

Q. I recently read in a Halacha Yomis that there is a great debate amongst the poskim whether electric shavers may be used for shaving. The Halacha Yomis states that the "Shulchan Aruch (YD 181:10) adheres to the second view and permits shaving with any scissor-like device, even if it results in a shave which is similar to that of a razor". Does that mean that those who prohibit shavers are disagreeing with the Shulchan Aruch? (A subscriber's Question)

A. The quote you mention is actually taken from Rav Belsky Zt"l's sefer, the Shulchan HaLevi, on p. 127. We can no longer consult with Rabbi Belsky, but we assume that he did not mean to imply that the Shulchan Aruch unequivocally would allow the use of a shaver. Those who allow shavers understand the Shulchan Aruch in a way that supports their position, and those who consider shavers halachically prohibited interpret the Shulchan Aruch differently. The central issue is what does the Shulchan Aruch mean when he writes that "misparayim k'ei ta'ar" (Scissors like a razor) is permitted. Those who prohibit shavers understand misparayim k'ei ta'ar to mean scissors which are similar to a razor. They are similar, but not exactly the same as a razor, in as much as scissors leave over some of the beard's hair (Kuntros Tiferes Adom p. 28). However, shavers which shave and destroy the hair (gilu'ach and hashchasah) and are exactly the same as a razor are not permitted.

On the other hand, those who permit shavers understand the wording of the Shulchan Aruch to mean that a shaver which has a scissors-like mechanism is permitted even if the resulting trim is exactly the same as a razor.

As is often our position, we recommend that everyone discuss these matters with their Rav to receive Halachic guidance.