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THE LAW OF GOD: APPENDIX 4: THE HAIR AND BEARD OF THE CHRISTIAN

A COMMANDMENT OF GOD SO SIMPLE, AND COMPLETELY IGNORED

THE COMMANDMENT IN LEVITICUS 19:27

There is no biblical justification for essentially all Christian denominations to ignore the commandment of God about males keeping their hair and beards as the Lord describes.

We know this was a commandment faithfully observed by all Jews during the biblical period without interruption, as today's ultra-Orthodox Jews continue to observe it, albeit with non-biblical details due to rabbinical misunderstanding of the passage.

There is also no doubt that Jesus, along with all His apostles and disciples, faithfully obeyed all commandments contained in the Torah, including Leviticus 19:27: *"Do not shave the hair around the head or shave the outline of the beard close to the skin."*

GREEK AND ROMAN INFLUENCE

The first Christians began to stray from the commandment about the hair and beard, largely due to cultural influences during the early centuries of the Christian era.

CULTURAL PRACTICES AND COMPROMISE

As Christianity spread throughout the [Greco-Roman world](#), converts brought with them their cultural practices. Both the Greeks and Romans had hygiene and grooming

norms that included shaving and trimming hair and beards. These practices began to influence the customs of Gentile Christians.



Early Christians were influenced by the Romans and the Greeks' appearance and began to disregard the Law of God about how to keep their hair and beard.

THE CHURCH'S FAILURE TO STAND FIRM

This should have been the time when church leaders stood firm in emphasizing the necessity of remaining faithful to the teachings of the prophets and Jesus, regardless of cultural values and practices.

They should not have compromised on any of God's commandments. However, this lack of resolve was passed down through generations, resulting in a people weakened in their ability to remain faithful to God's Law.

THE REMNANT PRESERVED BY GOD

This weakness persists to this day, and the church we now see is far removed from the one Jesus founded. The only reason it continues to exist is that, as always, God has preserved a remnant:

"The seven thousand who have not bowed to Baal nor kissed him" (1 Kings 19:18).

THE COMMANDMENT'S SIGNIFICANCE

A REMINDER OF OBEDIENCE

The commandment regarding hair and beards is a tangible reminder of one's obedience and separateness from worldly influences. It reflects a lifestyle dedicated to honoring God's instructions over cultural or societal norms.



There is no passage in the Scriptures indicating that God has canceled His commandment about hair and beard. Jesus and His disciples all kept their hair and beard according to the law.

Jesus and His apostles modeled this obedience, and their example should inspire modern believers to reclaim this often-overlooked commandment as part of their faithfulness to God's holy Law.

JESUS, HIS BEARD, AND HAIR

JESUS AS THE ULTIMATE EXAMPLE

Jesus Christ, through His life, gave us the ultimate example of how anyone seeking eternal life should live in this world. He demonstrated the importance of obeying all the Father's commandments, including the commandment concerning the hair and beard of God's children.

His example holds significance in two key aspects: for His contemporaries and for future generations of disciples.

CHALLENGING RABBINICAL TRADITIONS

In His time, Jesus' adherence to the [Torah](#) served to counter many rabbinical teachings that dominated Jewish life. These teachings appeared to be ultra-faithful to the Torah but were, in fact, largely human traditions designed to keep people "enslaved" to those traditions.

PURE AND UNTAINTED OBEDIENCE

By faithfully observing the Torah—including commandments regarding His beard and hair—Jesus challenged these distortions and provided a pure and untainted example of obedience to God's Law.

JESUS' BEARD IN PROPHECY AND HIS SUFFERING

The importance of Jesus' beard is also highlighted in prophecy and His suffering. In Isaiah's foretelling of the Messiah's torment, as [the suffering servant](#), one of the tortures Jesus endured was having His beard pulled and torn out: *"I offered my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who pulled out my beard; I did not hide my face from mocking and spitting"* (Isaiah 50:6).

This detail underscores not only Jesus' physical suffering but also His steadfast obedience to God's commandments, even in the face of unimaginable torment. His example remains a powerful reminder for His followers today to honor God's Law in all aspects of life, just as He did.

HOW TO CORRECTLY OBSERVE THIS ETERNAL COMMANDMENT

HAIR AND BEARD LENGTH

Men should maintain their hair and beard at a length that makes it evident they have both, even when observed from a distance. Neither too long nor too short, the primary concern is that neither the hair nor the beard be trimmed too closely.

DO NOT SHAVE THE NATURAL CONTOURS

The hair and beard should not be shaved at their natural contours. This is the key aspect of the commandment, centered on the Hebrew word *pe'ah* (פאה), meaning contour, edge, border, corner, or side. It does not refer to the length of each strand but rather to the natural edges of the hair and beard. For example, the same word *pe'ah* is used regarding the edges of a field: *"When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges (pe'ah) of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest"* (Leviticus 19:9).

Clearly, this does not refer to the length or height of the wheat (or any other plant), but to the extremity of the field itself. The same understanding applies to the hair and beard.

ESSENTIALS FOR OBSERVING THE COMMANDMENT

1. **Maintain Visibility:** The hair and beard should be visibly present and recognizable, reflecting the distinction commanded by God.
2. **Preserve Natural Edges:** Avoid shaving or altering the natural contours of the hairline and beard.

