

Which *Side*
Will *You* Choose?

*A Biblical and Historical
Examination of the Beard*

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2007 by Erich Matthew Janzen

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SEC used as an acronym for Strong's Exhaustive Concordance, and
BDB used as an acronym for Brown, Drivers and Briggs Hebrew
Lexicon.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from
the King James Version of the Bible.

Dedicated to Brother Randy Sewell

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Chapter One

Living with Morality

A JEWISH COLLEGE student recently returned to Israel to visit his parents after somewhat of a long stay in America. Upon approaching the door of his house he wondered, *and worried*, about the reaction his mother would have. He realized that many of his customs had been compromised for the sake of status in the country of his sojourn. As his Mother opened the door she was astonished to see that her son had shaved his beard. “Oh no, my child!” she exclaimed, as she reached out to touch the now smooth, childlike face of her son. “What on earth made you decide to do this?” To her, he just did not look like the son she knew. “Mother, one has to make sure that he can keep a job in America,” he replied, hoping his Mother would somehow sympathize with the fact that without monetary gain he could not have survived for such a lengthy period of time.

As they sat at the dinner table that night to talk and catch up on things, he related a story about a ham dinner at one of his closest friend’s house. “You don’t mean to tell me that you actually ate such a meal!” his Mother protested. In her mind she was not yet over the clean shaven face of her son, let alone knowing that he now felt comfortable eating the

animal most detestable to their faith. “Mother, you must understand that to acquire friends in America, you must show yourself friendly. You know that’s in the *Tanak*?”

“Yes,” his Mother thought, “*But I just can’t see how he forgot the part about not eating the flesh of the swine!*” She spoke up, “Son, have you really stopped eating kosher?” Her son clarified that when he is by himself, he always kept kosher, but around friends he went along with the menu of the crowd.

After thinking intently about these changes in her son’s life, the Mother leaned over and whispered in her son’s ear, “My child, are you still circumcised?”

This small tale illustrates the importance of certain customs. In this case, however, such customs are not merely those of one’s own opinion or prerogative. These customs are based upon a most sacred book known in Hebrew as the *Tanak*, or in English, as the Old Testament Scriptures. Scriptural customs are of far greater importance than ones borne out of family tradition or cultural practice. The Scriptures are given to us by the Creator, who is the Designer of the earth and the heavens and the Maker of our bodies. He knows what’s best for us because He took the time to fashion our most intricate details. Any time He breathes out a commandment, it is one that is for the good of us as individuals, as well as for the good of people on a national level. Sacred Scripture tells us that Yahweh’s¹ commands are for our benefit and well being (Deuteronomy 6:24).

People in society today recognize this to a degree, whether or not they look to the Scriptures for infinite aid in their lives. Try asking 10 people in the secular world and 10 people in the religious world if they feel we should treat others kindly and respectfully, in short, the way we desire to be treated. The response you receive will be one of

¹ Yahweh is the personal, proper name of the Creator. For a detailed study on this name contact us for the book entitled *Hallowed Be Thy Name*.

agreement. Everyone wishes to be respected and approached in a friendly manner.

I always make a habit of being extra friendly when checking out at a grocery or department store. People who scan items for hours at a time have to be tired of the continuous repetition, not to mention the attitudes of many customers who are “loaded” with attitude and ready to complain at the drop of a hat about the littlest “problem” the cashier gives them. I know that there have been several times when I have looked at the cashier with a smile and asked them how they were doing. I always try to notice their name tag and refer to them by name. You would be amazed to see the look on the face of the person who gets referred to by name in the grocery line. I remember one woman almost standing in awe after I spoke to her by name, telling her to have a good day.

People want to be treated as a friend, and Scripture tells us to treat others in a friendly manner. Proverbs 18:24 tells us that a man that seeks friendship must show himself friendly. Yeshua² himself stated that the law and the prophets could be summed up in treating others how you desire to be treated (Matthew 7:12). The point is that to a certain degree, the precepts in Scripture are recognized and even believed by people in society whether they are conscious of it or not.

There are, however, many teachings in Scripture that all people do not agree on. Oftentimes people believe that certain teachings were only for a certain time or for a certain people. How could one argue that this is not true? I don't think anyone reading this book would believe that the command given to the man Noah, to build a massive boat

² Yeshua is the personal, proper name of the Son of the Creator, and is preferred by the author over the traditional English derivative, Jesus. For a detailed study on this name visit the ministersnewcovenant.org media gallery, article section.

(Genesis 6:14-16) was applicable to you as a person living in the 21st century. Sure, we can learn principles from this great and factual story, but to apply it to every person in detail would yield millions of boats in the backyards of families across the globe! What a consequence; and it would be caused by not recognizing that all commands or teachings in Scripture do not apply for all people at all times.

On the other hand, there are commandments given to Yahweh's chosen people, the Israelites (Psalm 147:19-20), which do apply as moral principles to all, in the most involved details. Exodus 21:12-14 speaks of premeditated murder. In ancient Israel, if a person struck a man, causing him to die, and if this act was based in malice and premeditation, the one who committed the murder had to suffer a penalty of death. The text at hand even states that such a man is to be taken from the altar of Yahweh in order to have the act of capital punishment carried out. Although the United States has gradually reduced the penalty for murder, this government continues to recognize that murder is a vicious felony; one which demands justice to some degree. Many states still eventually get around to executing the criminal by lethal injection. The state I reside in (Georgia) executed criminals by means of an electric chair until this method was rescinded not many years ago. Currently, murderers are sentenced to prison, living their lives behind the bars of a cell, all because they committed what Yahweh calls in the book of Exodus, premeditated murder.

I'm not insinuating that the current American government has a system that is an absolute deterrent to crimes such as murder. I believe that the morality of our nation has declined significantly in many areas. I am simply pointing out that some commandments that were given to the nation of Israel as a special people apply as detailed moral principles for all people through all times.

We need to be cautious when deciding which teachings should function as strict moral guidelines, and which should

be seen as specific instructions for times past. I would sure hate to think that something was not applied to my life, when the application of such would lead me to a much better or healthier life. I would also be quite disappointed knowing that my Creator and Designer required something out of me morally, and I neglected to follow a certain practice because I felt it was outdated, primitive, and archaic.

The subject at hand brings us to the Scriptural book of Leviticus. Leviticus is a book that is most likely unknown by the secular world, and little known by the nominal Christian world. Certainly the small children of Christian families are taught that Leviticus is a book in the Old Testament. Children memorize this book as third on the list of the Old Testament books. The problem is that rarely, if ever, is the book expounded upon in a Sunday morning service.

Recently I was listening to a call-in radio program where a caller asked a question to a Minister about another book in the Old Testament writings, Deuteronomy. The caller expressed concern for a passage in the book that a friend of his had approached him with. The first thing out of the Minister's mouth was, "Ask your friend, what in the world is he doing over in the book of Deuteronomy?" Sadly, this minister reflects the mindset of many in modern Christendom.

We can learn much from the book of Leviticus, and many professing Christians agree with this assertion without realizing it. For example, Leviticus 19:26 gives commandments against eating blood, magic spells, witchcraft, and fortune telling. Most Bible-believers from various denominations would agree that we should not be practicing such things. Leviticus 19:28 speaks against an unholy mourning custom – cutting your flesh. It was the practice of many pagan peoples in antiquity to mourn for their deceased loved ones by cutting their flesh, or making gashes in their body. This too would be detestable in the sight of church goers living today.

What about Leviticus 19:29? Here a command is given to the fathers in Israel against prostituting their daughter(s). I believe all fathers reading this book would agree with me that this practice is most detestable. Any father, who is a genuine father, sees his daughter(s) as precious and delicate, as all his family should be. I know that I look at my daughters with eyes of care at all times. I always pray that Yahweh will protect them from all harm, keeping them safe in the licentious world we live in today. I would never even *think* about giving my daughter(s) over to prostitution, yet the command in Leviticus was given thousands of years ago. This being true, I know in my heart of hearts that the command applies in strict detail to me and every other father who reads the verse.

There is yet another command “sandwiched” in between these verses we have briefly covered. It is found in Leviticus 19:27 and concerns itself with the hair of the head and the hair of the face. Most specifically, I want to deal with the hair of the face in this booklet. Basically, the command states, “Ye shall not... mar the corners of thy beard.” I hear someone saying now, “Well, this command is not for me!” The question to you is this: how do you know for sure? Are you *certain* that this command was only for the Israelites of that time, or could it be that it and the surrounding commands given in relation to it, are governing moral principles for all those who consider the author of Scripture to have the preeminence in their lives? Should we throw this command in the basket with the command given to Noah, or should we let it lie in the basket with the command against witchcraft and fortune telling?

