

# THE BIBLICAL BEARD

by Avram Yehoshua

[The Seed of Abraham](#)

The Word of God speaks of a man needing to have a full, untrimmed beard. The full, untrimmed beard centers on the verse in Leviticus 19:27 which is translated by the NKJV as:

“You shall not *shave* around the sides of your head, nor shall you *disfigure* the edges of your beard.” (Leviticus 19:27 NKJV)

Nine English translations (below) speak of the Hebrew word that the NKJV has as ‘disfigure,’ translating it as either ‘mar’ (four times), ‘harm’ (once), ‘disfigure’ (once), ‘clip off’ (once), ‘ruin’ (once) and ‘diminish’ (once):

1. ASV ..... ‘mar the corners of thy beard.’
2. KJV ..... ‘mar the corners of thy beard.’
3. HCSB<sup>1</sup> ... ‘mar the edge of your beard.’
4. NRSV ... ‘mar the edges of your beard.’
5. NASB ... ‘harm the edges of your beard.’
6. NKJV ... ‘disfigure the edges of your beard.’
7. NIV ..... ‘clip off the edges of your beard.’
8. NET ..... ‘ruin the corners of your beard.’
9. SB<sup>2</sup> ..... ‘diminish the edge-growth of your beard.’

The Hebrew word for ‘disfigure’ (Lev. 19:27 NKJV) is *tash’heet* תִּשְׁחֶת which is a Hiphil imperfect, 2nd masculine singular form of the verb תִּשְׁחַח. The ten translations above express the meaning of the Hebrew word in terms of what trimming one’s beard does to the person, that is to say it disfigures or ruins the beard—in God’s eyes.

The *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament* speaks of the root verb as expressing ‘ruin’ or ‘destruction’ associated with the devastation of war.<sup>3</sup> The idea of trimming one’s beard is directly related to the destruction which comes in war.<sup>4</sup> God made man to have a full, untrimmed beard and anything that takes away from it is seen by God as an act of destruction (Lev. 19:27). The full, untrimmed beard is the most distin-

<sup>1</sup> HCSB is the Holman Christian Standard Bible.

<sup>2</sup> SB is the Jewish based Schocken Bible—The Five Books of Moses.

<sup>3</sup> Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann, general editors; Mark E. Biddle, translator, *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), n.p. *Accordance Bible Software* (Altamonte Springs, FL: OakTree software, 2012). “The root *šht* ‘to ruin,’ etc. is represented in the NWSem. languages (Ug.: *UT* no. 2400)...the nom. derivatives *mišhāt* ‘disfigurement’ (Isa 52:14), *mašhet* ‘destruction’ (Ezek 9:1), and *mošhāt* ‘corruption’ (Lev 22:25); the hi. ptc. *mašhit* also often displays the abstract meaning ‘ruin’...hi. indicates potential, intended, and thus often modally expressed ruin...The verb *always refers to a ruin* effected in the realm of community or individual experience...*šht* is anchored particularly firmly in the conceptual realm of war ...In theological usage, *šht* refers to God’s destructive judgment, indicated in each case by verb forms, but also to the ‘ruined’ human deed.”

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

guishing feature of a man in contrast to a woman.

The word for ‘shave’ or ‘cut off’ in the first phrase found in Lev. 19:27 is *tah’kifu* תִּקְפוּ and means, ‘to surround, compass...to go or come round, of time.’<sup>5</sup>

‘To make or let go around’ ‘with men ‘taking turns’ at hosting banquets. In the sense of surround or encircle...Hunting nets are cast, drawn around (Job 19:6) and Israelites are forbidden to shave or trim around the head (leaving a tuft of hair on top, emulating pagan cultists—Lev. 19:27).’<sup>6</sup>

The prohibition in the first part of the verse, ‘not to cut’ or ‘shave’ does not mean that men shouldn’t cut or trim their hair, but that it shouldn’t be like what many rebellious youth do today. They shave or cut a patch of hair above their ears, encircling their heads. This is a pagan custom associated with grieving for the dead. Bellinger states,

“The phrase, ‘Do not cut the hair at the sides of your head’ is probably a foreign mourning rite, as also may be the intentional cutting of the beard in some way.”<sup>7</sup>

James Freeman comments that it could also be a form of divination:

