

I. Introduction. Primarily, living life as a Jew involves subscribing to a certain set of core beliefs and performance of specific actions. Very often, though, a religious Jew is recognizable by his outward appearance. It is widely believed that Judaism frowns upon men who grow their hair long, as most religious Jewish men keep a well groomed short haircut. In this essay we will explore the question of whether a Jewish man is permitted to grow his hair long. We will identify three potential problems with long hair and address each one, with the hope of reaching a definitive conclusion as to the permissibility of such hairstyles.

II. דרכי האמורי—בלורית. The Gemara (סוטה דף מט:) teaches that one who has a certain type of haircut is in violation of the prohibition of דרכי האמורי (the prohibition to follow practices of Emorites). רש"י (סוטה שם) explains that the אמורי people would have this hairstyle as a way of showing allegiance to a particular זרה עבודה. In fact, the Gemara (קידושין דף עו:) reports that דוד המלך had four hundred battalion chiefs in his army who were born from non-Jewish women that were captured in previous wars, and would sport this unique hairstyle (due to their affinity for non-Jewish practices of their heritage). Although idol worshipers of our day generally do not keep this hairstyle, the תשב"ץ (חלק ג' סימן צג) writes that even in our times it is appropriate for Jews to distance ourselves from these practices, and to be distinguishable by our hairstyle.

A. How does this haircut look? The ראשונים dispute exactly what this forbidden haircut looked like.

1. רש"י, in numerous places (קידושין עו:, עבודה זרה ה., סוטה מט:, בבא קמא פג.) explains that this haircut involved shaving the front of the head while growing the back of the hair very long. It seems clear that רש"י would not object to one who grows long bangs on account of it being a violation of דרכי האמורי.

2. The רמב"ם (הלכות עובדה זרה פרק יא הלכה א) adds a second possible style to the list of what is forbidden on account of דרכי האמורי. In the context of a discussion of the general prohibition to follow the ways of non-Jews, the רמב"ם writes: "one should not make his hairstyle like their (the gentile's) hairstyles. *He should not shave the sides of his head and leave the hair in the middle, nor should he shave the front of his head and grow his hair in the back.*" Interestingly, the בית יוסף (יורה דעה סימן קעח) reports that the common Sephardic practice was to shave

the sides of the head while growing hair in the middle. While the בית יוסף discourages this practice on account of the רמב"ם's prohibition of it, he suggests that the Sephardic tradition must have been that רש"י is correct in asserting that only shaving the front and growing the back of the hair is included in the prohibition of בלורית.

B. Explaining the רמב"ם. While the רמב"ם explicitly prohibits growing the front hair while shaving the sides, he does not take a stand on whether one may grow the front of his hair if he does not shave the sides of his head.

1. The בית יוסף (שם) strongly implies that the only prohibition is in growing the hair on top while shaving the hair on the side. The idolatrous haircut was specifically in the contrast between the overgrown and undergrown sections of hair. If one were to only grow his hair on top long (i.e. long bangs) or grow all of his hair long for the sake of vanity, there would be no prohibition whatsoever.

2. Rav Yoel Sirkis (ב"ה סימן קעח) disputes the בית יוסף's reading of the רמב"ם and suggests that the רמב"ם would even prohibit growing long bangs without shaving the sides of the head. The חיד"א (ברכי יוסף יורה) (ברכי יוסף יורה) (א) (דעה קעה:א) in agreeing with the ב"ה, remarked that many young people stumble in this area and it is worthwhile to reprimand them in the hopes that they may do תשובה. The מחצית השקל (אורה חיים סימן כז) formulates his opposition to such haircuts in a more mild tone, suggesting that it is a "partial prohibition" ("קצת איסור"), but stops short of ruling that there is a definitive prohibition of חוקת עכו"ם in growing long hair.

C. Halachic Ruling. Rav Ovadia Yosef (שו"ת יחווה דעת חלק ב' סימן ב') points out that as a practical matter, it is difficult to prohibit growing long hair on the grounds of חוקת עכו"ם. First, there is a strong possibility that we rule in accordance with רש"י's opinion that the only prohibition is in shaving the front of the hair and growing long hair in the back. Second, even if one were to rule in accordance with the רמב"ם that growing the front of the hair is also included in the prohibition, it still may only be prohibited if one shaves the sides of his head. While Rabbi Yosef refuses to issue a prohibition against long bangs, he strongly discourages such a hairstyle and suggests that we try to satisfy even the stringent views on this matter. Using a play on words from מגילת רות Rabbi Yosef writes "ויאמר לקוצרים ה' עמכם" ("and he said to those who keep it short 'May God be with you'").

