in it there are corners and five the beard to destroy
וכן משמאל ושבלת הזקן. ולוקה על כל פאה ופאה. ואם נטלן
he removed them and if and corner corner every for and he is lashed the beard and the pit of from the left and so
כלן פאחת לוקה חמש. ואינו חייב עד שיגלחנו בתער שנאמר
as it is said with a razor he shaves it until liable and he is not five he is lashed as one all of them
ויקרא יט כז "ולא תשחית את פאת זקנה" גלוח שיש בו השחתה.
destruction in it that has shaving your beard the corner of — shall you destroy and not 27 19 Leviticus
לפיכך אם גלח זקנו במספרים פטור. ואין המתגלח לוקה עד
until is lashed the one being shaved and not he is exempt with scissors his beard he shaved if therefore
שיסייע. ואשה מתרת להשחית זקנה אם יש לה שער בזקן. ואם
and if in the beard hair to her there is if her beard to destroy is permitted and a woman he assists
השחיתה זקן האיש פטורה:
she is exempt the man the beard of she destroyed

This halacha details the prohibition against shaving the five corners of the beard with a razor, the exemption of scissors, and the status of women regarding this law.

הל' ח

גלוח השפה והשער המדלדל

Halacha 8 · Shaving the Mustache and the Hanging Hair of the Lip

השפה מתר לגלחו בתער והוא השער שעל גב השפה העליונה
upper the lip top of that is on the hair and that is with a razor to shave is permitted The mustache
וכן השער המדלדל מן השפה התחתונה. ואף על פי שהוא מתר
is permitted that it though · and even lower the lip from that hangs the hair and likewise
לא נהגו ישראל להשחיתו אלא יגלח קצתו עד שלא יעכב
it will interfere with that not until its ends he may shave rather to destroy it Israel did practice not
אכילה ושתייה:
and drinking eating

The Rambam explains that while shaving the mustache with a razor is technically permitted, the custom is only to trim the parts that interfere with eating and drinking.

הל' ט

אסור העברת שער בית השחי ובית הערוה לאיש

Halacha 9 · The Prohibition of Removing Armpit and Pubic Hair for Men

העברת השער משאר הגוף כגון בית השחי ובית הערוה אינו
is not the genitalia and the house of the armpit the house of such as the body from the rest of the hair Removal of
אסור מן התורה אלא מדברי סופרים והמעבירו מפין אותו מפת
stripes of him they strike and one who removes it Sages from the words of but the Torah from forbidden
מרדות. במה דברים אמורים במקום שאין מעבירין אותו אלא נשים
women except it remove where do not in a place are said words In what rebelliousness
כדי שלא יתקן עצמו תקון נשים. אבל במקום שמעבירין השער
the hair where they remove in a place but women the adornment of himself he will adorn that not in order
הנשים ואנשים אם העביר אין מפין אותו. ומתר להעביר שער
the hair of to remove and it is permitted him strike they do not he removed if and the men the women
שאר איברים במספרים בכל מקום:
place in every with scissors the limbs the rest of

This halacha details the Rabbinic prohibition against a man removing hair from his armpits or genitalia, which is based on the prohibition of adopting feminine practices.

הל' י

אסור לבשת בגדי המין השני ותקון השער כאשה

Halacha 10 · The Prohibition of Wearing Garments of the Opposite Gender and Removing White Hair

לא תעדה אשה עדי האיש כגון שתשים בראשה מצנפת או
or a turban on her head that she places such as a man with the adornment of a woman shall adorn herself not

כובע או תלבוש שריון וכיוצא בו או שתגלח ראשה כאיש. ולא

and not like a man her head that she cuts or of it and the like armor she wears or a hat

יעדה איש עדי אשה כגון שילבו בגדי צבעונין וחלי

and jewelry of colors garments of that he wears such as a woman with the adornment of a man shall adorn himself

זהב במקום שאין לובשין אותן הפלים ואין משימים אותו החלי

that jewelry it place and do not those garments them wear where do not in a place gold

אלא נשים הכל כמנהג המדינה. איש שעדה עדי

the adornment of who adorned himself a man the province is according to the everything women except with custom of

אשה ואשה שעדתה עדי איש לוקין. המלקט שערות

hairs one who plucks receive lashes a man the adornment of who adorned herself and a woman a woman with

לבנות מתוך השחורות מראשו או מזקנו משילקט שערה אחת

single hair from when he plucks from his beard or from his head the black ones from among white

לוקה מפני שעדה עדי אשה. וכן אם צבע שערו

his hair he dyed if and likewise a woman the adornment of he adorned himself because receives lashes with

שחור משיצבע שער לבנה אחת לוקה. טמטום ואנדרוגינוס אינו

shall not and an androgynus a tumtum receives lashes single white hair from when he dyes black

עוטר כאשה ולא מגלח ראשו כאיש ואם עשה כן אינו לוקה:

receive lashes he does not so he did and if like a man his head cut and not like a woman wrap

This halacha details the Torah prohibition against cross-dressing and adopting the grooming habits of the opposite gender, including a man plucking white hairs from his beard.

