

Headcoverings for Messianic Men: Tradition or Torah?

By

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There has been in recent months much controversy over "head-coverings" for men in Messianic Congregations. Some claim it is only tradition dictated by the Talmud or Jewish tradition, and others, like I, believe that it is permitted-if not commanded by Yahweh for men to be covered in prayer and worship. This is a Scriptural word study from the Hebrew and Greek in the Torah and Brit Chadasha to make the "case" for the head covering.

In The Beginning

Let us go back to the Beginning (Beresheet)1:26 when Yahweh created man in His likeness and image. Originally man was covered with Yahweh's garment of light or kavod (glory) for excellency and splendor as proclaimed in Tehillim 104:1-2. "You [Yahweh] have put on excellency and splendour, covering Yourself with light as a garment.." We know this because there are two Hebrew words used for "naked" in Beresheet. Before the fall of man the word 'arom is used in Gen.2: 25 meaning a partially naked state. AFTER the fall in Gen.3: 7 the word 'erom is used in the Hebrew meaning nudity or complete nakedness. Something happened to man after he fell. He lost the "covering" he had from Yahweh in creation. Yahweh clothed them in a substitute covering in Gen.3: 21 that He provided.

Right now we are in the likeness of sinful flesh (Rom.8: 3) and not Yahweh. We are no longer perfect as Yahweh commanded us to be (Matt.5: 48) because of the fall. ONLY YAHSHA IS NOW IN THE TRUE IMAGE AND LIKENESS OF YAHWEH (1 Cor.11: 7; 1 Cor.15: 49; Rom.8: 29). At the resurrection we shall be born again into His image and likeness as a son of Father-the ONLY TRUE RIGHTEOUS ONE, after putting off this sinful, corruptible flesh and putting on the incorruptible body like Yahsha's.

Moshe Our Example

Moshe Rabainu is one of our examples in the Torah. In Shemot 3:4-5, Yahweh commanded him to remove his shoes as he was on set-apart ground. Moshe being a shepherd in the desert of Midian surely wore some type of covering over his head to protect him from the blistering sun and heat, yet Yahweh NEVER commanded him to remove any head covering in His presence.

After the Exodus from Egypt Yahweh told Moshe to set-apart the first-born as Kohenim (priests) to Him (Ex.13: 1-2,19:3-24,24:4-8). This changed after the "golden calf" incident and Yahweh chose the sons of Lewi to be the Kohenim as the "First-born" had sinned against him. They disqualified themselves from the office of Kohen by idol worship. Yahweh commanded them to REMOVE the "ornaments" from them by Mt. Horeb. This word is 'adiy or finery, trappings, headstall or headpiece. By stripping them of their "headpieces" Yahweh removed them from their office as Kohenim. The "glory, honor, and splendour" was removed from them and given to the tribe of Lewi. The Aaronic or Levitical priesthood was commissioned to minister directly to Yahweh in the Mishkan (Tabernacle) Shemot 28:1; Bemidbar 8:16.

Priesthood Garments

The priestly garments were given to the priests and Lewites for "esteem (glory) and for comeliness (beauty)" Shemot 28:2. We also read in Yeshayahu 61:3-7, "... the garment of praise...and YOU [Yisrael-all of Yisrael not just the Lewites] shall be called PRIESTS OF YAHWEH, SERVANTS OF OUR FATHER shall be said to you, instead of your shame and reproach [or nakedness-Rabbi Ed] they rejoice a second time in their portion..." In the Kingdom of Yahweh all Yisrael shall be priests to Yahweh as He said in Shemot 19:6. I believe these are the Sons of Tzadok (righteousness) in Yechezqel 44:15 and Revelation 20: 6. According to the Brit Chadasha we are all priests NOW (1 Keph 2:5; Rev.1: 6). Yahweh has provided for us, as Kohenim, garments to cover our nakedness or shame in order to reflect His esteem (glory), splendour, and comeliness (beauty)- the tallit and head covering.

