

הלכות עבודת כוכבים • פרק י"ב

Learned like the daf, the literal words in bold, flowing with the elucidation

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.

הלכה א

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

אין מגלחין פאתי הראש

We do not shave the corners of the head

כמו שהיו עושין עובדי כוכבים

like that which the star-worshippers would do,

שנאמר ויקרא יט כז "לא תקפו פאת ראשכם".

as it is said in the Torah (Vayikra 19:27), "Do not round the corner of your head."

וחיב על כל פאה ופאה.

And a person is liable for each and every corner that he shaves.

לפיקה המגלח שני צדעיו

Therefore, one who shaves his two temples,

אפלו בבת אחת והתראה אחת

even at one time and under one warning,

לוקה שתיים.

is lashed twice.

אֶחָד הַמְגַלֵּחַ הַפְּאוֹת בְּלֶבֶד וּמַנִּיחַ שְׁעָר כָּל הָרֹאשׁ

It is the **same** law for **one** who **shaves the corners alone** and leaves the hair of the rest of the head,

וְאֶחָד הַמְגַלֵּחַ כָּל הָרֹאשׁ כְּאֶחָד

and the **same** law for **one** who **shaves the entire head at once**; in both cases he is **lashed**,

לֹקָה הוּאִיל וְגַלַּח הַפְּאוֹת.

since he **shaved the corners** as part of the shaving.

בְּמָה דְּבָרִים אֲמוּרִים בְּאִישׁ הַמְגַלֵּחַ

In **what** case are these words said? Regarding the man who **shaves** another person,

אֲבָל אִישׁ הַמְתַּגַּלֵּחַ אֵינוֹ לֹקָה

but the man who is **shaven** is not **lashed**,

אֲלָא אִם כֵּן סִיעַ לְמַגַּלְהוּ.

unless he **assisted the one** who **shaves** him.

וְהַמְגַלֵּחַ אֶת הַקָּטָן לֹקָה:

And one who **shaves** the corners of a **minor** is **lashed**.

הִלְכָּה ב

Halacha 2 - Exemption of Women and Obligation of Slaves in Shaving the Corners of the Head

הָאִשָּׁה שֶׁגַּלְחָה פֶּאֶת רֹאשׁ הָאִישׁ

A woman who **shaved the corner** of the head of a man,

אוֹ שֶׁנִּתְגַּלְחָה

or who **was shaven** by someone else,

פְּטוּרָה

is **exempt** from the Torah prohibition,

שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר וִיקְרָא יֵט כֹּז "לֹא תִקַּפוּ פֶּאֶת רֹאשְׁכֶם"

as it is said in the pasuk, "**Do not round the corner** of your head,"

וִיקְרָא יֵט כֹּז "וְלֹא תִשְׁחִית פֶּאֶת זַקְנְךָ"

and immediately following, "**and do not destroy the corner** of your beard."

כָּל שִׁישְׁנוֹ בְּכָל תִּשְׁחִית יִשְׁנוֹ בְּכָל תִּקְרִי,

The Sages derived from this juxtaposition: **everyone who is** included **in** the prohibition of "**do not destroy**" a beard, **is** included **in** the prohibition of "**do not round**" the head;

וְאִשָּׁה שְׂאִינָה בְּבֶל תִּשְׁחִית

and a woman, who is not included in the prohibition of "do not destroy"

לְפִי שְׂאִין לָהּ זָקָן

because there is not to her a beard naturally,

אִינָה בְּבֶל תִּקְיֶה.

she is not included in the prohibition of "do not round."

לְפִיכָהּ הָעֲבָדִים

Therefore, Canaanite slaves,

הוֹאִיל וַיֵּשׁ לָהֶם זָקָן

since there is to them a beard and they are obligated in this mitzvah,

אֲסוּרִין בְּהַקְפָּה:

are forbidden in rounding the corners of their heads.

