

OUTREACH ISRAEL NEWS

monthly newsletter of Outreach Israel Ministries
and MESSIANIC APOLOGETICS



NOVEMBER 2025

ACTS 15:15-18

THE TABERNACLE OF DAVID

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STATEMENT OF BELIEF

*Outreach Israel Ministries
and Messianic Apologetics*

There is One Almighty Creator God of the Universe, who has revealed Himself to us in the manifestations of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Yeshua the Messiah (Jesus Christ) came in fulfillment of the Messianic prophecies of the Scriptures and is fully God. It is mandatory for us to believe in a Divine Redeemer to be saved. Salvation is a free gift of God to all who receive Messiah Yeshua into their lives and confess of their sins. Those who reject Messiah will be consigned to eternal punishment.

The Holy Scriptures, Genesis-Revelation, are the inspired, infallible Word of God as revealed in the original Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek texts

All Believers in Israel's Messiah are to be regarded as a part of the Commonwealth of Israel. Jewish and non-Jewish Believers are to respect one another in mutual love as brothers and sisters, and are to work together for the salvation of the Jewish people and return of Israel's Messiah.

The Torah (Genesis-Deuteronomy) is the foundation of all Scripture, was followed by our Messiah Yeshua, and is to still be studied and heeded by Believers today.

Yeshua the Messiah is coming to gather the Believers after the Tribulation period.

OIM is an *agapē* ministry, freely and benevolently giving the vast majority of its teachings and resources, without charge, to those who desire to be spiritually nourished.

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OLM UPDATE

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J.K. McKee

"With this the words of the Prophets agree, just as it is written, 'AFTER THESE THINGS I will return, AND I WILL REBUILD THE TABERNACLE OF DAVID WHICH HAS FALLEN, AND I WILL REBUILD ITS RUINS, AND I WILL

RESTORE IT, SO THAT THE REST OF MANKIND MAY SEEK THE LORD, AND ALL THE GENTILES WHO ARE CALLED BY MY NAME,' SAYS THE LORD, WHO MAKES THESE THINGS KNOWN FROM LONG AGO [Amos 9:11-12, LXX]" (NASU).

ACTS 15:15-18 THE TABERNACLE OF DAVID

The statements made by James the Just, half-brother of Yeshua the Messiah, at the Acts 15 Jerusalem Council, were squarely intended to place the salvation of the nations within the context of the final restoration of Israel. The Apostolic assembly had been gathered to address a tenuous situation which had arisen in Antioch, where various hyper-conservative Jewish Believers, who were Pharisees, had insisted that the new, non-Jewish Believers be circumcised as proselytes and be ordered to keep the Torah of Moses for eternal salvation (Acts 15:1, 5). The Apostle Peter testified before the representatives that to do so would be tantamount to tempting God, as Jewish people and those of the nations were saved equally the same way, by the grace of Yeshua (Acts 15:7-11).

James the Just, who would issue the Apostolic Decree (Acts 15:19-21, 29)—which would mandate the new, non-Jewish Believers to adhere to four, non-negotiable essentials in order to have fellowship with Jewish Believers, beginning their path of discipleship—was the one who made the connection between the salvation of the nations and Tanach prophecy taking place. He indicated, "Simeon has related how God first concerned Himself about taking from among the Gentiles a people for His name" (Acts 15:14, NASU). It cannot be

overlooked here that as God's intention was to bring forth "a people" or *laos*, *ex ethnōn* or "out of the nations," how there was some important background behind this associated with Israel. The Greek term *laos* is quite loaded, because in the Septuagint it frequently translated the Hebrew *am*. "In the LXX *laos* occurs some 2,000 times, seldom in the plural, and with a specific reference to Israel as God's people. In most instances the Hebrew original is 'am" (TDNT).¹

The Greek term *laos* or "people" is frequently seen in the Septuagint as a reference to the people of Israel (i.e., Exodus 6:7; Deuteronomy 4:20, 14:2; 26:18-19; 32:9). Deuteronomy 14:2 from the LXX affirmed, "For you are a people holy [*laos hagios*] to the Lord your God, and it is you the Lord your God has chosen to be an exceptional people to him out of all the nations on the face of the earth" (NETS). The thrust of Zechariah 2:11 is often thought to be behind what James was claiming of the nations' salvation in Acts 15:14:

"Many nations will join themselves to the LORD in that day and will become My people [*v'hayu li l'am*]. Then I will dwell in your midst, and you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent Me to you" (Zechariah 2:11, NASU).