Chapter Two

Examining Leviticus 19:27

IT IS ALWAYS delightful to have the opportunity to dwell together with brethren in the faith. Songs in praise to Yahweh are sung and given as a sweet aroma to the throne in heaven. We dwell on pleasant things that the Father has blessed us with, and we ponder all the requests that we've made to Him, meditating on all the times He has given us an answer to a problem in due season. The unity of like-minded believers is a precious gift Yahweh has blessed His people with. I believe we need fellowship as human beings. Yahweh even said concerning Adam in the beginning, that it was not good for him to be alone (Genesis 2:18).

The Father knows that without the company of the brethren it is easy for us to fall away or stray from Scriptural principles. If we do not have brethren encouraging us to keep the faith, we may be on the verge of thinking that certain practices in our lives don't really amount to much. Yahweh gives us a directive through the author of Hebrews by saying that we are not to forsake to assemble ourselves together as the manner of some people (Hebrews 10:25).

The Psalmist commented upon the beauty and delight of the unity of brethren when he wrote in Psalm 133 the following:

Behold, how good and how pleasant *it is* for
brethren to dwell together in unity!

It is like the precious ointment upon the head,
that ran down upon the beard, *even* Aaron's beard:
that went down to the skirts of his garments.
(Psalm 133:1-2)

The brethren who dwell together in unity here, are symbolized by the precious oil that was poured upon the head of Aaron, and soon thereafter ran down the beard of Aaron. Yes, Aaron (Moses' brother) had a beard, and evidently quite an immense one. Some translations say that the beard of Aaron went to the collar of his robes, while others like the KJV here use the phrase "skirt of the garment." Either way we approach it, the beard of Aaron reached down to some article of clothing he was wearing. This was not some 5 o'clock shadow sported by Aaron, this was a full beard, and this beard was used to depict the beauty of the unity of brethren.

Beards are often associated with hippies or maybe even with bikers. I had a friend in high school whose father sported a very big beard, and yes, he was one of those biker dudes. Many churches today frown upon facial hair for their male members. I've known of churches who will not allow men to perform ministerial duties on the platform with hair on their face. If you think this is odd, I've got one even better. There are some churches and individuals who actually believe it is a *sin* for a man to wear a beard! I wonder how they would explain this to Aaron?

While growing up, I was told a story by my Father about a time when he was called to be the Minister of music for a camp meeting held at a particular church. This church was

one that looked down upon facial hair, and seeing my Dad wore a beard, they wore faces of sadness and grief the first days of the meeting. My Father approached the head Minister of the services for that week; the conversation between the two centered on whether or not the Preacher wanted my Dad to shave his beard. This particular Preacher had no problem with a beard, and said that he didn't care whether my Dad shaved or didn't shave.

Well, my Father felt bad that he was causing the revival services to be filled with people who were grieving about what they felt was unholy – his beard. He shaved it off towards the end of the camp meeting and was met at the door of the church with “Praise the Lord!” and “Good to see you Brother!” You may not understand how such a story could actually happen. Yet this is how some really feel about a man wearing a beard; strange, but true.

Aaron most definitely knew the commandments of Yahweh, being a priest in Israel. Aaron was quite aware of the law in Leviticus 19:27 that gave regulations for a man's beard. He was probably even more familiar with the law directed specifically towards him in Leviticus 21:5 where the priests in Israel were not to shave off the corners of their beard. These laws were no doubt what led Aaron to wear a beard. I use the phrase “wear” a beard in lieu of the phrase “have” a beard. This is an important specification. Generally, every man has a beard when he comes of age. Thus, the question is not about whether a man *has* a beard, but whether or not it is acceptable in the eyes of the Creator for a man *to shave* his beard. The question of trimming and grooming the beard would be suitable as well, but to ask about “having” a beard is futile.

You see, the beard of the man is assumed in Scripture, being a natural ornament for men in Israel and elsewhere. Just as Scripture does not have to prove that men have eyebrows or head hair (Leviticus 14:8-9), it also does not attempt to give a lengthy exposition about a man's beard.

This is similar to the doctrine of the Creator in Scripture. The doctrine of the Creator is assumed in Scripture. The very first verse in Scripture, Genesis 1:1 just comes right out and tells us that the Almighty created the heavens and the earth. We do not read a detailed dissertation about why a Creator exists, He is simply assumed to exist. Everyone reading Scripture believed that the Creator is. To think otherwise was to be a pagan. Likewise, everyone reading the Scripture knew that men had beards. There was no need to try to explain anything in this regard. This was a natural adornment for the male gender.

Leviticus 19:27 is most assuredly a command to the men of Israel, as well as a command to any non-Israelite who joined himself to the covenant people (Leviticus 24:22). The command regulates the beard of the man by telling us that men in Israel were not to (1) mar (2) the corners of their beard. This came directly after these same men were told not to round the corners of their head. Just as men had hair on their head, men also had hair on their faces.

What does this command mean; *ye shall not mar*? Mar is a word out of common use today, but the Hebrew word (*shacath*) from which we get the English translation – mar – was used many times in the Hebrew Scriptures. SEC gives as its primary definitions, *to decay or ruin*, while BDB gives its number one definition as *to destroy, corrupt, go to ruin, and decay*.

Several uses of the word *shacath* in Scripture give us an idea of what the word meant and implied in ancient Biblical times. Yahweh uses the word in Genesis 9:11 to describe how He destroyed the earth with the waters of the deluge. David spoke to Abishai in 1 Samuel 26:9, telling him not to destroy the anointed King that Yahweh had placed in authority. David's reference was to taking the *life* of King Saul. Thus, to *shacath* the King, meant to *kill* the King.

Jeremiah 13:7 speaks of a girdle that had been hidden in the ground. When this girdle was uncovered, it was found to be marred (*shacath*) and profitable for nothing. We also have

Exodus 21:26 telling us that a master who struck one of his male or female servants, causing their eye to perish, was to let such a servant go free. The word “perish” in the text is the Hebrew word *shacath*, and noticeably means that the eye of the servant was destroyed and could no longer be used. This being the case, they were to be released from servitude.

One very interesting use of this Hebrew word can be found in Genesis 38:9. This passage gives evidence for what is sometimes called the Levirate Law, the law that deals with a man raising up seed to his deceased brother’s wife (Deuteronomy 25:5-10). Onan, the son of Judah, was under a requirement to go in unto Tamar (his deceased brother’s wife) and give her a child. Seeing that Onan knew the seed would not really be his, he spilled his seed on the ground rather than using it in the manner prescribed by Divine Law. This act did not please the heavenly Father, thus Genesis 38:10 tells us that Yahweh slew Onan.

What is fascinating about this can be found by researching the word “spilled” in the text. This word is none other than the Hebrew word *shacath*. Onan’s seed was useless, now on the ground. It was profitable for nothing. Onan had caused it to go to ruin or to be destroyed.

Applying the understanding we get from these Scriptures and the remaining uses of the word *shacath* in Scripture, I think it is safe to say that the command in Leviticus concerns destroying one’s beard. The way to destroy a beard is to remove it; the way to remove it is to shave it off. A beard that has been shaved has been “*shacathed*.” The men of Israel were not to shave off their beard.

We then come to the word “corners.” I feel that we have a somewhat poor English translation of the Hebrew text at this point. Unless all men are Herman Munster look-a-likes, we do not have corners on our heads or faces. They are in the shape of a circle or an oval, not a square.

The word corner, in the Hebrew language, is the word *pe’ab* or *pe’ot* (plural). The word is translated as “sides” 65

times in the KJV and “corners” only 11 times. In my studies, I’ve come to the conclusion that each place where the word corners appears in English could have been better translated as either side(s) or border(s). The word has a direct reference to the side or landmark of a property (Numbers 35:5) or to the borders of a garden (Leviticus 19:9).

Basically the command can be seen in two different ways. The border of the beard is the outline that forms the image, just like the border of an ocean or the border of a field. A man has a distinct border on his face where hair begins to grow; around the cheek line, below the jaw, under the bottom lip, and on the neckline. This border is not to be removed, in other words, a man is not to shave off his beard. The beard is to remain intact.

More specifically, I think we can also understand the command to be prohibiting the removal of the sides of the beard and just having a goatee. In the context of the surrounding nations, especially the Egyptians, this fits hand-in-glove. As we will see later, the Egyptians were notorious for being either clean shaven or partially shaven on their face and head. Oftentimes the sides of the beard would be removed, leaving only a goatee. Yahweh wanted his chosen people to be holy, and this is why He gave the commands of Leviticus 19 (Leviticus 19:1-2). Thus Yahweh told His people to not remove the sides of their beard, i.e. keep their beards full. Let it grow in all places where Yahweh naturally causes it to grow.¹

What this begins to show is that in ancient Biblical times you could tell who a man worshiped by the way his beard looked, as well as his hair (Leviticus 19:27a). A man with a full beard was not a worshiper of false gods, while a man with

¹ Using this logic leads me to also leave my mustache in tact. While the mustache can be considered separate from the beard, it can also be included with the beard as a man’s natural facial hair.

a goatee or clean shaven face most likely worshiped Dagon or Baal.