‘Among the ancients the hair was often used in divination. The worshippers of the stars and planets cut their hair evenly around, *trimming the extremities*. According to Herodotus the Arabs were accustomed to shave the hair around the head, and let a tuft stand up on the crown in honor of Bacchus. He says that same thing concerning the Ma-cians, a people of Northern Africa. This custom is at present common in India and China. The Chinese let the tuft grow until it is long enough to be plaited into a tail.’<sup>8</sup>

Freeman goes on to say that cutting the hair at death was an ancient pagan practice for the dead:

‘It was also an ancient superstitious custom to cut off the hair at the death of friends and throw it into the sepulcher on the corpse. It was sometimes laid on the face and breast of the deceased as an offering to the infernal gods.’<sup>9</sup>

Some wrongly think that concerning Lev. 19:27a, that one shouldn’t trim the hair on the top of their head, but there are two cites in Scripture that declare that cutting the hair is an acceptable practice. God speaks through the prophet Ezekiel that the Hebrew priests in the future millennial Kingdom of Messiah Yeshua should trim their hair:

Ezek. 44:20: ‘And their heads they must not shave and long hair they must not grow. They must keep their hair well trimmed.’

Obviously, the hair on the head can, and should, be cut or trimmed.

Turning to the Nazarite Vow, at the end of the Vow all the hair was to be cut off and offered to God upon

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<sup>5</sup> Benjamin Davidson, *The Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1979), p. 562.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 600.

<sup>7</sup> W. H. Bellinger, Jr., *New International Biblical Commentary: Leviticus, Numbers* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 2001), p. 120.

<sup>8</sup> Rev. James M. Freeman, *Manners and Customs of the Bible* (Plainfield, NJ: Logos International, 1972; originally written around 1874), pp. 93-94, note 165. The word ‘polled’ is archaic and means, ‘shorn of hair; bald’; J. M. Sinclair, General Consultant, Diana Treffry, Editorial Director, *Collins English Dictionary*, Fourth Edition (Glasgow, Scotland: HarperCollins Publishers, 1998), p. 94-95, note 165.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 94, note 165.

the Altar:

‘All the days of his vow of separation no razor shall pass over his head. He shall be holy until the days are fulfilled for which he separated himself to Yahveh. He shall let the locks of hair on his head grow long.’ (Num. 6:5)

‘The Nazarite shall then shave his dedicated head of hair at the doorway of the Tent of Meeting, and take the dedicated hair of his head and put it on the fire which is under the sacrifice of peace offerings.’ (Num. 6:18)

During the Vow, if no razor could cut his hair, it reveals that the cutting of the hair was an acceptable practice in daily life. The prohibition not to cut the hair prevents one from doing what one would normally do. At the end of the Vow the person was to shave their head. If the practice was to not cut the hair at all, the Nazarite could just go on with his life. Cutting the hair at the end of the Vow also reveals that cutting or trimming the hair at other times was an acceptable practice.

Concerning the biblical beard, the word for ‘corners’ or ‘edges’ is “*pay’ah*” פִּאָה which means a ‘corner, e.g. of a field...corner or extremity of the beard.’<sup>10</sup> The *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* describes Lev. 19:27b (and 21:5)<sup>11</sup> as prohibitions that guarded against pagan practices for the dead:

“Both verses prohibit rounding off the hair at ‘the edges’ or trimming ‘the edges’ of ones’ beard. These injunctions...are found listed with other abominations such as body laceration, tattooing, and even cultic prostitution. Presumably the references to the avoidance of cutting the edges of one’s hair refer to the peculiar markings which the pagans put on themselves at their funerary rites (Jer. 9:26 [H 25]; 25:23; 49:32). It is thought that their intention was to make the mourner incognito to the spirits hovering round the deceased. In Israel such deference to the presence of evil spirits is prohibited.’<sup>12</sup>

The *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* also declares that the trimming or cutting of the beard is a pagan practice that was associated with the dead:

‘In Lev. 19:27a the Holiness Code forbids trimming [shaving] the edges of the hair or cutting the edges of the beard; 21:5 repeats the latter prohibition explicitly for priests. This prohibition is probably aimed at offerings of hair for the dead, using hair cut from the head.’<sup>13</sup>

It seems clear that the practice of trimming one’s beard was a pagan mourning rite for the dead, but the question arises that if one is not cutting or trimming their beard in relation to mourning practices for the dead is it acceptable to Yahveh? The answer is ‘No’ *because the result is the same*—a trimmed beard. In other words, if God didn’t want Israel to trim their beards for the dead He certainly wouldn’t accept a trimmed beard for another reason. Nowhere does God state that trimming the beard is acceptable for any other reason. Therefore, cutting it in relation to say, one’s desire or how one thinks a man should look in the 21st century vs. paganism, is not biblically justifiable.

