



לעילוי נשמת  
 יואל אפרים בן אברהם עוזיאל זלצמן ז"ל

## Haircut for a Bar Mitzva in the Three Weeks

**Question:** My son will have a bar mitzva celebration on Tammuz 22 (without music and dancing). Can he have a haircut right before the party? If yes, can I also have a haircut and shave?

**Answer:** A *mishna* (Ta'anit 26b) forbids hair-cutting during *shavua shechal bo Tisha B'av*. Ashkenazi *minhag* extends this to the entire Three Weeks (Rama, Orach Chayim 551:4).

For your son, there are two grounds to consider for leniency. One is that if he gets it before his halachic birthday, he is then a *katan*. Although we do not normally allow haircutting for *ketanim* (Shulchan Aruch, OC 551:14), the Mishna Berura (ad loc. 82) cites without a clear preference two opinions if this applies during the Three Weeks where the whole prohibition is just a disputed *minhag*. It seems that people are usually *machmir* on this.

Your main question is probably whether the *simcha* of a bar mitzva celebration permits haircuts/shaving. The Rama (OC 551:1) allows the principals to a *brit mila* to wear Shabbat

clothes to the *brit* right up until Tisha B'av. *Acharonim* debate whether or not this leniency applies to haircutting as well, which is more stringent than wearing nice clothes (see Eliya Rabba 551:28; Sha'arei Teshuva 551:1). As we have seen, the Talmudic prohibition is only on *shavua shechal bo*, so that there is extra room for leniency earlier in the Nine Days, and certainly during the Three Weeks.

How does a bar mitzva boy's halachic level of *simcha* compare to the principals of a *brit mila*. The Yam Shel Shlomo (Bava Kama 7:37) proves from the following *gemara* that we can call a bar mitzva a *mitzva* celebration. The *gemara* (Kiddushun 31a) tells of the blind sage, Rav Yosef. Rav Yosef said that if he would be convinced that the blind are obligated in *mitzvot*, he would make a celebration because one who is commanded in *mitzvot* receives more reward for their fulfillment. If a celebration is in place for one finding out that he has always been obligated, it is certainly appropriate (he does not call it an obligation) when a bar mitzva becomes obligated in the *mitzvot*. The Magen Avraham (225:4) and Mishna Berura (225:6) accept this Yam Shel Shlomo. While the bar mitzva *seuda* is not mentioned in the Shulchan Aruch/Rama, it is at least as important as a *siyum*, where we allow eating meat and drinking wine in the Nine Days (Rama, OC 551:10). On the other hand, we do not find people making a *siyum* getting haircuts in the Nine Days. Therefore, *poskim* are not confident about allowing haircuts for a bar mitzva boy (see Nitei Gavriel, Bein Hametzarim 20:6; Mishneh Halachot

(VI:45) regarding a bar mitzva during *sefira*, which is a somewhat weaker level of *aveilut* than the Three Weeks).

In your case, there is also little practical need for a Three Week haircut, as it is generally assumed that a male's hair looks its best several days after the haircut. Therefore, we would recommend doing your son's haircut before the Three Weeks, but if you forgot to do so and he does not look his best, we have seen enough room for leniency for a bar mitzva boy during the Three Weeks (see Nitei Gavriel *ibid.*).

Regarding your shaving, fundamentally, when haircuts are forbidden, that includes shaving (Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah 389:1). Rav Soloveitchik is among those who say that those for whom nowadays shaving is no longer done periodically but is daily upkeep, may shave during the Three Weeks. Unless you have a significant beard, shaving before the Three Weeks will not be of much help. We can acknowledge, that you too are likely somewhat of a principal to the bar mitzva (see language of Magen Avraham *ibid.* and notice that you also recite "*Baruch shepetarani ...*" (Rama, OC 225:2). Rav Mordechai Willig (Am Mordechai, Berachot 29) explains that the father is celebrating the completion of the fulfillment of the formal *mitzva* to educate his son. Therefore, although you imply you do not shave during the Three Weeks, if you rely on the leniency for a moderately important need (e.g., Shabbat, an important business meeting), it is appropriate to do so for the bar mitzva as well. ■

### Having a dispute?



For a Din Torah in English or Hebrew contact:  
 Eretz Hemdah-Gazit  
 Rabbinical Court  
 077-215-8-215 • Fax: (02) 537-9626  
 beitdin@eretzhemdah.org