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To the Torah & the Testimony
If anyone does not speak according to these words
It is because they have no light in them.
Yesh'yahu (Isaiah) 8:20; Revelation 12:17; 14:12



On Veils, Head Coverings, and Kippahs

I Corinthians 11

In **I Corinthians 11** a standard has been set forth based on a translation of the Greek forbidding men to pray with any kind of hat on their heads. But is that how the Greek reads? What was the custom of the Hebrew culture at the time? Is that custom consistent with this rendition of the Greek? How did the Rabbi's of the time view hats on men? And is this passage about what men are not to wear when praying, or about what women are to wear when praying? Is this tradition of removing the hat during prayer a tradition of the early 1st century assembly, or a tradition of the Reform Catholic (Protestant) church? Exactly what is I Corinthians really about?

To begin, I will first present all of the verses in the Tenach (Old Testament) addressing the matter of various types of head coverings to establish the mindset of the Hebrew culture towards head coverings in Yeshua's day. You can find these verses with the Hebrew definitions of the various types of head coverings (identified by a number preceded by an "H") at the end of this study.

First, historically, we can establish that to prevent lice infestations, people in the first century commonly wore either a hat, a veil, or a wig in order to prevent lice from laying eggs in their hair; so that to be bare headed was to risk unnecessary infestation of lice. The environment was not clean like that of our modern culture as well. Many roads were dirt roads, and the air when travelling dusty. Water for bathing was also not readily available, and so covering the head to protect the hair served more than just the purpose of modesty, or to establish stature, or to acknowledge dignity, or dedication to God; but it also served the practical purpose of maintaining personal cleanliness in the practice of personal hygiene.

But coming back to Scripture, what are some of the examples in Scripture of other reasons why a person would not desire to be bare headed?

One reason would be to disassociate oneself from leprous individuals. In **V'yikra (Leviticus) 13:45** the leper, to be more readily identified among the population, was forbidden to wear any kind of hat/head covering or veil. That is, by being forbidden to cover his head with anything, the leper could be more readily recognized as an unclean person in the midst of the head covered population.

Likewise, in **B'midbar (Numbers) 5:18** the woman suspected of adultery had to remove her veil to expose her potential shame; and so another reason to veil one's head would be to disassociate oneself from the appearance of sexual impurity.

Another reason would be to disassociate oneself from sinners in general. In **Yechezk'el (Ezekiel) 21:26** God commanded the turbans (**H4701**) and hats of dignity (**H5850**) to be removed from the princes of Israel as punishment for their wicked conduct.

In **Yesh'yahu (Isaiah) 3:18-20** the beautiful head coverings (**H6287**) of the women were removed as punishment for their sins; and in **Lamentations 5:16** the hats of dignity (**H5850**) of the men were removed because of the sin of the people.

And in **Yesh'yahu (Isaiah) 3:23** turbans/tiara's (**H6797**) are removed from women's heads as punishment as well as other types of head coverings, verses **3:18-23 (H6287, H7196, H7289, H7636)**; and in **Yesh'yahu (Isaiah) 47:2** women's veil's (**H6777**) are removed as punishment.

Another reason people of the time would refrain from removing a head covering was because it was seen as a form of personal humiliation. Like as in **Yyob (Job) 19:9**, where the removal of his dignifying hat (**Awt-aw-raw**) was perceived by Job as a humiliation - as a stripping of his former glory by God. And in **Song of Solomon 5:7** the veil (**H7289**) was also removed to humiliate.

Concerning these samples from Scripture we have two categories, that of various types of head coverings, and that of various types of veils.

Within these two categories we have men who have their various types of head coverings removed as a form of punishment or shame - and for the women, we have their various types of head coverings, as well as veils, removed as a form of punishment or shame for them.

Take note that in none of these examples are men ever caused to remove any veils. This indicates, and history affirms, that veiling was not a part of the common daily attire of men. That is, women as a part of their daily attire wore any assortment of head coverings or veils, and men as a part of their daily attire only wore various types of head coverings (hats, crowns, turbans, etc...), but not veils. And the forced or prophesied removal of these various types of headdress, for men and women alike, was viewed as a shameful thing or form of punishment.

On the other hand, the wearing of head coverings by men, and the wearing of head coverings and veils by women, was considered a glorious thing and thing of honor.