Looking at it from another perspective, if it’s not alright to make cuts in our body because of mourning rites for the dead, would it be alright for a man to cut his body for something other than mourning rites,

<sup>10</sup> Davidson, *The Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon*, p. 620.

<sup>11</sup> “They shall not make any bald place on their heads, *nor shall they shave the edges of their beards*, nor make any cuttings in their flesh.” (Leviticus 21:5 NKJV) This Scripture confirms the full, untrimmed beard.

<sup>12</sup> Harris, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, vol. 2, p. 713.

<sup>13</sup> G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, Editors; John Willis, Translator, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, vol. 11 (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997), p. 463. Ellinger, HAT I/4, 261.

for example, because he wanted to? Scripture states:

“You must not make *any cuttings in your flesh for the dead*, nor tattoo any marks on you! I am Yahveh!” (Leviticus 19:28)

Tattoos are also associated with mourning rights for the dead. Would it be alright, then, for a woman to have tattoos, if *not* in association with mourning rites for the dead? Of course not.

If it’s wrong to cut our bodies and/or tattoo them, whether for mourning rites for the dead or any other reason, how can it be right to shave/trim the beard if one isn’t doing it for mourning rites for the dead? The answer is obvious—it’s not right to do it for the dead, it’s also not right to do it for any other reason because the effect on the body is the same—the *destroying, disfiguring and ruining* of it, whether with cuttings, tattoos, or the trimming of a full, untrimmed beard, which means that a man must have a full, untrimmed beard.

One might ask another question in reference to the full, untrimmed beard. Should one celebrate Christmas if he isn’t worshipping Tammuz, but Yeshua? Although we find no explicit reference in the Bible to *not* celebrate Christmas, the whole tenor of what it means to follow the God of Israel, and not to worship Him the way the pagans do, is clearly seen.<sup>14</sup> Although there are no explicit references not to trim one’s beard outside the concept of mourning the dead, there are numerous references to the untrimmed beard as being the standard, with Lev. 19:27b forming the foundation for it.

The Hasidic (Jewish) understanding, found in *The Chumash*, speaks of the word that is translated in Lev. 19:27 as ‘trim...mar...disfigure,’ etc., as, ‘you shall not destroy’ the beard. It states:

‘There are five edges of the beard, each of which it is forbidden to shave (Rashi). But as a practical matter, since the exact areas of these edges are not clearly defined, it is forbidden to shave the entire beard.’<sup>15</sup>

It would seem that whatever or however the Rabbis defined the five edges, the ‘outer edges’ or the ‘ends’ of one’s beard would seem to be included in this. Until the early 1900s observant Jews always had full, untrimmed beards. The *Commentary on the Old Testament* states:

“Neither shalt thou mar the corners of thy beard,’...by cutting it off (cf. ch. 21:5), which Pliny reports some of the Arabs to have done.’<sup>16</sup>

## The Full, Untrimmed Beard—A Sign of Manhood

James Freeman states that the beard was a sign of manhood. In reference to Hanun taking King David’s messengers and shaving off one half of their beards (2nd Sam. 10:4), he writes that,

“According to Oriental sentiment *a greater indignity could not have been put upon them*. The beard is considered a symbol of manhood, and, in some places, of freedom—slaves being compelled to shave their beards in token of servitude. By shaving half their beard Hanun not only treated David’s ambassadors with contempt, but made them objects of

<sup>14</sup> One such is Dt. 12:28-32 where the Lord says not to worship Him the way the pagans do (and Christmas is certainly pagan in its origin). It also states not to add to His Words and the celebration of Christmas is certainly adding to the holy days of Yahveh.

