

Does Yahweh Forbid Women to Wear Trousers?



by Larry and June Acheson

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Table of Contents

| | | |
|-----|---|----|
| | <u>Introduction</u> | 4 |
| 1. | <u>The Abominable Jeans</u> | 5 |
| 2. | <u>Scripture Records That Both Men and Women Wore the Same Basic Clothing</u> | 7 |
| 3. | <u>The Evidence from History</u> | 8 |
| 4. | <u>Balancing Cultural Distinctions With The Will of Yahweh</u> | 12 |
| 5. | <u>What does Yahweh mean in Deuteronomy 22:5?</u> | 15 |
| 6. | <u>Did Women Wear Men’s Armor in Ancient Times?</u> | 20 |
| 7. | <u>The Record Preserved by Ancient Historians</u> | 27 |
| 8. | <u>Tracing the Origin of Pants and Recognizing Misrepresentations of Ancient Writings</u> | 29 |
| 9. | <u>The Trousers’ Association with Military Garments</u> | 38 |
| 10. | <u>Applying Cultural Understanding to Deuteronomy 22:5</u> | 41 |
| 11. | <u>What Can We Do?</u> | 46 |

DID WE BREAK THE LAW?

“when you allowed your wife to wear jeans in my house, you committed an abomination under old testament law!”

This is the charge that a man named Brad levied against me shortly after my family and I visited his home several years ago. What “Old Testament law” did he believe I violated when I allowed my wife to wear jeans on the night of our get-together? I might also ask why he believes I must personally approve my wife’s choice of apparel before making any clothing purchases, but that would be another topic for another day. For now, I will focus on the topic of whether or not Scripture condemns women who wear jeans or, to be less specific, trousers. Of course, we all need to be very careful to set righteous examples for others, so certainly if it is an abomination for a woman to wear jeans or other types of trousers, then women should be admonished to not wear them.

The verse of Scripture on which Brad based his accusation is Deuteronomy 22:5, and this is the text on which our study is based. We all need to avoid reaching premature conclusions with our interpretations of Bible texts, and this is one of those instances in which I am persuaded that we need to exercise extra caution. From experience, June and I have found that many well-intentioned people will take a plain wording of Scripture and distort it in such a way as to make it appear to mean something that it doesn’t really say. For example, many preachers teach that even though the Messiah taught that He did not come to destroy the law (Matt. 5:17-19), He in effect *really did* do away with certain laws, such as the Sabbath. Hopefully, we can agree that the Messiah did no such thing. However, we need to be careful to avoid the other extreme because there are instances in which a verse of Scripture, taken out of context, can appear to “plainly” mean something that it doesn’t. In other words, we need to approach Scripture from a balanced perspective, rightly dividing the Word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15), because it is true that we can potentially misapply certain laws, even though it may appear that we are faithfully obeying them. In the case of a woman wearing “that which pertaineth unto a man” (Deuteronomy 22:5), it may *appear*, on the surface at least, that a woman should not wear trousers, since in the society many of us have been raised in, trousers are traditionally identified as something worn by males, whereas dresses and skirts are traditionally identified as garments belonging to women.



Could it be that women who wear pants are in violation of the mandate expressed in Deuteronomy 22:5, or *could it be* that this verse is one that requires a deeper, more in-depth study before reaching a conclusion? Is it possible that there are ancient cultural underpinnings that, unless taken into consideration, will result in misunderstanding the original intent? If obeying the voice of Yahweh matters to you – and if you want to make absolutely certain that you understand the will of the Father before charging others of “committing an abomination,” then please join us in examining the truth of this famous passage of Scripture!

Does Yahweh Forbid Women to Wear Trousers?

by Larry and June Acheson

1. The Abominable Jeans

As mentioned in our introduction, several years ago my wife and I were invited to the home of a Messianic Jew named Brad, who had learned of the faith we practice. A security officer in the building where my wife worked, he became curious upon learning that we observe Yahweh's feast days instead of Christmas. As it turned out, both my wife and I wore jeans on the evening of our visit. Little did we realize that this decision would serve as a point of contention between Brad and our family. In a letter written to me after that visit, he wrote the following:

When you allowed your wife to wear jeans in my house, you committed an abomination under old testament law. Revelations 21:8 and 27 declare that no abomination shall enter the kingdom. You have not only violated that Law, BUT ALL OF THE LAW as James said. You are a lawbreaker. I hope by now you see that you are not, and cannot be justified by the law.¹

In my response to Brad, I went to considerable length to explain that June and I are not trying to be "justified by the law," even though, according to Romans 2:13, "Not the hearers of the law, but the doers of the law, shall be justified." Rather than focus our efforts on "being justified," June and I are persuaded that our drive should simply be to please the Father. We believe Yeshua the Messiah, in Luke 17:10, best summarized what our attitude should be:

¹⁰ So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.

In view of Yeshua's instruction, June and I choose to follow the path of obedience to our Heavenly Father, but with a spirit of humility. We aren't out to score "brownie points," as some have alluded, nor do we believe we are striving to "earn our salvation." Just as a child should seek to obey his or her parents, in the same way, June and I seek to learn and obey the will of our Heavenly Father. The point that Brad was trying to make in his letter is that June and I, in our efforts to obey the Torah, are essentially wasting our time because no one can really keep the law anyway. He felt that he found an opportunity to validate his point by drawing my attention to the fact that June wore jeans (which, in his estimation, is a violation of Torah) when we visited his home. As mentioned in our introduction, the "Old Testament law" referred to by Brad is Deuteronomy 22:5:

¹ Excerpt from page 119 of Brad H.'s 123-page letter to me, dated 05/01/1995. The letter primarily consists of Brad upbraiding our religious beliefs as he perceived them after having invited us to his home to apparently "feel us out."

⁵ The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment: for all that do so are abomination unto Yahweh thy Almighty.

According to Brad, Deuteronomy 22:5 not only proves that men should not wear women's clothing and vice-versa, but he is also persuaded that trousers are inclusive of "that which pertaineth unto a man." Is this true? Are jeans (or trousers) men's clothing, which in turn means that any woman wearing such garments are disobedient to the commandment? The obvious dilemma is that Deuteronomy 22:5 says absolutely nothing about bifurcated clothing, otherwise known as trousers, nor do we ever read in Scripture that anything resembling trousers are to be identified as a man's garment.

Our encounter with Brad, though controversial, led us to reexamine our reasons for believing as we do and we invite you to review the steps that led us to reach our current conclusion.

2. *Scripture Records That Both Men and Women Wore the Same Basic Clothing*

As we begin our investigation into this controversial topic, we need to remember that historically, men and women wore clothing that was more or less identical. Scripture records that both men and women wore “robes,” as can be found in Psalms 133:1-2:

How very good and pleasant it is where kindred live together in unity! It is like the precious oil on the head, running down upon the beard, on the beard of Aaron, running down over the collar of his robes.

The Hebrew word translated “robe” is word #6310 in *Strong’s Hebrew and Chaldee Dictionary*, pronounced “peh.” Its literal meaning is “mouth” or “orifice,” as in “opening of a sack” (Genesis 42:27), plus it is the opening of a “high priest’s robe” in Exodus 28:32 as well as Psalms 133:2.

Another word translated “robe” is found in Exodus 28:31-32, where we find the instructions for making the high priest’s garments. These verses are displayed below:

You shall make the robe of the ephod all of blue. It shall have an opening for the head in the middle of it, with a woven binding around the opening, like the opening in a coat of mail, so that it may not be torn.

The Hebrew word translated “robe” in this passage is word #4598 in *Strong’s*. It is pronounced “meh-eel,” and it simply means a “robe, (i.e., upper and outer garment).” This robe was worn by both men and women. It was worn by Job (Job 1:20), by Jonathan (I Samuel 18:4) and by Samuel (I Samuel 2:19, 15:27). King David’s daughter, Tamar, wore this robe (II Samuel 13:18). This verse is displayed below:

Now she was wearing a long robe with sleeves; for this is how the virgin daughters of the king were clothed in earlier times.

Since it is clear that both righteous men and women wore a “meh-eel,” it is equally apparent that both men and women can wear the same basic garment without “committing an abomination.” What, then, separates men’s clothing from women’s clothing?

3. *The Evidence from History*

Not only does Scripture present men's clothing as being very similar to women's clothing, at least in name, but the historical record also validates the fact that both men and women wore similar clothing. The following information is taken from the *Encyclopedia International*:

EGYPTIAN: Old Kingdom, c. 2600 B.C. -- A 5th-Dynasty king wore a striped headdress and a loincloth covered in front by a stiff linen triangle. Women's tunics extended from below the bosom to the feet.

ASSYRIAN: 9th Century B.C. -- The fringed purple robe and mantle of an Assyrian king were thrown over one shoulder.

GREEK: 6th - 5th Centuries B.C. -- The Greek youth's linen tunic, or chiton, was short and pleated, while the girl's was long and flowing. Both sexes wore mantles fastened on one shoulder with a pin or brooch.²

The above information reinforces our point that whatever differences that existed between men's and women's clothing in ancient times were not significant, yet there were obviously observable differences. They both wore robes and tunics, but those worn by women were typically longer, most likely because the men were more in need of the extra leg freedom offered by shorter garments while working and running. The Reader's Digest book *Jesus and His Times* supports the information offered by the *Encyclopedia International*:

The typical loom in Jesus' time produced cloth about three feet wide, so to make most clothing, two lengths of woven material had to be joined side by side to gain the proper width. In Galilee, however, looms were often wider, so that an article of clothing could be woven in one piece. In John 19:23 we read that Jesus' tunic "was without seam, woven from top to bottom." Over his tunic Jesus and other men wore a loose-fitting outer garment, or mantle, with fringes bound by blue ribbon.

This tunic or sometimes the outer garment would have been tied with a leather belt or cloth girdle about four inches wide. The girdle might have had a doubled section sewn into it to serve as a purse. A man wearing only his tunic was said to be naked, or stripped. Men sometimes dressed this way while working. And so, in John 21:7, when Peter is described as being "naked" (King James Version) or "stripped" (later translations) before leaping into the water upon recognizing Jesus, he was probably wearing only his tunic. If a man wore a girdle over his tunic it was called a loincloth. If he pulled his garment up between his legs and tucked it into his girdle to free his legs for easier movement, he was said to gird his loins. To complete his apparel, the Jewish man would have worn sandals and may have tied a white cloth over his head, letting it hang down to his shoulders.

² C.f., *Encyclopedia International*, Volume 6, Grolier Incorporated, New York, 1972, article "Dress, History of," plate 1 (located between pages 118 and 119).

The wife made her own clothes too. She wore the same type of tunic as the men, but her mantle was fuller, with enough fringe to cover her feet. While working, she might tuck the front of her mantle up over her girdle to form an apron for carrying small items.”³

The information from the above sources demonstrates that, historically-speaking, the clothing worn by both men and women had subtle differences, the most noticeable of which was that of *length*. As we are about to see, another distinctive difference involved the more decorative garments worn by women.



Wall painting from a dye shop (*fullonica*) at Pompeii showing workers hanging up clothing to dry. Notice the more colorful and decorative clothing worn by the woman on the left.⁴

Please notice that the differences between men’s and women’s clothing were not necessarily related to *styles* or *types* of clothing. In other words, in the same way that both men and women wore robes and tunics, with women’s garments being more decorative, nothing from the information we have thus far presented would prohibit both men and women from wearing trousers, so long as the culturally-recognized distinctive differences are borne by each gender. Thus, in the same way that there were differences in the length and of décor of robes worn by men and women, our findings suggest that observable differences need to be

exhibited between the trousers worn by women versus those worn by men. The fact that *decoration* played a key role in defining the differences between men’s and women’s clothing in ancient times is brought out by *Mercer Dictionary of the Bible*:

Five basic articles of clothing were worn by both men and women: (1) outer garment; (2) undergarments; (3) belt, sash, or girdle; (4) footwear; and (5) headgear. Mosaic Law prohibited men from wearing women’s clothes and vice versa (Deut. 22:5). But the difference in clothes between the sexes was not style. Women’s apparel was distinguished by its finer and more colorful materials, sometimes the presence of a veil (Gen 24:65; 38:14), and probably the use of a special headdress.⁵

Notice that, historically, there is nothing to indicate that the wearing of bifurcated clothing, i.e., pants, was necessarily associated with one gender over another. Again, as pointed out by the above reference, women’s clothing was distinguished by its finer and more colorful materials, much the same as the culturally-recognized distinction of today.