I should briefly deal with somewhat of a technicality, which is the issue of trimming and grooming the beard. I personally have seen nothing in sacred Scripture that prohibits a man grooming his beard so as to keep a neat and tidy appearance. Surely, the word *shacath* does not cover trimming a man's beard, thus, the command in Leviticus allows for grooming to be accomplished. One may wonder how much of the beard can be trimmed? The Scriptures just do not give us the inch and centimeter measurement to answer this question precisely.

I have been asked before about long hair on men. I believe the Scriptures teach that men should not have long hair like women (1 Corinthians 11:14-15), but at the same time I also believe that the hair of Israelite men in antiquity was longer than the hair of most men today.² My reasons for believing this are not in the general scope of this book, but I bring them up for this aim: How long does a man's hair have to be to be *too* long? Can you answer that question for me, with precision? It's a rather difficult one in my estimation, seeing that Scripture does not directly tell us. I do believe we can naturally look at a man's hair and decide within ourselves if we feel it has made a breach into womanhood, but to place an exact measurement on it; that I cannot do.

Applying this logic to the beard causes me to shy away from "shadow beards" or "stubble beards." I know for sure that the beards of the Israelite men could be pulled (Isaiah 50:5-6). For this reason I keep my beard long enough to be adequately pulled. This is not because I *want* it to be painfully

² My reasons for believing this are based upon a few examples in Scripture and most directly upon Leviticus 19:27a. For a detailed examination of this text, and other issues involving hair in Scripture, contact us for a CD set entitled *The Long and Short of It*.

pulled (smile), but only because I'm doing my best to not destroy the borders of my beard.

Another word must be briefly brought up about some men who cannot grow big beards. I'm one of them so I can pick on us! My beard definitely does not grow as well as I'd like it to. I should be resolved in myself about this seeing that Yahweh knows best when it comes to my design, but my humanity wishes for a much larger beard. I do know men who only grow a little bit on the sides and just barely a little bit more on the chin. What can we make of this?

Such men still cannot destroy the borders of their beard, for this is all that Yahweh commands. Yahweh does not command a man to have a foot long beard, though Aaron did seem to have such a beard. Yahweh knew that He would cause facial hair to grow better on some men than others. A man who doesn't violate Leviticus 19:27b, and yet has only a very small amount of hair growing on his face is perfectly fine. Be encouraged my fellow small bearded brethren!

One last point in regards to shaving verses trimming. Students of Scripture know that there are certain laws given specifically to the Priestly class. This is true whether we are speaking of the Levite Priests or of the Overseers (Bishops) in the New Covenant era. Laws given to those in such a class are either on equal footing or stricter footing than laws given to, let's say, the laymen in the community. The Priestly class never has a law that is less strict than the common class. This is because the Priests have a role to play that is somewhat *more holy* (more accountable) than the common people. I do not mean that they are more holy in and of themselves, only that Yahweh places a difference between the common man and the Priestly man. Leviticus 21:14 illustrates this by saying that the priest could not marry a woman that was a widow or divorced. This was not a requirement for the common man (Deuteronomy 24:1-4).

My intent in brining this to light is found in the command I mentioned earlier. Leviticus 21:5 forbids the priest to shave

off the corners (borders, sides) of his beard. The Hebrew word here for shave is the word *galach*, meaning to make bald. What this shows is that the command given to the common man in Israel (Leviticus 19:27b) could not have been prohibiting trimming the beard, else this would mean the common man had stricter regulations than the Priestly man.

Men of Israel wore beards. They did not shave. This was because the Mighty One of Israel, Yahweh, prohibited such. Yahweh caused hair to grow naturally on the face of the Israelite men, and directed them not to follow in the customs of the heathen who shaved off the hair of the face. I believe as we continue, you will see this precept is not one that applied only to those living at that time, but is a general precept for men throughout all time. The best way to show this is to continue in Scripture, showing the beard of a man to be a mark of honor, dignity, and even masculinity.

Chapter Three

Biblical Significance

I AM VERY blessed to have a wonderful wife. Yahweh most assuredly has smiled on me in the area of my help meet. I often sit and think about all the things I can be thankful for in my marriage; all the time my wife helps me with daily chores, situations, problems. She continuously seeks to find ways to please me and to give me respect as her husband. This causes me to seek to find more and better ways to love my wife. I want to take tremendous care of the gift from Yahweh. Scripture tells us that a man who finds a wife finds a good thing, and finds favor with Yahweh (Proverbs 18:22). We also find that Yahweh tells us that a man's inheritance comes from his father, but a prudent wife comes from Yahweh (Proverbs 19:14).

If you are a married (or unmarried) man you really need to check out each and every Scripture there is about your wife (for the unmarried – future wife). There is an especial feeling one receives when he not only recognizes his spouse as his spouse, but also sees her as precious, delicate, comely, pleasant, and given by the Father. Understanding the *Biblical significance* of your wife is of utmost importance.

Oftentimes my wife and I discuss Scripture. Of course I am always right! No, seriously, I glean a lot from my wife's wisdom in the Scriptures. I sure wish I had her reading comprehension skills. I've never known a person to take a 500 page book and read it in 5 hours and at the same time remember complicated minutiae embedded within the storyline. There are times when my wife assured me she had read a certain fact in Scripture that I just couldn't remember. When checking her out, I've seen that she remembered accurately.

The both of us do realize that understanding the Biblical significance of customs or practices is vital to our relationship with the heavenly Father. We also know that we don't have to always understand the *why* of something in order to practice that certain something. I know a Sister in the faith that wrote a beautiful song titled, "Obey Me First and Understand Later." The song was about trusting in Yahweh and leaning not to your own understanding, as Proverbs 3 speaks of. We should not tell Yahweh, "Well, if I cannot know your reason for commanding this then I am not inclined to recognize it as a heavenly instruction." This attitude misses the reality of Yahweh's holiness. We often lack the cognizance of just how holy Yahweh really is. We want to box him in to our personal package and think that He cannot do as He pleases. Scripture teaches that Yahweh is sovereign, and that our faith should be centered on His sovereignty and providence rather than on ourselves as limited, finite human beings.

I remember talking to an orthodox Jewish man years ago about the laws of diet found in Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14. I and a fellow Brother in Messiah were speaking to him when his neighbor came over and entered the conversation. The neighbor asked why we would find it necessary to obey these dietary teachings found in this ancient book called the Bible. I spoke up quickly, "You see, Sir, the Father has given us what's best for us. He knows what 'fuel'

to put into our ‘engine.’” The man responded in haste, “Well, people have now discovered that even some of the animals you deem clean are not healthy for you.” I could have continued on concerning the health aspect of the dietary law, and I could have showed the man the accuracy of my initial statement, but my new Jewish friend approached the situation much better in my opinion.

You see, I began my explanation by putting the cart before the horse. I placed health before holiness. Sure, the laws of diet are meant for health, but first and foremost they are meant for holiness. The Jewish man responded by simply saying, “God told us not to eat those things so we obey Him.” The neighbor didn’t have much to say about the subject after that.

Sometimes we can’t understand the Biblical significance about certain practices, and at those times we must trust Yahweh’s judgment. However, there are other times when Yahweh allows us to get a glimpse of the infinite. He causes us to see the pertinent reasons why He gave various commands.

I believe that I have seen a glimpse of this in relation to the beard of a man, and I would like to share my insight with you in this chapter. I pray that you will diligently research this area for yourself, relying on the Spirit of the Holy One to guide you through Scripture and give you a desire to see even what may seem like a gnat in the midst of a herd of camels.

There are many passages in Scripture that show forth the significance, nay, the *Biblical* significance of the beard. One would not readily think that the Scriptures had much to say about the facial hair of men, but that would be a mistaken notion. The Bible is replete with examples of men who wore beards.

For starters, in 1 Samuel 21 we find the very popular David on a run for his life. Saul was out to kill David, and had previously thrown a javelin at his very own son Jonathan, because his son was attempting to protect David.