<sup>15</sup> Rabbi Nosson Scherman and Rabbi Meir Zlotowitz, General Editors, *The Chumash*, 2nd edition: 2nd impression (Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, Ltd., Feb. 1994), p. 664, note 27.

<sup>16</sup> C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary On The Old Testament: The Pentateuch*, vol. 1 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2001; originally published by T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh, Scotland, 1866-91), pp. 602-603.

ridicule. The beard is usually kept with care and neatness; and thus when David feigned madness in the presence of Achish, king of Gath, he 'let his spittle fall down upon his beard,' which convinced the beholders that he must be bereft of his senses (1 Sam. 21:13). So disgraceful is it considered to have the beard cut off, that some of the Orientals would prefer death to such a punishment."<sup>17</sup>

The full, untrimmed beard is the Hebraic symbol of manhood, but modern Christian man is infatuated with the Greek symbol of manhood, the clean shaven face. Freeman also comments on Joab's slaying of Amasa, with his first touching of Amasa's beard, saying that,

'To touch the beard of another was an insult, unless done as an act of friendship and a token of respect. Joab therefore showed the base treachery of his heart by coming to Amasa in the manner of a friend...entirely concealing his murderous intent. He inquired after his health, gently touched his beard as if to give a kiss, and then suddenly grasped it with his right hand and quickly stabbed the unsuspecting Amasa with the unnoticed sword which he held in his left.'<sup>18</sup>

Freeman notes that *Jews didn't trim their beards*. Citing Lev. 19:27 he states,

'By the idolaters the beard was also carefully trimmed round and even. This was forbidden to the Jews. Dr. Robinson says that to this day the Jews in the East are distinguished in this respect from the Mohammedans, the latter trimming their beard, the former *allowing the extremities to grow naturally*.'<sup>19</sup>

Under 'Beard,' *The Illustrated Bible Dictionary* states,

'Israelites and their neighbors generally wore full round beards which they tended scrupulously. The beard was a mark of vitality and of manly beauty (Ps. 133:2; cf. 2 Sa. 19:24); to shave or cover it was a sign of grief or mourning (Is. 15:2; Je. 48:37, etc.; cf. Lv. 19:27; 21:5, enacted probably against idolatrous practices), or of leprosy (Lv. 14:9). To *mutilate* another's beard was to dishonor him (2 Sam. 10:4; Is. 50:6).'<sup>20</sup>

The cite for shaving or covering the beard (Is. 15:2) stresses the plight of another people (Moab) in being defeated (every head is bald and every beard cut off). Jeremiah 48:37 also speaks of Moab and its destruction with the accompanying signs being that the head is shaved and every beard cut off. The leper, when he would be cleansed, also had to shave his beard, suggesting a new beginning in life, and also implying that all Hebrew men had full, untrimmed beards (Lev. 13:29-30; 14:9).

Under *beard*, *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* states that the Hebrew beard was not cut, nor *trimmed*:

'The Hebrews generally wore full rounded beards, as contrasted with the desert nomads who frequently clipped or cut their beards (cf. Jer. 9:26; 25:23; 49:32; etc.). The Egyptians were clean shaven, although high officials wore artificial beards...The Torah forbade *trimming the edges of the beard* (Lev. 19:27), though Ezekiel was told to shave off his beard as a token of coming destruction (Ezk. 5:1).'<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Freeman, *Manners and Customs of the Bible*, pp. 143-144, note 273.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 149, note 288.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 94, note 165.

<sup>20</sup> J. D. Douglas, M.A., B.D., S.T.M., Ph.D., Organizing Editor, *The Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, Part 1 (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1998), p. 7.

<sup>21</sup> Geoffrey W. Bromiley, General Editor, Everett F. Harrison, Roland K. Harrison and William Sanford LaSor, Associate Editors, *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, vol. one (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1979), p. 100.

One of the humiliations of a conqueror was to shave or take off the beards of the men. Ezekiel was a sign of that coming destruction upon Judah and Jerusalem, to the Jewish people already in captivity in Babylon with him, and it was at Yahveh's express command to the prophet that he did something he normally never would have done.