³ C.f., *Jesus and His Times*, The Reader’s Digest Association, Inc., Pleasantville, New York, 1987, page 96.

⁴ From the online *Wikipedia* article “Clothing in ancient Rome,” Wikimedia Foundation, Inc., cited 06/24/2012. The article may be read in its entirety by accessing the following link: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clothing_in_ancient_Rome.

⁵ Cf., *Mercer Dictionary of the Bible*, Watson E. Mills, General Editor, article “Dress,” by Donald W. Garner, Mercer University Press, Macon, GA, 1997, p. 220.

We need to be mindful of the importance of the *culturally-recognized distinctions* because of the fact that Deuteronomy 22:5 does not specify what distinctions we need to go by in determining how to distinguish “that which pertaineth to a man” versus “that which pertaineth to a woman.” Had the Almighty so desired, He could have easily stated that no woman shall wear bifurcated garments. He could have specified that women are to be seen in robes extending to their ankles and that no man shall wear decorative clothing. Instead, He left the understanding of what constitutes men’s apparel and what is considered women’s apparel open to interpretation.

As we delve deeper into the historical record, one aspect that we will bring up later in this study is that of the reasoning behind the invention of bifurcated garments. Were trousers invented so as to create a distinction between men’s garments and women’s apparel? Or were trousers invented to fulfill a basic need? Based on what we have found in the course of our research, we are persuaded that the latter reason is the answer. Please consider that in today’s modern age, when embarking on a road trip, it matters not whether the driver is wearing trousers or a dress. However, our ancestors from ancient times had no such luxury and for those who had to ride a horse to reach their destination, the choice between robes and trousers would have been an easy one, for it is not practical to wear a robe or dress while horse-riding. Therefore, if all one had in his (or her) wardrobe were robes and tunics, it only seems natural that a creative inventor-type of person would eventually design a garment that would one day become known as *trousers*. Elizabeth Wayland Barber, in her book *The Mummies of Ürümchi*, effectively brings out this important piece of the historic puzzle:

Zipping around on horses also affected nomadic clothing. Loosely flapping drapery like that of the ancient Greeks won’t keep you warm on an icy winter steppe. You need garments that stay put around your body, closely fitted apparel with legs and sleeves. Many have suggested that the horse riders invented trousers, for pants seem to come into the well-documented areas of the ancient world with the steppe migrations of horse riders at the beginning of the Iron Age. Pants not only keep the legs warm, they can also minimize chafing while riding. Many cultures just beyond the steppe zone took up trousers at about this time, probably copying them from the invaders. And we know that the people of the Tarim Basin knew horses and riding by 1000 B.C., for they placed a leather saddle and the head and front hoof of a horse into the upper part of Cherchen Man’s tomb.⁶ The peculiar thong on his finger might thus have belonged to horse-riding gear.

Cherchen Man’s pants were not in a position to be studied. But another pair of trousers in the same sort of purple-red-brown woolen material turned up in the excavations at Cherchen (fig. 2.11). Between the pant legs, a square gusset was set cornerways in the crotch to give ample room for sitting with legs spread. (Problems with splitting one’s seams in tight areas like this have led to the expression *bust a gusset*.) As a decorative touch, the tailor used a thick pale red yarn for the visible stitching; the dashed line of its course resembles the

⁶ *Cherchen Man* or *Chärchän Man* is a mummy discovered in the Taklamakan Desert, Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region, western China. It is believed that he died around the year 1,000 B.C.E.

bright lane divider on a dark highway.⁷

The pattern for the Cherchen Man's trousers mentioned above is shown below as it appears in Barber's book:

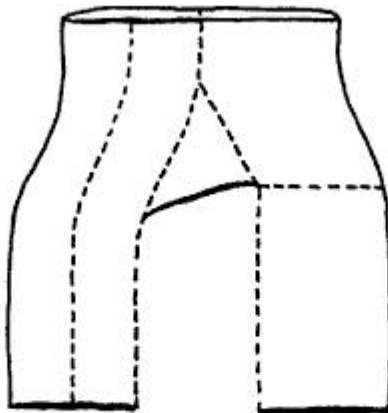


FIGURE 2.11

Pattern of purply-red-brown woolen pants from Cherchen, ca. 1000 B.C. Dashed lines indicate the positions of seams. The asymmetrically diamond-shaped gusset at the crotch was folded on the bias to give the cloth extra elasticity for freer movement.

Author Elizabeth Wayland Barber presents an important factor that must be considered as we weigh in on whether or not Scripture supports women wearing trousers: *protection*, whether it be from the cold or from chafing while horse-riding. We know that women of ancient times rode donkeys (2 Kings 4:22-25), so it was certainly understood even in ancient times that both men and women are permitted to ride horses. The reasoning behind designing a bifurcated garment for riding horses, then, equally applies to both genders.

Based on what we have uncovered thus far, the original differences between men's and women's clothing primarily involved decoration and length. With the passing of time, bifurcated garments were designed and created, not for distinguishing men's clothing from that of what women were expected to wear, but for protection. The question doesn't seem to be that of whether or not women should be allowed to wear trousers, but rather *how* they can wear trousers that simultaneously allow them to be in compliance with Yahweh's command.

⁷ From *The Mummies of Ürümchi* by Elizabeth Wayland Barber, W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., New York, NY, 1999, pp. 37-39.

4. *Balancing Cultural Distinctions With The Will of Yahweh*

We have seen that, historically, the primary differences between men's and women's clothing included the general length of the robes, as well as the finer materials and decorations attributed to women's garments. We will examine additional historical evidence during the course of our study, but when we combine the understanding of the subtle historical distinctions between each gender's attire with the fact that Yahweh omitted any mention of bifurcated apparel in Scripture, we need to be careful to not allow any cultural definitions to interfere with the truth as presented in Yahweh's Word. In other words, if a culture blurs the distinctions to the point that it becomes difficult to distinguish men's clothing from women's, then that culture undermines Yahweh's intentions when He inspired the mandate found in Deuteronomy 22:5. If it would have been wrong for a woman to purposely imitate the clothing worn by men in ancient times, what clothing choices should women of today's culture make? This is a question that each of us must not only ask ourselves, but we need to diligently seek to make certain that our answer meets the approval of Yahweh and honors Him.



This is an outline drawing of a bas-relief of the fifth century BCE. Notice the distinction between the men's clothing and the woman's.⁵

While it is obvious that both men and women of ancient times wore the same basic style of clothing, the references we have consulted establish the fact that there were, nevertheless, discernible differences, such as the more colorful materials used in making women's apparel. *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible* offers detailed information about these differences:

Ezekiel 16:8-14 presents Jerusalem in the figure of a woman regally attired as a bride. She is pictured as clothed "with embroidered cloth" (רְקֵמָה, variegated, woven, or embroidered stuff), "fine linen" (שֵׁשׁ, fine Egypt. linen) and "silk" (מִשְׁיָא, a costly material for garments, according to Rabb "silk"); and she is shod "with leather" (תְּהָשׂ, a kind of leather or skin used for sandals) and has a "beautiful crown" (עֲטֹרַת הַכְּפָאֵרֶת, "crown of splendor" or "beauty") on

⁵ This image was taken from the book *Costume and Fashion: A Concise History*, 4th edition, by James Laver, Thomas & Hudson, Inc., New York, NY, 2002, p. 28.

her head. She also is pictured as adorned with ornaments (עֲדָי), such as arm bracelets (צַמִּיד, “bracelet”), neck chain (רַבִּיד, “chain,” ornament for the neck), a nose ring (גֶּזֶם, used both as nose ring for women as here, and earring for men and women), and earrings (עֲגִיל, “hoop” or “ring,” prob. “earring”).

Isaiah 3:18-24 presents a fairly long list of clothing and ornamental items, and materials for beautifying, among which are finery for the ankles (i.e., anklets as ornaments), headbands (שְׁבִיט, “frontband”; cf. Arab., a “sun” or small glass neck-ornament), crescents (שֶׁהַרִּין, “moon” or “crescent,” as an ornament), pendants (נְטִיפָה, “drop,” “pendant,” or “pearl”), bracelets (שֶׁרָה, “bracelet”), veils (רַעְלָה, prob. “veil”; RSV “scarf”), headdresses (פֶּאֶר, “headdress,” “turban”), armllets (צַעְדָּה, “armllet,” a band clasping the upper arm), sashes (קֶשֶׁרִים, “bands” or “sashes,” a woman’s ornament which is bound on), charms (לְחָשׁ, “charms,” or “amulets” worn by women), signet rings (טַבְּעָה, here “ring” as an ornament), nose rings (cf. Ezek 16:12), “festal robes” (מַחְלָצָה, “robe of state,” here in Isa 3:22, dress robes of the ladies of Jerusalem), mantles (מַעֲטָפָה, “overtunic” or “mantle”), cloaks (מַטְפָּחָה, “cloak,” that which is spread over), handbags (חֶרֶיט, “bag” or “purse,” made of skin or other material), garments of gauze, or transparent garments (גְּלִיּוֹן, or “tablets of polished metal,” “mirrors”), linen garments (סְדִין, “linen cloth” or “wrapper”), turbans for women (צִנִּיף, “turban,” here of women), large veils (רַדִּיד, or “wide wrapper”), girdles (הַגֹּרֶה, “girdle,” “loin covering,” “belt”) and rich robes (פְּתִיגִיל, “rich robe”).

Revelation 18:16 pictures Babylon as a woman in her finery with her fine linen garments (*βύσσινος*, made of fine linen, “linen garment”; cf. the Heb. term in Isa 3:23) dyed with purple (*πορφύρα*) and scarlet (*κόκκινος*) and adorned with gold ornaments (*χρυσίον*), precious stones (*λίθος τίμιος*) and pearls (*μαργαρίτης*).

When Abraham’s servant went to Nahor in Mesopotamia to obtain Rebekah as a bride for Isaac, the text of Genesis 24 speaks of items of clothing and adornment for her, such as a gold nose ring and arm bracelets (vv. 22, 47), jewelry of silver and gold and clothing (בגד, a garment, clothing or robe of any kind) (v. 53).⁹

The above reference expounds on the information that we have already seen from other sources, validating the fact that women of old wore the same basic clothing that men wore, but their clothing was typically adorned with embroidered materials that set the clothing apart from men’s apparel. Would the fact that women wore clothing adorned with ornaments and embroidery demonstrate that it is forbidden for them to wear trousers? Nothing that we have read to this point supports reaching such a conclusion. Nevertheless, in keeping with Yahweh’s expressed desire for His children, if women choose to wear trousers, shouldn’t they do so with the intent of exhibiting a distinction from trousers that are worn by men? Conversely, since today’s culture certainly permits men to wear trousers, shouldn’t men go to great lengths to ensure that there is nothing

⁹ C.f., *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, Vol. 2, Merrill C. Tenney, General Editor, article “Dress,” by W. H. Mare, Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, MI, 1978, p. 164.

about their attire that would cause others to think he is wearing women's clothing?

I remember a day when, as a youngster, my dad took me to the local clothing store to buy some jeans for school. Of course, I had to try on a pair to make certain they fit properly. As I stood looking in the mirror, the store's owner matter-of-factly stated, "You know those are *girls'* jeans, don't you?" Unknown to me at the time, the owner was a renowned practical joker. I still remember the feeling of terror that jolted up my spine at the thought that I was wearing girls' clothing! I was already halfway to the dressing room in a dead run when both my dad and the owner caught up with me and, laughing hysterically, the store owner assured me that he was only kidding. At that early age, I didn't need to see flowers or any other "girly stuff" on the jeans to make it obvious that they were designed for girls. All I needed was the statement from the store owner, which I immediately believed to be true. I am persuaded that if each of us had that same internalized fear of wearing a garment attributed to the other gender, June and I would not have felt the need to compose this study.

While our society generally frowns on boys wearing dresses and skirts, which are now culturally attributed to girls only, the opposite is not true, and that is what leads to the current moral dilemma: *Our society approves of girls dressing like boys.* Even as a child, I remember girls being affectionately referred to as "tomboys."