For men for example, in **Mishlei (Proverbs) 1:9 and 4:9** Wisdom is compared to the placement of a garland or wreath (**H3880**) on the head of a wise son who has been shown favor. Hats (**H4021**) are required to be worn as part of the uniform of the priest for glory and for honor; **Shemot (Exodus) 28:40; 29:9; 39:28** and **V'yikra (Leviticus) 8:13**; as well as the turban (**H4701**) of the High Priest; **Shemot (Exodus) 28:4,37,39; 29:6; 39:28,31** and **V'yikra (Leviticus) 8:9; 16:4**, and this at that, worn at what is called "A House of Prayer for All Nations"; **Yesh'yahu (Isaiah) 56:7**.

Also there is the exquisite crown placed on King David's head; **II Samuel 12:30; I Chronicles 20:2**, the hat of dignity given to Mordecai by king Ahasuerus; **Esther 8:15**, and the common hats of beauty worn daily by the common people and royalty alike for dignity, for stature, and/or

for beauty (**H5850, H6287, H6797**). And for the women, both head coverings and veils alike represented the same things of glory, dignity, beauty, and/or stature for them as well.

The above examples demonstrate the normal daily wear of the Israelites, and how head coverings and veils were viewed when things were well, and how they are viewed when one is being punished or disgraced.

Above I mentioned that concerning daily wear, men are never noted in Scripture as wearing veils as a part of their daily attire. However, does this mean that men never veiled themselves? No. In fact, the Scriptures provide numerous examples of men veiling themselves on specific occasions - the occasions of which always revolved around a time of mourning, of embarrassment, or of self-humiliation.

We already mentioned earlier that the forced or prophesied removal of the head covering of a man, or of the forced or prophesied removal of the head covering or veil of a woman, was a form of punishment and humiliation. However, in times of mourning, or naturally humiliating circumstances short of punishment, men would voluntarily remove their various types of head coverings to repent and mourn, often placing ashes on their heads in place of their hats, or in the alternative, by completely encasing their head in a veil or cloak to symbolically hide and acknowledge their shame.

In other words, the Jews knowing the severe implications in Scripture of having the head covering or veil removed as a result of sin or shameful conduct, it became the natural expression of men mourning and/or repenting of their sins, to voluntarily remove their hats of dignity and stature and beauty, and replace them with ashes or to hide their face entirely through the full cloaking of the head with a veil or mantle - rather than wait for God to remove them or to hide His face from them.

For example, after Eliyahu ran from Jezebel only to end up veiling his head with his mantle (**H155**) in God's presence for having ran from a woman - even though just prior to that he had successfully defeated the 400 false prophets of baal; **I Melekim (I Kings) 19:13**.

Then there is King David who had been told by God that because of his wrongful slaughter of Uriah, and of adultery with Uriah's wife, that the sword would therefore never leave his house. So when King David establishes his kingdom and his own son Absalom arises to attempt the takeover of his throne, David **and all his men** climb up the Mountain of Olives with their heads veiled (**H2645**) in mourning over what he had done to Uriah, in hopes of mitigating through prayer, the prophecy against him.

Then there was Haman who after being humiliated before Mordecai ran back to his house with his head covered (**H2645**), no doubt to hide his embarrassment and to cover his shame.

Then there is the famine that God sent upon the land of Israel to punish Israel for their sins, and the Jews in recognition of this veiled their heads (**H2645**) to acknowledge before God their shameful conduct.

In **Yesh'yahu (Isaiah) 61:3** the ashes placed on the head while in mourning, God says in the time of Messianic visitation He will replace with beautiful hats (**H6287**).

Take note also that among the Jewish culture, mourning is equated with praying. In other words, you do not mourn without also praying.

But despite this custom, God stated specific circumstances when the hats of men were not to be removed during mourning. For example, the High Priest was never to remove **(H6544)** his turban when mourning, not even for near relatives; **V'yikra (Leviticus) 21:10; V'yikra (Leviticus) 10:6.**

Israelites in general were likewise told in **Yechezk'el (Ezekiel) 24:17-23** to not remove their hats to mourn for their sin for they had already passed the point of any ability to truly repent.

Now with this background we arrive in 1st century Israel with a standing Temple - a House of Prayer for all nations; and the culture sees hats for men, and hats and veils for women as a clean thing - as a thing of beauty, stature, and dignity. And then we have **I Corinthians 11.**

I Corinthians 11 has been translated to read "head coverings", and applied by the early Protestant churches to mean that women should cover their head when they pray, but that if a man has his head covered when he prays that it is somehow a shameful thing. The Scriptures cited in this study fully support - though indirectly, the concept of women wearing some kind of head covering when praying. But concerning any prohibition against men requiring them to uncover their head when praying - such prohibition does not exist in any of the Scriptures cited herein, and neither did any such prohibition exist at the Temple, or in the synagogue of the 1st century.

