



PARSHA

ENCOUNTERS

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Parshas Shemos  Rabbi Yisroel Langer

Peyos

Chazal tell us that the *Yidden* were able to leave *Mitzrayim* in the merit of not changing their language, names and style of clothing. Their adherence to these three aspects of identity helped them maintain their identity as a nation during their years of slavery. Since Matan Torah, the study of Torah and the keeping of its laws have preserved our unity as a Jewish nation throughout these long years of *golus*. One of the *mitzvos* that identifies us as belonging to the Jewish nation is the *mitzvah* of *peyos*. A *Yid* should never be embarrassed or self-conscious about his *peyos* when in public; rather he should feel tremendous pride in being a member of the Jewish nation.

The Torah prohibits a Jewish male from cutting off his *peyos* (sideburns), or even allowing others to remove them. A Jewish woman is permitted to cut her own *peyos*. Whether she is prohibited from cutting off the hair of a male is subject to a dispute among the *Rishonim*. However, even according to the *Rishonim* who maintain that there is no prohibition of “*Lo Sakifu*” (the negative prohibition warning one against cutting off his *peyos*), other prohibitions, such as “*lifnei iver*,” may still apply (see glosses of R’ Akiva Eiger to Y.D. 181:6).

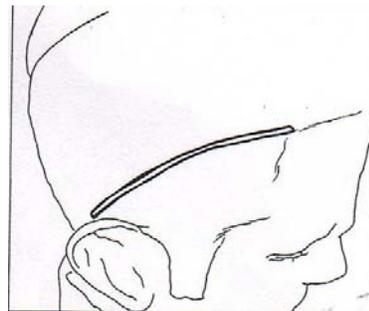
Location of Peyos

The *Shulchan Aruch* (Y.D. 141:9) states “the area of the *pe’ah* is across from the hair of the forehead, until **below the ear**, the place where the lower jaw extends and juts out. One should not touch the entire width of that area.”

Upper Limit

The exact point of the upper limit of the *peyos* is not entirely clear from the language of the *Shulchan Aruch*. According to the Chazon Ish (*L’schichno S’drashu* P. 269) and Harav Yaakov Kamenetzsky zt”l (as heard by Harav Yisroel Belsky

shlita, in sefer *Shulchan Halevi* p. 122), the upper limit of the *peyos* begins at the highest point of the hairline as it arches **over the ear**, and extends in a slightly curved line across to where the hairline of the forehead turns sharply downward towards the sideburns. All the hair from the imaginary line that connects these two points and below, comprises the *peyos* (quote from *Shulchan Halevi*, *ibid.*). (See diagram below)

(Taken with permission from the sefer *Shulchan Halevi*)

Lower Limit

Some people are stringent to leave their sideburns until the bottom of the earlobe, in accordance with the literal reading of the *Shulchan Aruch*- “**until below the ear.**” (See diagram below)

(Taken with permission from the sefer *Peyos Z’kanecha* by Harav Avraham Chaim Adas shlita)

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However, the *Shulchan Aruch* further identifies the lower limit as “below the ear, the place where the lower jaw extends and juts out.” Therefore many *poskim* conclude that when the *Shulchan Aruch* says “below the ear,” it means “below the ear canal,” as this is the place where the lower jaw bone extends and juts out. This is approximately 1/2 - 2/3 of the way down the ear. Some identify this place by locating the “bone” that is approximately 1/2 way down the ear. The *peyos* should be left until **beneath** the “bone” (*L’sichno S’drishu* *ibid*). (See diagram below –to the left.) The *Eretz Tzvi* (*siman* 3:5) lends support to this opinion, noting that some people have hairs of a different color in their beards than those on their heads. The point at which the color changes is usually approximately 1/2 way down the ear, which is proof that the hair beneath the 1/2 way mark is not considered *peyos harosh*.

A third opinion of the *poskim* is that the *peyos* should be left until the area where the earlobe begins to separate from one’s face (this location is somewhere in between the points of the two opinions mentioned above) (*sefer Peyos Z’kanecha* p.48). (See diagram below –to the right.) According to the stricter opinions which maintain that the area of *peyos* reaches lower down the ear, the hairs growing along the top of the cheekbone may also be considered part of the *peyos* (*ibid* p.54). As far as *halachah l’ma’aseh* is concerned, one should consult with one’s *halachic* authority as to which opinion to abide by.