David, in his flight, ran into Achish the King of Gath. The problem with this was that the servants of Achish recognized David. They said to themselves, “Isn’t this the one we heard others singing about?” (1 Samuel 21:10-11). Because of this David was worried that his cover would be blown and he would be captured. David knew he must do something and evidently the first thing that came to his mind was to act like a mad man, i.e. insane. David commenced to make marks on the door of the gate of the city, and he let his saliva run down his beard. This was all it took for Achish to think that David was a man who had lost his mind.

What this shows is that (1) David wore a beard, and (2) it was considered reprehensible for a man to treat his beard in the way David was doing. Basically the King was saying, “A man’s got to be insane to treat his beard like that!”

Bible Encyclopedia’s explain that a man’s beard was a mark of manhood. It was most noble for an Israelite man to wear a beard, and for some others as well. *Zondervan’s Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible* states that, “The possession of a beard was a sign of maturity among all the Semitic peoples of the ancient Near East. In most of the languages the word for ‘elder’ or ‘grownup’ is a cognate of the verbal and nominal forms meaning ‘beard’.”¹ In other words, you were becoming a man, a man of honor, when you were old enough to wear a beard.

One of my favorite stories to speak about in Scripture is found in 2 Samuel 10:1-5. The story can also be found in 1 Chronicles 19:1-5. The account relates to us how the King of the Ammonites had died, and how David wanted to show kindness to the son (Hanun) of the deceased King (Nahash). Evidently, King Nahash had showed kindness to David at some point in his life and David desired to return the favor.

¹ *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, Volume 1, 1976, page 495. Merrill C. Tenney – General Editor.

David's favor would be found in a delegation sent to express his sympathy for Hanun's loss.

When David's men approached the city of the Ammonites, Hanun's servants began to fill their new King's head with awful thoughts. "These men are not here to show kindness," they murmured, "they have come to spy out our land in hopes of an attack and overthrowing!" This must have gotten into the innermost of Hanun's mind because he soon thereafter shamed the men of Israel. The shame was done by shaving off one half of their beards, and cutting off their garments in the middle at the buttocks.

I personally do not believe that the backsides of the men of Israel were stark naked at this point, but maybe they were; whatever the case, their garment (robe, tunic) had been cut from normal size. I know I would be ashamed with my buttocks uncovered *with* or *without* underwear. I can't imagine being in public with a robe cut in such a way as to reveal my backside. What a shameful act.

We must not miss what is mentioned in context with such an act, and that is the removal of one-half of the beard. Hanun was aware of the practice of the men of Israel. Hanun knew that their Mighty One forbid them to remove the borders of the beard, so he removed one of the borders or the sides. He destroyed that portion of the beard, and this is mentioned in the same breath as the revealing of the buttocks.

What is interesting about the text is that in verse 5 we see that when David was informed about what had taken place he recognized the shame the men felt from having their beards destroyed. The NIV² version of the text states that the men had been greatly ashamed. David told these men to stay in Jericho until their beards be grown and then return. David did not want to embarrass them any more. "Let the

² NIV is an acronym for the *New International Version* of the Holy Bible.

beard grow back out,” he said, “before coming again into the presence of your fellow people.”

There is one instance where Yahweh commanded a prophet to shave off his beard. I once read an article where a man was convicted to shave his beard because of this prophetic oracle. It saddened me that this fellow would take the passage we are about to look at and make the decision to violate Leviticus 19:27b. The passage I speak of is Ezekiel 5:1-5.

Ezekiel is here told to take a barber’s razor and shave off the hair of his head and his beard. First of all we must not *miss* that Ezekiel wore a beard. Secondly we must not *dismiss* the surrounding verses which explain the reason for Yahweh’s instructions. Yahweh was using this as an object lesson for the people of Israel. He wanted the Israelites to see their moral decay, their utter decadency. Israel was to look to the prophet and exclaim, “What has happened Ezekiel! Don’t you know that our Mighty One forbids such a practice?!” Upon hearing these words the prophet would be able to explain that what they are seeing, they are involved in.

Yahweh did this through another prophet, Hosea. Remember when Yahweh told Hosea to marry Gomer the adulterous woman, loved by another (Hosea 1:2-3; 3:1)? This was to show how Yahweh was symbolically married to an adulterous nation; a nation that continually went after the gods of the surrounding heathen peoples. This doesn’t mean all men should go out and find adulterous women to live with for their remaining days. This was rather an object lesson by which the children of Israel could relate.

When we read the prophetic passage we find that Ezekiel was to remove all of his head and facial hair, burning, striking, and scattering different portions of it. This hair depicted Jerusalem which had been set at the center of all the surrounding nations, meaning that she was supposed to be the righteous example for the other nations to follow. Yet Yahweh says in Ezekiel 5:6 that she (Jerusalem, Israel) had

changed His statutes and judgments more than the nations around her. What a pronouncement upon the chosen people! The other nations had not even received the law from the hand of Yahweh, yet Israel was guiltier than the pagan nations! This immorality was depicted in part by Ezekiel's shaving of the beard. The shaving of the beard signified the *judgment* of the Almighty.

We also find that the removal of the beard signified servitude to heathen man, such as is found in the historical narrative regarding Joseph in the book of Genesis.

Joseph had been thrown into prison for a false accusation from Potiphar's wife (Genesis 39). It appears from Genesis 41:1 that Joseph remained in this prison for over 2 years. After this imprisonment, Joseph was called upon to interpret the dream of the Pharaoh of Egypt. Genesis 41:14 tells us that Pharaoh sent for Joseph, and Joseph shaved and changed his clothing. We know from this that while in prison, Joseph wore a beard.

Some brethren I've talked to about the beard use Joseph as an example of it being acceptable to shave. They reason that because Joseph shaved, we are allowed to do so generally and normally. I think that is reading too much into the text. Think about the life setting, the context, the timing, etc. Joseph was a sojourner and slave in a foreign land. He was not at liberty to practice the Hebraic customs learned from his Father and Grandfather. Furthermore, he was about to come into the presence of the "President" of Egypt. Egypt was notorious for being a clean or partially shaven nation, thus, for Joseph to come before Pharaoh meant he needed to be properly attired (in Egyptian terms) and his face needed to be smooth.

At the most this would show an exception to the general rule of not shaving the borders of one's beard. Although I'm not certain, one *may* be permitted to shave the beard in the case of captivity in a foreign nation where you are made to shave. I think of the children of Israel in the land of Egypt in

Exodus 1 and 2. We realize that the Israelites were in bondage in a strange land. I highly doubt that they were allowed to keep the Sabbath while in Egypt. I mean, the Egyptians were involved in killing their children, why in the world would they permit them to take a day off every week instead of continuing to build the huge treasure cities for Pharaoh?

There *are* exceptions to general rules in Scripture. I know that Leviticus 14:1-9 allows a man to shave his beard after being cleansed of a skin disease. Once again though, this proves that generally, the man wore a beard. The shaving of it was part of a cleansing process from ailment.

Along these lines we must remember that life takes precedence. What I mean is that if my son has an accident on the Sabbath day I am not forbidden to take care of him. Over 200 yellow jackets once stung my son in the space of a few minutes. All glory to Yahweh for sparing his life. This did not happen on the Sabbath day, but if it did I would not have hesitated one second in going to the local emergency room for medical care. Yahweh doesn't expect us to lose our lives for Sabbath observance. We *should* observe the Sabbath, and make extra sure not to profane it, but life takes precedent (Mark 3:4).

I am not saying that Joseph's life was in danger when he shaved his beard, but it may have been. Joseph may have known that Yahweh had a plan for him and that this plan meant that at this time he was going to have to shave in order to make it come to fruition. Nevertheless, the shaving or removal of the beard here signifies submission to heathen authority.

The beard was such a mark of honor and dignity for a Hebrew man that greetings were accomplished between brethren by kissing the beard. That's right, I said *kissing* the beard. This may seem uncustomary today, but it was most certainly the norm in ancient Israel. We generally shake hands

today when making the acquaintance of a person, but in that time the Israelite men would kiss the beard.

We find such a friendly greeting “gone bad” in the story of Joab and Amasa (2 Samuel 20:4-10). Joab, in pursuit of Sheba son of Bicri, came across a man in his own army named Amasa. Joab must not have favored Amasa because of what we read in the text. Joab came to him in a friendly manner, taking Amasa by the beard with his right hand to kiss him. Joab was going to give him the kiss of charity, the brotherly kiss upon the beard. Amasa did not know it but Joab secretly pulled a dagger on him and cut out his bowels. Whew! I really do feel sorry for Amasa as I read the story. I’m not sure that David wanted Joab to do this to Amasa. Amasa *had* disobeyed orders of the King (2 Samuel 20:4) but such an infraction doesn’t call for the punishment of death in my estimation. Any way we look at it, we do see here an example of the brotherly kiss upon the beard.