Even though this term is commonly attributed to girls who like to do things normally attributed to boys, such as playing football in the rain instead of playing with dolls or going shopping,

it is also associated with girls who like dressing the way boys do. In fact, the most commonly accepted definition of "tomboy," according to the Internet's *Urban Dictionary*, expresses this understanding:

A girl who dresses and sometimes behaves the way boys are expected to, often into more masculine things like "stronger" sports, computers, or cars. Stereotypically wears jeans, baseball caps, and denim vests/jackets."¹⁰

The term "tomboy," as it turns out, originated long before I was born. According to the *Online Etymology Dictionary*, this word is traced all the way back to the 1590's.¹¹ Thus, contrary to what some may believe, the cultural acceptance of girls dressing like boys didn't happen overnight. It very likely began very innocently, but has escalated to the point that there is often a blurring of the genders when it comes to clothing.

¹⁰ From *Urban Dictionary*, Urban Dictionary LLC, San Francisco, CA, ©1999-2012. All definitions are written and voted on by viewers/contributors to the site. To view all viewer-contributed definitions of "Tomboy," please visit the following link:
<http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=tomboy>

¹¹ Douglas Harper, the *Online Etymology Dictionary*, © 2001-2012. According to the information supplied by this reference, a "girl who acts like a spirited boy" was first recorded in the 1590's.

5. What does *Yahweh* mean in Deuteronomy 22:5?

In our original version of this study, the title of this chapter was “So what did *Yahweh* mean in Deuteronomy 22:5?” When we consider the fact that *Yahweh*’s Torah is not something that was for a certain era, but rather that it is *still* His living will for His people *today*, it only makes sense that we rename the chapter as shown above. If we can truly understand that *Yahweh* expects His children, both of Old Time and today, to obey His instruction in Deuteronomy 22:5, then we really need to determine what He means and how to apply that understanding to our lives.

Thus far, we have seen that, apart from the more ornamental attire worn by women, there really wasn’t much difference in the style of clothing worn by men and women in ancient times. Nevertheless, it is clear that *Yahweh* does not want us to create a blurred society in which men and women dress the same. This understanding is also expressed by Jewish sages. Notice the following information, taken from *The Chumash*:



One of the UK’s first female career journalists, Anne Scott-James, pictured in a pub in 1941.

5. Male and female garb. The Torah forbids men and women to adopt garb or other practices that are associated with the other sex. This is to avoid excessive mingling that can lead to promiscuity, and to preserve the normal and constructive differences between males and females. Thus, the Sages apply this prohibition to men who are excessively concerned with personal grooming and to women who wear battle dress (*Nazir* 59a; see *Ibn Ezra*; *Rambam, Hil. Avodah Zarah* 12:9-10).¹²

The Chumash presents the dangers associated with deliberately wearing clothing that is deemed as belonging to the opposite sex. It goes on to express concern, not about women wearing clothing assigned to men (since they wore the same basic clothing anyway), but about women wearing “battle dress.” Why would the primary concern about women’s clothing be that they not wear clothing designed for battle engagement? We will address this reasoning below. For now, equipped with the Scriptural and historical understanding that, apart from the more ornamental-style apparel worn by women, both men and women wore the same basic type of clothing, we are now poised to ask exactly what *Yahweh* means in Deuteronomy 22:5. Perhaps the most concise answer to this question can be found in *Adam Clarke’s Commentary on the Holy Bible*, shown

¹² From *The Chumash: The Stone Edition*, by Rabbi Nosson Scherman, Mesorah Publications, Ltd., Brooklyn, NY, 1997, rabbinic commentary on Deuteronomy 22:5, p. 1,050.

below:

5. *The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man. Keli geber, 'the instruments or arms of a man.'* As the word *geber* is here used, which properly signifies a 'strong man' or 'man of war,' it is very probable that armor is here intended; especially as we know that in the worship of Venus, to which that of Astarte or Ashtaroth among the Canaanites bore a striking resemblance, the women were accustomed to appear in armor before her. It certainly cannot mean a simple change in dress, whereby the men might pass for women, and vice versa. This would have been impossible in those countries where the dress of the sexes had but little to distinguish it, and where every man wore a long beard.¹³

Adam Clarke not only addresses an ancient heathen custom of women donning military garb, but he presents it as a part of a ritual associated with the worship of the goddess Venus. We will examine that aspect later. For now, as Adam Clarke pointed out, the Hebrew word “geber” is not generally used in Scripture to refer to “man.” The words normally translated “man” in Scripture are Hebrew word #376 (*'ish*) and #120 (*'ādām*). Neither of these two words is found in Deuteronomy 22:5, however. The word translated “man” in Deuteronomy 22:5, as we've already pointed out, is the word *geber*, which is word #1397 in *Strong's*. This word is used sparingly in comparison to *'ish* and *'ādām*. Why is *geber* used in Deuteronomy 22:5 instead of one of the other two choices? The answer can be found by doing more in-depth research into the meaning of this Hebrew word. Here is how this word appears in *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*:

1397. גִּבּוֹר *geber*, *gheh'-ber*; from 1396; prop. a valiant man or warrior; gen. a person simply:—every one, man × mighty.

That the word *geber* is to be distinguished from the more general words for “man” is brought out by the *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*:

Geber. Man. As distinct from such more general words for man as *'ādām*, *'ish*, *'enōsh*, etc., this word specifically relates to a male at the height of his powers. As such it depicts humanity at its most competent and capable level. Sixty-six occurrences.¹⁴

The understanding that *geber* reflects a warrior as opposed to men in general is supported by references such as *The New Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew-English Lexicon*, where *geber* is listed as meaning “man as strong, disting. fr. women, children, and non-combatants whom he is to defend, chiefly poetic.”¹⁵ Thus, as described earlier in *Adam Clarke's Commentary*, this word is mainly used to identify a “man of

¹³ C.f., *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Holy Bible*, Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, Kansas City, Missouri, 1985 (originally completed in 1832), page 220.

¹⁴ *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, Volume 1, R. Laird Harris, Editor, Moody Press, Chicago, IL, 1980, pp. 148-149.

¹⁵ C.f., *The New Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew-English Lexicon*, by Francis Brown, D.D., D. Litt., Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, MA, 1979, pp. 149-150.

war,” i.e., a warrior. Had Yahweh intended to make it clear that women in general are not to dress as men in general, He most likely would have inspired a general word meaning “man,” such as *’ish*, to appear in that verse. That Yahweh would choose to employ the Hebrew word *geber* instead of another more general term meaning “man” is remarkable. It is, in fact, significant.

There may be another reason for understanding that women are not to wear military-style clothing. If we consider the similarity between the robes worn by our ancestors, both male and female, *and* if we take into consideration the fact that many women could not afford the costly ornaments and embroidery that would have helped to distinguish their clothing from that of men, it follows that there may well have been some difficulty in determining that some women’s robes were necessarily that which “pertaineth to a woman.” However, if the woman donned a military uniform, an item clearly attributed to the male gender, there would have been no doubt as to her infraction.

Eighteenth century scholar John Gill, in his *Exposition of the Bible*, neatly strikes the balance between the understanding that, although the use of *geber* suggests the wearing of men’s battle armor, men and women should nevertheless exercise caution in wearing attire appropriate to their gender:

The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man

It being very unseemly and impudent, and contrary to the modesty of her sex; or there shall not be upon her any “instrument of a man,”¹⁶ any utensil of his which he makes use of in his trade and business; as if she was employed in it, when her business was not to do the work of men, but to take care of her house and family; and so this law may be opposed to the customs of the Egyptians, as is thought, from whom the Israelites were lately come; whose women, as Herodotus¹⁷ relates, used to trade and merchandise abroad, while the men kept at home; and the word also signifies armour¹⁸, as Onkelos renders it; and so here forbids women putting on a military habit and going with men to war, as was usual with the eastern women; and so Maimonides¹⁹ illustrates it, by putting a mitre or an helmet on her head, and clothing herself with a coat of mail; and in like manner Josephus²⁰ explains it,

“take heed, especially in war, that a woman do not make use of the habit of a man, or a man that of a woman;”

nor is he to be found fault with so much as he is by a learned writer, since he does not restrain it wholly to war, though he thinks it may have a special regard to that; for no doubt the law respects the times of peace as well as war, in neither of which such a practice should obtain: but the Targum of Jonathan very wrongly limits it to the wearing of fringed garments, and to phylacteries, which belonged to men:

¹⁶ John Gill’s footnote: “(כלי גבר) ‘instrumentum virile,’ Pagninus, Junius et Tremellius; ‘instrumentum viri,’ Vatablus.”

¹⁷ John Gill’s footnote: “(Euterpe, sive, l. 2. c. 35.”

¹⁸ John Gill’s footnote: “(Arma viri,’ Munster.”

¹⁹ John Gill’s footnote: “(Hilchot Obede Cochabim, c. 12. sect. 10.”

²⁰ John Gill’s footnote: “(Antiqu. l. 4. c. 8. sect. 43.”

neither shall a man put on a woman's garment; which would betray effeminacy and softness unbecoming men, and would lead the way to many impurities, by giving an opportunity of mixing with women, and so to commit fornication and adultery with them; to prevent which and to preserve chastity this law seems to be made; and since in nature a difference of sexes is made, it is proper and necessary that this should be known by difference of dress, or otherwise many evils might follow; and this precept is agreeably to the law and light of nature: it is observed by an Heathen writer²¹, that there is a twofold distribution of the law, the one written, the other not written; what we use in civil things is written, what is from nature and use is unwritten, as to walk naked in the market, or to put on a woman's garment: and change of the clothes of sexes was used among the Heathens by way of punishment, as of the soldiers that deserted, and of adulteresses²²; so abominable was it accounted: indeed it may be lawful in some cases, where life is in danger, to escape that, and provided chastity is preserved:

for all that do so are an abomination to the Lord thy God; which is a reason sufficient why such a practice should not be used. Some from this clause have been led to conclude, that respect is had to some customs of this kind used in idolatrous worship, which are always abominable to the Lord. So Maimonides²³ observes, that in a book of the Zabians, called "Tomtom," it is commanded, that a man should wear a woman's garment coloured when he stood before the star of Venus, and likewise that a woman should put on a coat of mail and warlike armour when she stood before the star of Mars; which he takes to be one reason of this law, though besides that he gives another, because hereby concupiscence would be excited, and an occasion for whoredom given: that there was some such customs among the Heathens may be confirmed from Macrobius²⁴, and Servius²⁵ as has been observed by Grotius; the former of which relates, that Philochorus affirmed that Venus is the moon, and that men sacrificed to her in women's garments, and women in men's; and for this reason, because she was thought to be both male and female; and the latter says, there was an image of Venus in Cyprus with a woman's body and garment, and with the sceptre and distinction of a man, to whom the men sacrificed in women's garments, and women in men's garments; and, as the above learned commentator observes, there were many colonies of the Phoenicians in Cyprus, from whom this custom might come; and to prevent it obtaining among the Israelites in any degree, who were now coming into their country, it is thought this law was made; for the priests of the Assyrian Venus made use of women's apparel²⁶, and in the feasts of Bacchus men disguised themselves like women^{27 28}.

²¹ John Gill's footnote: "(Cunaeus de Repub. Heb. l. 2. c. 22.)"

²² John Gill's footnote: "(Laert. Vit. Platonis, l. 3. p. 238.)"

²³ John Gill's footnote: "(Moreh Nevochim, par. 3. c. 37.)"

²⁴ John Gill's footnote: "(Saturnal. l. 3. c. 8.)"

²⁵ John Gill's footnote: "(In Virgil. Aeneid. l. 2.)"

²⁶ John Gill's footnote: "(Jul. Firmic. de Relig. Prophan. p. 6.)"

²⁷ John Gill's footnote: "(Lucian.)"

²⁸ C.f., *John Gill's Exposition of the Bible*, published between the years 1746-1763; available online at the following link: <http://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/gills-exposition-of-the-bible/deuteronomy-22-5.html>.