*Unger's Bible Dictionary*, under 'Hair,' states this about the beard:

'The removal of the beard was a part of the ceremonial treatment proper to a leper (Lev. 14:9)...The custom in mourning was and is to shave or pluck it out and the hair (Isa. 15:2; 50:6; Jer. 41:5; 48:37; Ezra 9:3), to neglect it in seasons of permanent affliction (2 Sam 19:24), and to regard any insult to it as the last outrage that enmity can inflict (10:4-5). The beard was an object of salutation (20:9), and it was a custom to swear by it (Matt. 5:36). The law forbade the deforming of the head by cutting away the hair around it, *and of the beard by cutting the corners* (Lev. 19:27). This is understood to mean that the hair was not to be cut in a circle from one temple to another, as among the Arabs; neither might that portion of the face where the beard and hair met be shaved.<sup>22</sup> These regulations are thought by some to have reference to the fact that among some nations these customs are part of idolatrous worship.'<sup>23</sup>

## But What of Mephibosheth and His Mustache?

Events or incidents recorded in the Old Testament don't necessarily mean that God endorsed them. For example, Scripture speaks of Mephibosheth's mustache not being trimmed when David was running away from his son Absalom, but it doesn't mean that God authorized the trimming of the mustache. Scripture records what he did, but doesn't condone it:

'Then Mephibosheth, the son of Saul, came down to meet the king, and he had neither cared for his feet, *nor trimmed his mustache*, nor washed his clothes, from the day the king departed until the day he came home in peace.' (2nd Sam. 19:24)

Scripture doesn't say that all Israel trimmed their mustache or that King David trimmed his, only that one man did didn't trim it when he was *mourning* what happened to David. This cite cannot be used for the trimming of the mustache, and of course, the beard, just as the sacrifice of Jephthah's daughter by Jephthah doesn't mean that God condoned child sacrifice. It reveals how far Jephthah (and Mephibosheth) were from God's Standard (Mosaic Law), because anyone who knew the Law would know it was wrong. God never wanted Israel to sacrifice their sons and daughters to Him, Gen. 22, the Binding of Isaac, notwithstanding, for it was a test of Abraham's love for God over his love for his son, and God didn't allow the sacrifice to happen, but with Jephthah it was a different story:

Judg. 11:30-31: "Jephthah made a vow to Yahveh and said, 'If You will indeed give the sons of Ammon into my hand, then it shall be that whatever comes out of the doors of my

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mans Publishing Company, 1979), p. 442. So unusual was it for a Hebrew not to have a full beard that Yahveh was able to use the absence of it as a sign of great destruction coming upon Jerusalem because the conqueror would humiliate the men by shaving their beards. (See also Ezra 9:3; Ps. 133.2)

<sup>22</sup> The Mennonites shave their cheeks so that from a side view their beard takes an 'L' shape, and all of them shave the mustache off. This was not done so as to avoid soup and drink from catching on it, but was a strong anti-Semitic theological statement—they did not want to look like a Jew, which tells us that the Jews had full, untrimmed beards and mustaches.

<sup>23</sup> Merrill F. Unger, *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1988), pp. 516-517.

house to meet me when I return in peace from the sons of Ammon, it shall be Yahveh's and I will offer it up as a burnt offering.”

Judg. 11:34-35: “When Jephthah came to his house at Mizpah, behold, his daughter was coming out to meet him with tambourines and with dancing. Now she was his one and only child; besides her he had no son or daughter. When he saw her, he tore his clothes and said, ‘Alas, my daughter! You have brought me very low, and you are among those who trouble me; for I have given my word to Yahveh and I cannot take it back.’”

Judges records Jephthah's vow and implication. No mention is made of it being a gross sin and violation of Torah, but obviously it was against God's will. This is what can happen when one lacks Torah knowledge and understanding. Mephibosheth, not having trimmed his mustache during the time of David's departure from Jerusalem, only means that he ‘was doing his own thing.’ The reason for the prohibitions in Lev. 19:27 have to do with pagan practices. God told Israel not to shave the hair around the temples by the ears and around the head, and not to trim the extremities of their beard, which would include their mustache. *Both* were a perversion in God's eyes, of the hair and the beard, and also, an idolatrous practice. Some Torah keepers trim their beard or shave and say justify it by saying they're not doing it for idolatrous reasons, but isn't the effect exactly the same? Doesn't it destroy what God has created for man? Isn't that why God insists that the beard be untrimmed? He made men to have full, untrimmed beards for, I imagine, a variety of reasons, but certainly one of them was to distinguish a man from a woman, just as He made the lion to have its mane, while the lioness doesn't have it.