This may cause you to remember several New Testament passages that mention the “holy kiss.” We have five separate verses in Scripture (Romans 16:16; 1 Cor. 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:12; 1 Thess. 5:26; 1 Peter 5:14) speaking of greeting the brethren with a holy kiss. This was done by kissing the beard of the man.

Understanding what Joab did to Amasa causes us to better understand what Judas did to Yeshua. Matthew 26:45-50 relates to us the account of the betrayal of Yeshua. Judas came to Yeshua with the kiss of charity, but beneath Judas’ “cloak” was not a dagger, but a desire for silver over and against a desire for his teacher and friend.

This gives evidence that our Savior had a beard. If Yeshua the Messiah had a beard, how in the world could a person believe it was sinful, ungodly, or even unkempt to have a beard? Do I believe that Yeshua definitely had a beard? I have to answer that question affirmatively. I *know* that Yeshua practiced the commandments. Scripture tells us that he knew no sin (2 Corinthians 5:21). This would have to

mean that he did not violate Leviticus 19:27b. He did not destroy the borders or sides of his beard. If he was guilty of sin, he could not have been the sinless sacrifice for us. He could not have been the lamb of Yahweh that takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29).

Many theologians believe that the book of Isaiah gives evidence of Yeshua having a beard. Isaiah 50-53 is usually looked upon as being Messianic in its tone. While I know that Isaiah 53 and portions of 52 are Messianic, I'm not as certain about Isaiah 50:5-6, the verse on which theologians base their belief. Nevertheless we can learn from the text about the beard of a man.

At the very least, the verse is speaking of Isaiah the prophet. In the passage the prophet speaks of giving his back to those who beat him and his cheeks to those who plucked out the hair. Do you think you would be ashamed to be beaten with stripes? I know that this is one way that Yeshua was shamed in the Gospel accounts. Lashes were placed upon his back, and this was most assuredly the punishment for a criminal (Deuteronomy 25:2-3). The point to be made here is that Isaiah mentions the plucking of the beard in the same sentence as the lashes upon the back, yet people today would not consider the two to be comparable. This is seen in the fact that many men today do not even wear a beard so that it *could be* plucked out. Men just go ahead and remove the sign of nobility and masculinity given to them naturally by Yahweh their Creator.

Isaiah goes on to say that he did not hide his face from shame and spitting. Spitting in a persons face, even today, is an utmost disgrace. Isaiah mentions this in the passage. The shame he mentions, however, is in direct reference to the pulling out of the beard. It was shameful for the beard of a man to be pulled out. The prophet Ezra (Ezra 9:1-3) in a rage of madness about the sins of Israel, tore his robe, and pulled out some of the hair of his head and beard. This showed the potency of the sins of his fellow brethren. Ezra

could not believe that they would treat Yahweh in this fashion.

As I said before, I'm not sure that Isaiah 50:5-6 has Messianic implications, but many theologians feel that it does. If they are correct, just think about the greater implications we can glean from the passage. The Messiah took upon himself the sins of his people (Matthew 1:21; 2 Corinthians 5:21). This was done by being beaten, mocked, spat upon, and eventually put to death. But do not miss that he very well could have taken on the shame of his people by having his beard plucked out by another. This would readily show the importance and *Biblical* significance of the beard.

Chapter Four

Historical Significance

PROFESSING CHRISTIANS DO not often comprehend the sacredness of the written word of the Father. Nevertheless, our Bibles are not the writings of uninspired, predetermined creatures. Rather, they contain the very utterances of Yahweh Almighty, His very breath. Paul the Apostle put it well when writing to his student, Timothy, by saying, "...all Scripture is given by inspiration of the Almighty" (2 Timothy 3:16). The NIV transmits a further and deeper understanding by stating that all Scripture is "God-breathed."

Our reliance on sacred Scripture needs to be a total reliance. Paul stated that the written word is given to make the man of Yahweh complete, thoroughly furnishing him unto all good works (2 Timothy 3:17). Thus, Scripture is our sole authority in matters of faith and morality. If there is anything that is pertinent to a holy life or righteous living, it can be found in the Scriptures. If someone attempts to state something to be a sin, and this "something" cannot be found in Scripture, you must recognize that this "something" is their personal belief or opinion, rather than the mind of the heavenly Father. Traditions of men that are forced upon people with stringency make the word of Yahweh of none

effect (Mark 7:6-9). This is because such people often lay aside the commandments of Yahweh in order to keep their tradition.

I know of one tradition many reading this book may not be familiar with. The tradition I speak of is when certain denominational churches teach people that wearing jewelry is sinful. I used to be one of these people. I was never really open about my beliefs concerning jewelry, but my wife and I never wore any because we thought it to be quite worldly. I can assure you of this, I didn't think such because I had studied the Bible. It was instead because I *had not* studied the Bible. I was somewhat taken aback to find that many people in Scripture, holy people, adorned themselves with jewels, even at some times in accordance with the command of Yahweh (Exodus 3:20-22).¹

I believe that such traditions also come about when people work backwards to prove a point. I have talked to many good men who seem to feel that unless there is non-Biblical history to support a religious belief, then we should shy away from that belief. This is not wise for one important reason: non-Biblical history is not inspired of Yahweh; it is not breathed of the Almighty, no more than church tradition. Alternatively, we should approach any matter of doctrine by first going to sacred Scripture, and if we then find any corroborating evidence on the historical side, we can benefit from it as well.

One thing people often forget is that the Scriptures themselves are historical information. I recognize the books of the Bible can be divided into those that deal with history, prophecy, law, etc. The point I labor to make is that the Bible tells us what happened in times past, thus, it fits the definition of a history book. Not only is it a book of history, it is a book of *inspired* history. History that you can "bank"

¹ For anyone interested in a more detailed examination of this subject please write us for the booklet titled, *Is Wearing Jewelry Sinful?*

on, seeing Yahweh wrote it as he carried along his prophets by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:19-21 NIV).

In the subject matter of this book we have found that inspired history, the Scriptures, has spoken well and clear on the issue of men shaving off the natural hair growing on their faces. This evidence is sufficient. Yahweh has revealed to us His will on the matter without going any further. At the same time, we do need to understand that others have seen Yahweh's will on this matter in antiquity. What I mean is that we find confirming evidence in non-Biblical history concerning the beard being a mark of nobility and honor. We find others who have believed that a man should not shave off his beard.

Most certainly, this is not to say that every religious person throughout history has felt the same about shaving. A quick glance at the pictures of former Presidents of the United States shares this information with us. I am just saying that there are those before us that believed that men should not remove the mark of masculinity that Yahweh gave them. Many men in the past have believed in wearing a beard.

I would like to begin now with a famous children's story, but before I do, it would do us well to recognize that it was customary for many men in ancient times to swear by the hair of the beard. Why do this, one might ask? Well, let's say you desired for your fellow neighbor to know for sure that you were telling the truth. "I swear it's the truth!" you say. You then add "I swear by my beard!" This would show that you considered the beard to be a prestigious thing.

I don't really think that such swearing is permissible. Yeshua stated in Matthew 5 that oaths between persons were not to be made frivolously. One need not go around making oaths by heaven, earth, Jerusalem, or even the hair of head according to Yeshua (Matthew 5:36). I think that Yeshua most likely was including the beard when mentioning the hair of the head. A man that has to swear to you every time he

makes a statement is probably not a bearer of truth. Yeshua taught that our yea's should be yea's and our nay's be nay's.²

Smith's Bible Dictionary, under its heading titled "beard" states, "The beard is the object of an oath, and that on which blessing or shame is spoken of as resting."³ Many other sources and references tell us of this ancient practice to validate ones word, and we find a vestige of this in the children's story I mentioned earlier.

Most of us have heard the story of the three little pigs. We know that the "big, bad wolf" wanted to devour these piglets, and because of this he asked them one by one if they could open the doors of their houses to let him in. The reply in the story is always the same, "Not by the hair of my chinny chin chin, I won't let you in."

Here we have an oath, based upon the beard. Humorous you say, well maybe, but it does show that whoever authored the children's story recognized a practice that existed some time ago; the practice of swearing by what was considered to be a mark of nobility on a man.

You may have heard before of a man named Clement of Alexandria. He often comes up in discussions about the "early church fathers." Clement is considered to be such a father, and many of his writings have been kept in tact for us to examine and learn from in the century we now live. This is quite fascinating seeing that he wrote during the 2nd century A.D. That's between 100 and 200 A.D; in other words, over 1800 years ago.

In his writings, Clement comments on the beard, making statements like, "For God wished women to be smooth, and rejoice in their locks alone growing spontaneously, as a horse in his mane; but has adorned man, like the lions, with a beard,

² This is not to say that oaths to Yahweh should not be taken. Yahweh makes it clear in Scripture that oath taking is permissible (Numbers 30:1-2; Deuteronomy 6:13).