III. תפילין Problems. Aside from the prohibition of having a distinctly

non-Jewish haircut, there may be another practical problem with a Jewish male having long hair, especially in the front of the head.

A. General Background to חציצה. The גמרא in (דף ג:) questions the necessity of a Tannaic ruling to require כהנים to wear תפילין בגדי כהונה while wearing the תפילין של יד because the תפילין בגדי כהונה pose a problem of חציצה for the תפילין של יד which need to be literally on the person's flesh ("על בשרו"). One may have therefore concluded that the כהנים should also be exempt from wearing תפילין של ראש. The teaching was therefore necessary to state clearly that one may fulfill the מצוה of תפילין של ראש even independent of the מצוה of תפילין של יד. The גמרא notes that though the כהן would wear a special hat (מצנפת) on his head, the תפילין של ראש would not pose a חציצה problem because the hat did not cover the part of the head where the תפילין would rest. The גמרא clearly asserts that nothing may come between the בגדי כהונה and the skin. However, the גמרא never addresses what would seem to be a simple solution to the problem of wearing בגדי כהונה and תפילין simultaneously. Namely, one may simply place the תפילין on top of the בגדי כהונה. There are two approaches taken by the ראשונים to address this omission:

1. The רש"י (שו"ת הרא"ש כלל ג' סימן ד) writes that it would seem clear from this גמרא that any foreign substance on the head in between the תפילין and the head would pose a problem of חציצה. That is why the גמרא never suggests placing the תפילין over the clothing. Indeed, this is the ruling of the שולחן ערוך (אורח חיים סימן כז סעיף ד'). Based on this concern the משנה ברורה (סימן כז ס"ק יד) states that even some loose dirt in the hair would constitute חציצה, and many people have the custom to wash that area of their head before putting on their תפילין. In fact, the שרי adds that one who just washed his hair should be careful to dry his hair before putting on תפילין, both because the wetness may damage the תפילין and because the water itself may constitute חציצה. The רמ"א (שם) does note that there may be more room for leniency when it comes to חציצות between the straps of the תפילין (see ומגן אברהם ט"ז ומגן אברהם). (שם).

2. The רשב"א (שו"ת הרשב"א חלק ג' סימן רפב) disagrees with the רש"י and rules that one may put the תפילין של ראש on top of a foreign substance. In the רשב"א's view there is only a concern of חציצה on the תפילין של יד, but not on the תפילין של ראש. The גמרא does not suggest simply placing the תפילין on top of the מצנפת because another מצוה would certainly constitute חציצה, while a foreign substance would not constitute חציצה. (It should be noted that this distinction between a

foreign substance and a competing מצוה seems to be contradicted by an explicit גמרא עבודה זרה דף מד. that suggests that even a king's crown would be a חציצה between the תפילין של ראש and the head. See (שו"ת הריב"ש סימן קלז.) The רשב"א proves the distinction between תפילין של ראש and תפילין של יד by pointing to the fact that תפילין של יד should be kept private ("לך לאות" ולא לאחרים לאות), while the תפילין של ראש are meant to be more external (וראו כל עמי הארץ כי שם ה' נקרא עליך ויראו ממך). While the רשב"א's opinion is widely rejected from the הלכה, the ריב"ש (שו"ת סימן קלז) was willing to rely on it under extenuating circumstances, especially since the ר"ן offers an identical ruling. (מגילה כד:)

B. The Stringent Opinion. Due to the concern of חציצה on the תפילין של ראש, the מחצית השקל (אורח חיים סימן כז) rules that one may not put the תפילין של ראש over a large amount of hair. The מחצית השקל argues that while it is obvious that the ר"א would prohibit such a חציצה, and we cannot veer from the ruling of the ר"א, he believes that in the case of an excessive amount of hair even the רשב"א would agree that there is a problem. It is possible that the רשב"א only permitted a thin חציצה, but a thick layer of hair would certainly constitute a חציצה. Though a thin layer of hair may be said to be a natural part of the body and not a חציצה, a greater amount of hair is not considered "normal growth" and would certainly constitute a חציצה.

