

FAQ

FROM THE MESSIANIC APOLOGETICS ARCHIVES (2000-2018)

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MESSIANIC APOLOGETICS
messianicapologetics.net

Frequently Asked Questions

FROM THE MESSIANIC APOLOGETICS ARCHIVES

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Abbreviations and Special Terms

The following is a list of abbreviations for reference works and special terms which are used in publications by Outreach Israel Ministries and Messianic Apologetics. Please familiarize yourself with them as the text may reference a Bible version, i.e., RSV for the Revised Standard Version, or a source such as TWOT for the *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, solely by its abbreviation. Detailed listings of these sources are provided in the Bibliography.

- ABD: *Anchor Bible Dictionary*
AMG: *Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament, New Testament*
ANE: Ancient Near East(ern)
Apostolic Scriptures/Writings: the New Testament
Ara: Aramaic
ASV: American Standard Version (1901)
ATS: ArtScroll Tanach (1996)
b. Babylonian Talmud (*Talmud Bavli*)
B.C.E.: Before Common Era or B.C.
BDAG: *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Bauer, Danker, Arndt, Gingrich)
BDB: *Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*
C.E.: Common Era or A.D.
CGEDNT: *Concise Greek-English Dictionary of New Testament Words* (Barclay M. Newman)
CGL: *Cambridge Greek Lexicon* (2021)
CHALOT: *Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Holladay)
CJB: *Complete Jewish Bible* (1998)
CJSB: *Complete Jewish Study Bible* (2016)
DRA: Douay-Rheims American Edition
DSS: Dead Sea Scrolls
EDB: *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*
EJ: *Encyclopaedia Judaica*
ESV: *English Standard Version* (2001)
Ger: German
GNT: *Greek New Testament*
Grk: Greek
HALOT: *Hebrew & Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Koehler and Baumgartner)
HCSB: *Holman Christian Standard Bible* (2004)
Heb: Hebrew
HNV: *Hebrew Names Version of the World English Bible*
IDB: *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*
IDBSup: *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible Supplement*
ISBE: *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*
IVPBBC: *IVP Bible Background Commentary (Old & New Testament)*
Jastrow: *Dictionary of the Targumim, Talmud Bavli, Talmud Yerushalmi, and Midrashic Literature* (Marcus Jastrow)
JBK: *New Jerusalem Bible-Koren* (2000)
JETS: *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*
KJV: *King James Version*
Lattimore: *The New Testament by Richmond Lattimore* (1996)
LITV: *Literal Translation of the Holy Bible* by Jay P. Green (1986)
LES: *Lexham English Septuagint* (2019)
LS: *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon* (Liddell-Scott)
LSJM: *Greek-English Lexicon* (Liddell-Scott-Jones-McKenzie)
LXE: *Septuagint with Apocrypha* by Sir L.C.L. Brenton (1851)
LXX: *Septuagint*
m. Mishnah
MT: *Masoretic Text*
NASB: *New American Standard Bible* (1977)
NASU: *New American Standard Update* (1995)
NBCR: *New Bible Commentary: Revised*
NEB: *New English Bible* (1970)
Nelson: *Nelson's Expository Dictionary of Old Testament Words*
NETS: *New English Translation of the Septuagint* (2007)
NIB: *New Interpreter's Bible*
NIDB: *New International Dictionary of the Bible*
NIV: *New International Version* (1984)
NJB: *New Jerusalem Bible-Catholic* (1985)
NJSB: *Tanakh, A New Translation of the Holy Scriptures* (1999)
NKJV: *New King James Version* (1982)
NRSV: *New Revised Standard Version* (1989)
NLT: *New Living Translation* (1996)
NT: *New Testament*
OT: *Old Testament*
REB: *Revised English Bible* (1989)
RSV: *Revised Standard Version* (1952)
t. Tosefta
Tanach (Tanakh): the Old Testament
Thayer: *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*
TDNT: *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*
TLV: *Messianic Jewish Family Bible—Tree of Life Version* (2014)
TNIV: *Today's New International Version* (2005)
TWOT: *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*
UBSHNT: *United Bible Societies' 1991 Hebrew New Testament revised edition*
v(s). *verse(s)*
Vine: *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*
Vul: *Latin Vulgate*
YLT: *Young's Literal Translation* (1862/1898)
WMB: *World Messianic Bible* (2020)

Headcovering Garments

Do you believe it is acceptable for Messianic men to wear a *kippah* or *yarmulke*, when Paul says that it is a dishonor for men to have their heads covered? How do you interpret 1 Corinthians 11:4-16?

