



A Letter to the Editor

from a resident of the Flatbush Sephardic community

Dear Editor:

Your articles about shaving and trimming the beard interested me greatly. I can sympathize with your desire to “learn merit” on our Jewish brothers who shave their beards.

I cannot allow myself to condone, however, the unfair one-sided content of your articles on this subject, which give the impression that all Gedolim agree that shaving is permitted. This is public deception. Many people would not shave if they were aware that most Poskim prohibit shaving, for all Israel are holy people. Who is greater than our esteemed Rabbe and Posek, the Gaon Rabbi Yosef Haim, o.b.m., author of the Ben Ish Hai? He was surely the most prestigious authority in Halacha in recent generations. Concerning shaving, he ruled that even cutting the beard with scissors or depilatory cream is a most terrible Isur — see his Sefer Shaalot/Teshuvot Torah Lishma par. 215 and 390 and 448.

The Tzaddik and Gaon Rabbi Shlomo Eliezer Alpanderei, the famed Saba Kadisha, who was Chief Rabbi of Safed and lived to past 120 years, also forbade scissors and cream on the beard. He wrote that any Rabbi who says differently is mistaken. He refused to speak to even a Talmid Chacham without a beard, even about matters of Talmud. Who in our time can equal him in piety and scholarship? See Sefer Amudei Arazim at length.

Everyone accepts the halachic authority of Rabbi Yaakov Haim Sofer, author of “Kaf Ha Haim”. In his “Kuntres HaHalomos”, article 16, he wrote that one may not so much as even tear one hair from the beard — how much more so may we not cut it in any manner.

The most holy and righteous Gaon of our generation, the awesome saint Rabbi Yisroel Abuhazerah, o.b.m., sharply admonishes even famous rabbis who trim their beards. He writes that cutting the beard is as bad as not guarding one’s circumcision!

I consider it a great zechut also to refer you to the world renowned rabbinical encyclopedia Sede-Hemed (Klallim Marechet “Lamed” 116). There the author quotes many Rishonim and Achronim who forbid any form of shaving including scissors, cream, etc. The Sede Hemed itself supports the prohibition, and writes that had the lenient poskim known about these Rishnoim and Acjronim they would have also ruled against all methods of removing the beard. It is a great mitzvah to admonish people about this, many Gaonim successfully did so, concludes the Sede Hemed.

Sincerely yours,

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For a comprehensive treatment of this subject, see:

Sefer **Hadras Ponim Zokon** / by Rabbi Moshe Wiener / The Cutting and Growth of the Beard in Halachic Perspective / Published with the Endorsements of the Leading Halachic Authorities of our Times / 1,000 pages (in expanded third edition)