C. The Lenient Opinion. Even if one were to accept the stringent ruling of the ר"א, it is not clear that hair, which is attached to one's body, would actually be considered a "foreign substance" and cause for concerns of a חציצה. Indeed, the גמרא (זבחים דף יט.) specifically refers to hair as part of the body and rules that it would not be a problem of חציצה. In fact, when the גמרא describes the area near the מצנפת where the כהן can place his תפילין, it says that "his hair was visible in between the מצנפת and the ציץ". Rav Ovadia Yosef (שו"ת יחווה דעת חלק ב' סימן ב') believes that at the very least one can apply a ספק ספיקא to allow one to wear תפילין של ראש on top of a generous amount of hair. First, perhaps the הלכה follows the רשב"א that one may have a חציצה on the head, and even if the הלכה accords with the ר"א perhaps hair, regardless of length, does not constitute a חציצה. Rabbi Aryeh Tzvi Frimer (שו"ת ארץ צבי סימן ו) also suggests that one may be lenient based on the concept that anything added for beauty cannot be considered a חציצה (כל לנאותו שפיר דמי). The extra hair is there to "beautify" the person and may therefore not be considered a חציצה. However, Rabbi Frimer rejects this leniency because we generally only apply that concept to items that beautify an actual

(e.g. decorative items on a lulav), rather than items that may beautify the person. Rav Yosef, however, cites a number of proofs to support a lenient ruling in this area:

1. The (בבא קמא פב. וסוטה מט:) states that those Jews who worked closely with the government were granted special permission to grow their hair in the style of בלורית. If one were to assume the רמב"ם's definition of בלורית as explained by the ב"ה (that even long hair on top without shaving other portions of hair constitutes בלורית), it would seem odd that we would grant permission to neglect a מצוה מצוה of תפילין in the interest of getting in the good graces of the local government. It should be noted that this is not a compelling proof that long hair does not constitute a חציצה. It is very possible that under extenuating circumstances, especially when the relationship between the Jewish people and the non-Jews was at stake, the rabbis exercised their right, as outlined in גמרא יבמות דף צ. to passively uproot a torah commandment (עוקר דבר מן התורה בשב ואל תעשה) and exempted these highly connected Jews from the מצוה of תפילין של ראש.

2. The רמ"א (יורה דעה סימן שצ סעיף ד') plainly states that the prevalent practice used to be for a mourner to avoid cutting their hair the entire year of mourning for a father or mother. Clearly, during a full calendar year hair has a chance to grow to unreasonable lengths. Yet, this practice was permitted with apparently no concern for the possibility that one would be forgoing their מצוה of wearing תפילין during that time period.

3. Though not cited by Rav Yosef, an equally compelling proof may be suggested from the very concept of a long period of נזירות. A נזיר may not cut his hair for the duration of the נזירות. Yet we do not find any limitation on the length of a נזירות period based on a concern for the inability to fulfill the מצוה of תפילין של ראש. (See פסקי תשובות 72 הערה 72 who cites this proof.)

D. Practical Halacha. The קיצור שולחן ערוך (סימן י' אות ו') rules that short hairs do not pose a problem of חציצה, but longer hairs do pose a significant problem. Indeed, Rav Ovadia Yosef (שו"ת יחזה דעת ב:כב) cites the חתן סופר (חלק א' שער הטוטפות סימן כז) as having stated that each day one places on top of a significant amount of hair, he has neglected a מצוות עשה of תפילין. While the (סימן כז ס"ק יד) does not seem to leave much room for leniency, both the רב and ערוך השולחן (סימן כז אות יד) conclude that long hair growing naturally should not be considered a חציצה. After all, who is to decide how long the hair would have to be in order to constitute a חציצה? The ערוך השולחן, and

Rabbi Shlomo Ganzfried (הערות לחם הפנים על קיצור שו"ע) both suggest, though, that if hair is moved from a different part of the head to the spot under the תפילין where it does not naturally grow, it may constitute a חציצה. It follows that somebody with long bangs should not push his bangs under his ראש של תפילין.

E. Lending תפילין to Somebody with Long Hair. One interesting application of this issue that is addressed by some of the leading פוסקים is whether one is permitted to loan their תפילין to somebody who has long hair. On the one hand, if the hair does not constitute a חציצה, it may be a great opportunity to aid somebody in the performance of a מצוה. On the other hand, if the hair does constitute a חציצה, the person is likely to recite a ברכה לבטלה (assuming he follows the Ashkenazic practice of reciting a separate blessing on the ראש של תפילין). This would seem to be a blatant violation of the prohibition of לא תתן מכשול, enabling another person to do an עבירה. This question is addressed by Rabbi Aryeh Tzvi Frimer (שו"ת ארץ צבי סימן ו). Rabbi Frimer suggests that one should be permitted to lend the תפילין to the person with long hair thereby enabling him to do a מצוה. Rabbi Frimer believes that the blessing would not be a ברכה לבטלה based on the ספק ספיקא we have previously mentioned (perhaps we follow the opinion of the רשב"א that there is not issue of חציצה on ראש של תפילין, and even if we pasken like the רמב"ם (הלכות מילה) it is possible that hair does not constitute a חציצה.) Furthermore, even if there were only a single doubt the position of the ראב"ד (הלכות מילה) is that one should recite a blessing even when performing a מצוה based on a single ספק. Nevertheless, Rabbi Frimer suggests that one not grow their hair long because there are two reasons that this ספק ספיקא should not be employed in anything less than the most desperate circumstances: First, one is never supposed to rely on a ספק ספיקא when there is another option, such as simply getting a haircut. Second, the ש"ך (יורה דעה סימן קי) states that one should never compose their own ספק ספיקא, and we may only rely on those "double doubts" that are firmly established by ה"ל.