This entry has been reproduced from *Torah In the Balance, Volumes I & II*

Approaching Male and Female Headcovering Garments

There is perhaps no issue more tense and divisive, when it comes to modesty and dress, within various sectors of the contemporary Messianic movement, than that of male and female headcovering garments. As we prepare to evaluate this issue, first from the array of Jewish traditions one may see practiced in Messianic congregations and fellowships, and then secondly analyzing some of the controversies present over 1 Corinthians 11:4-16—please note how this writer has made a point to use the terminology **head covering garment**. What makes this important is that terms like “head covering” or “covering” can get easily jumbled up, and then further confusion can erupt from some of the complexities and challenges regarding terms such as “head” or “covering.”

The text of the Torah or Pentateuch is actually relatively silent about the whole issue of head covering garments, and is not actually as big of an issue in the Tanach Scriptures, as some may make it out to be. Those who are actually specified in the Torah, to wear a specific head covering garment, were the Levitical priests. As the Book of Exodus originally directed,

“These are the garments which they shall make: a breastpiece and an ephod and a robe and a tunic of checkered work, a turban and a sash, and they shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother and his sons, that he may minister as priest to Me...You shall fasten it on a blue cord, and it shall be on the turban; it shall be at the front of the turban...For Aaron's sons you shall make tunics; you shall also make sashes for them, and you shall make caps for them, for glory and for beauty” (Exodus 28:4, 37, 40, NASU).

Aaron as high priest was instructed to wear a *mitznefet*, simply defined by *BDB* as “turban of high priest.”¹ Aaron’s sons as the Levitical priests were to wear a *migba’ot*, which *BDB* has regarded to be “head-gear, turban, of common priest.”² Some might claim that the principle of Believers in Yeshua being a Kingdom of priests (cf. Revelation 1:6; 5:10) might require a similar head piece to be worn—but *directly* transferring the symbols of the Levitical priesthood to individual Believers in Yeshua, with the Levitical priesthood effectively established to be Ancient Israel’s “aristocracy,” would be most out of place.

Concerning females specifically in Ancient Israel, some have certainly suggested that a head covering garment was normative, per what is stated in Numbers 5:18, here quoted from the KJV: “And the priest shall set the woman before the LORD, **and uncover the woman's head**, and put the offering of memorial in her hands, which is the jealousy offering: and the priest shall have in his hand the bitter water that causeth the curse.” An older Hebrew lexicon like *BDB* would define the verb *para*, appearing in the Qal stem (simple action, active voice), with, “let go, let alone...*id. unbind* (hair), *uncover*.”³ More modern Hebrew lexicography would define *para* with,

¹ Francis Brown, S.R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), 857.

² *Ibid.*, 149.

³ *Ibid.*, 828.

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“to let the hair on the head hang loosely...to let down the hair of a wife accused of infidelity” (HALOT).⁴ This is why *u’fara et-rosh ha’ishah* is rendered in more modern English versions with “and let the hair of the woman’s head go loose” (NASU), “and unbind the hair of the woman’s head” (RSV), or “dishevel the woman’s hair” (NRSV).⁵ Far from speaking of a head covering garment being removed in Numbers 5:18, a female’s long hair which was bound up would be let loose.

Even with head covering garments not specifically present in Numbers 5:18, this hardly means that head garments were not worn by both men and women in Ancient Israel. The climate of the Ancient Near East for certain, would have widely required that people wear some kind of garment protecting their heads from the Sun, little different than how hats are worn today. The issue more pertains to head covering garments as a matter involving religious practice, piety, submission, or any other such value judgment as interjected into it by the observant. This is where in ancient Jewish history, particularly over the past millennium, men wearing the skullcap, and women wearing a scarf or other headpiece, has been developed as a custom and tradition, albeit with variance.