Turbans or Bonnets

Shemot (Exodus) 29:9 and 39:28 uses the word turban or bonnet as a part of the commanded garments of the Kohen.

TURBAN-#4021; migba'ah: from #1389 a CAP (as a hemispherical) bonnet. The HEMI-means half, SPHERE means globe, ball, round. Hence the migba'ah was shaped as a half a ball. It comes from #1389 –gib'ah meaning a hillock, hill, little hill.

Now #1389 comes from #1387 –Geba' which comes from #1375-GeBiYa' an unused root meaning to be convexed, a goblet, the calyx of a flower, cup, pot. The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible Vol.1 page 532, tells us that, "the cap of the priest was a conical-shaped object of finely woven linen tied on the head of the priest as a SIGN of his investiture. The CAP was a distinctive item of the priestly vestments." Webster's New World Dictionary says that convex means "a vaulted arch, curving outward like the surface of a sphere." Now, if we take two convexo-convex pieces of linen material and sew them together, you would have the exact, small hilled, convex cap every priest wore when they served Yahweh. You can see that this design would be very similar as the modern "kippah" now worn.

The mitre (or official turban) of the Kohen HaGadol is called a mitsnepheth in Hebrew. According to Philo and Josephus it consisted of an ordinary priest's cap with a turban of dark blue color over it. Josephus (Antiq.111.vii.3, 6) says that the headgear of the priests was seemed at the folds and so became a cap. Clarke's Commentary, Vol. 1, page 445 tells us that; " the mitsnepheth comes from the root –to roll (tsanaph) or wrap around, it evidently means that covering of the head so UNIVERSAL in the Eastern countries which we call a turban which encompasses and binds the head.." . Note: only the High Priest wore the Turban or mitre, while the regular priests wore the cap! The Brit Chadasha tells us we are a set-apart priesthood offering up spiritual sacrifices to Yahweh (1 Kephah 2:5). Should we not have on some type of head covering as we minister as a priest before Yahweh?

Remember, this is a part of Torah not a tradition or Talmud. It is interesting that, according to the Torah, the Kohen HaGadol could NEVER UNCOVER HIS HEAD EVEN IN MOURNING FOR THE DEAD (Lev.21: 10-11). Yahsha is now our High priest after the order of Malkitzedek (Ivrim 6-8; Tehillim 110:4-6). Surely He wears some type of head covering as our High Priest as he ministers in the heavenly Mishkan.

The Bridegroom

Yeshayah (Isayah) 61:10 in the KJV says, ".. As a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments..". Here the word ornaments is pe'er #6287 from #6286 and means an embellishment, i.e. a fancy headdress, BEAUTY, goodly ornaments, tire, and bonnet. Note that this verse says that a bridegroom wears a head covering on His wedding day! Yahsha is coming back as a BRIDEGROOM to marry Yisrael after the tribulation for the marriage supper of the Lamb. He will be wearing some type of fancy headcovering as the bridegroom!

King Dode

Dode the Melek Yisrael, a man after Yahweh's heart, worshipped with a head covering and his prayers were answered! In 2 Shemu'el 15:30-37 Dode went up to the Mount of Olives (just as Yahsha did) weeping, barefoot, and having his head covered. And ALL the people covered their heads and went up weeping...and Dode said, "O Yahweh, I PRAY YOU..". Dode was seeking Yahweh's face and supplicating Him for help in a time of trouble. Yahweh answered Dode's prayer. Therefore we know Yahweh hears us when we pray with our heads covered! That has never changed!

The Book of Daniyl

Chananyah, Misha'el, and Azraryah were three Yahudites taken captive in Babylon between 598-582 BCE. All the people of rank, laws, judgments, and proper dress codes were also taken to Babylon according to 2 Melakim 24:14. Dani'el and these three Hebrews served in the court of Nebukad-netsar. They REFUSED to defile themselves with Babylonian ways! In Dani'el 3:21, were told these three that REFUSED TO BOW TO THE BABYLONIAN GODS AND WAYS were thrown with their "TURBANS" on into the fire! We know the Babylonians also wore a headcovering in their daily life, AS DID THE

YAHUDITES. The fact that they did, DOES NOT NEGATE THE USE OF HEAD COVERINGS FOR YISRAEL. We know in most Middle Eastern countries men do wear turbans or caps. The Yahudites carried this into the Babylonian exile. They did not pick it up there!

