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BIBLICAL TOPICS FOR STUDY – HATS WORN BY JEWS

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The practice of Jewish men covering their heads is not a direct biblical commandment. There are no specific verses for it. The obligation to wear a kippah is a rabbinic tradition and its interpretation of the Torah. According to the Talmud, the practice of wearing a head covering arose during and after the Roman occupation, to show distinction and respect in the presence of God, the true supreme authority. The only biblical reference we can find about covering the head during prayers is found, in a somewhat suggestive way, in Num. 15: 37-41 and Deut. 22: 12, regarding the fringes of the Tallit placed on the tassels of garments, which served as a reminder to the people to remember and fulfill all the Lord's commandments, avoiding following the desires of the heart and eyes, the two main organs responsible for leading them to sin. Deut. 22: 12 says: "You shall make tassels [*fringes*] on the four corners of the cloak with which you cover yourself", which suggests that the Tallit was a divine instruction during their prayers, to remind His people of the importance of obedience to His commandments and of His covering and authority over them. The tallit is used by men as a covering during Jewish prayers, especially during the morning prayer (Shacharit) and during prayer in the synagogue.

The text of 1 Cor. 11: 4-16 in the New Testament, where the apostle Paul discusses head covering in the context of the early church, does not fit contemporary Jewish practice, for it was written in a cultural and theological context different from rabbinic Judaism. There, Paul was speaking about the husband's authority over the wife (in the sense of 'covering' and 'submission') and about man being created first from clay, then Eve from his rib; in other words, God's authority (covering) over man, and man's authority over woman (v. 3: "But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the husband is the head of his wife, and God is the head of Christ."). Therefore, a man should not keep his head covered (or 'veiled,' in the original Greek sense of the word *katakalyptó*, Strong #2619, from *kata*, Strong #2596, a preposition that means, among other things: down from, against, according to, throughout, during, but it often denotes opposition + *kalupto*: to veil, cover the head, cover, hide, to cover wholly – v.7), in order to be fully receptive to God's will and then guide his wife, who would be in submission to him, humanly speaking, but never spiritually, because the spirit of both belongs to God and not to each other.

In the text of 2 Cor. 3: 14-18, Paul writes regarding the spiritual blindness of his own Jewish compatriots to the manifestation and revelation of the Holy Spirit, which may

corroborate the previous comment about not having their heads covered or veiled: “But their minds were hardened. Indeed, to this very day, when they hear the reading of the old covenant, that same veil is still there, since only in Christ is it set aside. Indeed, to this very day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their minds; but when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit.”

In this way, the veil can symbolize both the spiritual covering over a person and the veiling of their understanding of spiritual things.

Sometimes we see in the Bible the act of covering the head as one of the signs of mourning. For example:

- 2 Sam. 15: 30 – Fleeing from Absalom, David covers his head with his cloak and weeps as a sign of mourning and shame: “But David went up the ascent of the Mount of Olives, weeping as he went, with his head covered and walking barefoot; and all the people who were with him covered their heads and went up, weeping as they went.”

- Jer. 14: 3: “Her [referring to Jerusalem] nobles send their servants for water; they come to the cisterns, they find no water, they return with their vessels empty. They are ashamed and dismayed and cover their heads.”

In the case of hats, from a rabbinical point of view, it is a religious custom for Jewish men to cover their heads, for it signifies the recognition of divine superiority over humankind and is a symbol of humility before God and submission to His will.

Among Jewish garments, we can find various head coverings.

1) Kippah

The kippah is a piece of clothing worn by Jews both as a symbol of the Jewish religion and as a symbol of fear of God; of the recognition of divine superiority over humankind and a symbol of humility before the Creator and submission to His will.



Silk kippot worn at a wedding and crocheted kippot (sold in Jerusalem).