One of the most obvious elements, of modern Jewish identity witnessed in the world today, is men wearing the *kippah* (or *yarmulke*) or skullcap. The idea behind wearing this small skullcap is that it shows submission to God. The term *kippah* is derived from the Hebrew verb *kafar*, meaning “to cover, to forgive, to expiate, to reconcile” (AMG).⁶ The *kippah* is believed to be a “covering” which represents a man’s submission to God.

It is notable that the headcovering garment of a *kippah* is not an explicit commandment of Scripture. This is a Jewish tradition which has developed over time. Alfred J. Kolatch explains this in *The Jewish Book of Why*:

“A *yarmulke*, called a *kipa* in Hebrew, is a skullcap worn by Jews. Some wear one at all times, others only during prayer and at mealtime.

“...The custom of covering the head received wide acceptance, but not by all. Historian Israel Abrahams points out that in the thirteenth century ‘boys in Germany and adults in France were called to the Tora in the synagogue bareheaded.’

“In the Middle Ages, French and Spanish rabbinical authorities regarded the practice of covering the head during prayer and when studying the Tora to be no more than mere custom. Some rabbis were known to pray bareheaded.

“Today, Orthodox Jews and many Conservative Jews believe that covering the head is an expression of *yirat Shama’yim* (‘fear of God’ or ‘reverence for God’)....”⁷

Wearing a *kippah* is quite commonplace throughout the diverse social strata of modern Israel. Jews of all types throughout the Diaspora commonly wear them as well, sometimes as a part of their everyday dress. While wearing a *kippah* is more frequently associated with Synagogue worship or personal prayers, wearing a *kippah* at the home dinner table of a Jewish family is also witnessed. Jewish men wearing a *kippah* or *yarmulke*, and likewise Jewish women being found to wear some kind of a headscarf or other garment, is something which developed over time in history, often for reasons of wanting to respect the holiness of God.⁸

It is quite commonplace to see a majority of men in today’s Messianic Jewish congregations wear *kippahs* in *Shabbat* worship. At the very least, those in the leadership will wear a *kippah* or *yarmulke*. A few Messianic Jews may wear a *kippah* as a part of their normal, everyday dress—although it is probably safer to say that Messianic Jewish men who wear a *kippah* in *Shabbat* worship, during holidays, or at related functions and/or Messianic

⁴ Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, eds., *The Hebrew & Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 2 vols. (Leiden, the Netherlands: Brill, 2001), 2:970.

⁵ “and-he-shall-loosen *** hair-of-the-woman” (John R. Kohlenberger III, trans., *The Interlinear NIV Hebrew-English Old Testament* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987], 1:377).

⁶ Warren Baker and Eugene Carpenter, eds., *Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament* (Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 2003), 521.

⁷ Alfred J. Kolatch, *The Jewish Book of Why* (Middle Village, NY: Jonathan David Publishers, 1981), pp 121-122.

⁸ Consult Ronald L. Eisenberg, *The JPS Guide to Jewish Traditions* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2004), pp 374-377 for a summary of how the *kippah* and related headcovering garments, are employed in much of the mainline Jewish Synagogue.

⁸ Hayim Halevy Donin, *To Be a Jew: A Guide to Jewish Observance in Contemporary Life* (New York: Basic Books, 1972), 180; Eisenberg, pp 374-376.

conferences, will not wear one as a part of their normal, everyday dress. It is also not uncommon in many Messianic congregations to also see non-Jewish men wear *kippahs*. This is largely so that they can respect the protocol of the assembly, as generally all men are expected to wear a *kippah* if they were to attend a service at any non-Messianic synagogue.

The issue of female head covering garments, varies in the Jewish tradition, with some of it based in the Numbers 5:18 passage, but also for various reasons of modesty.⁹ Yet ultimately, at least in a great deal of Judaism, females wearing a head covering garment is a tradition and a custom, and is not an explicit Biblical commandment. One will witness a great deal of diversity based on the individual preferences and convictions of Jewish women, and the social norms of their particular sect or specific community.

The major controversy which tends to exist in various parts of the Messianic community, and the issue of head covering garments, pertains to diagnosing what the issue of **1 Corinthians 11:4-16** actually is. Frequently, and most often from non-Jewish people with a fundamentalist reading of Scripture, some would take 1 Corinthians 11:4-16, in English, as an insistence that Jewish men and Messianic men should not wear a *kippah* or *yarmulke*, but that all females (at least in worship settings) must wear a head covering garment. However, as we will proceed to describe, there are some translation issues present in these verses in various English Bible versions, as well as some ancient background issues germane to First Century Corinth, which need to be seriously considered.

The Apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 11:4, *pas anēr proseuchomenos ē prophēteuōn kata kephalēs*, “Every man praying or prophesying, having *something* down from the head...” (my translation). Many versions add something like “with his head covered” (NIV) or “who has *something* on his head” (NASU), but does this really do justice to the clause *kata kephalēs*? With a genitive (case indicating possession), the preposition *kata* relates to “*against; down, down from; throughout; by* (of oaths); *over* (of authority)” (CGEDNT).¹⁰ Would it have really been disgraceful for a First Century Jewish man, or even a Greek or Roman man, to have worn a garment upon his head during a time of prayer or prophecy? **No**. Paul specified later in 1 Corinthians 11:14 that there was something which could have been down from a man’s head, disgracing him: “if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him” (NASU). Long hair on a man hanging down, could have communicated something in Corinth which might not have been very good for the Believers. At the very least, some males with long hair hanging down, from certain angles, could possibly have been confused as being female.¹¹

Continuing in 1 Corinthians 11:5a, Paul issued instruction regarding *pasa de gunē proseuchomenē ē prophēteuōusa akatakalyptō tē kephalē*, “But every woman praying or prophesying, with the head uncovered...” (my translation) is to be regarded as having dishonored her head, being as though her head were shaved (1 Corinthians 11:5b). Having a shaved (Grk. verb *xureō*) head in ancient times, whether in Ancient Israel, Second Temple Judaism, or even Greco-Roman culture, was frequently a sign of mourning and/or humiliation. The challenge for interpreting a “head uncovered,” is that it is frequently read from the perspective of it meaning that a woman praying or prophesying must have had some kind of a garment present. But was wearing a head covering garment really the issue?

A significant usage of the adjective *akatakalyptos*, in the Septuagint, is Leviticus 13:45, speaking of “the leper who has the plague in him, his garments shall be torn, and his head shall be **uncovered** [*akatakalyptos*]” (LXE).¹² *Akatakalyptos* actually renders the before-mentioned Hebrew verb *para*, which as noted means “to let the hair on the head hang loosely” (HALOT),¹³ as “The leper who has the disease shall wear torn clothes and let the hair of his head **hang loose** [*para*]...” (Leviticus 13:45, RSV).¹⁴ If this background is kept in view, than a Corinthian woman who had her head “uncovered,” was one who actually had her long hair hanging loose for all in the assembly to see. It is true that when modern readers encounter a term like “uncovered,” it is more natural for us to think that

⁹ An history review is offered by Eisenberg, pp 376-377.

¹⁰ Barclay M. Newman, Jr., *A Concise Greek-English Dictionary of the New Testament*, Revised Edition (Stuttgart: United Bible Societies/Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2010), 94.

¹¹ Cf. the further description offered by Philip B. Payne, *Man and Woman, One in Christ: An Exegetical and Theological Study of Paul’s Letters* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), pp 141-142.

¹² NETS similarly has: “let his clothes be loosened and his head be uncovered [*akatakalyptos*].”

¹³ HALOT, 2:970.

¹⁴ Cf. the further observation in Payne, 167.

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the Corinthian woman was to probably be wearing some sort of head garment. But wearing or not wearing a head garment would not have been as problematic as a female having loosed hair flowing freely. In a largely progressive and so-called “sexually liberated” city like First Century Corinth, a woman with free-flowing loose hair **was anything but respectable**. In fact, such a hairstyle would be like a prostitute advertising her wares, consistent with some of the cultural influence of the Dionysiac cult.¹⁵ Contrary to Corinthian women with “uncovered” heads—heads with hair freely flowing down—respectable women would have “covered heads” with their hair arranged in a kind of bun, something attested in the artwork of the broad First Century.¹⁶

A Corinthian woman with an “uncovered” head meaning free-flowing long hair, hair which had not been arranged in a proper manner, makes sense of Paul’s prescription that such an “uncovered” woman’s hair be cut or shaved off—which was definitely a sign of dishonor (1 Corinthians 11:6). A proper recognition of the genders is in view here (1 Corinthians 11:7-8), including being aware of how at a previous time in Biblical history (e.g., Genesis 6:4) women may have been able to tempt the angels (1 Corinthians 11:10).