³ *Smith's Bible Dictionary*, by William Smith, L.L.D. (1813-1893), page 79.

and endowed him, as an attribute of manhood — a sign this of strength and rule... This, then, the mark of the man, by which he is seen to be a man, is older than Eve, and is the token of the superior nature.”⁴

The above paragraph shows that Clement realized the beard had something to do with masculinity. The male gender was not to appear as the female gender, i.e. smooth faced. We shall delve into this a bit later.

Clement also stated, “For an ample beard suffices for men. And if one, too, shave a part of his beard it must not be made entirely bare, for this is a disgraceful sight.”⁵ This man obviously did not believe in destroying the borders of the beard.

Many of the men who spear-headed and took part in the Protestant Reformation agreed with Clement, or more correctly, agreed with Scripture. I don’t know if the wearing of the beard by the Reformers stemmed from a disdain of anything Roman Catholic, or because they truly believed such to be commanded in Scripture. In either case, many of the Reformers wore beards. Men like Peter Waldo, Heinrich Bullinger, William Farel, John Calvin, and John Wycliffe all donned beards.

William Tyndale, a man to whom we owe a great amount of respect, wore a beard. This man was responsible for the first English translation of the Scriptures. Tyndale was continuously dodging persecution from the Roman Catholic Church in his day, all for the sake of translating the Bible into the language of the common people. On October 6, 1536 William Tyndale was strangled and burned at the stake. His last words before death were, “Lord, open the King of England’s eyes.” William Tyndale, friends, wore a beard, and

⁴ *The Early Church Fathers* (Anti-Nicene Fathers), Volume 2, Fathers of the Second Century. Book 3:3. Electronic Edition STEP Files Copyright © 1998, Parsons Technology, Inc., PO Box 100, Hiawatha, Iowa. All rights reserved.

⁵ *Ibid*; Book 3:11

in 1528 he stated, “Shaving was borrowed from the heathen.” and, “The shaven nation hath put Christ out of his room.”⁶

I know from pictures that the great Baptist preacher, Charles Haddon Spurgeon, wore a beard. This man is sometimes called the “Prince of Preachers.” His ministry spanned the 19th century. I have also heard a preacher here in Georgia make the statement that Spurgeon required all of his Deacons to wear beards. This preacher has a picture of Spurgeon and his Deacons, all beard wearers.

In 1859, an Englishman by the name of James Ward wrote a pamphlet entitled, “A Defense of the Beard.” In it he listed 18 reasons why a man was, “...bound to grow a beard, unless he was indifferent as to offending the Creator and good taste.”⁷

At this point I would like to remind the reader that it was the custom of the Egyptians to be clean or partially shaven. In Scripture, Egypt is a type of sin, slavery, and bondage. I recall the first words from the mouth of the Creator before uttering the 10 commandments. “I am Yahweh...” He says, “which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage (Exodus 20:2).” Egypt was not a type of liberation from sin, a liberty that allowed a man to joyfully live within the confines of the perfect law of Yahweh. Egypt was the antithesis of such.

The Jewish Encyclopedia states under the heading “beard” the following information:

In Gen. xli. 14, Joseph’s shaving does not belong to the Palestinian, but to the Egyptian, custom. The Egyptians of the higher classes shaved the Beard carefully; fashion allowing only sometimes a small tuft under the chin. The long, pointed chin-tuft of the primitive Egyptians (preserved among

⁶ *Oxford English Dictionary*, Volume XV, 2nd Edition, 1989, page 194.

⁷ *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, Volume 2, James Hastings, General Editor.

their Hamitic relatives, the Libyans and the inhabitants of Punt) was kept as an artificial Beard, tied to the chin on state occasions and at religious ceremonies. Of the other nations coming in contact with Israel, the Hittites and the Elamitic nations shave the Beard completely, as the earliest Babylonians had done...⁸

See, the Egyptians (among other nations) did not regard the natural mark of Yahweh between the sexes. When Yahweh causes hair to grow upon a man's face and does not cause it to grow upon the face of a woman, removing that mark blots out a natural distinction between the sexes. The above Encyclopedia informs us that many Jewish sages agree, "...basing the objection to such removal on the ground that God gave man a Beard to distinguish him from woman, and that it is therefore wrong to antagonize nature."⁹

What this reminds me of is a passage of Scripture in Deuteronomy 22:5. This text is a command given from Yahweh that concerns itself with women wearing that which pertains to men, and men placing upon themselves a woman's garment. Everyone participating in such practices are said to be an abomination to Yahweh.

There are many texts of Scripture that I've seen taken and twisted in a variety of ways. How often I hear a Scripture being used to prove a doctrine of some particular church, when the Scripture used is taken completely out of its original intent and context. Context is often the key to proper Scriptural interpretation. One such passage is Deuteronomy 22:5. It has been used by men today to prohibit women from wearing pants, when in actuality pants were not even in the picture when Moses penned these words.

⁸ *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, taken from jewishencyclopedia.com, article by Cyrus Adler, W. Max Muller, and Louis Ginzeberg.

⁹ *Ibid.*

Any study at all will reveal to a person that both men and women wore the same basic apparel in ancient Scriptural times. This apparel is what is known as a robe or a tunic, a long shirt-like garment with long or medium sleeves reaching anywhere from the knees to the ankles. Sure, there were most likely masculine and feminine styles as there has been throughout history, but the fact remains that the apparel worn was the same. One Hebrew word (*ketonet*) describes what Yahweh clothed Adam and Eve with after their fall into sin (Genesis 3:21). What this shows is that Yahweh was not condemning “pants-swapping” in Deuteronomy 22:5. Both sexes standing before Moses would be wearing robes.¹⁰

What then is the meaning of the verse? When one is able to let go of tradition and the doctrines of men, they can see the depth and even the beauty of the command in Deuteronomy. The command is basically stating that men need to be men (masculine) and women need to be women (feminine). Granted, it states such in an idiomatic format, but this is not a foreign format in Scripture.

Do you remember when Samson told a riddle to several young fellows at his wedding feast? These fellows could not figure out Samson’s riddle, so they coaxed his newlywed wife into revealing the answer to them, telling her that her father’s property would be destroyed if she kept the answer secret. When Samson found out that the men knew the riddle he told them that if they had not plowed with his heifer, they would not have found out the answer to the riddle (Judges 14:18). Do you think Samson was *literally* making reference to the men stealing a female cow from his herd and using her to plow their garden? This is highly unlikely. Samson was instead referring to them coaxing his new bride into telling them his secret. Thus, they “plowed with his heifer.”

¹⁰ For a detailed study on the issue of modest clothing for today, contact us for the booklet entitled *Modest Apparel: for Men and Women*.

We use a similar expression to Deuteronomy 22:5 in the English language today by saying, “Well, she wears the pants in that family!” What we mean when we say this is not that she necessarily wears Levi jeans. A woman can wear only dresses and still “wear the pants in the family.” The phrase is used of a woman who is not allowing her husband to be the head of the household. This woman does not recognize the mandate from Yahweh that she is to be under the authority of her husband (Genesis 3:16).

I find it extremely interesting that there is a particular word used in Deuteronomy 22:5 that is not used anywhere else in the book itself. This is the Hebrew word *geber*. The word *geber*, according to Hebrew lexicons, is a word that emphasizes a man’s strength and ability to fight. In other words, it expresses the masculinity of a man verses the femininity of the woman. Out of the seventy plus times the word man is used in Deuteronomy, the word *geber* (the underlying Hebrew word) is only used twice. Both of these times are found in, you guessed it, Deuteronomy 22:5.

Yahweh is therefore commanding that the feminine gender not take upon her self the items of the masculine gender. I personally believe that Paul had this in mind when he wrote Titus 2:4. This verse teaches that women should be keepers at home, i.e. homemakers. In spite of this verse, how many Christian women do you know that work for a living, placing their children in daycare or public school? She has, in effect, “worn that which pertains to a man” when she does this.

The flip side of this is that the man is not to wear the garment of the woman, i.e., take upon himself things of femininity. Would not the removal of his natural facial hair, given by Yahweh, be taking upon himself a mark of femininity?

I am firmly against transvestites, sex changes, and people who purposefully try to appear as the opposite sex. I believe all these practices violate Yahweh’s command here in

Deuteronomy. However, we cannot limit the precept to these practices and disregard the possibility, nay, the probability that we may just be in violation of the principle laid out in Deuteronomy.