הַלָּכָה ג

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

כָּל מִצְוֹת לֹא תַעֲשֶׂה שֶׁבַתּוּרָה

All negative commandments that are in the Torah,

אֶחָד אֲנָשִׁים וְאֶחָד נָשִׁים חִיָּבִים

both men and women are obligated to observe them,

חוּץ מִ"בֶּל תִּשְׁחִית" ו"בֶּל תִּקְיֶה"

except for the prohibition of "do not destroy" the corners of the beard and "do not round" the corners of the head,

ו"בֶּל יִטְמָא כֹהֵן לַמֵּתִים" מִשְׁנָה קִידּוּשִׁין א ז .

and "do not become impure, a Kohen, to the dead," as taught in Mishnah Kiddushin 1:7.

וְכָל מִצְוֹת עֲשֵׂה שֶׁהֵיא מִזְמַן לְזְמַן וְאִינָה תְּדִירָה

And every positive commandment that is from time to time and is not constant, meaning it is a time-bound positive mitzvah,

נָשִׁים פְּטוּרוֹת

women are exempt from it,

חוץ מקדוש היום

except for sanctification of the day, the Friday night Kiddush on Shabbos,

ואכילת מצה בלילי הפסח

and eating of matzah on the nights of Pesach,

ואכילת הפסח ושחיטתו

and eating of the Pesach offering and its slaughtering,

והקהל ושמחה

and Hakhel, the gathering in the Beis HaMikdash once in seven years, and rejoicing on the festivals,

שהנשים חייבות:

all of which women are obligated to perform.

הלכה ד

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

טמטום ואנדרוגינוס הרי הן ספק,

A tumtum whose gender is hidden and an androgynous who possesses both male and female physical characteristics, behold they are considered a halachic doubt as to whether they are male or female,

נותנין עליהן חמרי האיש וחמרי האשה בכל מקום

therefore we place upon them the stringencies of the man and the stringencies of the woman in every place and in regard to all mitzvos,

וחייבים בכל.

and thus they are obligated in everything—including all time-bound positive mitzvos from which women are exempt.

ואם עברו אינם לוקין:

And if they transgressed a prohibition that only applies to one gender, they are not lashed because of the doubt.

הלכה ה

Halacha 5 • A Woman Shaving the Corners of a Man's Head

אף על פי שהאשה מתרת לגלח פאת ראשה

Even though a woman is permitted to shave the corner of her head, since the Torah only prohibited this to those who are commanded in the prohibition of rounding the head, and women are exempt,

הרי היא אסורה לגלח פאת ראש האיש.

behold she is forbidden to shave the corner of the head of a man, because a man is subject to the prohibition, and she may not assist him in transgressing.

ואפילו קטן אסור לה לגלח לו פאה:

And even for a child, it is forbidden for her to shave for him a corner of his head, as we do not feed or cause a child to do a prohibition directly.

הלכה ו

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

ופאה זו שמניחים בצדדים

And regarding this corner of the head that we leave at the temples,

לא נתנו בו חכמים שעור

the Sages did not give a specific minimum measure for it in the Torah's law;

ושמענו מזקנינו שאינו מניח פחות מארבעים שערות.

and we heard from our elders that one should not leave less than forty hairs for each corner.

ומותר ללקט הפאות במספרים

And it is permitted to remove the corners with scissors,

לא נאסר אלא השחתה בתער:

as it was not forbidden by the Torah except for destruction of the hair with a razor.

הלכה ז

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

דרך כהני עובדי כוכבים היה להשחית זקנם.

The way of the priests of idolaters was to destroy their beard as part of their pagan worship.

לפיכך אסרה תורה להשחית הזקן.

Therefore, the Torah forbade destroying the beard entirely.

וחמש פאות יש בו.

And there are five corners in it, in the beard, which are forbidden to destroy.

לחי העליון ולחי התחתון מימין וכן משמאל ושבֿלת הזקן.

These are: the upper cheek and the lower cheek on the right, and likewise on the left, and the pit of the beard where the chin meets the neck.

ולוקה על כל פאה ופאה.

And a person is lashed for each and every corner that he shaves off individually.

ואם נטלן כלן כאחת לוקה חמש.

And if he removed all of them as one, in a single shaving session, he is lashed five times, once for each corner.

ואינו חייב עד שיגלחנו בתער

And he is not liable to be lashed until he shaves it with a razor,

שנאמר "ולא תשחית את פאת זקנך"

as it is said in the Torah, "And you shall not destroy the corner of your beard," which refers to a manner of

גליח שישיש בו השחתה.

shaving that has destruction in it, meaning the hair is cut off completely at the roots.