In the Hebrew MT, this prophecy employed the term *am*, and in the Greek LXX it was translated by the term *laos*. Stern, as a Messianic Jewish commentator, actually did note in his *Jewish New Testament Commentary*,

"Although at [Acts] 10:2 and [Acts] 10:42 [*laos*] refers to the Jewish people...here the implication is that Gentiles do not have to become Jews in order to be included in the *laos*, because God is now doing something new."

The viewpoint of James was how the non-Jewish Believers coming to faith in Israel's Messiah, were going to be incorporated into the *am Yisrael*, as anticipated by the Prophets (Acts 15:15). But this would surely not be represented as somehow replacing or displacing James' own Jewish people—rather, as is seen in the prophecy of the

¹ H. Strathmann, "*laos*," in TDNT, 499.

² Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, 277.

Tabernacle of David, the borders of the people of God, indeed Israel itself, would be enlarged.

Anticipating people coming from the nations and joining with the Jewish people, was not something unexpected, but was something anticipated by the Tanach Scriptures. Before referencing Amos 9:11-12—and certainly to discount the meddling nature of those who wanted to demand that the non-Jewish Believers become proselytes—James placed all attention on the responsibility to heed the Prophets. He said, “With this the words of the Prophets agree” (Acts 15:15, NASU), *hoi logoi tōn prophētōn*, with both “words” and “prophets” in the plural. This indicates that while Amos 9:11-12 may be quoted, James would by no means have limited the inclusion of the nations, or the scope of events to be anticipated, to this single Tanach (OT) prophecy. (A short list of prophecies, which have been proposed by various examiners, include: Isaiah 2:2; 19:18-25; 45:20-23; Jeremiah 12:15-16; Hosea 3:4-5; Zephaniah 3:9; Zechariah 2:11; 8:22; 9).

It is easy to detect from English Bibles, when consulting Amos 9:11-12 and Acts 15:16-18, that there appear to be some differences between what Amos prophesied and what James stated. It has long been recognized among expositors that what appears in Acts 15:16-18, is actually from the Greek Septuagint.³ Other than the fact that Amos 9:11-12 in the LXX does represent some ancient Jewish views of the restoration of David’s Tabernacle (or Tent), it should not be surprising why James appealed to the LXX, as what he would be ruling would have a decisive influence on how the good news was communicated to ancient people in the Mediterranean basin.

The table below compares and contrasts the readings of Amos 9:11-12, from both the Hebrew MT and Greek LXX:

³ Barbara Aland, Kurt Aland, Johannes Karavidopoulos, Carlo M. Martini, and Bruce M. Metzger, eds., *Novum Testamentum Graece, Nestle-Aland 27th Edition* (New York: American Bible Society, 1993), 366; Leonard Greenspoon, “The Septuagint,” in *The Jewish Annotated New Testament*, pp 562-563.

AMOS 9:11-12 (MT)	AMOS 9:11-12 (LXX)
<p>“In that day I will raise up the fallen booth of David, and wall up its breaches; I will also raise up its ruins and rebuild it as in the days of old; that they may possess the remnant of Edom and all the nations who are called by My name,’ declares the LORD who does this” (NASU).</p>	<p>“On that day I will raise up the tent of David that is fallen and rebuild its ruins and raise up its destruction, and rebuild it as in the days of old in order that those remaining of humans and all the nations upon whom my name has been called might seek out me, says the Lord who does these things” (NETS).</p>
<p>[11] <i>b’yom ha’hu aqim et-sukkat David ha’nofelet v’gadar’ti et-pir’tzei’hen v’harisotayv aqim u’benityha k’yimei olam</i> [12] <i>l’ma’an yirshu et-sh’eirit Edom v’kol-ha’goyim asher-niqra shemi alei’hem ne’um-ADONAI oseh zot</i></p>	<p>[11] <i>en tē hēmera ekeinē anastēsō tēn skēnēn David tēn peptōkuian kai anoikodomēsō ta peptōkota autēs kai ta kateskammena autēs anastēsō kai anoikodomēsō autēn kathōs hai hēmerai tou aiōnos</i> [12] <i>hopōs ekzētēsōsin hoi kat-aloipoi tōn anthrōpōn kai panta ta ethnē eph’ hous epikeklētai to onoma mou ep’ autous legei Kurios ho Theos ho poiōn tau-ta</i></p>