Yeshua, like Fathers Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and King David and Isaiah, etc., would have had a full, *untrimmed* beard,<sup>24</sup> as did all the Apostles and all the Jews<sup>25</sup> who believed in Him (Acts 2:41; 21:20, etc.). The new Gentile believers would have followed suit. Let us avoid the appearance of evil (idolatry), and honor our God by having full, untrimmed beards.<sup>26</sup>

## The Full, Untrimmed Beard—The Spiritual Aspect

All the commandments, ordinances, judgments and statutes of the Law are spiritual.<sup>27</sup> Much of the time we don't realize it until the Holy Spirit opens our eyes. One day I asked the Lord Yeshua, ‘Why the full,

<sup>24</sup> As for the fact of Messiah Yeshua's beard, Is. 50:6 states Him saying, ‘I gave My back to those who strike Me and My cheeks to those who pluck out the beard. I did not cover My face from humiliation and spitting.’

<sup>25</sup> Some say that the Hebrew word for mustache is actually a beard, but two noted Hebrew authorities declare that it's a mustache. The Hebrew word is שֵׁפֶם (*sa'fam*) and it means mustache: “שֵׁפֶם,” Ludwig Koehler, Walter Baumgartner, and J. J. Stamm, authors; M. Richardson, translator, *The Hebrew-Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, vol. 3 (Boston, MA USA: Brill Academic Publishers; Accordance Software, 2002), p. 1348.

“שֵׁפֶה,” Francis Brown, S. R. Driver and Charles A. Briggs, based on the lexicon of Wilhelm Gesenius; Edward Robinson, translator and E. Rodiger, editor, *Hebrew and English Lexicon*, Abridged (Accordance Bible Software), paragraph 21833.

<sup>26</sup> Also, Yeshua would not have had the long, flowing hair, that is so prevalent in misrepresentations of Him (e.g. the many pictures that are supposed to be Him). The verse in Ezekiel tells us that it is God's will for us to have our hair trimmed to an acceptable length. Also, as the Apostle Paul declares in 1st Cor. 11:14, ‘Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him’?

There are some who dissect the mustache from the beard and justify trimming it because ‘it's not part of the beard,’ but this understanding isn't Hebraic, it's Western. To the ancient Hebrew the mustache was part of the beard, not a separate entity from it. The prohibition against trimming the beard also applies to the mustache.

<sup>27</sup> One such place we note is Paul's greatest theological letter where he states what for him, was an obvious reality: ‘For we know that the Law is spiritual, but I am of flesh, sold into slavery to sin.’ (Rom. 7:14)

untrimmed beard?’ The Spirit of the Holy One immediately led me to this Scripture:

‘If you make an altar of stone for Me, you must not build it of cut stones, for if you wield your tool on it, *you profane it.*’ (Ex. 20:25; cf. Dt. 27:4-6)

God made Man with a beard.<sup>28</sup> When we shave it off (or trim it) to beautify<sup>29</sup> ourselves, as it is with the Greek–Western man, we alter God’s design for us. It is truly a profaning, corrupting, destroying and defiling of what God has made. The Hebrew word used in Ex. 20:25 for ‘profane’ is תִּהְלַחְלַח (tih’hal’leh’hah), which means to ‘defile.’ Benjamin Davidson writes that it means ‘to be pierced, wounded...to make common, to profane, pollute, defile...to violate, break, a covenant.’<sup>30</sup>

The verb is used of Yeshua being pierced-through at His death (Isaiah 53:5).<sup>31</sup> When we follow the world and shave, or trim our beards, we break God’s commandment and are actually defiling ourselves.

## Just Weights and Measures

God speaks of the phrase, ‘just weights and measures,’ twice in Torah.<sup>32</sup> It’s a picture of righteousness, integrity and honesty. Telling someone that a weight for measuring is one pound, or one kilo, while it is actually a little more or less, makes him a deceiver and a robber of another’s goods, in the ancient way of buying and selling. The Lord wants us to present ourselves to others as honest and integrous, not like the Pharisees, who represented themselves as righteous and godly when in fact they were wicked, lacking honesty and integrity.