The term kippah (Hebrew: כִּיפָה) literally means ‘dome’, for the kippah is worn on the head like a dome. Kippah is a singular feminine noun; the plural is kippot. In Yiddish, the word is written as keppel or koppel (‘small dome’). The other Yiddish word, yarmlke

(יאַרמלקע), comes from the Polish ‘jarmułka’, which means ‘beret’, or from the Ukrainian, ‘yarmulka’ which, in turn, is derived from medieval Latin, *almutia* (‘cowl’ or ‘hood’). Yarmulke is linked to the Aramaic term ‘yire malka’ [יִרֵא מַלְכָּא, meaning, ‘fear of the King’]. The kippah is similar to the zucchetto (zucchetta or zucchini) in Italian, or skull-cap or calotte [Solideo, from the Latin ‘*solī Deo tollitur*’, meaning ‘only by God is it removed (from the head)’], used by Catholic priests, with varying colors according to hierarchy: white for the Pope, crimson for cardinals, purple for bishops, canons and monsignors, and black for everyone else.

The kippah symbolizes the need to always have the fear of God upon one’s head. Most Jews wear it only when attending a synagogue, during the study of Scripture, in religious ceremonies and during prayer times, while some wear it all day. Some wear it during meals. Among Orthodox Jews, only men wear the kippah, but non-Orthodox branches of Judaism allow women to wear it as well, especially those who are rabbis. Until the 16th or 18th century, head covering was not mandatory as a religious symbol, but from there Ashkenazi Jews began to wear the kippah. There is reference to the use of the kippah by some Jewish communities at the time of the Babylonian exile.

In Israel, kippahs made of knitting or crochet (first made in the late 1940s) are known as ‘kippah serugot’ (‘Knitted or crocheted kippah’), and are generally worn by religious Zionists and modern Orthodox Jews. They can also be made of suede or leather. Most Haredi (traditional) Jews wear kippahs made of black velvet or fabric.

2) Shtreimel

A shtreimel (plural: shtraimlech) is a fur hat worn by many married Haredi men on Shabbat and Jewish holidays and other festive occasions, particularly by members of Hasidic Judaism (one of the branches of Haredi Judaism, with a more traditionally scholarly base and founded in the 18th century in reaction to Rabbinic Judaism).

In Jerusalem, the shtreimel is also worn by Litvak Jews (non-Hassidic Jews from the original Ashkenazi community of Jerusalem). The term ‘Ashkenazim’ refers to the descendants of the first Jews of Eastern Europe, scattered throughout the world after the Holocaust, and comes from the medieval Hebrew word for Germany.



Image above: Shtreimels used by Jews during Passover in the Hasidic community in London.

There is no special religious significance to the shtreimel compared to other head coverings, such as the kippah.

The shtreimel is generally made from the tips of the tails of Canadian or Russian sables [a marten with a short tail and dark brown fur, native to Japan and Siberia and valued for its fur (*Martes zibellina*)], weasels, pine martens [a marten with a dark brown coat, a yellowish throat, and a bushy tail (*Martes martes*)], or American gray foxes. The shtreimel is the most expensive item of Hasidic clothing and is custom-made for the wearer. It is possible to buy a shtreimel made of synthetic fur, which is more common in Israel. It is shorter, wider, and disc-shaped, while kolpiks are taller, thinner, and cylindrical in shape.

The shtreimel is always worn over a kippah and usually accompanies Shabbat attire, unlike regular weekday clothes. It is also worn on Jewish holidays such as Rosh Hashanah [New Year], Yom Kippur [Day of Atonement], Sukkot [Tabernacles], Simchat Torah [the Torah reading on the 8th day of the Feast of Tabernacles], Shemini Atzeret [the solemn assembly on the 8th day of Tabernacles], Purim, Pesach [Passover] and the day after Pesach [Passover], Shavuot [Pentecost], at one's own wedding or the weddings of family members or family members of the Rabbi, and at a brit milah [circumcision] of a direct relative. Typically, the bride's father buys the shtreimel for the groom at his wedding.

3) Hoicher

The expression 'Hoicher Samet' refers to a tall velvet or felt hat. Hoicher or hoycher, in Yiddish, is similar to the German word 'hoher', which means 'tall'. Samet: in Yiddish means 'velvet'. It is a type of hat frequently worn by members of ultra-Orthodox Jewish communities (Haredi) on Shabbat, Jewish holidays, or formal occasions.