חלי יא

אסור כתבת קעקע ופרטיו

Halacha 11 · The Prohibition of Tattooing and Its Specific Requirements

כתבת קעקע האמורה בתורה הוא שישרט על בשרו וימלא מקום

the place of and fills his flesh upon is that he scratches it in the Torah which is spoken of tattooing The writing of

השריטה כחל או דיו או שאר צבעונים הרושמים. וזה היה מנהג

the custom of was and this that leave a mark dyes other or ink or with eye-paint the scratch

העכו"ם שרושמים עצמן לעבודת פוכבים כלומר שהוא עבד מכור לה

to it sold a servant that he is as if to say idols for the service of themselves who would mark the idolaters

ומרשם לעבודתה. ומעת שירשם באחד מדברים הרושמים אחר

after that leave a mark of the things with one that he marks and from the time for its service and marked

שישרט באי זה מקום מן הגוף בין איש בין אשה לוקה. כתב

If he wrote he receives lashes a woman or a man whether the body of place · in any he scratches

ולא רשם בצבע או שרשם בצבע ולא כתב בשריטה פטור עד

until he is exempt with a scratch write and did not with dye if he marked or with dye mark and did not

שִׁיכְתָב וִיקְעֹקַע שְׁנֶאֱמַר וַיִּקְרָא יְיָ כַח "וּכְתָבַת קְעֻקַּע". בְּמָה דְּבָרִים

words In what tattoo and a writing of 28 19 Vayikra as it is said and tattoos he writes

אֲמֹרִים בְּכֹתֵב אֲבָל זֶה שִׁפְתָּבוּ בְּבָשָׂרוֹ וְקָעָקְעוּ בּוֹ אִינוֹ חֵיב

liable is not on him and tattooed in his flesh whom they wrote this one but regarding the writer are said

אֵלָּא אִם כֵּן סִיעַ כְּדֵי שְׂיַעֲשֶׂה מַעֲשֶׂה. אֲבָל אִם לֹא עָשָׂה כָּלֹּם אִינוֹ

he does not anything he did not if but an action that he did so he assisted . . unless

לוֹקָה:

receive lashes

This halacha defines the biblical prohibition of tattooing, which requires both scratching the skin and filling it with dye, and explains who is liable for lashes.

ה'יב

אסור שריטה על המת

Halacha 12 · The Prohibition of Gouging the Flesh for the Dead

הַשּׁוֹרֵט שְׁרִיטָה אַחַת עַל הַמֵּת לוֹקָה שְׁנֶאֱמַר וַיִּקְרָא יְיָ כַח "וְשָׂרַט

and a gouge 28 19 Leviticus as it is said is lashed the dead for single a gouge One who gouges

לְנֶפֶשׁ לֹא תִתְּנוּ בְּבָשְׁרְכֶם". אֶחָד כֶּהֵן וְאֶחָד יִשְׂרָאֵל. שָׂרַט שְׁרִיטָה

a gouge If he gouged an Israelite or whether a Kohen Whether in your flesh place do not for a soul

אַחַת עַל חֲמִשׁ מֵתִים אוֹ חֲמִשׁ שְׁרִיטוֹת עַל מֵת אֶחָד לוֹקָה חֲמִשָּׁ.

five he is lashed one dead person for gouges five or dead people five for single

וְהוּא שִׁהֲתָרוּ בּוֹ עַל כָּל אַחַת וְאַחַת:

and one one each for him that they warned and this is

This halacha details the prohibition against gouging one's flesh in grief for the deceased and the liability for multiple lashes based on the number of dead or the number of gouges.

ה'יג

אסור גדידה ושריטה על מת ולעבודת כוכבים

Halacha 13 · The Prohibition of Gasbing and Gouging for the Dead and for Idolatry

גְּדִידָה וְשְׁרִיטָה אַחַת הִיא. וְכַשֵּׁם שֶׁהָיוּ הָעֲכוּפִים שׁוֹרְטִים בְּבָשָׂרָם עַל

over in their flesh gouging the idolaters that were and just as they are one and gouging Gashing

מִתֵּיהֶם מִפְּנֵי הַצָּעַר כִּךְ הָיוּ חֹבְלִין בְּעַצְמָם לְעִבּוּדַת כּוֹכָבִים שְׁנֶאֱמַר

as it is said stars for worship of themselves wound they would so the grief because of their dead

