

Head Coverings

In researching Jewish practices and traditions, we find that one such practice is the covering of the head during worship and prayer. Some wonder how this may, or may not, relate to Believers in Yeshua (Jesus)? To help the average person understand this tradition, we will need to look at several different sources of reference material. To start with we will take a look at a widely accepted resource for Jewish information and history, which will be used in conjunction with scriptures relating to the subject, so that we can get a full and complete, as well as, a well-rounded analysis of the subject.

The Encyclopedia of Jewish Concepts describes the basis for this practice as follows:

“Jewish tradition regards bare-headedness as a form of nakedness, and nudity as one of pagan indecencies and as infraction of propriety in worship. The word ערִיָּה (nakedness) connotes shameful exposure, indecency, as well as improper behavior in general. In Deuteronomy 23:15, the phrase עֲרִיֹת דָּבָר signifies ‘anything indecent.’”

In the Tanach (the Hebrew Old Testament scriptures) the division of some chapters and/or verses will sometimes vary from that found in the Christian Bible, as it does in the case of the following verse, where in most Christian Bibles Deuteronomy 23:14 is Deuteronomy 23:15 in the Hebrew Tanach.

Deuteronomy 23:14 (NASV)

(14) “Since the Lord your God walks in the midst of your camp to deliver you and to defeat your enemies before you, therefore your camp must be holy; and He must **not** see **anything indecent** among you lest He turn away from you.”

To appear before God with an uncovered head, in prayer or worship was considered to be dishonoring to God and shameful to the man or woman who was doing so. The wearing of some type of head covering, most of the time, was and still is, looked upon as an act of reverence toward God. During the first and second Temple periods, as well as the prior worship connected with the Tabernacle in the wilderness, the High Priest wore a special **turban** while serving in the Tabernacle.

Exodus 28:37-39 (NASV)

(37) “And you shall fasten it on a blue cord, and it shall be on the **turban**; it shall be at the front of the **turban**.”

(38) “And it shall be on Aaron’s forehead, and Aaron shall take away the iniquity of the holy things which the sons of Israel consecrate, with regard to all their holy gifts; and it shall always be on his forehead, that they may be accepted before the LORD.”

(39) “And you shall weave the tunic of checkered work of fine linen, and shall make a **turban** of fine linen, and you shall make a sash, the work of a weaver.”

In the following verses in Exodus and Leviticus we also find that the son's of Aaron wore special **caps** along with the rest of their apparel.

Exodus 28:40 (NASV)

(40) "And for Aaron's sons you shall make tunics; you shall also make sashes for them and for you shall make **caps** form the, for glory and for beauty."

Exodus 39:28 (NASV)

(28) and the **turban** of fine linen, and the decorated **caps** of fine linen, and the linen breeches of fine twisted linen,

Leviticus 8:13 (NASV)

(13) Next Moses had Aaron's sons come near and clothed them with tunics, and girded them with sashes, and bound **caps** on them, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

This obligation for a head covering was recognized and reemphasized in the book of Ezekiel as we see below.

Ezekiel 44:18 (NASV)

(18) "linen **turbans** shall be on their heads, and linen undergarments shall be on their loins;...

The priests were not to go before the LORD with their heads un-covered especially in the Tabernacle or Temple. And not only then, it was also important for them any time they went before God in prayer or worship, as well as when prophesying.

Leviticus 10:6 (NASV)

(6) Then Moses said to Aaron and to his sons Eleazar and Ithamar, "**Do not uncover your heads** nor tear your clothes, so that you may not die, and that He may not become wrathful against all the congregation....

Leviticus 21:10 (NASV)

(10) 'And the priest who is the highest among his brothers, on whose had the anointing oil has been poured, and who has been consecrated to wear the garments, **shall NOT uncover his head**, nor tear his clothes;

Would any of these ordinances be applicable to anyone other than the High Priest or Levites?

According to scripture...the entire nation of Israel was to be a Kingdom of Priests.