The main difference which one should be able to immediately notice between the MT of Amos 9:11-12, and what appears in both the LXX and James’ quotation, is the usage of “THE REST OF MANKIND” (Acts 15:17, NASU) instead of “the remnant of Edom.” Here, the MT reading of *sh’eirit Edom* was rendered by the LXX as *hoi kat-aloipoi tōn anthrōpōn*. This difference can be explained on the basis of how *Edom* is closely connected to *adam*, which is not only the name of the first person in the Bible, but also means ‘**mankind, peo-**

ple” (*HALOT*).⁴ The interpretation of “the remnant of man” simply passed into the LXX, which employed *anthrōpos*, itself meaning “**the human race**” (*BDAG*).⁵

A second difference which appears between the MT and LXX is less easy to spot. The MT reads with “That they may possess the remnant of Edom” (Amos 9:12, NASU), whereas the LXX has the totally different “SO THAT THE REST OF MANKIND MAY SEEK THE LORD” (Acts 15:17, NASU). Aside from the LXX’s theological value judgments, the MT of Amos 9:12 uses the verb *yarash*, meaning “take possession of, inherit, dispossess” (*BDB*),⁶ speaking of the restored Tabernacle of David taking a hold of Edom. Contrary to this, the LXX uses *ekzēteō*, “**to exert effort to find out or learn someth., seek out, search for**” (*BDAG*),⁷ speaking of this remnant of humanity trying to find the Lord as a major result of the restored Tabernacle of David.

In addition to any theological opinion interjected by the Septuagint’s Jewish translators, it might also be that the verb *darash*, “resort to, seek” (*BDB*),⁸ could have been the original reading.⁹

The main point of drawing the attention of the Jerusalem Council to Amos 9:11-12, was to emphasize how a restored Tabernacle of David (Heb. *sukkat David*; Grk. *tēn skēnēn David*)—representative of a united Kingdom of Israel of all Twelve Tribes at its center—**would expand beyond itself**. If one follows the Hebrew MT, this is represented by how during the reigns of David and Solomon, not only was the Kingdom of Israel at its height of power, but Edom was annexed by it (2 Samuel 8:14). Or, if one follows the Greek LXX, God’s faithful remnant from among humanity would seek Him, come to a knowledge of Messiah Yeshua, and be a part of the Messianic Kingdom with Him as the Greater David. Either way, *a larger restoration*

⁴ Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, eds., *The Hebrew & Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 2 vols. (Leiden, the Netherlands: Brill, 2001), 1:14.

⁵ *BDAG*, 81.

⁶ Francis Brown, S.R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), 440.

⁷ *BDAG*, 302.

⁸ *BDB*, 205.

⁹ Ben Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 459 indicates this as a possibility.

of Israel is in view, and there are worthwhile reasons for Bible readers to consider both the MT and LXX to have prophetic validity. There will be a decisive enlargement of Israel's Kingdom realm, of which those from the nations get to be citizens. Gary Gilbert, in *The Jewish Annotated New Testament*, concurs,

"The Hebrew version speaks of Israel's possessing other nations. The Septuagint, which in Luke's version here is what James quotes, refers to God's act of restoration of all peoples, Jews and Gentiles."¹⁰

James placed the nations' coming to faith within the prophecies of the restoration of the Tabernacle of David and Israel's Kingdom. The imagery of David, representing King Messiah, rules over the Kingdom of Israel, and His reign obviously affects not only the Jewish people—but **most especially the whole world**. Isaiah 49:6, a rather general word, detailed how the restoration of Israel via the Messiah, would involve the tribes of Israel *and* the nations both being impacted with His light:

"It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also make You a light of the nations so that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth" (Isaiah 49:6, NASU).

James knew that the restoration of Israel had started with King Messiah's reign having begun, and not only with many of his fellow Jews having acknowledged Yeshua, *but also* with people from the nations coming to faith in Him. *A long, hard process had started*. So, James' attestation in Acts 15:19, prefacing the Apostolic Decree, "wherefore I judge: not to trouble those who from the nations do turn back to God" (YLT), was a wise word. Requiring the new, non-Jewish Believers, to become instantaneous proselytes to Judaism, keeping the Torah to be saved (Acts 15:1, 5), was surely contrary to the will of God's Spirit. The New Covenant enacted by God's Spirit, however, would write the Torah onto the hearts of His people

¹⁰ Gary Gilbert, "The Acts of the Apostles, in *The Jewish Annotated New Testament*, 229.

(Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36:27)—something which would take place at *His pace*, not the pace of any demanding mortal. According to Tanach prophecy, the nations were to come to Zion and be instructed from Moses' Teaching, as the word of the Lord went forth (Micah 4:1-3; Isaiah 2:2-4).

James emphasized that since the nations coming to faith was something prophesied in the Tanach, that those who were turning to the God of Israel need not be troubled. The Greek verb *epistrephō*, employed in Acts 15:19, mainly means “**to cause a pers. to change belief or course of conduct, with focus on the thing to which one turns**” (*BDAG*).¹¹ It is notable, though, how it appears in a prophetic word like Amos 9:14: “Also I will restore [Heb. MT: *shuv*; Grk. LXX: *epistrephō*] the captivity of My people Israel...” (NASU).¹² With the very verb describing Israel proper's return, applied to the salvation of the nations, this should be taken as a good indicator of how the Apostles not only recognized that the salvation of the nations signaled a major step forward in Israel's ultimate, corporate redemption—but they really did consider the non-Jewish Believers coming to faith, to be participants within such a restoration, along with them (Acts 15:14; cf. Zechariah 2:11). Jewish and non-Jewish Believers were all going to be involved, and all were to be brothers and sisters in the Lord. It was/is to all culminate, in what is embodied by the promise,

“My servant David will be king over them, and they will all have one shepherd; and they will walk in My ordinances and keep My statutes and observe them” (Ezekiel 37:24, NASU).

Even today, we have still not witnessed the complete restoration of David's Tabernacle. Many of today's Messianic people are of the conviction that the very reason our faith community has been growing in significant numbers, the past several decades, is indeed to see Israel's restoration completely come to fruition in the not-too-distant future. Although many things will need to be sorted out by God's sovereign hand, it is something which involves more than just Jewish people coming to faith in Israel's Messiah; **it will affect the whole**

¹¹ *BDAG*, 382.

¹² Cf. Amos 9:9.

world and people from all nations who call upon Yeshua for salvation.

If we interpret Amos 9:11-12 and Acts 15:15-18 from the perspective of representing an enlarged Kingdom realm of Israel—with a restored Twelve Tribes at its center, King Messiah’s reign extending beyond itself, and the righteous from the nations likened unto those annexed territories like Edom—then obviously, non-Jewish Believers are not a part of some separate “Church” entity per dispensationalism or bilateral ecclesiology.

The expectation of Amos 9:11-12, referenced by James the Just in Acts 15:15-18, with the restoration of the Tabernacle or Tent of David, does not at all envision the Jewish people or a restored Twelve Tribes of Israel, as being displaced by those of the nations. It is more appropriately concluded that an enlarged Kingdom realm of Israel, or a *Super-State of Israel*, as it were, will ultimately emerge, with Yeshua the Messiah Himself as its Sovereign Monarch. The Jewish people surely do not stop being “the people” (cf. Acts 26:23), but the Kingdom of God does receive many new citizens—citizens which only the work of the Messiah Himself could see enter in.

None of today’s Messianic people should deny the fact of how there are finer details regarding the restoration of the Tabernacle/Tent of David, which are likely only going to be known as the Messiah’s return draws nearer in future time. The reality is, though, when Amos 9:11-12 and Acts 15:15-18 are read in concert with other passages—the impetus witnessed is one where the righteous of the nations move *toward the Jewish people and toward Israel*. They might not be physical Israel, but by having sought Israel’s Messiah, they do get incorporated into Israel’s Kingdom realm. Most importantly, such non-Jewish Believers need to join with their fellow Jewish Believers, with both working together as co-laborers in the restoration of Israel, heralding the return of King Yeshua!

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

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.

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, "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 *kippa* 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 bare-headed.'

³ *Ibid.*, 828.

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.

"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 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

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

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.

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

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 prophēteuōsa akatakaluptō 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 *akatakaluptos*, 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** [*akatakaluptos*]" (LXE).¹² *Akatakaluptos* 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

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 the loosened and his head be uncovered [*akatakaluptos*]."

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 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,

¹⁴ Cf. the further observation in Payne, 167.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 166.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 151.

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 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.