IV. Other Considerations. Aside from the particular concerns of חוקת עכ"ם, the חציצה בתפילין and עכ"ם, the פוסקים raise a number of other ancillary issues that may be relevant to a Jewish man who has long hair.

A. גירוי יצר הרע. משנה ברורה (שם), מחצית השקל (שם), ברכי יוסף (שם) speak in the strongest terms about how inappropriate it is for a Jewish man to be overly concerned with his hair to the extent that he grows

his hair long. In fact, ר' חיים פלאגי (רוח חיים יורה דעה סימן קעח ס"ק ד') writes that growth of long hair is frequently a gateway to serious עבירות, and should be avoided as would any other activity that is likely to lead to sin. Rav Yosef (יהוה דעת שם) cites the well known story in מסכת נדרים (דף ט:) of the righteous man who became a נזיר after noticing his beautiful hair in the reflection in the water, and realizing how this beauty incited his יצר הרע. The story seems to be a clear indication that the hair was seen as a symbol of the יצר הרע. Furthermore, the מדרש (בראשית רבה כ"ו:) states explicitly that when the יצר הרע sees a person spending time fixing his hair, the יצר הרע declares "this person is mine and is now under my domain". While it is possible that one grows his hair without any sinister intentions (see Rabbi Shlomo Yosef Zevin's אישים ושיטות where he reports that the Ragotchover Gaon, Rav Yosef Rosen, refused to take any haircuts because he would not remove his yarmulke even for a few minutes), one must be aware that growing long hair is frequently an external sign of rebellion against authority, and can often be an indicator of larger trends in a person's life.

B. Placement of תפילין. Aside from the specific concern of חציצה, the משנה ברורה (סימן כז ס"ק טו) points out that when one has long hair it is very difficult to keep the תפילין של ראש fastened in their proper place, often causing one to lose out on the מצוה of תפילין.

C. בגד אשה. Rabbi Moshe Shternbuch (סימן מב) (שו"ת תשובות והנהגות חלק א') points out that the גמרא (שבת דף ג) relates a man beautifying himself with the prohibition of a man doing feminine activities. It may easily be argued that the same would hold true for growing long hair. The שולחן ערוך (יורה דעה סימן קנ"ו) prohibits a man from looking in a mirror unless it is to find a stain or for medicinal purposes (e.g. spot an infection in his eye) for this reason, but the רמ"א writes that one may do so in a place where it is common for men to look in mirrors as well. One may suggest that the same might apply to growing long hair. Though in many societies it may be considered a feminine act, in places where it is common for men to do so as well it would be permissible. However, Rabbi Shternbuch rejects the comparison between looking in a mirror and growing long hair. It is possible that the rabbis permitted looking in a mirror in our day and age because even in the times of חז"ל one could not definitively conclude that a man looking in a mirror was committing a feminine act (he may be looking for a stain etc.). When one grows their hair long, however, there is no other explanation aside from the attempt at vanity which is objectively a feminine act.

V. Conclusion. While one who grows long hair cannot be said to have definitively violated any given prohibition, whether biblical or rabbinic, the overwhelming consensus amongst the leading פוסקים is that growing long hair is a practice that should be avoided both for halachic and meta-halachic reasons. Rabbi Ovadia Yosef concludes that it is worthwhile to give מוסר about this and remind people how a בן תורה should present himself. Rabbi Shternbuch reports that when he visited Rav Ahron Rokeach (the Belzer Rebbe), the Rebbe asked him to tell the boys that his father thought growing long hair was an איסור דאורייתא, and he obviously thought it was something worth correcting. Rabbi Shternbuch does note that when a boy comes from a family where he is expected to keep up with certain styles, and a sudden change in outward appearance is likely to upset the שלום בית and may discourage the parents from supporting the boy's development as a בן תורה, it is certainly ill advised for the boy to cut his hair. However, even in these circumstances the בן תורה should realize that the ultimate goal should be to appear as a בן תורה and avoid the various concerns outlined in this essay.