

Shayla: Should men wear kippot when they pray?

Extended: Why do some men wear kippot when they pray in contradiction to the Apostle Paul's prohibition against men covering their head while praying?

- [1 Corinthians 11:4 HCSB](#) Every man who prays or prophesies with something on his head dishonors his head.
- [1 Corinthians 11:7 HCSB](#) A man, in fact, should not cover his head, because he is God's image and glory, but woman is man's glory.

Meforshim:

The best answer I could find is that they borrow the tradition from the Judaizers. So, why do the Judaizers wear them? Again, the best answer I could find is that they saw that the priest wore a turban when he served the Lord in the Tabernacle¹ and decided "if it's good enough for the priest, its good enough for the rest of us. However, I find the justification to be very weak.

In Exodus 28, we see a description of the priestly garments which includes seven different elements:

1. Breastpiece (ch'oshen; Strong's 2833) in verse 4
2. Ephod ('ephod; Strong's 646) in verse 6
3. Robe (me'il; Strong's 4598) in v.31
4. Woven tunic (ketoneth; Strong's 3801) in verse 39
5. Turban (mitsnepheth; Strong's 4701) in verse 39
6. Girdle, sash or belt ('abnet; Strong's 73) in verse 39
7. Undergarments (miknesayim; Strong's 4370) in verse 42

These articles were not ordinary garments worn by the priests or the high priest in everyday life. Only the high priest could wear them, and only when he went inside the sanctuary.

- [Exodus 28:40-41 HCSB](#) Make tunics, sashes, and headbands for Aaron's sons to *give them* glory and beauty. (41) Put these on your brother Aaron and his sons; then anoint, ordain, and consecrate them, so that they may serve Me as priests.

Aaron and his sons were consecrated, or set aside for this special function and the clothing was an indication of their special role. I think that it is significant that even the common priest serving at the sanctuary wore a simple white linen uniform.

There were other elements of sanctuary worship that were strictly forbidden for the common person to imitate or use. The incense they made and used was forbidden.²

While other Levites could teach and give blessings, the ability to make sacrifices and the use of the Urim and Thumim that was on the Ephod was limited to the priests.³ Even the admonition against mixing different types of fabrics⁴ gives us insight into the matter.

The Encyclopaedia Judaica⁵ says: *The clothing of the priests was notably exempt from the prohibition of sha'atnez [a garment of two sorts of thread, NW]. Exodus 28:6, 8, 15 and 39:29 prescribe that various pieces be made of linen and colored wool interwoven. . . . This suggests that the general prohibition was grounded on the taboo character of such a mixture, pertaining exclusively to the realm of the sacred."*

The prohibition did not apply to the Tabernacle and to the priests because Hashem specifically instructed that fabrics be mixed for sacred use.⁶ Therefore, the specific prohibition was only for the general public and the priestly class was exempt.

¹ Exodus 28:4, 36-40; 29:6; 39:28-31; Leviticus 8:9; 16:4

² Exodus 30:37-38 cp Numbers 16:35

³ Leviticus 17:3-9; Exodus 28:29-30

⁴ Deuteronomy 22:11

⁵ Jerusalem, 1973, Vol. 14, col. 1213

⁶ Exodus 26:1

So, access to the tabernacle, the ability to make sacrifices, the ability to use or even wear the ephod, the ability to replicate the holy incense, and even the very cloth itself was all forbidden to non-priests.

Even other members of the tribe of Levi who were not immediate members of Aaron's family, could assist the priests but could not offer sacrifices, touch some of the implements, or enter certain areas of the Tabernacle.

When these matters are taken and compared to the Apostle Paul's very clear instruction, I believe it would be hubris to think that we can dress like the cohenim and use that as a fatuous argument to support what is essentially a post-biblical practice. I think it noteworthy that nowhere in the Bible do we find positive support for the practice, many implicit indications, and two explicit prohibitions against the practice.

The desire to dress and act like the cohenim strikes me as smacking somewhat of Korah who thought that EVERYONE was holy and that Aaron should not be elevated above everyone else.

- **Numbers 16:1-5 HCSB** Now Korah son of Izhar, son of Kohath, son of Levi, with Dathan and Abiram, sons of Eliab, and On son of Peleth, sons of Reuben, took (2) 250 prominent Israelite men who were leaders of the community and representatives in the assembly, and they rebelled against Moses. (3) They came together against Moses and Aaron and told them, "You have gone too far! Everyone in the entire community is holy, and the LORD is among them. Why then do you exalt yourselves above the LORD's assembly?" (4) When Moses heard *this*, he fell facedown. (5) Then he said to Korah and all his followers, "Tomorrow morning the LORD will reveal who belongs to Him, who is set apart, and *the one* He will let come near Him. He will let the one He chooses come near Him.
- **Numbers 16:9-10 HCSB** Isn't it enough for you that the God of Israel has separated you from the Israelite community to bring you near to Himself, to perform the work at the LORD's tabernacle, and to stand before the community to minister to them? (10) He has brought you near, and all your fellow Levites who are with you, but you are seeking the priesthood as well.

I think that we would be well-advised to consider Korah and his minion's end.

- **Numbers 16:31-33 HCSB** Just as he finished speaking all these words, the ground beneath them split open. (32) The earth opened its mouth and swallowed them and their households, all Korah's people, and all *their* possessions. (33) They went down alive into Sheol with all that belonged to them. The earth closed over them, and they vanished from the assembly.

Pardon me if I hesitate to wear a kippa while I pray.