

# THE SHABBOS WEEKLY

## HALACHA SERIES ON HILCHOS SHABBOS

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*May I pluck a hair that is bothering me, from my head on Shabbos?*

Cutting hair on Shabbos falls under the umbrella of the *melacha* of **גָוֹזֵן** – shearing. The *Shulchan Aruch*<sup>1</sup> teaches us that it is prohibited to cut or pluck hair, whether one uses an instrument, such as scissors, or one's fingers.

There is a difference though as to the severity of the action: one is only *chayav* (biblically prohibited) when cutting hair with an instrument and rabbinically prohibited when pulling out hair with one's fingers, in view of the fact that it is not the normal manner for removing hair.<sup>2</sup>

Another crucial issue is the number of hairs that need to be cut. For one to violate an *issur d'oraissos* (biblical prohibition) and be liable for the biblical punishment, one would need to cut at least two<sup>3</sup> hairs. Although cutting a single hair is also an *issur d'oraissos*<sup>4</sup> one is not subject to the punishment prescribed by the Torah.

Consequently, pulling out even a single hair is an *issur d'rabanan* (pulled out as opposed to cut) and it may not be done on Shabbos.

<sup>1</sup> Simon 340:1.

<sup>2</sup> M"B simon 340:2.

<sup>3</sup> Mechaber ibid.

<sup>4</sup> M"B simon 340:3. It complies with the rule of **חַזִ'י אָסָר מִן הַתּוֹרָה**.

*Is the cutting of two hairs always a melacha d'oraissos?*

We find a *machlokes* between the *Tosefos* and the *Rivash* in this matter.<sup>5</sup> We must not forget that the source of this *melacha* is shearing sheep, and hence *Tosefos* says that in the *Mishkan* the sheep were sheared for their wool. Therefore, cutting hair for a purpose other than for the purpose of acquiring the hair itself, renders the cutting a *melacha she'eina tsricha l'gyafa* – meaning that it is done for a motive other than that of the *Mishkan*. According to the *halacha* it would then only be an *issur d'rabanan*.

The *Rivash*, on the other hand, learns that this *melacha* was also practiced in the *Mishkan* for the purpose of cleaning the skins of hair. The hair was not used or wanted and nevertheless it is a *melacha*. Consequently, cutting hair for appearance sake will be a regular *melacha d'oraissos*.

*Does it make a difference whether it is a white hair from black and that I am a male?*

It does indeed make a difference. If we said that the basis of the *melacha* is two hairs, when removing a single white hair from amongst black or vice versa, one accomplishes a complete goal and is *chayav* on account of that single hair.<sup>6</sup> The *Bi'ur*

<sup>5</sup> See the *Bi'ur Halacha* **ד"ה וחייב**.

<sup>6</sup> Mechaber ibid. The *Bi'ur Halacha* discusses this issue according to the opinions who learn that the *melacha*

*Halacha* says that some are of the opinion that one is chayav for **pulling** out such a hair, as it is normal to do so.

Being male compounds the problem because it is prohibited for a male to pluck a black hair from white or vice versa during the week as well, since it is an act of beautification, typical of women. This is the implementation of the *issur* of **לא ילبس גבר שמלה אשא**, which includes beautifying oneself as women do.<sup>7</sup> There are extenuating circumstances where this is permitted, and one must ask one's rav when this is.

#### **What about picking at fingernails on Shabbos?**

Cutting a fingernail is also part of **גווז**. Cutting fingernails with an instrument is an *issur d'oraissō*<sup>8</sup> and picking them is an *issur d'rabanan*. A person who habitually picks or bites fingernails is in danger of violating the Shabbos, because he will most likely continue with his (bad) habit on Shabbos as well.

#### **Is there a problem to remove 'feather remnants' from a chicken in my plate?**

Removing feathers from a dead chicken is an *issur d'oraissō*.<sup>9</sup> Yet we find a *machlokes haposkim* as to whether it applies to a cooked chicken as well.

The *Sh'miras Shabbos Kehilchasa*<sup>10</sup> cites *poskim* who hold that it is *osur*, but also cites lenient opinions. Ray Moshe Feinstein<sup>11</sup> is of the opinion that it is totally permitted.

is only when one needs the cut hair, as it seems that it should not be prohibited to any further extent when it is a white from black.

<sup>7</sup> *Mechaber ibid* and *M"B* 340:7.

<sup>8</sup> According to the *Rivash* mentioned above.

<sup>9</sup> *M"B simon* 340:5, towards the end.

<sup>10</sup> Chapter 3 comment on page 48 and footnote 83.

<sup>11</sup> *Iggros Moshe Orach Chaim* Vol. IV page 141

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#### **Vort on the Parsha**

The *Possuk* says **"רַק אֵין יָרָא אֱלֹהִים בָּמָקוֹם הַזֶּה וְהַרְגּוֹנִי עַל דְּבַר אַשְׁתִּי"** (20:10), which can be understood to mean that everything else can be found in the city of *G'rar*, but due to the lack of the "fear of heaven" they are capable of murder. What does this mean? R' Elchonon Wasserman was in Germany in the year '35 when he spoke at the Rabbinical Seminar in Berlin. He said that we see from this *possuk* that many fine things such as art, literature, music could be found in *G'rar*, but one could not find any *Yir'as Shomayim* and without that all the fineries are worthless. A person might be a gentleman and murder at the drop of a hat.

R'Elchonon<sup>7</sup> foresaw all this and knew that so-called *culture* does not make a better person.

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#### **Food For Thought**

**May one clean dirty fingernails on Shabbos?**

**A fingernail has partially separated from the nail, may it be removed?**

**Is one permitted to peel a scab on Shabbos?**

**What about removing dead skin or cutting a wart?**

Answers coming next week.

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