Even in the Mishnah, which was written around the time of the 1st century, and representing centuries and millennia of oral tradition among the Jewish people, no such concept is presented. In fact, quite the opposite is true. For example, in **Kiddushin 29b(19,20)** it is said,

Rabbi Hisda praised Rabbi Hamnuna before Rabbi Huna as a great man. And he said to him, "When he visits you, bring him to me. When he arrived, he saw that he wore no head covering." 19 "Why have you no head-dress?" asked he. "Because I am not married," was the reply. Upon hearing this Rabbi Huna turned his face away from him saying, "See to it that you do not appear before me again before you are married..." 20

And in **Shabbat 156b(14)**

...Rabbi Nachman ben Isaac's mother was told ..."Your son will be a thief". So she did not let him be bareheaded, saying to him, "Cover your head so that the fear of heaven may be upon you, and pray [*for mercy*]".

And in **Kiddushin 31a (2-4)**

1. Rabbi Isaac said: "He who transgresses in secret is as though he pressed the feet of the Shechinah [*God's Glory*], for it is written: Thus says the Lord, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool." 2. Rabbi Joshua ben Levi said: "One may not walk four cubits [*~6 feet*] with haughty men, 3. for it is said, the whole earth is full of His glory." 4. Rabbi Huna son of Rabbi Joshua would not walk four cubits bareheaded, saying: "The Shechinah [*God's Glory*] is above my head."

Instead, we only find the concept of men voluntarily removing their hats during the time of mourning, and even under this circumstance it was sometimes actually forbidden by God to remove the hat while mourning; so what is I Corinthians then talking about?

The key is in the translation. The Greek word "katakalypto", does not refer to the covering of the head with a head dress (i.e. like a hat, turban, tiara, crown, headband, miter, etc...), that is, does not refer to a "head covering"; but means to veil.

When we more correctly translate I Corinthians 11 as "to veil" instead of as "head covered", not only does the passage make more sense in light of the Scriptures cited herein of a tradition developing eventually requiring women to be veiled when praying; but now we can also see from those same Scriptures cited herein that whenever a man "veiled" his head, it is because he either was mourning, or because he had done something that he was ashamed of, and was repenting of. Not that the act of veiling the head or wearing of a hat while praying was a shameful thing, but that when a man had dishonored God by doing something he was ashamed of, that he would veil his head in an act of voluntary self-humiliation.

With the Greek word translated literally, and in light of all other Scriptures related to this subject, **I Corinthians 11** reads more clearly as follows:

11:2 Now I praise you brothers, that you remember me in all things and keep the traditions as I delivered them to you.

11:3 But I want you to know that the head of woman is man, the head of every man is Messiah, and the head of Messiah is Yehovah.

11:4 Any man praying or prophesying having a veil hanging down from his head, has dishonored his head*¹.

11:5 In like manner, every woman who prays or prophesies with her head unveiled has shamed her head, for that is one and the same as if her head were shaved*².

11:6 For if a woman does not have her head veiled then let her also be shaved. But if it is shameful for a woman to be shaved or sheared, then let her head be veiled.

11:7 For certainly it is not man who is bound to veil his head, for he is the reflection of Yehovah's splendor; but rather woman, who is the splendor of man.

11:8 For man is not from woman, but woman from man.

11:9 Nor was man created for the woman, but woman for the man.

11:10 For this reason the woman should have authority over her head among the messengers.

11:11 Nevertheless, neither is man independent of woman, nor woman independent of man, in Yeshua.

11:12 For as the woman was from man, even so the man also is through woman; but all things are from Yehovah.

11:13 Discern among yourselves. Is it proper for a woman to pray to Yehovah with her head unveiled?

Note *1: I Kings 19:13; II Samuel 15:30; Esther 6:12; Jeremiah 14:1-4.

Note *2: Deuteronomy 21:10-12 (Shaving removes the lice).

11:14 [*In analogy*] Does not even natural expression itself teach you that if a man has long hair that it is a dishonor to him,

11:15 But that if a woman has long hair, it is an honor to her? For her hair has been given to her in similitude of the veil.