(With permission -*ibid*)

How many hairs?

The Ramban (*Avodah Zara* 12:6) writes in the name of his elders that one has not transgressed the prohibition of “*Lo Sakifu* - cutting off one’s *peyos*” if he leaves over 40 hairs in the area of the *peyos*. However, the *halachah* follows the ruling of the *Smag* that one has violated the prohibition of “*Lo Sakifu*” if he cuts two hairs off the place of the *peyos*. (According to some opinions, even one hair would be prohibited because of *chatzi shiur*.) Based on this *halachah*, R’ Akiva Eiger (*Gilyon Hashas Shavuos* 2b) questions if it is permissible to brush one’s *peyos* with a brush when it is inevitable (*p’sik reisha*) that a couple of hairs will be pulled out. The Chasam Sofer (Y.D. 139), in a *teshuvah* to his father-in-law Rabbi Akiva Eiger, proves that it is permitted, as he witnessed his rebbi R’ Nosson Adler doing so. *L’halachah*, some *poskim* say that one should be *machmir* as R’ Akiva Eiger wasn’t certain that it should be permitted (Harav Mordechai Gross in his *sefer Kerem Shlomo* 181:6). Other *poskim* (Chazon Ish) rule leniently, concurring with the Chasam Sofer (*Tama d’kra* p.177, #34).

Length of peyos

According to the Rambam, one has only transgressed the prohibition of “*Lo Sakifu*” if he cuts off his *peyos* using a razor. However, the *Shulchan Aruch* (Y.D. 181) rules that one should conduct oneself in accordance with the opinion of the other *Rishonim* who hold that one may not cut the hairs of the *peyos* even with a scissors - “*k’ein ta’ar*.” (Note: according to the *Chinuch*, even the Rambam would agree that there is an *issur d’rabbanan*.)

However, how long must the hairs of the *peyos* be so as not to violate the prohibition of “*Lo Sakifu*?” This also appears to be a *machlokes Rishonim*. Some *Rishonim* (see Rambam, *Hilchos Nazir*, 5:11) state that each hair must be long enough so that it can be folded over and the end of one hair touches the other (see Mesechtas Niddah 52b). Other *Rishonim* (*Tosfas Nazir* 40A) are more lenient and hold that as long as the hair is not cut to the bottom, one has not violated the prohibition. The wording of the *Chochmas Adam* (89:16) seems to support this latter view. However, the Chasam Sofer (cited by his son the Ksav Sofer, brought in the *Darchoi Teshuvah*, 181 s.k. 15) says that the *minhag* is to leave all the hairs of the *peyos* long enough to allow for folding. Based on this ruling, Hagaon R’ Yoseph Shalom Elyashiv shlita is quoted as ruling that one should use a guide no less than 6 mm (1/2 centimeter) on the clipper when trimming the *peyos* (corresponding to the #2 on most clippers) (*Bais Yaakov Makus* 20A, *peyos Z’kanecha*). As a precaution, some *poskim* recommend using the #3 (Harav Yisroel Belsky shlita *Shulchan Halevi* *ibid*). (Note: Beard trimmers have a different number system)

When one is having the hair on the side and over the ear being trimmed, extreme care must be taken not to cut any of those hairs too short. This is especially true if the trimmer (without a guide) is being used. Some *poskim* suggest having the barber use scissors and not the trimmer (without a guide) at all when cutting those hairs.



(With permission -*ibid*)

If one prefers very short haircuts, care must be taken not to cut any of the hairs that are within the upper limits. (See above for upper limits)

The *talmidim* of the Arizal suggest that while one is receiving a haircut, he should have the intent that he is not permitting the barber to cut his *peyos* in order not to transgress the commandment of “*Lo Sakifu*”. This thought elevates the mundane act of a haircut into a *mitzvah* (*Pele Yoetz-giluach*).

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