מַלְכִּים א יח כח "וַיִּתְּגְדְּדוּ כְּמִשְׁפָּטָם". גַּם זֶה אֶסְרָה תוֹרָה שְׁנֶאֱמַר

as it is said the Torah forbade this also according to their custom" and they gashed themselves 28 18 I Melachim

דְּבָרִים יד א "לֹא תִתְּגְדְּדוּ". אֵלָּא שֶׁעַל מֵת בֵּין שָׂרַט בְּיָדוֹ

with his hand he gouged whether a dead person that over except gash yourselves" "do not 1 14 Devarim

בֵּין שָׂרַט בְּכֶלִי לוֹקָה. לְעִבּוּדַת כּוֹכָבִים בְּכֶלִי חֵיב

he is liable for with an instrument stars for worship of he receives lashes with an instrument he gouged or whether

מִלְקוֹת בְּיָדוֹ פָּטוּר:

he is exempt with his hand lashes

This halacha explains that gashing and gouging are a single prohibition, forbidden both as a mourning practice and as an idolatrous rite, with differing liabilities depending on whether an instrument was used.

הל' יד

אָסוּר עֲשִׂית אַגְדוֹת אַגְדוֹת בְּבֵית דִּינִין

Halacha 14 · The Prohibition Against Forming Separate Factions and Courts in One City

וּבְכָלֵל אִזְהָרָה זֶה שְׁלֹא יִהְיוּ שְׁנֵי בֵּית דִּינִין בְּעִיר אַחַת זֶה

this one one in a city of law courts two there shall be is that not this of prohibition And in the category

נוֹהֵג כְּמִנְהַג זֶה וְזֶה נוֹהֵג כְּמִנְהַג אֲחֵר. שְׁדָּבָר זֶה

this for thing of another according to the behaving and this one of this one according to the behaving custom custom

גוֹרֵם לְמַחְלּוֹקוֹת גְּדוּלוֹת שְׁנֵי אֲמָר דְּבָרִים יָד א "לֹא תִתְגַּדְּדוּ" לֹא תֵעָשׂוּ

become do not gash yourselves "Do not 1 14 Devarim as it is said great to disputes causes

אַגְדוֹת אַגְדוֹת:

groups groups

The Rambam explains that the prohibition of gashing oneself also includes a prohibition against dividing into separate halachic factions within a single city.

הל' טו

אָסוּר קָרַחַה עַל הַמֵּת וְשַׁעֲרָה

Halacha 15 · The Prohibition of Making a Bald Spot for the Dead and Its Measure

הַקָּרַחַה קָרַחַה עַל הַמֵּת לֹקַחַה שְׁנֵי אֲמָר דְּבָרִים יָד א "וְלֹא תִשְׁמִי

shall you place "and not 1 14 Devarim as it is said is lashed the dead for a bald spot One who makes a bald spot

קָרַחַה בֵּין עֵינֶיכֶם לְמֵת". אֶחָד יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאֶחָד כֹּהֵן שְׁשָׁרֵט עַל

for who made a bald spot a priest or an Israelite whether for the dead" your eyes between a bald spot

הַמֵּת אֵינוֹ לֹקַחַה אֶלָּא אַחַת. הַקָּרַחַה אַרְבַּע אוֹ חֲמִשׁ קָרַחַת עַל

for bald spots five or four One who makes a bald once except receive lashes he does not the dead spot

מֵת אֶחָד לֹקַחַה כְּמִנְיָן הַקָּרַחַת וְהוּא שֶׁהִתְרִוּ בּוֹ עַל כָּל

every for him provided they warned and this is the bald spots according to the is lashed one dead number of

קָרַחַה וְקָרַחַת. אֶחָד הַקָּרַחַת בְּיָדוֹ אוֹ בְּסֵם אוֹ הִטְבִּיל

if he dipped or with a potion or with his hand one who makes a bald It is the same and bald spot bald spot spot

אֶצְבָּעוֹתָיו בְּסֵם וְהִנִּיחָם בְּחֻמְשָׁה מְקוֹמוֹת בְּרֹאשׁוֹ בְּבֵת אַחַת הוּאִיל

since one at time on his head places on five and placed them in a potion his fingers

וְקָרַחַח חֲמִשׁ קָרַחַת אַף עַל פִּי שֶׁהִיא הִתְרָאָה אַחַת לֹקַחַה חֲמִשׁ

five he is lashed one warning it is though . even bald spots five he made a bald spot

שְׁהָרִי כָּלֹן בָּאִין כְּאַחַת. וְחֵיב עַל כָּל הָרֹאשׁ כְּבֵין הָעֵינַיִם

the eyes just as between the head all of for And he is liable as one come all of them for behold