לפיכך אם גלח זקנו במספרים פטור.

Therefore, if he shaved his beard with scissors, he is exempt from lashes, even if he cut it very close to the skin.

ואין המתגלח לוקה עד שיסייע.

And the one being shaved by another person is not lashed unless he assists the barber in some active way.

ואשה מתרת להשחית זקנה אם יש לה שער בזקן.

And a woman is permitted to destroy her beard if she has hair in the beard area, as the prohibition only applies to men.

ואם השחיתה זקן האיש פטורה:

And if she destroyed the beard of a man by shaving him with a razor, she is exempt from lashes, though it is forbidden for her to do so.

הלכה ח

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

השפה מתר לגלחו בתער

The mustache is permitted to shave with a razor,

והוא השער שעל גב השפה העליונה

and that is the hair that is on top of the upper lip,

וכן השער המדלדל מן השפה התחתונה.

and likewise the hair that hangs from the lower lip.

ואף על פי שהוא מתר

And even though it is permitted to shave it completely,

לא נהגו ישראל להשחיתו

Israel did not practice to destroy it entirely with a razor;

אלא יגלח קצתו

rather, he may shave its ends

עד שלא יעכב אכילה ושתיה:

until the point that it will not interfere with eating and drinking.

הלכה ט

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

העברת השער משאר הגוף

Removal of the hair from the rest of the body

כגון בית השחי ובית הערוה

such as the house of the armpit and the house of the genitalia

אינו אסור מן התורה אלא מדברי סופרים

is not forbidden from the Torah, but from the words of the Sages mid'Rabbanan,

והמעבירו מכין אותו מכת מרדות.

and one who removes it, they strike him stripes of rebelliousness as a Rabbinic disciplinary measure.

במה דברים אמורים

In what circumstances are these words said?

במקום שאין מעבירין אותו אלא נשים

In a place where they do not remove it except for women,

כדי שלא יתקן עצמו תקון נשים.

in order that he will not adorn himself with the adornment of women, which is a Torah prohibition.

אבל במקום שמעבירין השער הנשים ואנשים

But in a place where they remove the hair, both the women and the men,

אם העביר אין מכין אותו.

if he removed it, they do not strike him at all.

ומתר להעביר שער שאר איברים במספרים בכל מקום:

And it is permitted to remove the hair of the rest of the limbs with scissors in every place, as this is not the typical way of women's grooming.

הלכה י

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

לא תַעֲדָה אִשָּׁה עֲדֵי הָאִישׁ

A woman shall not adorn herself with the adornment of a man,

כְּגוֹן שֶׁתַּשִּׁים בְּרֹאשָׁהּ מְצֻנָּפֶת אוֹ כּוֹבֵעַ

such as that she places on her head a turban or a hat that is uniquely worn by men,

אוֹ תַלְבָּשׁ שָׁרִיוֹן וְכִיוֹצָא בּוֹ

or she wears armor and the like of it,

אוֹ שֶׁתַּגְלַח רֹאשָׁהּ כְּאִישׁ.

or that she cuts her head short like a man.

וְלֹא יַעֲדָה אִישׁ עֲדֵי אִשָּׁה

And a man shall not adorn himself with the adornment of a woman,

כְּגוֹן שֶׁיִלְבָּשׁ בְּגָדֵי צִבְעוֹנִין וְחֵלִי זָהָב

such as that he wears garments of colors and jewelry of gold

בְּמָקוֹם שֶׁאֵין לּוֹבָשִׁין אוֹתָן הַפְּלִים

in a place where they do not wear those garments

וְאֵין מְשִׁימִים אוֹתוֹ חֵלִי אֶלָּא נָשִׁים

and they do not place that jewelry except women;

הַכֹּל כְּמִנְהַג הַמְּדִינָה.

everything is according to the custom of the province.

אִישׁ שֶׁעָדָה עֲדֵי אִשָּׁה

A man who adorned himself with the adornment of a woman,

וְאִשָּׁה שֶׁעָדָתָה עֲדֵי אִישׁ

and a woman who adorned herself with the adornment of a man,

לּוֹקִין.

receive lashes.