Both *Clarke's Commentary* and *John Gill's Exposition of the Bible* offer the explanation that men and women are commanded not to wear each other's clothing because of heathen worship rituals in honor of the goddess Venus. This same information is also expounded on by the *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*:

One of the most complex cases, at first appearance, is that of the adoption of feminine dress by priests, shamans, and medicine-men. Where for various mythological reasons an androgynous deity exists, it is natural that the attendant priests should be sympathetically made two-sexed in their dress. Sacrifice was made to the Bearded Venus of Cyprus by men dressed as women, and by women dressed as men.²⁹

Hopefully, none of us has any intention of cross-dressing as part of a ritual honoring an idol, but is there a way to ensure that our garments can in no way be construed by others as clothing that is more appropriate for the opposite sex? Obviously, we need to take the proper precautions against dressing as members of the opposite sex; the dilemma is that of ascertaining that our attire is, without question, gender-appropriate.

We can wrestle over the proper interpretation of Deuteronomy 22:5 with the understanding that scholars across the centuries have shared in the debate. One thing remains clear: The Almighty does intend for His children to wear clothing that promotes a clear distinction between the sexes. The question is how? Are trousers one such distinguishing factor?

²⁹ Cf., *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*, Edited by James Hastings with the assistance of John A. Selbie and Louis H. Gray, Vol. V, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1912, pp. 69-70.

6. *Did Women Wear Men's Armor in Ancient Times?*

We have provided quotes from several sources, including *Clarke's Commentary*, offering scholarly support for understanding that the prohibition of women from wearing "that which pertaineth unto a man" is a reference to dressing for battle. During the letter exchange that I had with Brad (the man whose home June and I visited back in 1995), *Clarke's Commentary* was the only reference I had access to that presented this line of reasoning. Brad, apparently unaware that Adam Clarke's understanding was also shared by Jewish scholars, including first-century historian Josephus, was not impressed with Clarke's explanation. Here is his reaction:

Concerning your interpretation of Deuteronomy 22:5. I am exasperated by your belief (or your belief in Clarke's interpretation) that what is in question here is whether women may wear armor. This verse clearly distinguishes garments.

Deu 22:5 (KJV) "The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment: for all that do so are abomination unto the LORD thy God."

Deu 22:5 (NIV) "A woman must not wear men's clothing, nor a man wear women's clothing, for the LORD your God detests anyone who does this."

You left out that second part of this scripture. That men must not wear that which pertains to women. It cannot be talking about armored men as Clarke supposes (a supposition not supported by any commentary, dictionary or any translation I am aware of). It is talking about garments.

8071. simlah, sim-law'; perh by perm. for the fem. of H5566 (through the idea of a cover assuming the shape of the object beneath); a dress, espec. a mantle: --apparel, cloth (-es, -ing), garment, raiment. Comp. H8008.

This is a generic word for garments and simply means clothing in general. If your belief that there was no discernible difference between men's apparel and women's apparel is true, then this is a nonsensical scripture. The contrast is between garments of men and women. There is no other object that the verb wear modifies except garment. For you to compare other religions to try and arrive at a conclusion other than believing God could just simply say "Don't wear each other's clothing" is to make the God of the universe reactionary to false religions. I prefer to believe that He simply says what He means. No trickery. Just believing that He means do not confuse the sexes. If you look at this logically, if it is armor in question with the man, then the second part of this scripture is total nonsense (i.e. men wearing women's garments). If there is no difference in garments, it is total nonsense.

1397. geber, gheb'-ber; from H1396; prop. a valiant man or warrior; gen. a person simply:--every one, man, X mighty.

Geber, refers not to men in armor, but men that are strong, young and the age of war (i.e. over twenty). If you will carefully examine this word as it is used throughout the scripture you will find this to be the case.

Exo 10:9-11 (KJV) "And Moses said, We will go with our young and with our old, with our sons and with our daughters, with our flocks and with our herds will we go; for we must hold a feast unto the LORD. 10 And he said unto them, Let the LORD be so with you, as I will let you go, and your little ones: look to it; for evil is before you. 11 Not so: go now ye that are men (**geber**), and serve the LORD; for that ye desire. And they were driven out from Pharaoh's presence."

Moses contrasts young and old, sons and daughters. Pharaoh seeks only to let the geber (strong young men) go to worship God. These definitely weren't armored men of war in Egypt! Pharaoh knew if he kept their women, children and old men, they would return.

{TWOT} geber – Man. As distinct from such more general words for man as 'adam, 'ish, 'enosh, etc., this word specifically, relates to a male at the height of his powers. As such it depicts humanity at its most competent and capable level. Sixty-six occurrences.

The word for armed men is gibbor #1401.

{TWOT} gibbor. Mighty, strong, valiant, mighty man. (RSV often translates "warrior.") The heroes or champions among the armed forces. Occurs 156 times.

I believe Clarke is wrong. Not just about what he arrives at as a conclusion to this Scripture, but how. Additionally, please remember that there are many versions of the scriptures, by many highly capable translators, who have never arrived at anything close to Mr. Clarke's unfounded conjecture. However, I am not making this an issue. I am simply pointing out what I believe on this issue of apparel. Your wife may wear whatever she chooses as far as I am concerned. It is not my business. What is my business is the defense of the sanctity of the word.³⁰

Brad, in his commentary, went to great lengths in an attempt to refute the notion that the prohibition against women wearing men's garments could have been understood as having been a reference to battle gear. Nevertheless, the historical record, as agreed upon by both Jewish and Christian sources, indicates that heathen women would indeed dress in "warlike armour" when they stood before the star of Mars. This understanding is further substantiated and elaborated on by the *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*:

The occurrence of a masculine temperament in women is not uncommon in early culture. In some tribes of Brazil there were women who dressed and lived as men, hunting and going to war. The same practice is found in Zanzibar and

³⁰ Excerpt from pp. 10-11 of Brad H.'s 18-page letter to me, dated 06/09/1995. The letter primarily consists of Brad upbraiding our religious beliefs as he perceived them after having invited us to his home to apparently "feel us out."

among the Eastern Eskimo. Shinga, who became queen of Congo in 1640, kept 50 or 60 male concubines. She always dressed as a man and compelled them to take the names and dress of women. Classical antiquity has many similar cases of queens wearing men's armour in war, and of women fighting in the ranks, either temporarily, or permanently, as the Amazons. The last case, on the analogy of the West African cases of women's regiments, may be based on fact.

In modern civilization the practice of women dressing as men and following masculine vocations is no less frequent than was in barbarism the custom of effemination of men. Women of masculine temperament are by no means a rare phenomenon to-day, and the balance of sexual reversal has thus changed.³¹

Although the above information pertains to "classical antiquity" that does not date to ancient times, it is quite possible that their customs are traced to ancient practice and belief and are representative of the cultural application that Yahweh addresses in Deuteronomy 22:5. This same reference cites other heathen customs associated with cross-dressing:

II. Inversion of sexual dress.—The remarks of Frazer may introduce this part of the subject, which is curiously large: 'The religious or superstitious interchange of dress between men and women is an obscure and complex problem, and it is unlikely that any single solution would apply to all the cases.' He suggests that the custom of the bride dressing as a male might be a magical mode of ensuring a male heir, and that the wearing by the wife of her husband's garments might be a magical mode of transferring her pains to the man. The latter mode would thus be the converse of the former. We may also note the importance assigned to the principle of transference or contagion. Such ideas, it may be premised, are perhaps secondary, the conscious reactions to an unconscious impulsive action, whose motivation may be entirely different. The whole subject falls simply into clear division, which may be explained as they come. The Zulu 'Black Ox Sacrifice' produces rain. The officiators, chief men, wear the girdles of young girls for the occasion. To produce a change in nature, it is necessary for man to change himself. The idea is unconscious, but its meaning is adaptation. Its reverse aspect is a change of luck by a change of self. The most obvious change is change of sex, the sexual demarcation being the strongest known to society, dividing it into two halves.³²

The *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics* not only offers evidence of heathen cultures practicing "inversion of sexual dress," but Judaism itself was not immune to such customs:

A holiday being a suspension of normal life, it tends to be accompanied by every kind of reversal of the usual order. Commonly all laws and customs are broken. An obvious mode of reversal is the adoption of all garments of the other sex.

In the mediæval Feast of Fools the priests dressed as clowns or women. In Carnival festivities men have dressed up as women, and women as men. In the

³¹ Cf., *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*, Edited by James Hastings with the assistance of John A. Selbie and Louis H. Gray, Vol. V, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1912, p. 71.

³² *Ibid*, p. 68.

Argive Ὑβριστικά festival men wore women's robes and veils, and women dressed as men. At the Saturnalia, slaves exchanged positions and dress with their masters, and men with women. In Alsace, as elsewhere at vintage festivals and the like, men and women exchange the dress of their sex. In the mediæval feasts of Purim, the Jewish Bacchanalia, men dressed as women, and women as men.

The result, and in some degree the motive, of such interchange is purely social, expressive of the desire for good-fellowship and union.³³

While we appreciate the time and effort that Brad put into composing his perspective, regrettably, it appears that he did not research this topic thoroughly enough. The historical record simply has too many examples of cross-dressing by heathens (and even wayward Jews) to ignore. The wearing of men's battle gear by women is only one such example.

Brad also attempts to present another Hebrew word as being a more logical candidate for "armed man." The word he suggests is "gibbor." It is not a coincidence that the Hebrew word "geber" is very similar to the word "gibbor." The fact is, they are both the same, exact Hebrew word, the only difference being the vowel-pointing. Here is a side-by-side comparison of these two words as they appear in *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*:

1397. גִּבּוֹר **geber**, *gheh'ber*; from 1396; prop. a valiant man or warrior; gen. a person simply:—every one, man x mighty.

1401. גִּבְּוֹר **gibbâr** (Chald), *ghib-bawr'*; intens. of 1400; valiant, or warrior:—mighty.

As displayed above, it should be obvious that the two Hebrew words are spelled the same (גבר). There was no vowel-pointing in the original Hebrew text because vowel-pointing wasn't even invented until the 7th century CE,³⁴ so it wasn't until modern history that man decided to separate the one word from the other. Originally they were the same word. Therefore, Brad's attempt to downgrade the use of *geber* in Deuteronomy 22:5 as a less-than-desirable translation of "armed man" is simply a wasted effort.

Moreover, Brad is unable to escape the fact that *trousers* are not mentioned anywhere in Scripture as having been understood as a man's garment. Of course, it is possible that no such garment existed when the command found in Deuteronomy 22:5 was given to Israel. Regardless of the time period during which trousers came into

³³ Cf., *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*, Edited by James Hastings with the assistance of John A. Selbie and Louis H. Gray, Vol. V, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1912, p. 69.

³⁴ Cf., *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, Translated by Benjamin Davies, LL.D, Ira Bradley & Co., Boston, MA, 1880, p. 32, where we read, "But when the Hebrew had died out, and the ambiguity arising from such an indefinite mode of writing, and the fear of losing the right pronunciation, must have been increasingly felt; then the *vowel-signs* or *vowel points* were invented, which minutely settled what had till then been left uncertain. Of the date of this punctuation (*vocalisation*) of the Old Testament text we have no historical account; but a comparison of historical facts warrants the conclusion, that the present vowel-system was not completed till the seventh century after Christ; and that it was done by Jewish scholars, well versed in the language, who, it is highly probable, copied the example of the Syriac, and perhaps also of the Arabic, grammarians."

existence, Brad would need to prove that they were invented for men as opposed to women. It is difficult to ascertain from the historical record whether or not trousers were invented for men only, but it doesn't require a lot of research to validate that regardless of which gender they were created for, they were not invented for the purpose of making a fashion statement or for clearly distinguishing men's apparel from that of women, but rather they were created out of *necessity*.