11:16 But if anyone seems to be argumentative, we have no other custom than this^{*3}, nor do the assemblies of Yehovah.

From this translation correctly stated as "veil", and combined with the background of Scripture and cultural practices of the 1st century resulting therefrom, we can determine a few things.

1) The context of this passage is not about what men are not to wear when praying, but about what women **are** to wear when praying. The Greek women living in the more civilized and developed cities of the Grecian/Roman empire with its cobblestone roads and improved opportunities for cleanliness through better water access, and without the background of Scriptural stigma against bare headedness in their Greek upbringing, did not always cover their heads like the Hebrews did. And so when the Greek women converted, they had to be reminded that for believers, there is no other custom than to veil the head - at minimum, while praying.

2) The statement about men being veiled is to show an analogous contrast between the genders by showing how what a man wears to demonstrate acknowledgement of shame when praying, is a demonstration of dignity when a woman prays with that same garment. Paul repeats this contrast later in the chapter with the analogy of long hair though being a shame for a man, is a glory for a woman.

3) That it is not a sinful or shameful thing for a man to pray while wearing a hat signifying dignity, stature, or beauty. But that if he has done something shameful and dishonored God in some way, that it would be perfectly acceptable to demonstrate and acknowledge his shameful conduct before God by veiling his head with his mantle, tallit, or other garment when praying to God for mercy and forgiveness.

4) If wearing a hat while praying was shameful, then certainly the Temple, which was called by God, and by Yeshua, "A House of Prayer" for all nations, would have had some regulatory prohibition against praying in the Temple with one's hat on. However, no such prohibition has ever existed in the Temple. Likewise, no such prohibition was ever practiced or applied to I Corinthians 11 until the Protestant Reform movement arose.

On this last point, one must ask then, why did the Protestants stop wearing hats at the time of the Reformation?

One of the main factors underlying the drive for Reformation of the Catholic church was not just that of doctrinal issues, but also that of corruption in leadership. The leaders of the Catholic church had become very wealthy, and as a result, also very corrupt; and their respective positions and pomp were all very well represented by the types of hats they wore in uniform. These leaders were likewise, very distant from the common people in their attitudes and lifestyles.

When the Protestant reformation began, one of the things the Protestant leaders did to separate

Note *3: That is, no other custom other than for women to be veiled when praying.

themselves in identity and uniform from the corruption in the leadership, and to present themselves as more approachable to the common people, was to remove their hats. But because this removal of hats was related to leadership, only the men removed their hats, but the women continued to veil their heads.

Likewise, it is the Protestants who gave us our translations. So it is no surprise that when reading **I Corinthians 11** that their distaste for hats on men while praying, and continued support for women covering their heads while praying, is perfectly reflected in their translation of this passage.

However, their translation does not accurately reflect Paul's intent or purpose in writing this epistle, or accurately reflect the Hebrew culture or understanding of this passage in the ears of the 1st century recipients of this epistle.

Protestant commentators likewise agree concerning this original 1st century understanding of **I Corinthians 11** as being in reference to veils, and not to hats; *Barnes Notes on the Bible*, *Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary*, *Meyer's New Testament Commentary*, as well as many others.

As teachers and representatives of the God of Scripture, it is our duty to correctly teach and apply this passage (and all Scripture) as intended by the original author as they were inspired by the Holy Spirit, not to perpetuate Protestant translation skewed to fit political views held at the time of the Reform movement.

We are called to worship our Heavenly Father in Spirit and in Truth, and in fact are required by mandate to worship Him in Spirit and in Truth; and that means casting aside false doctrines and traditions of the Catholic and Reform Catholic (Protestant) churches that negate the commandments and traditions of God.

Below is the dictionary of passages addressing the use of head coverings and veils in the Hebrew culture of Scripture.