הַמִּלְקֵט שְׁעָרוֹת לְבָנוֹת מִתּוֹךְ הַשְּׁחֹרוֹת

One who plucks white hairs from among the black ones

מֵרֹאשׁוֹ אוֹ מִזְקָנוֹ

from his head or from his beard,

מִשִּׁי לִקְטַ שְׁעָרָה אַחַת לוֹקָה

from when he plucks a single hair, receives lashes,

מִפְּנֵי שֶׁעָדָה עַדִּי אִשָּׁה.

because he adorned himself with the adornment of a woman who is accustomed to remove gray hairs.

וְכֵן אִם צָבַע שְׁעָרוֹ שְׁחֹר

And likewise, if he dyed his hair black,

מִשִּׁי צָבַע שְׁעָר לְבָנָה אַחַת לוֹקָה.

from when he dyes a single white hair, he receives lashes.

טְמֻטּוּם וְאַנְדְּרוֹגִינוּס

A tumtum whose gender is hidden and an androgynus who has both male and female characteristics

אֵינוֹ עוֹטֵף כְּאִשָּׁה

shall not wrap his head like a woman,

וְלֹא מְגַלֵּחַ רֹאשׁוֹ כְּאִישׁ

and not cut his head like a man, so as to avoid any doubt;

וְאִם עָשָׂה כֵּן אֵינוֹ לוֹקָה:

and if he did so, he does not receive lashes because of the doubt.

הַלָּכָה יא

Halacha 11 · The Prohibition of Tattooing and Its Specific Requirements

כְּתֻבַּת קַעֲקַע הָאִמּוּרָה בַּתּוֹרָה

The writing of tattooing which is spoken of in the Torah

הוּא שִׁישְׁרֹט עַל בָּשָׂרוֹ

it is that he scratches upon his flesh

וַיִּמָּלֵא מְקוֹם הַשְּׂרִיטָה כָּחַל אוֹ דִּיּוֹ

and fills the place of the scratch with eye-paint or ink

או שאר צבעונים הרושמים.

or other dyes that leave a mark.

וזה היה מנהג העכו"ם

And this was the custom of the idolaters

שרושמין עצמן לעבודת פוכבים

who would mark themselves for the service of idols

כלומר שהוא עבד מכור לה

as if to say that he is a servant sold to it

ומרשם לעבודתה.

and marked for its service.

ומעת שירשם באחד מדברים הרושמים

And from the time that he marks with one of the things that leave a mark

אחר שישרט באי זה מקום מן הגוף

after he scratches in any place of the body,

בין איש בין אשה לוקה.

whether a man or a woman, he receives lashes.

כתב ולא רשם בצבע

If he wrote and did not mark with dye,

או שרשם בצבע ולא כתב בשריטה

or if he marked with dye and did not write with a scratch,

פטור עד שיכתב ויקעקע

he is exempt until he writes and tattoos,

שנאמר "וכתבת קעקע".

as it is said, "and a writing of tattoo."

במה דברים אמורים בכותב

In what words are said? Regarding the writer.

אָבֵל זֶה שֶׁכָּתְבוּ בְּבָשָׂרוֹ וְקָעְקְעוּ בּוֹ

But this one whom they wrote in his flesh and tattooed on him

אֵינוֹ חַיֵּב אֶלָּא אִם כֵּן סִיעַ

is not liable unless he assisted,

כְּדִי שְׂיַעֲשֶׂה מַעֲשֶׂה.

so that he did an action.

אָבֵל אִם לֹא עָשָׂה כְּלוּם אֵינוֹ לוֹקֶה:

But if he did not do anything, he does not receive lashes.

הִלָּכָה יב

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

הַשּׁוֹרֵט שְׂרִיטָה אַחַת עַל הַמֵּת

One who gouges a single gouge for the dead

לוֹקֶה

is lashed,

שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר וַיִּקְרָא יְיָ כַּח "וְשָׂרֵט לְנַפְשׁ לֹא תִתֵּנוּ בְּבָשָׂרְכֶם".

as it is said in the Torah in Vayikra 19:28, "and a gouge for a soul do not place in your flesh."