When Yeshua cursed the fig tree He didn’t do it out of malice.<sup>33</sup> It was a picture of judgment upon all who present themselves as righteous, but aren’t. When the fig tree has leaves on it the tree should also have figs. The fig tree presented itself to Yeshua as having food on it, but when Yeshua came to satisfy His hunger He saw that the fig tree had misrepresented itself or deceived Him. Those who claim Yeshua, with all the outward ‘signs’ (going to church, ‘belief’ in Jesus, etc.), but who do not have the Fruit of the Spirit within (Gal. 5:22-23), will be similarly cursed on the Day of Judgment.

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<sup>28</sup> Not all men have the potential for a beard. This is not the issue though. If one can grow a beard, according to the Commandment, one should. But if one cannot grow a beard, they are not sinning.

<sup>29</sup> The ancient Romans also shaved so that the enemy soldier wouldn’t be able to grasp their beard with one hand and plunge a knife into their belly with the other. It was a tactical advantage the Romans had over their enemies.

<sup>30</sup> Benjamin Davidson, *The Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1979), p. 260. The verb is a Piel future, 2nd person masculine singular with a 3rd person feminine singular suffix (her), p. 755.

<sup>31</sup> Some translations have ‘wounded’ but the more accurate rendering would be as stated.

<sup>32</sup> Lev. 19:36: ‘You shall have just balances, just weights, a just ephah, and a just hin; I am Yahveh your God, who brought you out from the land of Egypt.’ Deut. 25:13: ‘You shall not have in your bag differing weights, a large and a small.’ And Proverbs and Micah pick up on the theme of it. Here are two cites: Prov. 20:10: ‘Differing weights and differing measures, both of them are abominable to Yahveh.’ Mic. 6:11: ‘Can I justify wicked scales and a bag of deceptive weights?’

<sup>33</sup> Matt. 21:18-22; Mark 11:12-14, 19-26.



# CONCLUSION

The full, untrimmed beard is God's ways of distinguishing between a man and a woman, and also, the men of Israel from the men of the world. In this day, when men have long hair and women have short or shaved heads, and men dress like women and women like men, it can be very hard to distinguish between a man and a woman. God never intended this (nor homosexuality). This understanding is brought out in such diverse passages as 'just weights and measures' and Yeshua's pronouncement of death to the fig tree. It's also seen in Lev. 19:27 where God commands Israeli men to not trim their beards, for trimming (or a shaved face) destroys and ruins the beard that God gave to men.

The people of Yahveh, walking with Yeshua the Messiah, are called to love Him with all their hearts and walk in *all* His ways that pertain to them, whether man or woman. Yeshua had a full, untrimmed beard and so should we as men.<sup>34</sup> He is our Example of Holiness, from the inside-out. There was no mistaking Yeshua for a woman in His day. Let there be no mistaking us for women in our day.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Of course, there are men (and groups of men, like Native American Indians), who cannot grow a beard, and so they would be exempt from this commandment because it's not sin for them to do what they cannot do, but one should not shave, either, allowing any facial hair to grow, even if it is only patchy and doesn't 'look good.'

<sup>35</sup> A further point about the beard being a 'standard' in Israel is seen in Is. 7:20 where the prophet Isaiah speaks of Israel being carried away captive and one of the signs of that is the 'removal of the beard.' Also, it's assumed by God that the Hebrews will have full, untrimmed beards, when the Lord speaks of the leper needing to shave it off if there is a leprosy in the beard (Lev. 13:30, 33), and the leper must cover his mustache (with his hand) when saying, 'Unclean, unclean!' (Lev. 13:45), along with having torn clothes, to graphically notify anyone who might draw near, which again presupposes that the mustache is part of a full, untrimmed beard.

On a practical note, shampoo your beard every day with Head & Shoulders Classic Clean. This will stop any itchiness and/or dandruff, and you'll have a clean beard. Rinse the shampoo out and with your face under the shower water, run a wide-tooth comb gently through your beard to loosen any tangles and straighten it. Dry it, then take a wide brush and brush the mustache to the sides. This will keep it out of your mouth and 'set it' for the day. Brush the sides of your beard, as well as the rest of it, down. This will cause it to lay flat and not stick out.

Revised on August 12, 2018.