

Letter of Gedolei Yisroel

BS"D

Elul 5784

The issue of wigs containing Indian hair has been a subject of discussion for over twenty years. In 5764 (2004), a psak was issued by the *gedolei hador* forbidding these sheitels as *tikroves avoda zara*.

Many have relied on a *heter* based on the opinion that the hair tonsuring performed in the Indian temples is not done with the intention of sacrificing the hair to the *avoda zara*. Furthermore, the lenient opinion maintained that even if the practice was indeed *tikroves avoda zara*, it was presumed that the hair used in sheitels did not originate from these temples.

Recently, there has been more clarity based on many testimonies and much detailed research. It has become clear that the practice of hair tonsuring is indeed a form of *tikroves avoda zara*. It has also been established that the vast majority of hair used in sheitels comes from this source. Therefore, the issue is relevant again with full severity.

As of the present time, an acceptable *heter* has not been presented for this serious issue. According to many *Rishonim* the transgression of deriving benefit from *tikroves avoda zara* is in the category of sins for which the halacha is *yehoreg v'al yaavor* (one must give up one's life rather than transgress).

It is our opinion that there is no way to avoid this severe problem other than ascertaining that the hair is not from the temples, through strict supervision of the hair from when it is cut off the head until the completion of the production process. As of now, such supervision is something which is almost non-existent.

The difficulty that this imposes on the *tzibbur* is well understood. However, our ancestors throughout the generations sacrificed their lives *al kiddush Hashem* so as not to be contaminated by the impurities of *avoda zara*, r"l.

Chazal say "*l'fum tzaara agra*," according to the greatness of the difficulty so is the greatness of the reward. The Torah has already promised (Devorim 13;18), "No part of the banned property should attach to your hand, so that Hashem will turn back from His anger, and give you mercy and be merciful to you and multiply you..."

In the merit of abstaining from *avoda zarah* and its accessories, may Hashem make us worthy of the time when all *avoda zara* will be destroyed, with the revelation of Hashem's kingdom, may it be speedily in our days, Amen.

Elya Ber Wachtfogel

Aharon Feldman

Aryeh Malkiel Kotler

Yaakov Shraga Horowitz

Yisroel Tzvi Neuman

It is clear and simple, and I have already publicized it as such, and anyone who has a drop of Yiras Shamayim will be careful at least for the future and his reward is very great!

My father in law HaGoan HaRav Yosef Sholom Elyashiv zt"l was very stringent regarding hair that comes from India, and it is appropriate to abide by the Psak of Maran zt"l

The words of my brother-in-law HaGoan HaGadol Azriel Auerbach are true and firm

Sariel Rosenberg

Moshe Shternbuch

Azriel Auerbach

Yitzchok Zilberstein

Moshe Mordechai Karp

The clear opinion of Maran HaGoan HaRav Elyashiv zt"l is well known concerning the hair from India which is in the category of *tikroves avoda zara*. In order to clarify the topic due to the fact that certain Rabbanim have different opinions, in the year 5778 I was part of a group of prominent Rabbanim who heard the testimony of a witness who was sent to the temples in India and returned with clear proofs that it is *tikroves avoda zara*. Therefore I hereby repeat the opinion of Maran that there are severe transgressions in this matter.

Nachum Eisenstein