Jew at the Wailing Wall, using a Hoicher Samet

4) Fedora

There are large, wide-brimmed black hats, like the Fedora, worn by Chabad Lubavitch (one of the branches of Hasidism. Lubavitch is the Yiddish name for the Russian city of Lyubavichi). These hats are part of daily attire or worn to synagogue, depending on the community and level of observance.

Image below: Wide Brim-Fedora of Wool, used by Hasidic-Jews, and Felt Fedora hat with braids.

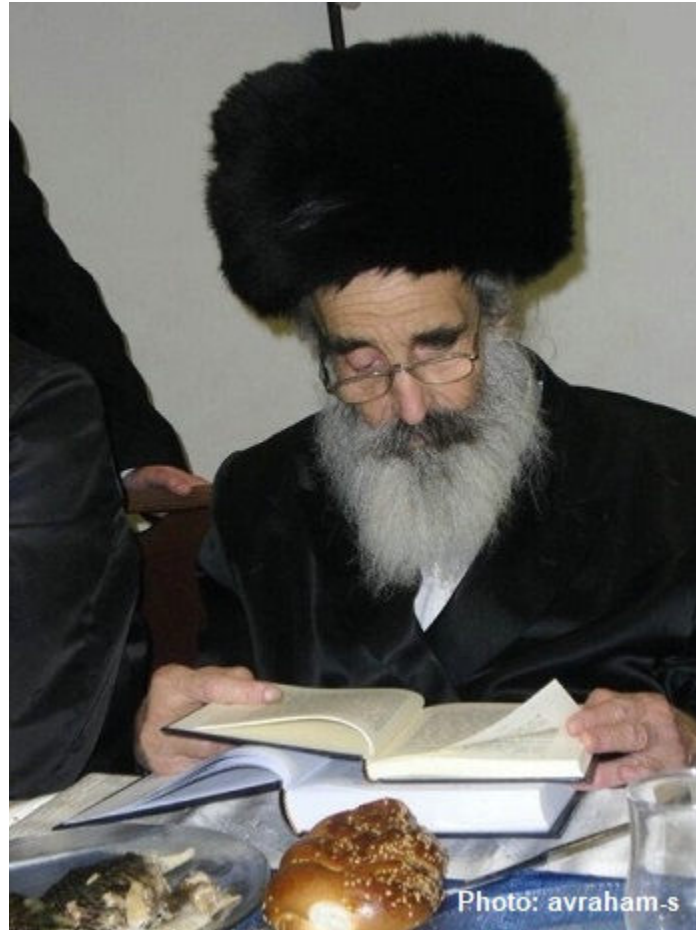


There are others with round or flat crowns, not as tall as the Hoicher Samet. Some Chabad wear the grosgrain ribbon on the right, others on the left. The fabric can be felt or wool.



5) Spodik

The spodik is a tall black fur hat worn by some Polish Hasidic Jews. Because it is dyed, the spodik is a cheaper hat than the shtreimel, which could be worth more or less US\$1,900.



Rabbi Menachem Mendel Mendzon, using a spodik.

6) Kolpik

The kolpik is a traditional cylindrical hat made of brown fur, unlike the spodik, and is worn by unmarried men (the shtreimel is worn by married men) and some Hasidic rabbis of Hungarian descent on special occasions other than Shabbat or major holidays. The shtreimel is shorter, wider, and disc-shaped, while kolpiks are taller, thinner, and cylindrical in shape.

In the image below, Rabbi Moshe Leib Rabinovich using a kolpik.



7) Kashket

The kashket (from the Polish *kaszkiet* and the French *casquette* ‘cap’; also known as *kashkettel* or *kasket*) is a cap, usually made of felt, worn primarily by Hasidic Jewish children as an alternative to the *kippah*. It has a crown, a band, and a brim. From the early 20th century until World War II, many Russian and Polish Jews wore this cap as part of their everyday attire.

In the image below, two boys using the Kashket.



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Main source of research: wikipedia.org