

Restrained Barberism

February 15, 2024

Q I own a barbershop. Occasionally, a nonreligious Jewish patron asks me to cut off his *peyos*, and it would be awkward to refuse. How should I handle this?



A It is forbidden for you to cut off his *peyos*. Politely explain to him that you are unable to accommodate him under Jewish law. The prohibition of *lifnei iveir* (causing someone to stumble into sin) doesn't apply here, because he could easily commit the sin without your help (see Avodah Zarah 6b) by going to another barber or cutting the *peyos* on his own. But you must decline for a different reason: The prohibition in Vayikra 19:27 of "*lo sakifu* (you shall not round off the edge of your scalp)" is directed at both *makif* (cutter) and *nikaf* (one whose *peyos* are cut). So cutting off another Jew's *peyos* is an independent *issur* for the barber. You may not even ask a non-Jewish employee do it, because of the prohibition of *amirah lenachri* (telling a non-Jew to do something that a Jew may not do). It is accepted by the *poskim* that *amirah lenachri* is forbidden for all *isurim*, not only Shabbos (Shulchan Aruch C.M. 338:6). In many barbershops, the workers are paid not per hour but per haircut. If that is your arrangement, you may allow a non-Jewish worker to give the haircut. Since his payment is commission-based, the worker is considered to be working for himself, and his actions are not attributed to his employer (see O.C. 252:2). But that is only if the worker attends to the client on his own; you may not directly instruct him to do the forbidden act (*ibid.*). This solution, however, is only for cases where turning down the client is not, in your assessment, something he will understand. If you think he will be accepting of the idea, you should seize the opportunity to familiarize a lost Jew with the Torah life. This may, in time, bear fruit.