Strabo is the name of a first-century geographer, philosopher and historian who authored a 17-volume work titled *Geographica*, otherwise known as *The Geography of Strabo*. In Book 11 of his work, he describes how various customs, including styles of garments, were handed down from the Medes to the Persians. One garment of interest is the trouser, an article of clothing that he deemed appropriate for protection from the cold:

As for customs, most of theirs and of those of the Armenians are the same, because their countries are similar. The Medes, however, are said to have been the originators of customs for the Armenians, and also, still earlier, for the Persians, who were their masters and their successors in the supreme authority over Asia. For example, their "Persian" stole,³⁵ as it is now called, and their zeal for archery and horsemanship, and the court they pay to their kings, and their ornaments, and the divine reverence paid by subjects to kings, came to the Persians from the Medes. And that this is true is particularly clear from their dress: for tiara,³⁶ citaris,³⁷ pilus,³⁸ tunics with sleeves reaching to the hands, and trousers, are indeed suitable things to wear in cold and northerly regions, such as the Medes wear, but by no means in southerly regions; and most of the settlements possessed by the Persians were on the Red Sea, farther south than the country of the Babylonians and the Susians. But after the overthrow of the Medes the Persians acquired in addition certain parts of the country that reached to Media. However, the customs even of the conquered looked to the conquerors so august and appropriate to royal pomp that they submitted to wear feminine robes instead of going naked or lightly clad, and to cover their bodies all over with clothes.³⁹

It is interesting to note that Strabo, despite his reference to trousers as a suitable item of clothing for "cold and northerly regions," later mentions "feminine robes." If it is true that women wore trousers, it would have been for protection from the elements, plus we need to consider the possibility that, even in those cold northern regions, they may have been worn as undergarments. In Book IV of his work *Geography*, Strabo hints that it was the Gallic men who wore trousers:

The Gallic people wear the "sagus," let their hair grow long, and wear tight

³⁵ i.e., robe (cf. Lat. "stola").

³⁶ The royal tiara was high and erect, encircled with a diadem, while that of the people was soft and fell over on one side.

³⁷ A kind of Persian head-dress; Aristophanes, *Birds* 497 compares a rooster's comb to it.

³⁸ A felt skull-cap, like a fez.

³⁹ Strabo (64/63 BCE – ca. 24 CE), *Geography*, Book 11, ch. 13, section 9, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press; London: William Heinemann, Ltd. 1924. This excerpt was taken from the online Perseus Digital Library, Gregory R. Crane, Editor-in-Chief, Tufts University, Medford/Somerville, MA: <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:abo:tlg.0099,001:11&lang=original>.

breeches; instead of tunics they wear slit tunics that have sleeves and reach as far as their private parts and the buttocks.⁴⁰

The reason we are persuaded that Strabo hints at the Gallic men wearing trousers instead of women wearing them is his assertion that the short tunics only reach as low as their private parts. As we have previously covered, one of the distinguishing marks separating men's garments from women's garments is the long robes worn by women. It is not likely that the short tunics described above by Strabo were intended as a description of the attire worn by women during that time period.

If we can presume that it is true that women of Old wore trousers, we are left to presume that they did so for protection from the elements and that they were worn as undergarments. *The Encyclopædia Britannica* corroborates Strabo's testimony that trousers were worn for *protection*, not to make a fashion statement:

Dr. C. H. Stratz divides clothing climatically into two classes: tropical, which is based on the girdle (or, when the attachment is fastened round the neck, the cloak), and the arctic, based on the trouser. This classification is ingenious and convenient as far as it goes, but it seems probable that the trouser, which also has the waist as its point of attachment, may itself be a further development of the girdle. Certainly, however, in historical times the division holds good, and it is worthy of remark that one of the points about the northern barbarians which struck the ancient Greeks and Romans most forcibly was the fact that they wore trousers. Amongst the most northerly races the latter garb is worn by both sexes alike; farther south by the men, the women retaining the tropical form; farther south still the latter reigns supreme. No distinct latitude can be assigned as a boundary between the two forms, from the simple fact that where migration in comparatively recent times has taken place a natural conservatism has prevented the more familiar garb from being discarded; at the same time the two forms can often be seen within the limits of the same country; as, for instance, in China, where the women of Shanghai commonly wear trousers, those of Hong-Kong skirts. The retention by women in Europe of the tropical garb can be explained by the fact that her sphere has been mainly confined to the house, and her life has been less active than that of man; consequently the adoption of the arctic dress has been in her case less necessary. But it is noticeable that where women engage in occupations of a more than usually strenuous nature, they frequently don male costume while at their work; as, for instance, women who work in mines (Belgium) and who tend cattle (Switzerland, Tirol). The retention of the tropical patten by the Highlanders is due directly to the environment, since the kilt is better suited than trousers for walking over wet heather.⁴¹

As explained by the above reference, trousers were worn in northern climates, but not in southern regions. Why? It should be obvious that women weren't wearing them to

⁴⁰ Strabo (64/63 BCE – ca. 24 CE), *Geography*, Book IV, Ch. 4. This excerpt was taken from http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Strabo/4D*.html.

⁴¹ From *The Encyclopædia Britannica*, 11th edition, Volume 7, The Encyclopædia Britannica Company, New York, NY, 1910, article "Costume," p. 225.

imitate men or to make a fashion statement – they wore trousers for protection from the cold.

It is only fair that we mention that not all Bible commentators share Adam Clarke's conclusion that the Scriptural mandate against switching of men's garments for women's garments and vice-versa is due to heathen customs. Take, for example, the following commentary offered by C. F. Keil in *Commentary on the Old Testament*:

22:5 As the property of a neighbor was to be sacred in the estimation of an Israelite, so also the divine distinction of the sexes, which was kept sacred in civil life by the clothing peculiar to each sex, was to be not less but even more sacredly observed: "*There shall not be man's things upon a woman, and a man shall not put on a woman's clothes.*" אֵלֶּיךָ does not signify clothing merely, nor arms only, but includes every kind of domestic and other utensils (as in Ex. 22:6; Lev. 11:32; 13:49). The immediate design of this prohibition was not to prevent licentiousness, or to oppose idolatrous practices (the proofs which *Spencer* has adduced of the existence of such usages among heathen nations are very far-fetched); but to maintain the sanctity of that distinction of the sexes which was established by the creation of man and woman, and in relation to which Israel was not to sin. Every violation or wiping out of this distinction—such even, for example, as the emancipation of a woman—was unnatural, and therefore an abomination in the sight of God.⁴²

C. F. Keil establishes that his understanding of Yahweh's intentions as laid out in Torah is that our clothing choices must exhibit a culturally-recognized distinction between the sexes. We respect and support Keil's understanding; however, we continue to revisit the question of whether or not trousers were anciently considered a man's garment as opposed to apparel suitable for women, as well as whether or not women in northern climates should be permitted to keep their legs warmer. Keil takes a firm stand in affirming that the design of Deuteronomy 5:22 is for Yahweh's children to "maintain the sanctity of that distinction of the sexes which was established by the creation of man and woman," but he doesn't present *how* we are to reflect that distinction in our everyday walk. Are trousers an example of an item of clothing that is supposed to set men apart from women?

⁴² C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, Vol. 1, "The Pentateuch," by C. F. Keil, Translated by James Martin, Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, MA, originally published by T. & T. Clark, Edinburg, Scotland, 1866-91, 2001, p. 945.

7. *The Record Preserved by Ancient Historians*

We have already presented first-century Jewish historian Josephus's understanding about men's and women's garments. His primary area of concern seemed to involve switching types of garments in battle and indeed, as we have seen, use of the Hebrew word *geber* would seem to indicate a warrior instead of a man. Nevertheless, there can be no mistaking the fact that we should appropriately distinguish the typical raiment worn by women from the clothing worn by men. We have seen from *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible* that the primary difference between men's and women's clothing in ancient times was not so much the style, but the length and decorative additions, including embroidery, associated with women's clothing. If we delve more deeply into Josephus' writings, we find that he not only expressed the understanding that the command in Deuteronomy 22:5 extends to women wearing military clothing, but he also expressed the understanding that a characteristic of women's garments included embroidery work. The following narrative is taken from a description offered of the attire sometimes worn by the Roman emperor Caius Caligula:

Now although he had sometimes put on women's clothes, and had been wrapt in some embroidered garments to them belonging, and done a great many other things, in order to make the company mistake him for a woman; yet did he, by way of reproach, object the like womanish behavior to Cherea.⁴³

Secular Roman historian Suetonius offers a similar testimony regarding Caius Caligula, which in turn presents even greater clarity about the distinction between women's and men's clothing during ancient times:

Caligula ignored Roman fashion and tradition in clothing, shoes and other elements of dress, even wearing female costumes and imitating the attire of the gods. He often wore cloaks embroidered with precious stones in public, with long-sleeved tunics and bracelets, sometimes dressing in the silken robes only permitted to women. His footwear might be slippers, or platform-soles, or military boots, such as those worn by his bodyguard, or women's sandals.⁴⁴

Suetonius' mentioning the fact that Caligula would wear "cloaks embroidered with precious stones" in public implies that this is not something that men would typically consider doing. Suetonius also establishes that silken robes were only permitted to women, which in turn suggests that robes made from other materials were considered appropriate for men to wear. We thus see that the softer, more ornamental and embroidered styles of clothing were not only considered to be limited to women by believers, but by secular society as well.

Josephus is not the only first-century scholar to express his understanding about the Almighty's intentions in this matter. Notice what Philo of Alexandria had to say:

⁴³ Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, Book XIX, ch. 1, section 5.

⁴⁴ Suetonius (ca. 69/72 – after 130), *The Twelve Caesars (De Vita Caesarum)*, Book IV: Gaius Caligula, ch. LII, "His Mode of Dress."

IV. (18) But such great anxiety and energy is displayed by the law in attaining the object of training and exercising the soul so as to fill it with courage, that it has even descended to particulars in the matter of raiment, enjoining what men ought to wear, and prohibiting with all its might a man from wearing the garments of a woman, in order that no trace of shadow of the female may be attached to the male part of mankind, to its discredit; for the law, being at all times in perfect consistency and accordance with nature, desires to establish laws which shall be akin to and in perfect harmony with one another from beginning to end, even in those minute points which, by reason of their insignificance, appear to be beneath the notice of ordinary legislators. (19) For as it perceived that the figures of men and women, looking at them as if they had been sculptured or painted forms, were very dissimilar, and, moreover, that the same kind of life was not assigned to both the sexes (for to the woman is assigned a domestic life, while a political one is more suited to the man), so also in respect of other matters which were not actually the works of nature, but still were in strict accordance with nature, it judged it expedient to deliver injunctions which were the result of sound sense and wisdom. And these related to the mode of living, and to apparel, and to other things of that kind; (20) for it thought it desirable that he who as truly a man should show himself a man in these particulars also, and especially in the matter of dress, since, as he wears that both day and night, he ought to take care that there is no indication in it of any want of manly courage. (21) And, in the same manner, having also equipped the woman in the ornaments suited to her, the law prohibits her from assuming the dress of a man, keeping at a distance men-women just as much as it does women-men; for the lawgiver was well aware that when only one single thing in the proper economy of the house was removed, nothing else would remain in the same position as it ought and as it was in before.⁴⁵

Philo echoes the sentiments of virtually every scholar whose writings we have examined in that our Creator expects us to distinguish between the clothing worn by men and the clothing worn by women. Philo would most certainly discourage the “unisex” clothing that is in vogue in much of our world today. Yet, we are still faced with the lingering question as to whether or not trousers were initially considered to be an item of clothing designed to be worn solely by men.

⁴⁵ C.f., *The Works of Philo*, “On the Virtues,” IV (18-21), Translated by C. D. Yonge, Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, MA, 1993, pp. 641-642. This commentary is also available online at the following URL: <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/yonge/book31.html>.

8. *Tracing the Origin of Pants and Recognizing Misrepresentations of Ancient Writings*

Many insist that dresses and skirts are strictly for women. However, as we have already shown, in ancient times dresses (i.e., “robes”) were worn by both men and women. How about trousers? Many hold that trousers are strictly an invention for men. However, as we have already noted, this is not necessarily true. Scripture speaks of “breeches” that were made for priests, but does this mean other people *did not* wear this type of garment? No, it does not. In fact, if we are to strictly employ the reasoning that “breeches” were intended for men based upon Scriptural hermeneutics, we fall short, for according to strict wording of Scripture, the “breeches” were only for the priests, which would exclude all other men *and* women.

The word “breeches” is Hebrew word #4370, and contrary to the belief of many, does not mean “trousers.” It is found only five times in all of Scripture, all in reference to the priests (*cf.* Ex. 28:42, Ex. 39:28, Lev. 6:10, Lev. 16:4, and Ezekiel 44:18). According to *The New Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew-English Lexicon*, page 488, it simply means “drawers,” derived from a word that means “to cover up, hide.” According to *Strong’s Concordance* it means “drawers (from *concealing* the private parts).” Thus, the Hebrew word translated “breeches” is simply another word for “underwear.”