שְׁנַאמַר וַיִּקְרָא כֹּה ה' לֹא יִקְרָחוּ קְרָחָה בְּרֹאשָׁם". וְכִמָּה

And how much on their head" a bald spot shall they make bald "not 5 21 Vayikra as it is said

שְׁעוֹר הַקְּרָחָה כִּדִּי שִׁירָאָה מֵרֹאשׁוֹ כְּגֵרִים פָּנוּי בְּלִי שְׁעָר:

hair without clear like a gris from his head that there will be seen enough the bald spot is the measure of

This halacha defines the prohibition against tearing out hair to create a bald spot in mourning for the deceased, detailing the lashes incurred for multiple spots and the minimum size of the baldness.

ה'טז

דִּינֵי קְרָחָה שְׁרִיטָה וְכַתְּכַת קַעֲקַע בְּסִיוַע חֵבֵרוֹ

Halacha 16 · Laws of Bald Spots Gashes and Tattoos with a Colleague's Assistance

הַקְּרָחַת רֹאשׁוֹ אוֹ הַשּׁוֹרֵט בְּבִשְׂרוֹ עַל בֵּיתוֹ שֶׁנָּפַל וְעַל סִפִּינָתוֹ

his ship or over that fell his house over in his flesh one who gashes or on his head One who makes a bald spot

שֶׁנִּטְבְּעָה בַּיָּם פָּטוֹר וְאִינוֹ לֹקָה אֲלָא עַל הַמֵּת בְּלִבָּד אוֹ הַשּׁוֹרֵט

one who gashes or only the deceased over except lashed and is not is exempt in the sea that sank

לְעִבּוּדַת כּוֹכָבִים. הַקְּרָחַת בְּרֹאשׁוֹ שֶׁל חֵבֵרוֹ וְהַשּׁוֹרֵט

and one who gashes his colleague of on the head a bald spot One who makes a bald stars for worship of spot

שְׁרִיטָה בְּבִשְׂרֵי חֵבֵרוֹ וְהַכּוֹתֵב כְּתָבַת קַעֲקַע בְּבִשְׂרוֹ שֶׁל חֵבֵרוֹ וְהִיא

and was his colleague of in the flesh tattooed a writing and one who writes his colleague in the flesh of a gash

חֵבֵרוֹ מְסִיעַ. בְּזֶמֶן שֶׁשְׁנֵיהֶן מְזִידִין שְׁנֵיהֶן לֹקִין. אֶחָד שׁוֹגֵג

unintentional one are lashed both of them are intentional that both of them at a time assisting his colleague

וְאֶחָד מְזִיד הַמְּזִיד מִשְׁנֵיהֶם לֹקָה וְהַשּׁוֹגֵג פָּטוֹר:

is exempt and the unintentional is lashed of both of them the intentional one intentional and one one

This halacha details the exemptions for self-inflicted wounds not done for the dead or idolatry, and the liability when two people participate in these forbidden acts.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

The chapter begins by defining the prohibition of shaving the corners of the head (pe'os ha-rosh), explaining that there are two corners and that both the one who shaves and, under certain conditions, the one who is shaven can be liable. The Rambam clarifies that women are exempt from this prohibition because they do not have beards, while slaves, who do have beards, remain obligated. This leads into a broader discussion of the mitzvos from which women are exempt, including time-bound positive commandments, and the status of a tumtum and an androgynous who must follow the stringencies of both men and women. Finally, the halachos address the prohibition of destroying the corners of the beard (pe'os ha-zakan) with a razor, the prohibition against tattooing (kesoves ka'aka), and the prohibitions against making gashes in one's flesh or tearing out hair in grief over the deceased.

The Torah warns us against shaving the corners of our head and beard, or tattooing our skin, because these were the ways of the idolaters who marked their bodies to show they were 'sold' as servants to their false gods. Hashem wants us to know that a Yid's body is not a blank canvas for the trends of the world; it is a holy vessel, a sanctuary for the neshama. When we guard the boundaries of our appearance, we are declaring that we belong to Hashem alone.

This is also why the Torah commands 'lo tsgodedu', not to cut ourselves in grief, which Chazal teach also means we must not split into opposing factions, 'agudos agudos.' Just as we must not damage the physical vessel of our own body, we must not tear apart the collective body of the Jewish people through division and machlokes. Our external boundaries and our internal unity both stem from the same truth: we are one holy nation, dedicated to one Creator.

Today, pay attention to how you carry yourself in the physical world. Before you adopt a style, a look, or a harsh way of speaking to another Yid, remember who you belong to. Take one small, conscious action to show respect for your body or to bring peace between people, showing that you are a proud servant of the King.