H155 (Ad-deret): *Luxurious outer garment, mantle, or cloak*

-**I Kings 19:13** (Eliyahu when fleeing like a coward from Jezebel, now covers his head with his mantle to hide his embarrassment before God, and to demonstrate shame on behalf of Israel's disgraceful, shameful behavior)

H2645 (Chaw-faw): *To cover. By implication, to veil, to incase, or to protect*

- II Samuel 15:30** (David and his men cover their heads to mourn Absalom's rise to power in fulfillment of prophecy against David)
- Esther 6:12** (Haman covering his head after being shamed in Mordecai's presence)
- Jeremiah 14:1-4** (Jews cover their heads in shame over sin in the land leading to famine)

H3880 (Leev'yaw): A garland or wreath

-**Proverbs 1:9; 4:9** (Wisdom compared to the placement of this head covering on the head of a wise son who has been shown favor)

#H4021 (Mig-baw-aw): *A hemispherically shaped cap. Miter.*

- Exodus 28:40; 29:9; 39:28** (Hat as part of uniform for priests)
- Leviticus 8:13** (Hat as part of uniform for priests)

H4533 (Mahs-vey): *A face veil*

- Exodus 34:33-35** (Moses covers his face with a veil)

H4701 (Mits-neh-feth): *Turban of a High Priest or King*

- Exodus 28:4,37,39; 29:6; 39:28,31** (Head covering as part of uniform for Priests)
- Leviticus 8:9; 16:4** (Head covering as part of uniform for Priests)
- Ezekiel 21:26** (This male head covering to be removed to the shame of the princes of Israel)

H5850 (Awt-aw-raw): *A crown, diadem, or royal headband (i.e. Any head covering distinguishing stature or dignity)*

- II Samuel 12:30; I Chronicles 20:2** (Exquisite crown placed on David's head)
- Esther 8:15** (Mordecai given head covering of dignity by King Ahasuerus)
- Job 19:9** (Removal of man's head covering to strip of former position of glory)
- Psalms 21:3** (King David rejoices in head covering of dignity placed on his head)
- Proverbs 4:9** (A beautiful head covering demonstrating the dignity of a wise son)
- Ezekiel 16:12** (Jerusalem like a woman with a head covering of dignity before playing the harlot)
- Ezekiel 21:26** (This male head covering to be removed to the shame of the princes of Israel)
- Lamentations 5:16** (The hats signifying dignity have been removed because of sin)
- Zechariah 6:11-14** (Adding of male head covering to Joshua High Priest for glory in Messianic prophecy)

H6287 (Pey-ehr): *A beautiful head-dress, tiara, or turban*

- Isaiah 3:20** (Beautiful head coverings of women removed)
- Isaiah 61:3,10 (61:3** Beautiful head coverings given to men in place of ashes/**61:10** as a groom is decorated with beautiful head coverings)
- Ezekiel 24:17,23** (Beautiful head coverings worn by Israeli men and commanded not to be removed at this particular time of mourning)
- Ezekiel 44:18** (Future head covering of priests)

H6544 (Paw-raw): *To loosen. By implication, to expose*

- Leviticus 10:6** (Priests not to uncover their heads to mourn for dead brothers who had offered forbidden incense)
- Leviticus 13:45** (Leper shall keep his head uncovered as a component of a procedure to identify himself as unclean to the public)
- Leviticus 21:10** (High priest shall not uncover his head for any reason while on duty)
- Numbers 5:18** (Woman's head uncovered to expose her shame)

H6777 (Tsawm-maw): *To fasten, to veil*

- Song of Solomon 4:1,3; 6:7** (the bride veiled)
- Isaiah 47:2** (Veils removed from women as punishment)

H6797 (Tsaw-neef): A turban or tiara

- Job 29:14** (A head covering seen symbolically as a thing of royalty)
- Isaiah 3:23** (Turbans removed from women's heads as punishment)
- Isaiah 62:3** (Jerusalem seen as a beautiful tiara/turban in God's hands)
- Zechariah 3:5** (Beautiful turban placed on head of Yehoshua the High Priest)

H6809 (Tsaw-eef): *A woman's veil that wraps around the head*

- Genesis 24:65** (Rebecca covers herself with a wrap around veil when seeing Isaac)
- Genesis 38:14,19** (Tamar wore in place of her widows garment in order to disguise her identity from Judah)

H7196 (Keesh-shur): *Decorative hairnets*

- Isaiah 3:20** (Decorative hairnets removed from women as punishment)

H7289 (Raw-deed): *A large cloak like veil of a woman*

- Song of Solomon 5:7** (the bride's veil is removed to humiliate)
- Isaiah 3:23** (Removed from the women as punishment)

H7479 (Raw-aw-law): *A long fluttering head veil of a woman*

- Isaiah 3:19** (Women's long fluttering veils removed as punishment)

H7636 (Shaw-veece): *A woman's headband, often with decorations hanging down from it*

- Isaiah 3:18** (Headbands removed as punishment)

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