We are still left with the question as to whether or not trousers were strictly created for men and *not* for women. To answer this question, we will once again refer you to the *Encyclopedia International*:

It is thought that the Magdalenian culture evolved the fundamental forms of dress: the tunic, the skirt or kilt, the mantle or cape, as well as moccasins or boots. During this period a differentiation must have arisen between male and female dress, although it is far from true that trousers have always been characteristic of the male and skirts of the female. Anthropologists distinguish rather between “arctic” (bifurcated) and “tropical” dress.⁴⁶

The above information reinforces the fact that the designs of clothing that traverse the cultures of the world and encompass the pages of history have primarily arisen out of *practical need* rather than assigning a particular design to a particular sex. Certainly, in the early period of history, both men and women living in the far northern regions would have taken measures to design clothing that better fits around the legs (“bifurcated dress”), thus better protecting them from the icy blasts of winter than could have been achieved by wearing loose-fitting robes. Conversely, those who dwelled in warmer climates were more inclined to retain robe-style clothing (“tropical dress”) for both men and women.

There is some controversy over whether or not both men and women wore trousers

⁴⁶ C.f., *Encyclopedia International*, Vol. 6, Grolier, Incorporated, New York, NY, 1972, article “Dress History of,” page 117.

30 Tracing the Origin of Pants and Recognizing Misrepresentations of Ancient Writings

when they were first introduced. The online encyclopedia *Wikipedia* presents them as first entering recorded history during the 6th century BCE and that they are believed to have been worn by both sexes:

Trousers first enter recorded history in the 6th century BCE, with the appearance of horse-riding Iranian peoples in Greek ethnography. At this time, not only the Persians, but also allied Eastern and Central Asian peoples such as the Bactrians, Armenians, and the Tigraxauda Scythians, Xiongnu Hunnu (nowadays Mongolia) are known to have worn them. Trousers are believed to have been worn by both sexes among these early users.⁴⁷

If it is true that trousers were anciently worn by both men and women, this



Scythian archer. Interior from an Ancient Greek Attic red-figure plate, ca. 520–500 BCE, from Vulci. British Museum, London.

observation seems to have escaped the artists' brushes and sculptors' chisels of their time period. We can only speculate, but we find it very likely that those women who wore trousers for protection from the elements wore them under their dresses or robes, thus removing any doubts as to whether or not they were violating the commandment of Deuteronomy 22:5. The early paintings show men "wearing the pants" instead of the women.

The *Wikipedia* article cited above has a footnote for the statement about trousers having been worn by both sexes. The footnote attributes the source of their remark to the book *Costume and Fashion: A Concise History*, by James Laver. Where

did author James Laver obtain his information that both sexes wore trousers in ancient times? As it turns out, Mr. Laver doesn't provide his readers with an ancient reference to validate his remark. For the record, here is what he wrote:

The most important innovations [of the Persians] was the wearing of trousers, which came to be looked upon as the typical Persian garment and, if we can rely on the very scanty records available, were probably worn by women also.⁴⁸

Mr. Laver also adds the following insight:

Costume, throughout the greater part of its history, has followed two separate lines of development, resulting in two contrasting types of garment. The most obvious line of division in modern eyes is between male and female dress: trousers and skirts. But it is by no means true that men have always worn

⁴⁷ From the online *Wikipedia* article "Trousers," Wikimedia Foundation, Inc., cited 06/24/2012. The entire article may be read by accessing the following link: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trousers>.

⁴⁸ From *Costume and Fashion: A Concise History*, 4th edition, by James Laver, Thomas & Hudson, Inc., New York, NY, 2002, p. 15.

bifurcated clothes and women not. The Greeks and Romans wore tunics, that is to say, skirts. Mountain people like the Scots and the modern Greeks wear what are, in effect, skirts. Far Eastern and Near Eastern women have worn trousers, and many continue to do so. The sex division turns out not to be a true division at all.⁴⁹

Author James Laver does not offer his readers the source leading him to believe that “the sex division turns out not to be a true division,” and we have learned to be cautious about accepting “carte blanche” the historical interpretations handed down to us, even by professed experts.

We have read a few studies whose authors insist that women were the first to wear trousers. If this is true, then certainly trousers should not be regarded as a gender-specific garment, at least not from a historical perspective. One author, Denise Snodgrass, argues that throughout most of history, trousers have *not* been associated with men:

Who was the first to wear pants, men or women? Surprisingly to many, throughout most of history trousers have NOT been associated with MEN! ONLY IN EUROPEAN CULTURES did trousers become associated with MEN.⁵⁰ (More on this later). Ellen Battelle Dietrick wrote in the magazine, the *Arena*, in 1894,

“It is a pity to have to shatter an illusion so dear to millions of men...The truth is, man did not invent, nor did he first wear, that bifurcated [divided into two parts] garment which is variously designated as ‘trousers,’ ‘breeches,’ or ‘pantaloons.’ ...

“The earliest allusion to this garment is by a historian who lived in Greece about 450 BC. He is describing the costume of various troops...but the PERSIANS, he tells us, ‘wore on their legs loose trousers, and the MEDES marched equipped in the same manner as the Persians.’ ...another Greek historian supplies a missing link by the information that this peculiarly feminine fashion which the Persians copied from the Medes, was the invention of Queen Medea, who gave her name to, and ruled that portion of the human race known to us as the Medes.”

A significant fact to point out here is that pants existed in Biblical OT times and were worn by **heathen nations!** The Hebrews, of course, did not wear pants. The Hebrews dressed according to their own national identity and culture in which BOTH men and women wore skirts, or robe-type garments.⁵¹

We find it interesting that the above author, Denise Snodgrass, while otherwise arguing her position from a Biblical standpoint, concedes that pants were worn by heathens and not by the Hebrews. Should this tell us something? Elsewhere in her writings, Ms. Snodgrass argues that Deuteronomy 22:5 is no longer applicable to today’s society because it is one of the laws that was “done away.”⁵²

⁴⁹ From *Costume and Fashion: A Concise History*, 4th edition, by James Laver, Thomas & Hudson, Inc., New York, NY, 2002, p. 7.

⁵⁰ This is Denise Snodgrass’s footnote: “CLOTHING, ‘History of Clothing Around the World’.”

⁵¹ Denise Snodgrass, “The Historical Origin of Pants & Who Made Pants a Male Garment?” 12/31/2011, p. 2. This study may be read in its entirety by accessing the following link: http://studyholiness.com/doc/THE_HISTORICAL_ORIGIN_OF_PANTS1.pdf.

⁵² Cf., Denise Snodgrass, “What Deuteronomy 22:5 Really Means,” dated 12/31/2011, page 3, where she writes, “Deuteronomy 22:5 is placed squarely in the middle of, and is completely surrounded by, **ceremonial laws**. If it were indeed a MORAL law to be literally followed today, why would God choose to

Ms. Snodgrass, in defending her belief that trousers have not historically been primarily associated with men, cites a late 19th century article written by Ellen Battelle Dietrick, who maintains that men did not invent or first wear trousers. We were able to locate Dietrick's article, which appeared in the 1894 edition of *The Arena*, and was authored in response to an opus composed by renowned British historian Goldwin Smith, who apparently favored dresses for women and trousers strictly for men. To our dismay, the entirety of Mrs. Dietrick's article was authored from an extremely biased perspective, supplying nothing to substantiate any of her claims. In addition to the quotation already cited by Ms. Snodgrass, author Ellen Battelle Dietrick wrote the following:

Prepare for a shock, dear brothers of the Occident; don't let the wave of information swallow you up alive! The fact is that trousers were a purely feminine invention, created by woman for her own special wearing, and man was actually reproached by his contemporaries for copying feminine fashions when he first began to adopt trousers for his attire!⁵³

Of course, the above commentary begs for supportive evidence; regrettably, Mrs. Dietrick did not deliver. Here is what she offered:

The earliest allusion to this garment [trousers] is by a historian who lived in Greece about 450 B. C. He is describing the costume of various troops, of the Caspians, who wore 'goat-skin mantles,' of the Thracians, the Cilicians and numerous other races, clothed in tunics and half-boots, but the Persians, he tells us, 'wore on their legs loose trousers,' and 'the Medes marched equipped in the same manner as the Persians, for the above is a Medio and not a Persian costume.' Now another Greek historian supplies a missing link by the information that this peculiarly feminine fashion which the Persians copied from the Medes, was the invention of Queen Medea, who gave her name to, and ruled over, that portion of the human race known as the Medes. Says this Greek historian, Strabo, 'Trousers are proper to be worn in cold and northerly places, such as those in Media, but they are not by any means adapted to inhabitants of the South'; but he adds that after the Persians conquered the Medes, 'The custom, however, of the vanquished appeared to the conquerors to be so noble, and appropriate to royal state, that, instead of nakedness or scanty clothing, they endured the use of the feminine garment, and were entirely covered to the feet.' But it is not alone in 'cold and northerly places' that women invented trousers for their outdoor apparel. The first white men who visited Senegambia, as early as the sixteenth century, found the beautiful Fellatah women wearing short, close-fitting trousers as an equally appropriate costume for the tropics, and the same fashion abides to this day in Morocco, Algiers and Tunis.

Since it is thus established that the bifurcated garment was a feminine invention for female attire, woman, in returning to 'divided skirts' or 'oriental

bury this verse in the middle of what are clearly **ceremonial laws**?" This study may be read in its entirety by accessing the following link: http://studyholiness.com/doc/WHAT_DEUTERONOMY_22.pdf.

⁵³ "Male and Female Attire in Various Nations and Ages," by Ellen Battelle Dietrick (1847-1895), as taken from *The Arena*, Volume X, edited by B. O. Flower, Arena Publishing Co., Boston, Mass., 1894, pp. 355-356.

trousers,' will merely return to a perfectly womanly, eminently sensible fashion of her own original creation.⁵⁴

There is a major problem with Mrs. Dietrick's commentary as offered above: She misrepresents the historian Strabo, making it appear that the "feminine garment" that he referred to was *trousers*, whereas he was actually describing *robes*. We had previously cited Strabo's commentary on this topic, so you may not need our reminder of what he actually wrote. However, for those who need to review Strabo's information, here, again, is what he wrote:

But after the overthrow of the Medes the Persians acquired in addition certain parts of the country that reached to Media. However, the customs even of the conquered looked to the conquerors so august and appropriate to royal pomp that they submitted to wear feminine robes instead of going naked or lightly clad, and to cover their bodies all over with clothes.⁵⁵

Contrary to what Ellen Battelle Dietrick wrote, nowhere does Strabo (or any other historian for that matter) attribute the invention or first use of trousers to women, nor does he identify them as a "feminine garment." According to Strabo, the "feminine garment" was a *robe*. Other translations of his work are worded slightly differently, rendering the feminine garment a "stole":

But after the overthrow of the Medes they gained possession of some tracts of country contiguous to Media. The custom, however, of the vanquished appeared to the conquerors to be so noble, and appropriate to royal state, that instead of nakedness or scanty clothing, they endured the use of the feminine stole, and were entirely covered with dress to the feet.⁵⁶

When I initially read the above translation, I had no idea what a *stole* was. It turns out that, historically-speaking, women wore a stole, also called a *stola*, for modesty reasons. Going without a stole was even considered immoral. The stole, then, was anciently considered a woman's article of clothing. Author Michael Marlowe, in his treatise "Headcovering Customs of the Ancient World, An Illustrated Survey," addresses the custom of modest women wearing a stole:

There was one garment, however, that did have marital significance among the Romans. It was a sleeveless robe called a *stola*, worn over the *tunica*. Traditionally, married women were expected to wear this extra layer of clothing in public. But in the first century this custom was apparently losing its force. Married women began to appear in public

⁵⁴ Ibid, p. 356.

⁵⁵ Strabo (64/63 BCE – ca. 24 CE), *Geography*, Book 11, ch. 13, section 9, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press; London: William Heinemann, Ltd. 1924. This excerpt was taken from the online Perseus Digital Library, Gregory R. Crane, Editor-in-Chief, Tufts University, Medford/Somerville, MA: <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:abo:tlg.0099.001:11&lang=original>.