Exodus 19:6 (NASV)

(6) “and you shall be to Me a Kingdom of Priests and a Holy Nation.
‘These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel.’ ”

So, we see that the entire Nation of Israel was to be a Nation of Priest. This means the requirements of a Priest were also to be upon all of them! The requirement to have their heads covered while praying, worshiping or any time that they were going before Almighty God.

Isaiah 61:6 (NASV)

(6) But you will be called the Priests of the Lord,
You will be spoken of as Ministers of our GOD...

Deuteronomy 26:19 (NASV)

(19) “and that He shall set you high above all nations which He has made, for praise, fame, and honor; and that you shall be a consecrated people to the LORD your GOD, as He has spoken.”

Now we must determine if this ‘Priesthood’ concept could be carried through as a ‘New Testament’ principle as well, or should it be relegated only to times and places connected with ‘Temple’ ordinances?

Revelation 5:10 (NASV)

(10) “And Thou hast made them to be a Kingdom of Priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth.”

1 Peter 2:5 (NASV)

(5) you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a Holy Priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to GOD through Jesus Christ.

Revelation 1:6 (NASV)

(6) and He (Jesus) has made us to be a kingdom, Priests to His GOD and Father; to Him (The Father) be the glory and the dominion forever and ever Amen.

1 Peter 2:9 (NASV)

(9) But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A ROYAL PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR GOD’S OWN POSSESSION, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;

Revelation 20:6 (NASV)

(6) Blessed and holy is the one who has part in the first resurrection; over those the second death has no power, but they will be Priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.

Here we have ‘five’ New Testament references, from ‘two’ different authors (witnesses) concerning this concept. Why then should there be such an emphatic objection by some in the Church to ‘believers’ conducting themselves in a more reverent manner and choosing to wear a head covering?

We have what ‘seems’ to be a contradiction that arises from an ‘epistle’ of Paul. So, at this point we need to ask; “What is it that should be used as the basic criteria for establishing any religious ‘Doctrine’, or scriptural ‘Tradition’”? According to Paul, in 2 Corinthians, we find him making the statement that something may be established when it is confirmed by the mouth of two or three witnesses. This need for at least two, but preferably three, witnesses is confirmed by several other places in Scripture as well.

2 Corinthians 13:1 (NASV)

(1) ...Every fact is to be confirmed by the testimony of two or three witnesses.

Deuteronomy 19:15 (NASV)

(15) “A single witness shall not rise up against a man on account of any iniquity or any sin which he has committed; on the evidence of two or three witnesses a matter shall be confirmed.

Matthew 18:16 (NASV)

(16) “**But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more witnesses with you, so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed.**”

Deuteronomy 17:6 (NASV)

(6) “On the evidence of two witnesses or three witnesses, he who is to die shall be put to death; he shall not be put to death on the evidence of one witness.

John 6:17 (NASV)

(17) “Even in your law it has been written, that the testimony of two men is true.

Numbers 35:30 (NASV)

(30) If anyone kills a person, the murderer shall be put to death at the evidence of witnesses, but no person shall be put to death on the testimony of one witness.

Hebrews 10:28 (NASV)

(28) Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses.

1 Timothy 5:19 (NASV)

(19) Do not receive an accusation against an elder except on the basis of two or three witnesses.

Scripture points out frequently that there is a very close connection between obedience and rebellion, as to how they can effect physical life and death situations, as well as how they can affect an individual’s spiritual life or death for all eternity.

The word of God establishes the principle for wearing a head covering as a sign of reverence, first in the ‘Old’ Testament, and confirmed further in the ‘New’ Testament. It is not clear that the Lord specifies this as an absolute requirement for individuals who are not a part of the Kingdom of Priest. Nor does Scripture indicate the lack of a head-covering is considered a ‘punishable’ sin of any sort for the average individual who is not a part of the Righteous Nation who is to be a Kingdom of Priest. It should therefore be optional for each person, and each person should FIRST determine if he or she is truly fulfilling the basic requirements of Scripture concerning the ‘Kingdom of Priests’ mentioned in the New Testament. If the BASIC requirement is that one must **‘love the Lord you God with all or your heart, with all of your soul, and**

with all of your strength...'. Then there would be very little reason for the individual **NOT** to show his or her GOD, ALL the reverence that The Almighty deserves and expects.