אֶחָד כֹּהֵן וְאֶחָד יִשְׂרָאֵלִי.

This prohibition applies equally, **whether** to a **Kohen** or **whether** to an **Israelite**.

שָׂרֵט שְׂרִיטָה אַחַת עַל חֲמֵשׁ מֵתִים

If he gouged a single gouge for five dead people,

אוֹ חֲמֵשׁ שְׂרִיטוֹת עַל מֵת אֶחָד

or if he gouged five gouges for one dead person,

לוֹקֶה חֲמִשָּׁה.

he is lashed five times.

וְהוּא שֶׁהִתְרִיכוּ בּוֹ עַל כָּל אַחַת וְאַחַת:

And this is provided that they warned him for each one and every one of the violations.

גְּדִידָה וּשְׂרִיטָה אַחַת הִיא.

Gashing and gouging are one and the same prohibition.

וְכַשֵּׁם שֶׁהָיוּ הָעַבְדִּים שֹׂרְטִים בְּבָשָׂרָם עַל מִתֵּיהֶם מִפְּנֵי הַצָּעַר

And just as the idolaters would gouge in their flesh over their dead because of the grief,

כִּי הָיוּ חוֹבְלִין בְּעַצְמָם לְעִבּוֹדַת כּוֹכָבִים

so they would wound themselves for the sake of worship of stars,

שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר "וַיִּתְּגְדּוּ כַּמִּשְׁפָּטִים".

as it is said regarding the prophets of Baal, "and they gashed themselves according to their custom."

גַּם זֶה אִסְרָה תּוֹרָה שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר "לֹא תִתְּגְדּוּ".

Also this act of gashing for idolatry the Torah forbade, as it is said, "do not gash yourselves."

אֲלָא שֶׁעַל מַת בֵּין שְׂרִיט בִּידוֹ בֵּין שְׂרִיט בְּכָלִי לֹקָה.

Except that regarding gashing over a dead person, whether he gouged with his hand or whether he gouged with an instrument, he receives lashes.

לְעִבּוֹדַת כּוֹכָבִים בְּכָלִי חַיֵּב מִלְּקוֹת בִּידוֹ פְּטוּר:

But if he did so for worship of stars, if he did it with an instrument he is liable for lashes, but if he did it with his hand he is exempt from lashes, though it is still forbidden.

וּבְכָלֵל אֲזַהְרָה זֶה

And in the category of this prohibition of "do not gash yourselves" is a Rabbinic warning

שֶׁלֹּא יִהְיוּ שְׁנֵי בֵּתֵי דִינִין בְּעִיר אַחַת

that there shall not be two courts of law in one city where

זֶה נוֹהֵג כְּמִנְהַג זֶה וְזֶה נוֹהֵג כְּמִנְהַג אֲחֵר.

this court behaves according to the custom of this authority and this other court behaves according to the custom of another authority,

שֶׁדָּבָר זֶה גּוֹרֵם לְמַחֲלּוֹקוֹת גְּדוּלוֹת

for this thing causes great disputes and division among the Jewish people,

שְׁנֵאֲמַר דְּבָרִים יָד א "לֹא תִתְגַּדְּדוּ"

as it is said in the Torah in Devarim 14:1, "Do not gash yourselves,"

לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ אֲגָדוֹת אֲגָדוֹת:

which the Sages expounded homiletically to mean: **do not become groups groups**, meaning do not split into opposing factions.

הַלָּכָה טו

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

הַקֹּרֵחַ קִרְחָה עַל הַמֵּת לוֹקָה

One who makes a bald spot for the dead is lashed mid'Oraisa,

שְׁנֵאֲמַר דְּבָרִים יָד א "וְלֹא תִשִּׁימוּ קִרְחָה בֵּין עֵינֵיכֶם לְמֵת".

as it is said in the Torah, "And you shall not place a bald spot between your eyes for the dead."

אֶחָד יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאֶחָד כֹּהֵן שִׁשְׁרֵט עַל הַמֵּת אֵינוֹ לוֹקָה אֶלָּא אַחַת.

Whether an Israelite or a priest who made a bald spot for the dead, he does not receive lashes except once for a single act of balding.