⁵⁶ From *The Geography of Strabo*, Book 11, ch. 13, section 9, literally translated, with notes. The first six books translated by H.C. Hamilton, esq., the remainder by W. Falconer; Volume II, Book 11, ch. 13, section 9, George Bell and Sons Publishers, London, England, 1903, p. 266.

without the *stola*, and this gave rise to some complaints from conservative-minded Romans. There was some discussion about it in the Roman Senate, and severe legal steps were taken so as to compel married women to wear the *stola*, but it does not seem to have had the desired effect. At the end of the second century Tertullian makes reference to the ineffective decrees in Rome, where women had “abjured the stole,” among other things, that they may go about “more openly” (*On the Pallium*, chapter 4). He declares that in Rome he sees “no distinction left in dress between matrons and harlots” (*Apology for the Christians*, chapter 6).⁵⁷

The above author quotes late 2nd – early 3rd century author Tertullian, who not only makes it clear that the *stole* was worn by women in public as an act of modesty, but he also establishes that men who wanted to dress in feminine garb did so with “dainty robes” (not trousers):

Such garments, therefore, as alienate from nature and modesty, let it be allowed to be just to eye fixedly and point at with the finger and expose to ridicule by a nod. Just so, if a man were to wear a dainty robe trailing on the ground with Menander-like effeminacy, he would hear applied to himself that which the comedian says, “What sort of a cloak is that maniac wasting?” For, now that the contracted brow of censorial vigilance is long since smoothed down, so far as reprehension is concerned, promiscuous usage offers to our gaze freedmen in equestrian garb, branded slaves in that of gentlemen, the notoriously infamous in that of the freeborn, clowns in that of city-folk, buffoons in that of lawyers, rustics in regimentals; the corpse-bearer, the pimp, the gladiator trainer, clothe themselves as you do. Turn, again, to women. You have to behold what Cæcina Severus pressed upon the grave attention of the senate—matrons stoleless in public. In fact, the penalty inflicted by the decrees of the augur Lentulus upon any matron who had thus cashiered herself was the same as for fornication; inasmuch as certain matrons had sedulously promoted the disuse of garments which were the evidences and guardians of dignity, as being impediments to the practising of prostitution. But now, in their self-prostitution, in order that they may the more readily be approached, they have abjured stole, and chemise, and bonnet, and cap; yes, and even the very litters and sedans in which they used to be kept in privacy and secrecy even in public. But while one extinguishes her proper adornments, another blazes forth such as are not hers. Look at the street-walkers, the shambles of popular lusts; also at



⁵⁷ From “Headcovering Customs of the Ancient World, An Illustrated Survey,” by Michael Marlowe. This study may be read in its entirety by accessing the following link: <http://www.bible-researcher.com/headcoverings3.html>.

the female self-abusers with their sex; and, if it is better to withdraw your eyes from such shameful spectacles of publicly slaughtered chastity, yet do but look with eyes askance, (and) you will at once see (them to be) matrons! And, while the overseer of brothels airs her swelling silk, and consoles her neck—more impure than her haunt—with necklaces, and inserts in the armllets (which even matrons themselves would, of the guerdons bestowed upon brave men, without hesitation have appropriated) hands privy to all that is shameful, (while) she fits on her impure leg the pure white or pink shoe; why do you not stare at such garbs? or, again, at those which falsely plead religion as the supporter of their novelty?⁵⁸

As presented above, there is nothing in the writings of either Strabo or Tertullian indicating that trousers were ever considered feminine garments or that women invented them. Ellen Battelle Dietrick, in her apparent attempt to rewrite history, succeeded in persuading the likes of authors Denise Snodgrass of this ruse, but more in-depth research reveals the fact that not only are trousers originally attributed to *men*, but the other (unnamed) historian from Mrs. Dietrick’s article — who wrote that the Medes marched in trousers — validates the understanding that trousers were anciently looked upon as *military* garments.

Mrs. Dietrick also misrepresented other early writers, including one whose writings we’ve already reviewed, the late 2nd - early 3rd century theologian Tertullian. Tertullian made a disparaging reference to trousers, which Mrs. Dietrick misinterpreted as an association with feminine dressing. First, let’s read what Tertullian wrote:

Of Physco and Sardanapalus⁵⁹ I must be silent, whom, but for their eminence in lusts, no one would recognise as kings. But I must be silent, for fear lest even they set up a muttering concerning some of your Caesars, equally lost to shame; for fear lest a mandate have been given to canine constancy to point to a Caesar impurer than Physco, softer than Sardanapalus, and indeed a second Nero.

Nor less warmly does the force of vainglory also work for the mutation of clothing, even while manhood is preserved. Every affection is a heat: when, however, it is blown to (the flame of) affectation, forthwith, by the blaze of glory, it is an ardour. From this fuel, therefore, you see a great king—inferior only to his glory—seething. He had conquered the Median race, and was conquered by the Median garb. Doffing the triumphal mail, he degraded himself into the captive trousers! The breast dissculptured with scaly bosses, by covering it with a transparent texture he bared; punting still after the work of war, and (as it were) softening, he extinguished it with the ventilating silk!⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Tertullian (c. 160 – c. 225 CE), “On the Pallium,” chapter 4, “Change Not Always Improvement.” His complete commentary may be read by accessing the following link:

<http://www.holybooks.com/wp-content/uploads/Ante-Nicene-Fathers-VOL-4.pdf>

⁵⁹ Sardanapalus, according to Greek writer Ctesias of Cnidus, was the last king of Assyria. Sardanapalus spent his whole life in self-indulgence and dressed in women’s clothes and wore make-up.

⁶⁰ Tertullian (c. 160 – c. 225 CE), “On the Pallium,” chapter 4, “Change Not Always Improvement.” His complete commentary may be read by accessing the following link:

<http://www.holybooks.com/wp-content/uploads/Ante-Nicene-Fathers-VOL-4.pdf>

If I understand the commentary offered above by Tertullian, King Sardanapalus conquered the Medians, then adopted their custom of wearing trousers. Tertullian never refers to trousers as a garment associated with the female gender. Nevertheless, author Ellen Battelle Dietrick somehow came away with that interpretation, referencing Tertullian's account as a commentary against "women's trousers." Here is what she wrote:

Now in the face of these facts, it is one of the most comical curiosities of history, first, to find Father Tertullian, in the third century of the Christian era, in his treatises remonstrating with the men of Greece and Rome — of civilized Christendom — who had tentatively begun to adopt "that effeminate costume — trousers," laying aside their "manly robes"; and now to find Father Goldwin Smith, in the nineteenth century, in his treatises solemnly rebuking the women of Christendom who have begun to adopt "male attire" — modified trousers; both worthies alike sublimely unconscious of the whimsical pranks of Queen Custom, who has made men and women dress alike in one period of time, change dress in another period, and then dress alike again in other centuries with perfect equanimity. In 220 A. D., Father Tertullian explains that he does not think men should wear their gowns long enough to trail in the dust, as is the fashion of many third century Roman gentlemen, but he vehemently reprobates all thought of abandoning this manly garment for the "effeminate" bifurcated garment imported from Persia. To-day Father Goldwin Smith does not care what women wear so long as they stick to gowns and eschew the erstwhile effeminate trousers, because, "after all, nature has made two sexes!" (We never know how amusingly absurd man can be until he gets to writing about the intentions of nature concerning woman.)⁶¹

When we read what Tertullian wrote and compare his writing with what Mrs. Dietrick *says* that he wrote, it becomes clear that she was guilty of the proverbial "putting words in his mouth." Unless someone can produce a quote from Tertullian that we have missed in our research, he never once referred to trousers as "effeminate." In fact, as we are about to see, the ancient understanding was just the opposite.

Not only was Ellen Battelle Dietrick guilty of misrepresenting the ancient writers, but she also makes it clear that her motives in addressing men's and women's clothing had nothing to do with any desire to follow Scripture:

A human being should cultivate absolute indifference to public opinion in dress, every one wearing what suits his or her purse, taste and occupation. The greater the freedom, the greater will be the variety of experiments in costume, and the greater these, the sooner shall we arrive at the ideal human costume. There are many reasons why it would be well that the street dress of men and women should be identical. On the streets they should be citizens, on one plane of equality, and the less there is in garb to indicate sex the better, as dress would then often be a woman's best protector.⁶²

⁶¹ "[Male and Female Attire in Various Nations and Ages](#)," by Ellen Battelle Dietrick (1847-1895), as taken from *The Arena*, Volume X, edited by B. O. Flower, Arena Publishing Co., Boston, Mass., 1894, pp. 355-360.

⁶² *Ibid*, p. 364.

Yahweh, in His word, specifies that there needs to be a distinction between the clothing worn by the genders. Regrettably, Ellen Battelle Dietrick spurns the Scriptural directive in favor of presenting her own reasoning, and we need to be concerned about the danger of allowing anyone's reasoning that may sway us from honoring our Heavenly Father's command, for He certainly knows more about what is best for His children than anyone else. All told, what Mrs. Dietrick succeeded in doing was misrepresenting ancient writers by leading her readers to believe, based on what she attributed to those authors, that not only did the women of Old wear trousers, but that they *invented* them. This is pure conjecture, unsupported by any reference or historical writing that we have ever seen. She even attributed a remark that trousers were considered a "feminine garment" to Tertullian — a reference that is simply false when examined under the microscope of the historical record. After presenting all this false information, she proceeded to reveal the agenda behind her writing: That men and women should wear identical clothing. Should we give serious attention to the writings of those who have no regard for the expressed will of our Heavenly Father?

9. *The Trousers' Association with Military Garments*

You may have noticed from the ancient artwork shown on page 30 that one of the earliest depictions of the wearing of trousers is that of a Scythian archer. This image adds weight to the belief that trousers may well have been considered the attire of soldiers. The *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics* offers a hint that such may very well have been the case:



Scythian archer. Interior from an Ancient Greek Attic red-figure plate, ca. 520–500 BCE, from Vulci. British Museum, London.

Pollux gives a classic account of ancient Greek, and Varro of ancient Italian dress. It is significant, sociologically, that the classic type, characterized by the loose tunic and toga, which with some differences was that chiefly affected by the great Oriental races, and is adapted both to the Oriental ideal of repose and to the classic ideal of aristocratic contemplation, was discarded, as the Empire developed into the States of Europe, in favour of what the Greeks styled barbarian dress, chiefly characterized by trousers—a dress adapted to activity. Trousers, the Sanskrit *chalana*, had been connected in India, as now in the East Indian Archipelago, with the dress of warriors and chiefs.⁶³

Author Denise Snodgrass, in her study “The Historical Origin of Pants & Who Made Pants a Male Garment?” cites another author who further expounds on the likelihood that trousers were originally designed for warriors:

Pants: A History Afoot, by Laurence Benaim, presents a lucid description of ancient art work, which illustrates the first appearance of pants, on pp 12-15.

“It was in Persepolis [*capital of Persian Empire*] in southern Iran along the stone walls of the staircase leading to the ‘Apadana’ reception hall that the long, flowing baggy pants, emblem of the all-powerful Persian Empire (557-330 BC) were first depicted. Medes, Aryans, Cappadocians, Scythes, Bactrians, Sogdians and Drangianins, as bearers of offerings, march past, sculpted and motionless, with their horses or camels and dressed in purple trousers that were often covered by gold-bejeweled tunics. These treasures of Achaemenian art are testimony to a civilization whose legend fired Herodotus’ imagination.

“Offering protection from the cold and for combating the enemy, pants emerged as the outfit *par excellence* of warriors, and the bas-reliefs found in Persepolis depict them beneath a belted tunic for holding large daggers. The Huns, nomads of the Steppes and so-called ‘cruel men,’ and ancestors of the Turks, Mongols, Alans, and above all, the Scythes and the Sarmates, were the FIRST to adopt the tunic with a pointed

⁶³ The *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*, edited by James Hastings with the assistance of John A. Selbie and Louis H. Gray, Vol. V, Charles Scribner’s Sons, New York, 1912, p. 47.

hood, along with leather pants, which distinguished them from the dress of the Mediterranean region. These 'Barbarians of the North' wore pants under a long, belted garment that had long sleeves—a caftan which has survived for more than three millennia. Great horsemen, known for their taste for entertainment and luxury...the Persians, who were dignitaries of the Achaemenian Empire, a paradise...appeared to have worn pants in response to their passion for hunting.⁶⁴

Other experts agree that trousers were most likely originally designed with battle in mind. Here is what author James Laver writes:

At first the Romans, with their hardy traditions, strongly disapproved both of trows (to use the Scottish term) and of the long trousers worn by the barbarian tribes. But they gradually became accepted, being adapted first by soldiers.⁶⁵

When we understand that barbarians rode horses, combined the difficulties posed by riding astride a horse while wearing a robe or tunic, it seems only natural that trousers, if not already available to warriors, were invented by them. After all, "necessity is the mother of invention." We initially addressed this aspect of the invention of trousers back in chapter 3. In that chapter, we cited an informative piece from Elizabeth Wayland Barber's book *The Mummies of Ürümchi*, where she underscored the primary reasoning behind the invention of trousers: Protection from the cold and protection from chafing while horse-riding. What we didn't address was Barber's comment that the various cultures most likely copied trousers from *invaders*. By "invaders," of course, Barber was making reference to military forces on horses.