Some individuals, as well as entire Denominations, will still become irritated or even outraged at this point. Because when it comes to a head covering, they claim just the opposite...! That covering the head for prayer, worship or study is 'irreverent' or even 'blasphemous'!

What can they be using for the basis of this theological position? Once again we find only ONE place and only ONE author (ONE witness) who '**appears**' to be saying something different. After further study of the following verses from the epistle of Paul to the Corinthians, there appears to be at least a possibility that he did **NOT** intend to alter this already long standing and well established Jewish tradition based on the Scripture, but was actually upholding it.

1 Corinthians 11:2-16 (NASV)

- (2) Now I praise you because you remember me in everything, and hold firmly to the TRADITIONS, just as I delivered them to you.
- (3) But I want you to understand the Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, God is the head of Christ.
- (4) Every man who has something on his head while praying or prophesying, disgraces his head.
- (5) But every woman who has her head uncovered while praying or Prophesying, disgraces her head; for she is one and the same with her whose head is shaved.
- (6) For if a woman does not cover her head, let her also have her hair cut off;
- (7) For a man ought not to have his head covered, since he is the Image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of the man.
- (8) For man does not originate from woman, but woman from man;
- (9) for indeed man was not created for the woman's sake, but woman for the man's sake.
- (10) Therefore the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels.
- (11) However, in the Lord, neither is woman independent of man, nor is man independent of woman.
- (12) For as the woman originated from the man so also the man has his birth through the woman; and all things originated from God.
- (13) Judge for yourselves; is it proper for a woman to pray to God with head uncovered?
- (14) Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him.
- (15) but if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her? For her hair is given to her for a covering .
- (16) But if one is inclined to be contentious, we have no other practice, nor have the churches of God.

It seems that if this chapter by Paul were used as the basis for a 'man' to be praying WITHOUT his head covered, that it would be used just as adamantly for the premise of 'women'

KEEPING their head covered; if it is taken as an en-errant ‘translation’, which is going to be used to establish a ‘NEW’ Doctrine or a NEW ‘Church’ tradition.

Once again we need to remember that it was Paul’s own words that re-affirmed the requirement for two or more witnesses for any fact to be established. There is no other place to be found in the New Testament for this idea of a NEW CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE being established for the NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH. This apparent requirement for a man to have his head uncovered cannot be found ANYWHERE else in the NEW TESTAMENT or even the OLD TESTAMENT for that matter.

At first glance some of the statements made by Paul in 1 Corinthians chapter 11 seem to contradict the Jewish Tradition which is based on the Old Testament Scriptures, which we have reviewed earlier. The most important fact to keep in mind when studying a ‘translation’ is that we are studying a ‘translation’ and not the original manuscript. Anyone with a basic understanding of any foreign language knows the difficulty in finding words that convey the exact same meaning when translating from one language to another. Many times words in one language will have more than one meaning, or viable translations, and this is especially true in Hebrew, Greek and English. Since this is an established fact, it therefore remains for the ‘translator’ to ‘choose’ the words ‘he’ wants to use for the translation in any given instance. This does not mean the translation is not valid. It usually is. However, when there is more than one choice, there is more than one accurate translation, and the more the translator understands who and what the original writer is trying to convey, the ‘more’ accurate the translation will be. If however, the translator is working under a pre-conceived idea, and has been taught to believe that the writer’s intent differs from what is really was, the interpretation will be different, and the translation will be different than originally intended by the author.

Now the question remains: Is there any significant word or words in this chapter, which have additional meaning? Would another valid translation re-affirm the Scriptures we have already reviewed, rather than contradicting them? There are several key verses that could help us understand the thought Paul is trying to convey. Looking more closely at 1 Corinthians 11:4, 6 and 7 could possibly help clear up some of the confusion.

