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Can We Shave Our Beards?

Once one begins teaching that the whole bible is true, not just some of it, it is not long before someone responds by saying, “Do you shave,” which is a clear reference to Leviticus chapter nineteen verse twenty-seven. How are we to respond? Is that what the commandment means? Does Leviticus 19:27 teach us that His people are not to shave our beards? Is it possible that we are not considering the purpose and context of this commandment?

Leviticus 19:27

“You should not round the corners of your heads. Neither should you mar the corners of your beard.”

We find that even different sects of Jews understand this differently. Orthodox Jews, for example, grow the corners of their heads rather long, and typically braid them. Karaite Jews, on the other hand, examine the Hebrew and compare it to Orthodox tradition and declare such practice simply tradition and not Torah.

What is the truth?

In any study it is often wise to examine the root language in which it was originally written. The English word “*round*” comes from the Hebrew, Strong’s *naw-kaf*; meaning in its primitive root;

to strike with more or less violence (beat, fell, corrode); by implication (of an attack) to knock together, surround or circulate:—compass, cut down, destroy, go round, enclose, round.

It should be noted that the verses mentioned both the head and beard and we should, perhaps, consider there’s a reason for this. Also, it should be noted that after reading Strong’s, that there is a primary meaning of striking violence in this particular Hebrew wording. Also, the very next verse states in verse 28,

Leviticus 19:28

“you should not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor print (tattoo) any marks upon you, I am the LORD. (YHWH)”

These are all pagan sun-god practices in the mourning for the dead as noted in Scripture. Thus, this is

the context and we should treat the commandment as such.

Another verse,

Leviticus 21:5

“They shall not make baldness upon their head, neither shall they shave off the corner of their beard, nor make any cuttings in their flesh.”

Notice how this similar commandment is associated with the cutting in their flesh just like in Leviticus 19. This is when obvious sun-god worship practices should also come to mind for those who are knowledgeable and have studied these things. When they, the pagans, were mourning they would pull out their hair, with violence, of their head and beard and also cut themselves. Sometimes, they would follow that up with a tattoo to remember their lost loved ones. These practices were all associated with each other, and we cannot ignore that. We need to consider the context in which the commandment is to be observed and practiced.

The pagans would also shave their heads in ritualistic customs in their mourning.

Isaiah 15:2

“He is gone up to Bajith, and to Dibon, to the high places, to weep: Moab shall howl over Nebo, and over Medeba: on all their heads shall be baldness, and every beard cut off.”

Another example can be found in Jeremiah 47:4-5

Jeremiah 47:4-5

because of the day that is coming to destroy all the Philistines, to cut off from Tyre and Sidon every helper that remains. For the Lord (YHWH) is destroying the Philistines, the remnant of the coastland of Caphtor. Baldness has come upon Gaza; Ashkelon has perished. O remnant of their valley, how long will you gash yourselves?

And also, Jeremiah 48:37-38

Jeremiah 48:37-38

“For every head is shaved and every beard cut off. On all the hands are gashes, and around the waist is sackcloth. On all the housetops of Moab and in the squares there is nothing but lamentation, for I have broken Moab like a vessel for which no one cares, declares the Lord (YHWH).”

Ezekiel 7:18

“They will wear sackcloth, terror will cover them; shame will be on all their faces, and all of their heads will be shaved bald.”

We read the same in Ezekiel 27:30-31,

Ezekiel 27:30-31

and shout aloud over you and cry out bitterly. They cast dust on their heads and wallow in ashes; they make themselves bald for you and put sackcloth on their waist, and they weep over you in bitterness of soul, with bitter mourning.

And finally, Amos describes a time when Yahweh's judgments will bring about mourning for the nations.

Amos 8:9-10

"In that day," says the sovereign LORD (YHWH), "I will make the sun set at noon, and make the earth dark in the middle of the day. I will turn your festivals into funerals, and all your songs into funeral dirges. I will make everyone wear funeral clothes and cause every head to be shaved bald. I will make you mourn as if you had lost your only son; when it ends it will indeed have been a bitter day."

Quite clearly, the prophets confirm our findings from the Torah, the Law, that mourning of the pagans is accompanied by cutting the body, cutting the hair and cutting the beard. And Yahweh specifically instructed His people not to do these things in that context. Yahweh does not want us emulating pagan ways that relate their worship of false gods. He said that over and over in His Word.