Both man and woman—especially if they are married—are to understand that they are not independent of one another, with all originating from God (1 Corinthians 11:11-12). With the realization that “covered” and “uncovered” probably relates to hairstyles of hair pulled up versus free-flowing long hair, for the Corinthians, how might this change our reading of Paul’s further direction? When people would attend home gatherings of the Corinthians, *including* any visiting pagans, what impression would it give of the Messiah followers and the Lord Yeshua? As 1 Corinthians 11:13-16 details,

“Judge for yourselves: is it proper for a woman to pray to God *with her head* uncovered {**meaning:** with free-flowing long hair}? Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him, but if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her? For her hair is given to her for a covering [mantle; Grk. *peribolaion*]. But if one is inclined to be contentious, we have no other practice, nor have the [assemblies] of God” (1 Corinthians 11:13-16, NASU).

It is difficult at first for many to consider covered/uncovered to relate to hairstyles, which either communicated lewdness or promiscuity or just general disrespectfulness to wider society, in Ancient Corinth—but it is a much better way to understand the issues of 1 Corinthians 11:1-16. The actual issue in Ancient Corinth, regarding male and female heads, was that “covered” and “uncovered” **actually pertained to specific hairstyles**. Men should not have had long hair hanging down. Women should have had their long hair put up, being “covered,” as being “uncovered” would have meant letting the hair go. The association which such hairstyles would have had, could not only have communicated a degree of prostitution-promotion (female *and* male) to outsiders, but perhaps also have associated the Corinthians as participating with local pagan religious activities. The Apostle Paul clearly did not want something like this communicated to outsiders in the gatherings and worship activities of the Messiah followers!

I have never seen the perspective of “covered” and “uncovered” relating to Ancient Corinthian hairstyles, ever really considered in any sector of today’s Messianic movement. Many believe that “covered” and “uncovered” relates to head garments like the *kippah/yarmulke*, various uses of the *tallit*, or some kind of female head garment. While not all of these items as we know them were in use in the Biblical period, ultimately the issue of headcovering garments for men and women is one which is **entirely traditional and cultural**. It is something all Messianic Believers need to be sensitive about in their *halachah* to be certain (like men wearing a *yarmulke* at the Western Wall in Jerusalem), **but head covering garments are not the real issue** of 1 Corinthians 11:1-16. The main thrust of this part of Paul’s letter to the Corinthians pertained to how various grooming styles can damage the credibility of the faith community. In First Century Corinth, women who let their hair go “uncovered”—long and loose—were communicating something bad. Today, long hair on a woman (perhaps in a pony tail or other style) in some places might instead communicate conservativeness. As far as shorter or longer degrees of hair

¹⁵ Ibid., 166.

¹⁶ Ibid., 151.

length on a woman *or* man are concerned: they regard the general evaluation of their (Twenty-First Century [Western]) cultural context, and what may be considered respectable.

I have personally been favorable toward all Messianic men wearing a *kippah/yarmulke* during weekly *Shabbat* services, and most especially during the high holy days of *Rosh HaShanah* and *Yom Kippur*. Likewise, all of those who also don a *tallit* for prayer and worship should not do so without a *kippah/yarmulke*. While it is a tradition, the wearing of the skullcap is nonetheless considered to be a sign of a man's reverence for God in mainline Judaism. The protocol observed in a Messianic congregation should be similar to that in the Jewish Synagogue.

At the same time, the wearing of the *kippah* cannot be construed as any kind of Biblically-prescribed commandment, nor something which should be forced upon anyone. I urge sensitivity concerning the Jewish custom of wearing the *kippah*, especially considering how widespread it is. No non-Jewish Believer should ever be caught trying to degrade the role the *kippah/yarmulke* has played during many centuries of Jewish culture. Yet, unbalanced interpretations of 1 Corinthians 11:1-16, slurs such as calling the *kippah/yarmulke* some kind of “beanie,” and disrespect for the custom in general—has definitely been witnessed by those in the widely independent Hebrew/Hebraic Roots movement. Sadly, many such persons cannot respect one of the most basic and widespread traditions of the Jewish people.