1 Corinthians 11:4

KJV

(4) Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoureth his head.

NASV

(4) Every man who has something on his head while praying or prophesying, disgraces his head.

The key word used in the KJV is ‘covered’ and in the NASV it is the word ‘on’ or ‘something on’. The Greek root word from which these words were translated is *κατά* which is No. 2596 in Strong’s Concordance.

Strong’s Greek Dictionary, word #2596

Κατά *kata*, *kat-ah*’ ; a prim. Particle; (prep.) **down** (in place or time), in varied relations (according to the case [gen., dat. or acc.] with which it is joined): - about, according as (to), after, against, (when they were) X alone, among, and, X apart, (even, like) as (concerning, pertaining to, touching), X aside, at, before, beyond,

by, to the charge of, [charita-] bly, concerning , + covered, [dal-] ly, down, every, (+ far more) exceeding, X more excellent, for, from. . . to, godly, in (-asmuch, divers, every, -to, respect of), . . . by, after the manner of, + by any means, beyond (out of) measure, X mightily, more, X **natural**, of (up-) on (+ part), **out** (of every), over against, (+ your) X own, + particularly, so, through (-oughtout, -oughout every), **thus**, (un-) to (-gether, -ward), X uttermost, where (-by), with. In composition it retains many of these application, and frequently denotes *opposition, distribution or intensity*.

There are obviously several other translations that could carry a different meaning from the one that was chosen. It appears that it might be just as valid to use one of them such as **down, down from, natural, out, thus**, etc. Keeping this in mind, it is possible for this verse to also be validly translated as one of the following?

1 Corinthians 11:4

(4) Every man praying or prophesying, having anything **down from**, his head disgraces his head.

(4) Every man praying or prophesying, having his head **out**, disgraces his head.

(4) Every man praying or prophesying, having his head **natural**, disgraces his head.

(4) Every man praying or prophesying, having his head **thus**, disgraces his head.

The verses following this statement are somewhat dogmatic, concerning a 'woman' praying with her head uncovered, which in today's Protestant 'Christian' theology is considered unnecessary. These 'opposite' statements seem to be presenting a contrast between men and women.

1 Corinthians 11:6

KJV

(6) For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn: but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered.

NASV

(6) For if a woman does not cover her head, let her also have her hair cut off; but if it is disgraceful for a woman to have her hair cut off or her head shaved, let her cover her head.

The statement at the beginning of this verse uses 'be not covered' in the KJV and 'does not cover' in the NASV the word 'not' is translated from the word No. 3756 in the Strong's and appears in the Greek Interlinear to be accurate.

Strong's Greek Dictionary, word #3756

οὐ ou, oo; also (before a vowel)
 οὐκ ouk, ook; and (before an as pirate)
 οὐχ ouch, ouch; a prim. word; the absol. Neg. [comp. 3361]
 adv.; *no* or *not*: - + long, nay, neither, never, no (X man),
 none, [can-] not, + nothing, + special, un ([-worthy]), when,
 + without, + yet but,

The word translated as 'cover' or 'covered', used twice in this verse at the beginning and at the end is translated from word No. 2619 in the Strong's. Here the definition also seems to be more specific than No. 2596 which as we saw in verse 4 was possibly translated in error.

Strong's Greek Dictionary, word #2619

Κατακαλύπτω katakalupto, *kat-ak-al-oopt'o*; from 2500
 and 2572; to cover wholly, ie. Veil: -cover, hide.

1 Corinthians 11:7 also 'appears' to imply that men should not wear head coverings.

1Corinthians 11:7

KJV

(7) For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man.

NASV

(7) For a man ought not to have his head covered, since he is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of man,

Not only is there a problem in choosing definitions for a proper translation, but also problems arising in the construction of Greek grammar when trying to transform it properly into English grammar. A question arises about whether or not the placements of certain words in the sentence are in the proper order to relate the original intent of the author, properly into English?