Deuteronomy 12:30

"Take heed to yourself that you're not snared by following them, after that they be destroyed from before you; and that you do not enquire after their gods, saying, 'How did these nations serve their gods? We will do the same.' You must not worship the LORD (YHWH) your God in their way."

Jeremiah 10:2-5

"Thus says the LORD (YHWH), Learn not the way of the heathen, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven; for the heathen are dismayed at them. For the customs of the people *are* vain: for *one* cuts a tree out of the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the axe. They deck it with silver and with gold; they fasten it with nails and with hammers, that it move not. "Like a scarecrow in a cucumber field are they, and they cannot speak; they must be carried because they cannot walk! Do not fear them, for they can do no harm, nor can they do any good."

Deuteronomy 12:4

"You must not worship the LORD (YHWH) your God their way."

Bottom line is that we should not cut ourselves nor rip or ruin our hair out of our beard and our head with violence, as it is a practice of sun-god worship; or anything else derived or associated with pagan false god worship, for that matter. They would mourn to their gods in this way for the loss of their loved ones. Yahweh detests it when we take on the practices of false gods and reassign it to Him. Yahweh declares what He wants and likes, not us.

It should also be noted that there are plenty of other Scriptural references in which this shaving or trimming of the head or beard is completely acceptable. As in the Nazarite vow in Numbers chapter 6, for example. Knowing this, we are forced to examine of the difference when, why and how it is acceptable or not acceptable. It requires context. To determine a blanket interpretation that the cutting of the sides of the hair is always unacceptable is to pretend that the context is unimportant.

Since sin is defined as breaking God's commandments (1 John 3:4), then anyone saying that we cannot cut our hair ever, is declaring that Yahweh said it is ok to sin in Numbers chapter 6. That is just plain silly. Obviously, context should play a role in our Biblical interpretation and understanding, or silly little contradictions will manifest in our doctrine. We must be careful to avoid such things and continue

to test all doctrines to His Word and the context in which it was presented. The difference in what is acceptable or not, is defined by its similarity to pagan sun-god worship. We are to do Bible things in Bible ways, not pagan false god things in false god ways.

To be consistent with Leviticus 19:27, you only need to ask yourself one question, “Are you cutting your hair simply to cut your hair? Or, are you pulling your hair out with violence as they did with the false gods in their mourning of lost loved ones?”

Sometimes related to this topic and conclusion, we receive this question:

Question: In 2 Samuel 10, David sent out two spies that were captured and half their beards shaved. So, he asked them to stay outside the camp until their beard grew back. How does that not show that we are to have a beard?

Here is our response:

Yes David did do this, but there is no evidence to indicate that this is because it was against the Torah to have their beard shaved. If we look at what was going on, it becomes more clear as to why David did what he did.

2 Samuel 10:4-5

So Hanun took David's servants and shaved off half the beard of each and cut off their garments in the middle, at their hips, and sent them away. When it was told David, he sent to meet them, for the men were greatly ashamed. And the king said, “Remain at Jericho until your beards have grown and then return.”

Verse 4 shows that the men were being humiliated by only having half of their beard shaved off and half of their garments removed. This was done in rebellion to David, to mock David as they were sent by King David to King Hanun.

Verse 5 shows us that the men were greatly ashamed; so it would appear that David was showing them an act of kindness before having them come before him.

He let them remain at Jericho in order to regrow their beards and look normal again. David is not telling them to stay outside the city, but rather to return to another one. This appears to only be to save them from their embarrassment, not because it was a sin.

In conclusion, it does not appear that shaving ones beard is against the Torah. However, the Biblical pattern and Hebraic culture usually consisted of men retaining a beard.

One reason Yah did not likely make this a requirement in the Torah is because about 1 out of 10 men cannot physically grow beards.

If Yah was to make a commandment that at least 10% of the male population could not physically keep, those men might feel rejected by a Torah based society, or even worse, rejected or cursed by their Creator.

So while a beard is not a commandment, it is understood that it is commonplace in Hebraic culture.

We hope that this study has blessed you. And remember, continue to test everything. Shalom.

For more on this and other teachings, please visit us at www.testeverything.net

Shalom, and may Yahweh bless you in walking in the whole Word of God.

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