הַקֹּרֵחַ אַרְבַּע אוֹ חֲמֵשׁ קִרְחוֹת עַל מֵת אֶחָד לוֹקָה כְּמִנְיֵן הַקִּרְחוֹת

One who makes four or five bald spots for one dead person is lashed according to the number of the bald spots he made,

וְהוּא שֶׁהִתְרֹו בוֹ עַל כָּל קִרְחָה וְקִרְחָה.

and this is provided they warned him for every bald spot and bald spot before he made it.

אֶחָד הַקֹּרֵחַ בִּידוֹ אוֹ בְּסֵם

It is the same whether one makes a bald spot with his hand by pulling out the hair, or with a potion that destroys the hair,

אוֹ הַטְּבִיל אֶצְבָּעוֹתָיו בְּסֵם וְהִנִּיחֵם בְּחֲמִשָּׁה מְקוֹמוֹת בְּרֹאשׁוֹ בְּכַת אַחַת

or if he dipped his fingers in a potion and placed them on five places on his head at one time;

הוֹאִיל וְקִרַּח חֲמֵשׁ קִרְחוֹת אַף עַל פִּי שֶׁהָיָא הִתְרָאָה אַחַת לוֹקָה חֲמֵשׁ

since he made five bald spots, even though it is only one warning, he is lashed five times,

שֶׁהָיָו כָּלָן כְּאֵין כְּאַחַת.

for behold, all of them come as one and are created simultaneously.

וְחַיֵּב עַל כָּל הָרֹאשׁ כְּכֵין הָעֵינַיִם

And he is liable for making a bald spot on all of the head just as he is for making one between the eyes,

שֶׁנֶאֱמַר וַיִּקְרָא כֹּה ה' "לֹא יִקְרְחוּ קִרְחָה בְּרֹאשָׁם".

as it is said, "They shall not make a bald spot on their head."

וְכַמָּה שְׁעוֹר הַקִּרְחָה

And how much is the measure of the bald spot to make him liable?

כְּדֵי שֶׁיֵּרָאָה מֵרֹאשׁוֹ כְּגֵרִיס פָּנוּי בְּלִי שֵׁעַר:

It must be enough that there will be seen from his head an area like a gris bean, clear without hair.

הִלְכָּה טז

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

הַקֹּרֵחַ רֹאשׁוֹ אוֹ הַשּׂוֹרֵט בְּבָשָׁרוֹ

One who makes a bald spot on his head or one who gashes in his flesh

עַל בֵּיתוֹ שֶׁנָּפַל וְעַל סִפִּינָתוֹ שֶׁנִּטְבְּעָה בַּיָּם

grieving over his house that fell or over his ship that sank in the sea

פָּטוּר וְאֵינוֹ לוֹקָה

is exempt from the Torah prohibition and is not lashed

אֲלֹא עַל הַמֵּת בְּלֶבֶד

except when doing so over the deceased only

אוֹ הַשּׂוֹרֵט לְעִבּוּדַת כּוֹכָבִים.

or if he is one who gashes as a ritual for worship of stars.

הַקֹּרֵחַ קִרְחָה בְּרֹאשׁוֹ שֶׁל חֲבֵירוֹ

Regarding one who makes a bald spot on the head of his colleague

וְהַשּׂוֹרֵט שְׂרִיטָה בְּבָשָׁר חֲבֵירוֹ

and one who gashes a gash in the flesh of his colleague

וְהַכּוֹתֵב כְּתָבַת קֶזְקַע בְּבָשָׁרוֹ שֶׁל חֲבֵירוֹ

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

וְחֵיהָ חֲבֵירוֹ מְסִיעֵ.

and his colleague was assisting in the act

בְּזִמּוֹ שֶׁשְּׁנֵיהֶן מְזִידִין שְׁנֵיהֶן לוֹקִין.

at a time that both of them are intentional, both of them are lashed.

אֶחָד שׁוֹגֵג וְאֶחָד מְזִיד

If one was unintentional and one was intentional

הַמְזִיד מְשַׁנֶּיהֶם לֹקֶה וְהַשׁוֹגֵג פֶּטוּר:

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

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.

לְמַעֲשֶׂה WHAT TO TAKE HOME

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.