Yechezqel, who prophesied just before and after the captivity, was COMMANDED BY YAHWEH TO PUT A TURBAN ON HIS HEAD in Ezek.24: 15-17 and then he commanded all of them to do the same in verses 20-23!

Ephrayim Rejected!

Hoshea 4: 6 tells us that Yahweh rejected Yisrael as being a priest before Him because they forgot His Torah and HIS GLORY (ESTEEM) THEY CHANGED TO SHAME! Then He says –as for the priest it is for the people!

It is only when we as Messianic Yisrael embrace Yahsha as the Moshiach through belief, that we can requalify for the priesthood because of His righteousness. We wrap ourselves in His righteousness and His garment of Salvation .All Yisrael can be that nation of priests! We put that helmet of Salvation upon our head (Eph.6: 17). We are once again clothed in His esteem and splendour. The head covering and tallit are physical symbols and reminders of that righteousness. We can as a ROYAL PRIESTHOOD work righteousness (Ivrim 10:21-27). In effect we are TRAINING FOR REIGNING AS KOHENIM IN YAHWEH'S KINGDOM TO COME!

Yahsha has qualified for the High Priesthood that had been removed from Yisrael by sin (Ezek.21: 21-27) and ALL YISRAEL, not just Lewi, can be priests after the order of Malkitzedek and sons of righteousness (Ivrim 7:24-28;Ezek.44). It is a superior priesthood (Ezek.44: 10-14) than the Levitical. In effect, they have been "demoted", but still are and will be priests.

What about 1 Corinthians 11:4?

Let's look at that verse in the Greek and see what it really means. FIRST YOU HAVE TO UNDERSTAND THAT THIS IS A MISTRANSLATION OF THIS VERSE! It is only ONE MISTRANSLATED WITNESS that people try to quote to "prove" head coverings for men are wrong in the eyes of Yahweh.

1 Corinthians 11:4 "Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, brings shame to his Head." The Scriptures Complete Jewish Bible by David Stern, "Every man who prays or prophesies wearing something down over his head.." COVERED -#2596 KATA- down, about, AGAINST, in OPPOSITION TO, down from (like a VEIL hanging from his head) –Thayer's page 327. This word then can mean 1. To hang down from the head (over the face) like a woman's veil [which in context makes sense as Rav Shaul is contrasting the worship of men and women, and that men are not to look like women-Rabbi Ed] 2. In opposition to or opposed to. HEAD # 2776 KEPHALE; KAPTO the HEAD (literally or figuratively) supreme, chief, prominent, MASTER page 345 Thayer's. This is the same word used twice in this verse. Why was one capitalized and the other isn't? There are no capitals in Greek.

This verse is NOT against head coverings for men. It is against the wearing of a veil by a man over his face, as was the custom of the women of that period! Why does the Apostle Shaul speak of men wearing long hair or actually adoring the long locks of hair with ornamental jewels as women (the word is #2863 in Greek KOMAO- wear long tresses of hair, locks, as ornamental (length is secondary) from #2864-KOME). Shaul did not want the men of Corinth (center for male temple prostitutes of Apollo, Poseidon, and other gods) to be mistaken for women in their dress, and hairstyle-other wise NO CROSS-DRESSING. The men were pulling their long locks of hair over their faces as a veil as was the manner of women and imitating their hairstyles and manner in prayer. THIS IS NOT TALKING OF A MAN WEARING A HEAD COVERING IN PRAYER OR WORSHIP BUT A VEIL!

Let me present another interpretation also in light of the real meaning of the word –KATA and KEPHALE.