In the case of verse seven, of FIRST CORINTHIANS chapter eleven, the 'negative' statement of 'a man ought not', would be changed to a 'positive' one, 'ought not a man?' So then, another equally valid translation for this verse might then be as follows:

1 Corinthians 11:7 (NASV)

(7) For ought not a man to have his head covered, since he is the image and glory of God; and woman is the glory of man.

In verse sixteen Paul makes an interesting, if not slightly confusing summation of his previous statements, concerning the Churches of God (or Synagogues of God, because the Greek word **ἐκκλησία** *ēkklēsia* or *Ecclesia* can refer to either type of Congregation). The significance of this verse is also important to our understanding of his prior discussion throughout the chapter.

1 Corinthians 11:16 (NASV)

(16) But if one is inclined to be contentious,
we have no other practice,
nor have the Churches of God.

It is interesting to note that the word *ἐκκλησία* - *Ecclesia* translated as 'Churches' was the word also used for 'Jewish Congregations' in the Greek Septuagint, long before it was ever translated into English as the word 'Church' or 'Churches'. The Greek Septuagint was the Old Testament text (in Greek) which was read by most of the individuals in Corinth to whom Paul is righting. In today's English *ἐκκλησία* - *Ecclesia* can validly be translated as either. It is also the word from which the book of Ecclesiastes gets its name. This book could have also been called; 'The Book of the Synagogue', 'The Book of the Called Out Ones', 'The Book of the Congregation, or even 'The Book of the Church'. Another translation for verse 16, which would possibly be just as valid, might have been:

1 Corinthians 11:16

(16) But if one is inclined to be contentious,
we have no other practice (custom or tradition),
nor have the Congregations (or Synagogues) of God.

All of these facts should make a major difference in the meaning and understanding of this chapter, as well as the entire thought, which Paul appears to be trying to convey to the 'Gentiles' in Corinth. With the alternate and equally valid translations for these verses it is much easier to see that Paul was probably espousing the 'Traditional' and 'Fundamental' principle of mainstream Judaism to the Gentiles of Corinth; which would make his statements much less confusing and less contradictory to the rest of Scripture, whether Old or New Testaments.

1 Corinthians 11:2-16

- (2) Now I praise you because you remember me in everything,
and hold firmly to the **TRADITIONS**, just as I delivered them to you.
- (3) But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man,
and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ.
- (4) Every man praying or prophesying, having *anything down from*
his head (having his head **out** or **natural**) disgraces his head.
- (5) And every woman who has her head uncovered while praying or
prophesying disgraced her head; for she is one and the same with her
whose head is shaved.
- (6) For if a woman does not cover her head, let her also have her hair cut off;
and if it is disgraceful for a woman to have her hair cut off or her head shaved,
let her cover her head.
- (7) For **ought not a man to be under obligation to have his head covered**,
since he is the image and glory of God; and the woman is the glory of the man.
- (8) For man does not originate from woman, but woman from man;

- (9) for indeed man was not created for the woman's sake, but woman for the man's sake.
- (10) Therefore the woman is to be under obligation to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels.
- (11) However, in the Lord, neither is woman independent of man, nor is man independent of woman.
- (12) For as the woman originates from man, so also the man has his birth through the woman; and all things originate from God.
- (13) Judge for yourselves: is it proper for a woman to pray to God with head uncovered?
- (14) Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him,
- (15) but if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her?
For her hair is given to her as a covering.
- (16) But if one is inclined to be contentious, we have another practice (custom or tradition), nor have the Congregations (**Synagogues** and Churches) of God.

If the entire discourse is read in context, (especially in a good Greek Interlinear) it becomes more and more clear that the problem or question Paul is trying to straighten out is predominately dealing with the women. It appears that he is actually using the reason that 'men' SHOULD have their heads covered as being the 'SAME' reasons that women should cover their heads, and then gives 'extra' examples for the women as well. We see that a man is to have shorter hair, as head of the house, but he is still to have a hat, cap or some other form of head covering on his head when praying, worshipping or prophesying. In order to show proper respect and honor to THE ONE who is 'over' him in heaven. While the woman's long hair is given to her as an extra covering as an honor to her husband, she is still to cover her head to give honor to her Father in Heaven, the God of Creation. Since she (woman) came into this world as part of man (taken from his side) she is therefore obligated in the same manner as the man, to honor Almighty God during worship and prayer.