I mentioned at the beginning of this book that there are some laws which are for a particular people or person at a particular time. Laws which distinguish men and women do not fit under this heading. All through the pages of holy writ we find the theme of masculine and feminine. Yahweh places a difference between the sexes, giving man strength, and women delicacy. How many of you men have a wife like mine who always hands you the jar of pickles or peppers to open? This little example shows forth a big principle. Men are different than women. I know, I know, we are losing that frame of mind in 21st century America, but Yahweh has not changed. Men are still the stronger of the two sexes; men still grow hair on their face, while women do not. Men still need to be men and women still need to be women. Deuteronomy 22:5 is still just as applicable today as it was 4,000 years ago.

I have joked with the assembly I teach about changing the signs on the bathroom doors across the country. These doors portray the sexes as stick figures, with one dressed in a skirt-like garment and the other that appears to be wearing absolutely nothing, or I guess people figure he's wearing pants. I have had people seriously point me to such pictures in an attempt to show that pants are the apparel of the man and a woman should not wear them. I do not mean to be rude, but our theology should not be based in what hangs upon the door of a modern day restroom. The distinction made on the restroom doors of America is not Biblical. What I propose is two figures dressed both in robes, but with the male sign having a face with a beard, and the feminine sign having a smooth face with long, flowing hair on the head. Such pictures would show forth a Scriptural distinction Yahweh has placed between male and female. Don't forget,

this is a distinction taught in both Scripture and in Yahweh's creation, nature.

As I close out this chapter let me say that if Deuteronomy 22:5 still applies today, then so would Leviticus 19:27. Men should not shave off the borders of their beard. I find it funny that people have used Leviticus 19:28b to prohibit the wearing of tattoos, while thinking that the verse just prior to it doesn't apply today. I agree that a person should not print marks on his flesh, such as tattoos, but I also see that the verse just before it applies in equal force.

Chapter Five

I Object!

I REALLY ENJOY expressing my thoughts on paper. When I began a small ministry some time ago, my reasons for doing so were based in zeal to equip people with Bible based teachings to study and learn from. I wanted to print up pamphlets, articles, books, etc. and give them away in hopes of encouraging others to dig deep into the word of Yahweh, rather than spending all of their time watching sitcoms and soap operas. I believe that I have begun to accomplish my goal. I have had many people tell me how much they appreciate the time and effort put into the material produced. I surely do not say this to exalt myself. I would be nothing but for the grace of my Creator and His Son and Holy Spirit. I realize that everything I accomplish in this life finds its foundation or authorship in the Spirit's effectual working in my heart. We should all feel this way very strongly.

When you write, talk, converse, or make it a point to voice your beliefs, let me assure you, everyone's not going to agree with you. It's refreshing to get a call of encouragement, but if you think every call you get is going to be a "breath of fresh air" you've got another thing coming! Some time ago, a movie gave out what has become a very popular phrase, "Life is like a box of chocolates. You never know what you're going to get." Anyone who has experienced dealing with people knows the truth of that statement.

There are several articles and booklets I have written that include sections on answering objections from critics, and even with this subject, such needs to be done. Let me say that I am not one who minds objections. Disagreement sharpens a person's mind. Sometimes you will find out that you were wrong, and at other times you will see deeper into your initial thought and grow stronger in what you originally believed. I know a brother in the faith who humorously states, "One time I thought I was wrong, but then I got to checking and found out I was right."

People do hate to be wrong, and no one enjoys being publicly humiliated, even in a battle of wits. There are just times when we have to let go of what we once thought was right and hang on even stronger to the truth of the matter. If we catch a glimpse of the truth and forsake embracing it, we will dig ourselves deeper and deeper into the mud pit of error. Believe me, error will beget more error. I've seen some of the worst theology from people on subjects where they just beget error after error instead of humbling themselves and recognizing that they were mistaken on what they first thought was fact.

I don't mean to bring up such a ticklish topic, but such is the case with the practice of a man having more than one wife. The Bible forthrightly allows and/or permits a man to take more than one wife (Exodus 21:10; Deuteronomy 21:15-17; 25:5-10; 2 Chronicles 24:1-3; 2 Samuel 11:7-8). I don't know of a single negative word the heavenly Father ever spoke about this practice. However, some men, even theologians for some reason or another, do not want to believe that the practice is acceptable, therefore they work very hard at trying to make the Bible say and teach something that it just doesn't say or teach. I've read one scholar's statement that "wicked Lamech" was the first man to take two wives (Genesis 4:19, 23), and he was from the seed of Cain. Consequently, we shouldn't be involved in this wicked practice.

The problem with this idea is that Lamech is never referred to as “wicked Lamech.” This particular scholar is reading into the text something it does not say. I should also note that if we are going to abide by such logic then no one should be involved in tent dwelling, herding cattle, musical instruments, or brass and iron. This is because the first people to be involved in all these things were from the seed of Cain (Genesis 4:20-22). Do we really want to follow such convoluted logic?

I am not trying to be discourteous in any way, but we have to realize that we are called to believe the Scriptures even if they do not “fit our fancy.” Truly, a man shows his love for the Creator when, in spite of his personal opinions and feelings, he goes ahead and takes Yahweh’s word on a matter. This man says, “I don’t understand it, but because You said it Father, I am called to believe it.” This is called not leaning to your own understanding.

There have been objections given to me concerning a man wearing a beard, and I would be foolish to ignore these objections and just hope that they go away. I have a daughter who thinks that if she closes her eyes, people cannot see her. She actually sits in the dentist’s chair with her eyes closed and her hand over her face thinking that somehow this puts a blockade between her and the eyes of another person. My daughter is not old enough to understand this concept, but I am. I am also old enough to realize that when people ask questions they deserve answers; when people give objections, they need to be dealt with.

I have a friend of mine who is clean shaven and he continuously gives me the objection I am about to bring up. I continuously give him the same answer, to which he has not responded satisfactorily. The objection begins by giving an example. We know that the 10th commandment in Exodus 20 commands us not to covet the belongings of another person, such as his wife, donkey, house, etc. Does this mean that if our neighbor doesn’t have any one of the above items

in his possession, we need to provide him with such items so we can obey the command not to covet his belongings?

The answer to this question should be obvious. If your neighbor does not have a wife, then you cannot possibly covet “the wife he does not have.” The same would hold true for the donkey or the house. The command would only apply if your neighbor *had* these items. Of course one’s neighbor is going to inevitably have something in their possession that we should not covet.

With the beard, however, there is a huge difference. Every young man comes to a time in his life when he begins to grow hair on his face. I guess there are exceptions, but they are rare. At this point in a young man’s life he can either: (1) shave, or (2) not shave. To those men who choose to be clean shaven I have to ask, what are you shaving? Why do you shave? The answers to these questions are not difficult. Men shave to remove hair growth on their face. Every man has a beard. As I said earlier in this study, the issue is not about whether a man should or should not *have* a beard – every man has a beard; Yahweh put it there. The question is should a man *shave off* that beard. When men shave, they are shaving the hair on their face, thus they are shaving their beard. If they ceased to shave, the beard would grow. To shave does indeed destroy the borders on one’s beard. A beard is just as natural as fingernails or toenails; shaving is what is unnatural. In the end, a man may or may not have a wife, donkey, or house, but every man that comes of age does have a beard.

A beard is a natural sign of the masculine gender. Earlier, if you will recall, I dealt with the command in Deuteronomy 22:5, which speaks of masculinity and femininity. There is a verse that fits well with this command in the New Testament writings, and that is Revelation 9:7-8:

And the shapes of the locusts were like unto
horses prepared unto battle; and on their heads

were as it were the crowns like gold, and their faces were as the faces of men.

And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as the teeth of lions.

John, in describing these locusts, gives us character traits of their outward appearance. In the midst of this he states that their faces were as the faces of men. Now I ask you, what does the face of a man look like?

Most commentators that I have consulted on this text give this sentence a very quick glance, believing that John had in mind humanity, that is, the locusts had human faces. I would agree with these commentators, but that is not where I would stop. To say that a human face and a human face alone is what John intended to convey does not fit the context. Sometimes the word “man” is used to refer to humanity in Scripture incorporating male and female, but here it is used in distinction to women.

Notice that verse 8 begins by saying that the locusts had hair as the hair of women. I do not know of any other understanding here but that the locusts had long, flowing hair – hair like women (1 Corinthians 11:14-15). What this shows is that when the word “men” is used in verse 7, it is denoting the male gender in distinction from the female gender in the verse immediately following. The face of a male is different from the face of a female. The distinguishing characteristic of a male face is that his face dons a beard while a female’s face is smooth. This must be what John intended to relay in Revelation 9:7. He saw that the locusts had bearded faces.