By adhering to these principles, men can faithfully observe this divine instruction concerning their hair and beard, honoring God's eternal commandments as intended.



INVALID ARGUMENTS FOR NOT OBEYING THIS COMMANDMENT OF GOD:

INVALID ARGUMENT:

"Only those who want to have a beard need to obey"

Some men, including Messianic leaders, argue that they do not need to obey this commandment because they completely shave their beards. According to this illogical reasoning, the commandment would only apply if someone chose to "have a beard." In

other words, only if a man wanted to grow a beard (or hair) would he need to follow God's instructions.

This convenient rationale is not found in the sacred text. There is no conditional "if" or "in case," only clear instructions about how hair and beards should be maintained. Using this same logic, one could dismiss other commandments, such as the Sabbath:

- *"I don't need to keep the seventh day because I don't observe any day,"* or
- *"I don't need to worry about forbidden meats because I never ask what kind of meat is on my plate."*

This type of attitude does not convince God, as He sees that the individual views His laws not as something delightful but as an inconvenience they wish did not exist. This stands in stark contrast to the attitude of the psalmists:

"O Lord, teach me to understand your laws, and I will always follow them. Give me understanding so that I may keep your law and obey it with all my heart" (Psalm 119:33-34).

INVALID ARGUMENT:

"The commandment about the beard and hair had to do with the pagan practices of neighboring nations"

The commandment about hair and beard is often misinterpreted as being related to pagan rituals concerning the dead, simply because the adjacent verses in the same chapter mention practices God forbids. However, when we examine the context and Jewish tradition, we notice that this interpretation lacks a solid basis in the Scriptures.

This commandment is a clear instruction about personal appearance, **without any mention of pagan practices concerning the dead or any other pagan custom.**

THE BROADER CONTEXT OF LEVITICUS 19

Leviticus 19:1-37 contains a wide range of laws that cover various aspects of daily life and morality. These include commandments about:

- Not practicing divination and sorcery (Leviticus 19:26)
- Not making cuts or tattoos on the body for the dead (Leviticus 19:28)
- Not prostituting (Leviticus 19:29)
- Treating foreigners well (Leviticus 19:33-34)
- Honoring the elderly (Leviticus 19:32)
- Using honest weights and measures (Leviticus 19:35-36)
- Not mixing different types of seeds (Leviticus 19:19)

Each of these laws reflects God's specific concern for holiness and order within the people of Israel. Thus, it is essential to consider each commandment on its own merit.

One cannot simply claim that the commandment not to cut the hair and beard (Leviticus 19:27) is linked to pagan practices just because verse 28 mentions cuts on the body for the dead and verse 26 addresses witchcraft.

NO CONDITIONAL CLAUSE IN THE COMMANDMENT

NO EXCEPTIONS IN SCRIPTURE

Although there are passages in the Tanach that connect shaving one's hair and beard with mourning, nowhere in Scripture does it state that a man may shave his hair and beard **as long as he is not doing so as a sign of mourning**.

This conditional clause to the commandment is a human addition—an attempt to create exceptions that God did not include in His Law. Such an interpretation adds clauses that are not in the sacred text, revealing a search for justifications to **avoid** full obedience.

ADJUSTING COMMANDMENTS IS REBELLION

This attitude of adjusting commandments according to personal convenience, rather than following what was clearly commanded, goes against the spirit of submission to God's will. Passages that mention shaving for the dead serve as warnings that this excuse would not justify breaking the commandment concerning hair and beard.

ORTHODOX JEWS

THEIR UNDERSTANDING OF THE COMMANDMENT

While they clearly have an incorrect understanding of certain details about cutting hair and beards, Orthodox Jews, since ancient times, have always understood the commandment in Leviticus 19:27 as separate from laws concerning pagan practices.

They maintain this distinction, recognizing that the prohibition reflects a principle of holiness and separation, unrelated to mourning or idolatrous rituals.

ANALYZING THE HEBREW TERMS

The Hebrew words used in verse 27, such as *taqqifu* (תקפו), meaning "to cut or shave around," and *tashchit* (תשחית), meaning "to damage" or "to destroy," indicate a prohibition against altering a man's natural appearance in a way that dishonors the image of holiness God expects from His people.

There is no direct connection to the pagan practices described in the preceding or following verses.

THE COMMANDMENT AS A PRINCIPLE OF HOLINESS

Claiming that Leviticus 19:27 is related to pagan rituals is incorrect and biased. The verse is part of a set of commandments that guide the conduct and appearance of the people of Israel and has always been understood as a distinct order, separate from the mourning or idolatrous rites mentioned in other passages.

JESUS' TEACHING, BY WORD AND EXAMPLE

The true follower of Christ uses His life as a model for everything. Jesus made it clear that if we love Him, we will be obedient to the Father and the Son.

This is a requirement not for the weak, but for those who have their eyes fixed on the Kingdom of God and are willing to do whatever it takes to obtain eternal life—even if this creates opposition from friends, church, and family.

COMMANDMENTS IGNORED BY MOST OF CHRISTIANITY

The commandments concerning hair and beard, [tzitzit](#), [circumcision](#), the [Sabbath](#), and [forbidden meats](#) are ignored by practically all of Christianity. Those who refuse to follow the crowd will certainly face persecution, just as Jesus told us.

Obedience to God requires courage, but the reward is eternity.