The Jewish custom for many centuries before and during Paul's time is for a woman to wear a head covering all the time in public only if she is married. For a woman not to cover her hair in public was to say that she was single and available for marriage. Even today this custom can be seen in some Jewish Communities. This appears to probably be what Paul is trying to explain in 1 Corinthians 11:10.

Although the chapter in 1 Corinthians is still far from being 'clear as a bell', it is somewhat easier to see that Paul was **not** trying to establish a **NEW 'Religious' Tradition**, one that would obviously have been contrary to his own Orthodox Jewish Theology, Doctrine and Tradition of which he was a part. It was not until several hundred years after Paul's death that factions under Constantine began to claim that a '**NEW**' tradition was being established by the Apostle Paul. Many of the so called 'Early Church Fathers' proceeded to further confuse the understanding of Paul's already 'difficult' to understand epistles.

2 Peter 3:15-16 (NIV)

- (15) Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him.

(16) He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. **His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.**

Even though it may have been socially acceptable for Gentile individuals to be seen in public during Paul's time with their heads uncovered, most of the 'true' believers, felt as Paul apparently did, that it was not socially acceptable for those who truly 'revered' their God. It seems that Paul was declaring to the Corinthians that it was not an acceptable practice. He was obviously trying to keep the peace in areas that were highly influenced by their Hellenistic culture, and it is possible that in some of the Hellenized Jewish 'Synagogues' that the practice (or custom) of covering their heads may have waned. And this may well have been a point of contention that he was dealing with. Sometimes it is difficult to remember that Paul was going from place to place, preaching and teaching in, and 'establishing' Messianic Synagogues; **not** 'Churches' as we know them today.

The skull-cap, which is the most common head covering worn today during prayer and other times is sometimes called yarmulke, a word of Slavic derivation, or kappel (from the Italian cappello for hat), or kippah כִּפּוּת in Hebrew. Most individuals (men) wear this type of head covering since it is small and uncumbersome, and serves as an expression of their devotion and commitment to Almighty God.

There are some that will still refuse to except that Paul did not mean what they have always been taught that it meant. They will refuse to believe that Paul did not mean exactly what they think it means.

Yet, where is the second and third witness?

Where in Scripture does anyone other than Paul, even appear to say the same thing?

As we saw earlier, the members of the Priesthood were to always wear some form of Head Covering when ever they came before Almighty God, whether in worshipping, praying or engaged in any other form of service to Almighty God. And what does the New Testament have to say about the Believers in Yeshua (Jesus) as the Mashiach (Messiah)? Though it was shown earlier it warrants a repeat.

Revelation 5:10

(10) "And Thou hast made them to be a **Kingdom of Priests to our GOD**; and they will reign upon the earth."

1 Peter 2:5

(5) you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a **Holy Priesthood**, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to GOD through Jesus Christ.

Revelation 1:6

(6) and He (Jesus) has made **us** to be a kingdom, **Priests to His GOD and Father;**
to Him (The Father) be the glory and the dominion forever and ever Amen.

1 Peter 2:9

(9) But you are A CHOSEN RACE, **A ROYAL PRIESTHOOD,**
A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR GOD'S OWN POSSESSION,
that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has
called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;

Remember, no one in the Priesthood is to come before the Almighty with their head uncovered. If you chose not to cover your head in prayer and worship to God; then perhaps you have chosen **not** to be a part of the **NEW TESTAMENT ROYAL PRIESTHOOD** that will be **PRIEST OF GOD.**

So, whether you think all of this is so, or not.

Remember: Either Way,

GOD WILL BE THE ONE,

WHO HAS THE FINAL SAY!