John knew well that man’s natural adornment for the face was the beard. I’m sure that John was also aware of the close relation of the Hebrew words for elder and beard. The Hebrew word used for the elders of the children of Israel is *zāqen* (pronounced zah-cane), while the Hebrew word for beard is *zāqan* (pronounced zah-con). Basically the word elder denotes one who is bearded, meaning a man has

reached an age in his life where Yahweh now gives him a beard on his face.

Next we come to somewhat of a complex objection that I came across when I first began to study the issue of the beard. This objection stems from noticing verses in Scripture that seem to connect the removal of the beard with mourning rites, i.e. pagan mourning rites. Some people argue that a man was not to remove his beard while mourning for the dead. To remove the beard for other reasons, whatever they may be, would be permissible in their estimation.

Let's begin the response by journeying back to Leviticus 19:27, or better yet, verses 26-29.

Ye shall not eat *any thing* with the blood: neither shall ye use enchantment, nor observe times.

Ye shall not round the corners of your heads, neither shalt thou mar the corners of thy beard.

Ye shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor print any marks upon you: I *am* Yahweh.

Do not prostitute thy daughter, to cause her to be a whore; lest the land fall to whoredom, and the land become full of wickedness.

I have had others tell me that the command to not mar the corners of the beard is used in the same context of the “for the dead” phrase. Notice above that Leviticus 19:28 states that cuttings in the flesh are not to be made and then it specifically states that this is in reference to doing such “for the dead.” It was an ancient pagan custom to mourn for one's deceased loved one by cutting your flesh, i.e. making gashes in ones body.

The *immediate* problem with this understanding is that the phrase “for the dead” only appears in direct relation to the phrase “cuttings in the flesh.” There isn't any reason to insist that “for the dead” applies to printing marks upon the body,

even though it is found directly after the prohibition against cutting the flesh for the dead. If we do insist on such, then we have just as much right to place the “for the dead” phrase onto verse 29 or verse 26. In other words, it would only be wrong to eat blood or prostitute your daughter if you were doing so “for the dead.” Does that really make logical sense?

Deuteronomy 14:1 is sometimes thrown into the mix here, and rightfully so. We read in this verse, “Ye are the children of Yahweh your Mighty One: ye shall not cut yourselves, nor make any baldness between your eyes for the dead.” Deuteronomy 14:1 does compliment Leviticus 19:28. It mentions (1) cutting of the flesh, and (2) baldness between the eyes. However, notice that nothing is stated here concerning rounding the corners of the head or marring the corners of the beard. We see from Deuteronomy 14:1 that the practice of making baldness between the eyes was prohibited with the “for the dead” clause, and although this clause is not immediately attached to the prohibition of cuttings in the flesh, it is attached specifically to it in Leviticus 19:28. This shows that both (1) cuttings in the flesh, and (2) making baldness between the eyes, were prohibitions in specific reference to practicing such “for the dead.”

Consider more closely the “for the dead” clause of Leviticus 19:28. Do we *really* believe it’s *only* wrong to cut one’s flesh if you’re doing it for the dead? Do we not know that mutilating the body for any reason is wrong and that Yahweh was specifying that it should not be done *even if* a loved one dies? The point is, just because the commandment against cutting the flesh is specifically joined to “for the dead” doesn’t mean we should go around cutting our flesh and proclaim “Hey, I’m not doing it for the dead, so it’s okay!” The Priests of Baal come to mind here. Remember the contest between Elijah the Prophet and the Baal Priests? These Priests tried so hard to get their god, Baal, to answer them by fire. These Priests cried out from morning until noon, jumping upon the altar they had made. 1 Kings 18:28

tells us that they cried aloud, "...and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them." Now, were they making gashes in their flesh "for the dead"? No, but they were mutilating their body, and this was just as sinful as a person who was doing so "for the dead."

Apply this concept to Leviticus 19:27, which doesn't even join the clause "for the dead" to rounding the corners of the head or marring the corners of the beard. Also, look at Leviticus 19:26, which also doesn't contain the clause. In these cases, the point would even be stronger than the one I made concerning Leviticus 19:28. You couldn't even make the claim "Hey, I'm not doing it for the dead!" because the passages don't say you should not do them "for the dead."

There are three Scriptures I am aware of that show that there were beards shaved off in connection with mourning.

The burden of Moab. Because in the night Ar of Moab is laid waste, *and* brought to silence; because in the night Kir of Moab is laid waste, *and* brought to silence;

He is gone up to Bajith, and to Dibon, 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.

In their streets they shall gird themselves with sackcloth: on the tops of their houses, and in their streets, every one shall howl, weeping abundantly. (Isaiah 15:1-2)

That there came certain from Shechem, from Shiloh, and from Samaria, *even* fourscore men, having their beards shaven, and their clothes rent, and having cut themselves, with offerings and incense in their hand, to bring *them* to the house of Yahweh. (Jeremiah 41:5)

Therefore mine heart shall sound for Moab like pipes, and mine heart shall sound like pipes for the men of Kirheres: because the riches *that* he hath gotten are perished.

For every head *shall be* bald, and every beard clipped: upon all the hands *shall be* cuttings, and upon the loins sackcloth.

There shall be lamentation generally upon all the housetops of Moab, and in the streets thereof: for I have broken Moab like a vessel wherein *is* no pleasure, saith Yahweh. (Jeremiah 48:36-38)

The above passages are quite clear. What they prove is that the heathen did shave the hair of the head and the hair of beard in mourning. I cannot argue with “clear-cut” Scripture.

However, what they do not prove is that the prohibition in Leviticus 19:27 was only in reference to “for the dead.” I have already answered such argumentation so there is no need to be repetitive at this point. I do want to point out that the three passages do not necessarily prove that it was sinful for a man to shave his head or his beard when mourning for a deceased loved one. We know for sure that Israel was not to gash their flesh in mourning (or to make baldness between the eyes), but to shave the head and face in mourning; we have no direct command against such a practice.

As a matter of fact, when we look at Leviticus 21 in the instructions given to the priest, we find that Yahweh most likely allows the priest to shave his beard off for a specific reason. The reason given in context was the death of an immediate family member. When we read Leviticus 21:5 in context with verses 1-4 it appears that the Levite priests could not defile themselves by shaving their beards, except in the case of the death of someone “next of kin” (Leviticus 21:2-4). Concerning the common men in Israel, we may assume that the same law applied to them, or that they could shave their beard in mourning for any member (not just the next of kin)

of the community of Israel. The law to the common man was either equal or less strict than the law to the priestly class.

In conclusion to answering this objection we must realize that Yahweh never directly states that one is not to shave his beard off “for the dead.” Yahweh only directly states that a man is not to destroy the borders of this beard. I feel that this objection makes an attempt to dodge Yahweh’s will on the matter with a technicality that cannot really and truly be found in Scripture.

As I close out this book I would like to address one final objection that I have had given to me. This objection basically states that a book like this strains at a gnat. What this means is that people feel that there are many more important things to center in on and talk about, other than the facial hair on the male gender.

I’m not about to say that there are not subjects of greater importance. I realize that America as a nation has declined in morality in such a way that the judgment of Yahweh is being carried out in many facets of life. I believe that subjects such as murder by abortion, homosexuality, marital infidelity, etc., must be dealt with Scripturally and forthrightly. That being said, I also believe we must deal with the smaller commandments, or shall I say, the *least* of the commandments.

When Yeshua rebuked the Pharisees for paying tithes of every mint, dill, and cumin (Matthew 23:23) he was making direct reference to their *disregard* for the weightier matters of the law such as mercy, faith, and judgment. Yeshua did not say that they should stop paying their tithes, only that they should not *just* focus upon the tithe paying, but rather on all of what Yahweh’s will was for their lives. They were doing the small jobs meticulously, while at the same time omitting the great.

We should never allow a subject such as the beard to become a matter of self-righteousness. We should never think that just because we do not shave our beard that we have a

one-way ticket to the kingdom of heaven. Yahweh demands complete obedience to Him. Yahweh desires for us to have a longing to obey each and every one of his precepts. A man that has a beard, but does not take care of his wife and children, both physically and spiritually, is following in the footsteps of the Pharisees. He has omitted a weightier matter of the law.

A beard is just one aspect of Yahweh's perfect law (Psalm 19:7). His law does not begin and end with a man's facial hair. I hope and pray that I have made that clear. But let me also make clear that even if the law against shaving is one of the least of the commandments, I still want to be keeping this commandment. Never forget that Yeshua said when we break one of the *least* of the commandments, and teach others to do so, we will be called least in the kingdom of heaven. However, if we do and teach even the *least* of the commandments we will be called great in the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 5:19). Would you like to be called great in heaven's kingdom? If your answer is yes, then let's not forget to keep the least of the commandments.

