



Parshas Vayeira 5764

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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 גזוז – shearing. The *Shulchan Aruch*¹ 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.²

Another crucial issue is the number of hairs that need to be cut. For one to violate an *issur d'oraisso* (biblical prohibition) and be liable for the biblical punishment, one would need to cut at least two³ hairs. Although cutting a single hair is also an *issur d'oraisso*⁴ 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.

¹ *Simon* 340:1.

² *M"B simon* 340:2.

³ *Mechaber* *ibid*.

⁴ *M"B simon* 340:3. It complies with the rule of חצי שיעור אסור מן התורה.

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

We find a *machlokes* between the *Tosefos* and the *Rivash* in this matter.⁵ 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'gufa* – 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'oraisso*.

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.⁶ The *Bi'ur*

⁵ See the *Bi'ur Halacha* ד"ה וחייב.

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