In verse 3, the Apostle Shaul says, the HEAD of every man is Messiah, the HEAD of every woman is man, and the HEAD of Messiah is Father. There three HEADS here. The HEAD here is speaking of RULERSHIP or AUTHORITY! Yahsha is HEAD of the Congregation (Eph.1: 22).

Verse 4 therefore CAN MEAN this, " Every MAN praying or prophesying, that is teaches, refutes, reproves, admonishes, and comforts having OPPOSITION TO HEADSHIP (AUTHORITY) brings shame upon (dishonors) the Messiah, the HEAD of him."

If in verse 5 a woman brings shame or dishonor to her HEAD –MAN by being unveiled or akatakaluptos or literally without veil down, then a man shames his HEAD-MESSIAH YAHSHA by having his VEIL DOWN Over HIS FACE!

Verse seven is speaking of Yahsha the HEAD being in the image and esteem of Yahweh as we have shown previously. It should read, " Now a man truly ought not to cover his HEAD (Yahsha) by hiding and opposing Him, for He (Yahsha) is the image and glory of Yahweh; but the woman is (the __expression of) man's glory (majesty, pre-eminence). The word cover is katakalupto –to cover wholly-hide, VEIL. Verse seven could also read, "For a man indeed should not veil his face, since He (Yahsha) is the likeness and esteem of Father, but woman is the esteem of man."

These verses are all about delegated authority from the HEAD down. Anyone with delegated authority should have a head covering on his or her head. Yahweh is the SUPREME HEAD-then Moshiach-then man-then woman. Only Yahsha is in the image and likeness of Yahweh at this time. Messiah is man's head and this fact is not to be opposed by man. A man is the head of woman-and she is to acknowledge this fact by wearing a veil upon the hair of her head. Man is under the authority of Messiah the very same way woman is under the authority of her husband. Man also is to show he is under authority in the same manner a woman shows she is under authority- man covers his own head with the ordained head covering of the priesthood.

Closing Thoughts

Some people argue that we should not wear a kippah because the pope and cardinals wear a facsimile of the kippah because they claim to have inherited the Aaronic priesthood. The Roman church strictly FORBIDS the laity to wear this covering because they will tell you that you ARE SUBJECT TO THE Catholic Church! Who will you obey-Yahweh or the pope?

Still others claim these set-apart garments came from Babylon. It is true that the laws concerning these garments were taken into Babylon by Yahudah in the exile... but these garments DID NOT ORIGINATE IN BABYLON! They were ordained by Yahweh in the Torah, and came out of Babylon as given by Yahweh with the Yahudim when they rebuilt the Temple of Yahweh.

According to The Concise Encyclopedia of Greek and Roman Mythology by Savine Ostwalt page 261,

" A sacrifice was made to Saturnus (S.A.Tan /Hellel) in his temple WITH UNCOVERED HEAD ACCORDING TO THE GREEK OBSERVANCE.."

Alfred Edersheim in his book "[Yahsha] the Messiah" on pages 426-431 describes the dress of the time period of the Second Temple. He says, "In regard to the covering of the head, it was deemed a mark of disrespect to walk abroad, or to pass a person, with a bared head. Slaves covered their heads in the presence of their masters. The ordinary covering of the head was the Sudar, a kerchief twisted into a turban. A kind of light hat was also in use, either of a light material or of felt. The Sudar was twisted by rabbis in a peculiar manner to distinguish them from others...We read besides of a sort of a cap or hood attached to some kinds of outer or inner garments...of the outward appearance of [Yahsha]. His headgear would probably be the SUDAR wound in a kind of turban or perhaps the Maaphoreth, which seems to have served as a covering for the head, and to have descended over the back of the neck and shoulders.." so, here from historical references we can see that Yahsha probably wore some sort of head covering.

This is by no means an exhaustive study on the head covering for men. It is just a good solid starting point for the student of the Scriptures to begin his own study. May Yahweh bless your understanding.

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