The *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics* sheds more light on how the need to provide greater movement to the legs, the "organs of locomotion," paved the way for the invention of trousers:

In the sphere of masculine dress and the affirmation by its means of sexual characters, it is sufficient to note two medieval fashions:

The long-hose which superseded the barbarian trows and preceded the modern trousers emphasized most effectively the male attribute and social quality of energy and activity as represented by the lower limbs, the organs of locomotion. The *braguette*, or codpiece, of the 15th and 16th centuries is an example of a protective article of dress, originally used in war, which became an article of fashionable apparel, often made of silk and adorned with ribbons, even with gold and

⁶⁴ Denise Snodgrass, "The Historical Origin of Pants & Who Made Pants a Male Garment?" 12/31/2011, p. 1. This study may be read in its entirety by accessing the following link:

http://studyholiness.com/doc/THE_HISTORICAL_ORIGIN_OF_PANT1.pdf.

⁶⁵ From *Costume and Fashion: A Concise History*, 4th edition, by James Laver, Thomas & Hudson, Inc., New York, NY, 2002, p. 40.

jewels. Its history supplies a modern repetition of the savage phallocrypt, and throws light on the evolution of the ideas of dress.

With regard to secondary sexual characters, sexual dress, itself an artificial secondary sexual character, carries on various adaptations. The man must be strong, vigorous, energetic, hairy, even rough ... the woman must be smooth, rounded, and gentle. These characters are echoed in the greater relative coarseness and strength of fabric of masculine dress, and the softness and flimsiness of feminine.⁶⁶

When June and I composed our original study on this topic, we were completely unaware of any military-oriented associations with the invention of trousers. We are not about to deny the primary reason for why both men and women would need to wear trousers (protection from the elements), but as we probed more deeply into the reasons offered by those who have devoted a great deal of time and effort into impartially researching the history of clothing, the conclusion seems unanimous that trousers have a military connection.

⁶⁶ Cf., *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*, Edited by James Hastings with the assistance of John A. Selbie and Louis H. Gray, Vol. V, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1912, p. 63.

10. *Applying Cultural Understanding to Deuteronomy 22:5*

As the impact of the invention of trousers spread across the cultures, they continued to be culturally-recognized as primarily being a man's garment. In describing the apparent progression of the bifurcated garment, the *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics* presents the following information:

Sixty years ago [predating 1912] in England the use of drawers was almost unknown, and was regarded as immodest and unfeminine. The tight-fitting hose were the men's characteristic garment. The doublet or jacket was replaced among the academic class by the long coat. An extraordinary variety of fashions prevailed from the Middle Ages onwards. Knee-breeches later replaced the long-hose, and the longer jacket the doublet. The peasant's overall, smock, or blouse goes back to early European times. Finally, the modern trousers superseded the knee-breeches.⁶⁷

This reference leaves no room to doubt that the bifurcated garment, including tight-fitting hosiery, was "the men's characteristic garment." Regardless of whether or not trousers should, in the final analysis, be considered as strictly "that which pertaineth to a man," and in spite of the fact that a case can be made establishing trousers as a garment worn by the military of ancient times, there is nevertheless no escaping the fact that bifurcated garments offer greater protection from the elements than dresses and skirts. As such, if women choose to wear trousers, it seems prudent for those who are determined to honor the command found in Deuteronomy 22:5 that they should simultaneously choose to wear trousers that are clearly understood as being feminine. June and I are acquainted with women who wear decorative tunics over their trousers, adding a distinctive feminine touch to their wardrobe. We really need to remember that the two primary functions of clothing are protection from the elements and exhibiting modesty. Trousers can fulfill both of these functions, but if there is no discernible difference between men's trousers and women's trousers, then we ignore the spirit of the command in Deuteronomy 22:5.

Many women are careful to select pantsuits with a distinctive feminine flair that clearly sets their clothing apart from men's apparel. Shown below is a family picture, taken back in 1972, of my mother standing between two of my grandmothers. She is wearing what I feel is a very appropriate pantsuit for women:

⁶⁷ Cf., *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*, Edited by James Hastings with the assistance of John A. Selbie and Louis H. Gray, Vol. V, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1912, p. 47.



Is my mom's attire a violation of Deuteronomy 22:15?

The difficulty posed by the controversy of how to properly apply Deuteronomy 22:5 lies in how different cultures understand the application of this command. Not only that, but in a land such as ours where there are sub-cultures of individuals with different understandings of what is and isn't appropriate, the answers are not easily found. Thus, while my mom's pantsuit may appear compliant to me based on my cultural understanding, someone else's cultural understanding will influence their conclusion that it is a violation of Deuteronomy 22:5.

We previously read from author James Laver that Far Eastern and Near Eastern women have traditionally worn trousers, but when we examine the trousers worn by these women, we find that they have a feminine touch. This is attested by author Richard Gan in his online study "Of Man's and Woman's Garments." Mr. Gan opened his article with a photo of his mother-in-law wearing a "samfoo," which is a combination tunic with trousers commonly worn by Chinese men and women. Here is that photo:



A visiting minister from Germany, upon noticing the attire of Mr. Gan's mother-in-law advised him that she was wearing men's clothing. This led to a discussion about the cultural setting in which the minister now found himself. He, like many others, regarded "trousers" as the defining garment that Deuteronomy 22:5 identifies as "that which pertaineth unto a man." Mr. Gan's ensuing response confirms what we are led to believe is the intent behind Deuteronomy 22:5. As he explains in his study, Mr. Gan's mother-in-law was wearing a "samfoo" with designs signaling that it was a woman's *samfoo* and not a man's. Thus, in the Chinese culture, a distinction is clearly made between what is considered the woman's version of a *samfoo* and a man's version of a *samfoo*. Is this not what Yahweh intended? An excerpt from Mr. Gan's study "Of Man's and Woman's Garments" is below:



Since ancient Chinese time, besides the wearing of robes (which obviously are not skirts), the trousers or trousers-like garments were worn by both the men and the women, even when they were toddlers. (Trousers are believed to have originated in China. It is believed that the early Europeans took the design from the East in as early as some five hundred years before Christ.



The Grecians began also to adopt it. But the Romans fought it as being barbaric; to them “only Barbarians wear trousers.”) The garments were tailored more like pajamas than the trousers we know today. But what “pertaineth unto a man” and what was truly a “woman’s garment” was the difference in the tunic – a garment that covers the top part of the body down to the hips, thighs or legs. (Some people mistake the long tunic for a skirt or equated the tunic to a skirt.) It was the design, the colour and the pattern on that piece of garment that determined whether it was a man's or woman's attire. Look at the photo on the right and compare the samfoo the man is wearing with that of my mother-in-law’s. The man’s had a bold design and pattern, and was usually of a single solid color. The woman’s had a softer color. A wealthy woman’s samfoo may have a soft lacy design, or several decorative colors or just a plain soft color like pink or orange. The two pieces made up a samfoo. They were never designed to cling to the body to show the human form. China was effectively the only one of the great cultures of antiquity to wear trousers but the Chinese were so interlinked with Central Asia that they crossed the divide. In Europe, trousers as such are a relatively late entry, after hose and trunk hose and breeches, etc. and then only for men.

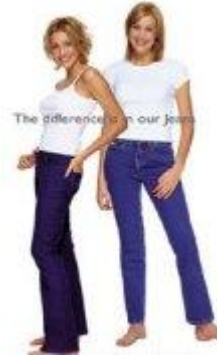
The trousers that the Western women wear today are not the kind that the ancient Asian women wore. The American moral deteriorated fast after World War II. It was common to hear American husbands say, “My wife wears the pants/trousers at home,” meaning that the wife is the boss of the home. It is also true and very common for many American women, even Christians, to wear the trousers, a garment that their pioneering ancestors did not wear.



What's more, they took the blue jeans and wore them and then slowly altered them to hug their female form. Jeans were the first trousers to put women and men on equal terms. From that time on, the so-called “female pants” were changing every so often to suit the taste of women's fashion. Such changes and alterations do not justify it being a woman's attire. It is done to either make a woman look sexy or powerful (like a man). (See advertisement poster and pantsuit models below.) Such attires are an abomination to God.

Until 1970 it was not fashionable and sometimes against the law for women to wear pants in offices, classrooms, and restaurants in the U.S.

From the West the designs of the sexy looking, tight fitting pants were carried to the East, and soon the simple samfoo was influenced by the western trousers' designs. The legs of the trousers were cut narrower and tighter like the jeans and modern slacks of the American women. Look at the picture on the left (taken in the 1960s). The woman on the left of the picture wore a floral-patterned sam-foo. Compare that with the one worn by my mother-in-law. You will notice that the sleeves had been cut back (an influence by the West) and the tunic was not as long. Notice the two women on the right in the same picture. Both wore a corrupt form of the samfoo. The trousers legs were cut narrower and tapered to the ankles. The women were even wearing high-heeled shoes to make themselves taller and "leggy" (again an influence by the West). As a whole, the dress style of the two women is comparable to many



of the seductive and outrageous garments worn by today's youth.

Now look at the pictures on the right. Can anyone disagree that a proper samfoo is "modest apparel"? Then compare the samfoo with the "T-shirt and jeans," the "shirt and trousers" or the office



"pantsuit" that women wear today. The samfoo is originally a woman's apparel, the "T-shirt and jeans" and the "shirt and trousers" are originally man's. The women who wear them corrupt themselves by wanting to be equal with the men. More so, when they power-dress in a "pantsuit." Besides such corruption, an impure woman will dress extravagantly (either "blouse and skirt" or "shirt and trousers") and adorn herself with jewelry, simply because such attire fittingly represents her internal pride and seductive desires. But a "born again" woman will dress with simplicity and modesty, without jewelry, simply because such apparel fittingly represents her internal humility and purity.⁶⁸

We are not about to say that we agree 100% with Mr. Gan's understanding of "acceptable" versus "unacceptable" trousers, which, on the surface, seems a bit on the nitpicky side, but then again, his culture is different from ours. The point is, according to his cultural understanding, you can tell by looking at a *samfoo* whether it is a man's or a woman's. As Mr. Gan summarizes, trousers are not the problem – it's the way they are

⁶⁸ From the online study "Of Man's and Woman's Garments," by Richard Gan, 05 August 2007. The article may be read in its entirety by accessing the following link: <http://www.propheticrevelation.net/misc/garments.htm>.

worn. His culture identifies a woman's *samfoo* by its decorative style, not by the type of garment, which in turn means there is not a blurring of the genders, and the fact that he is concerned about narrower and tapered trouser legs demonstrates that he is likewise concerned with what may be a trend that will lead to the blurring of the clothing worn by men and women, which may eventually result in "unisex" clothing. Remember, we earlier identified what may well have been a semi-innocent "tomboy" nod of approval serving as the potential catalyst for today's full-scale acceptance of women wearing clothing that is not dissimilar to men's apparel. Sadly, the culture in which we live (in the United States) is one that has now fallen prey to the unisex styles of clothing. Mr. Gan only wants to preserve the cultural distinction passed down to him from his ancestors with the assurance of knowing that the Chinese culture doesn't go the same route as ours.

June and I frequently find ourselves in situations where we observe the blurring of the genders when it comes to clothing options. For example, we were recently in a restaurant and from a distance I observed what I at first thought were two young men in line. I then noticed that their hair was long, which could potentially, but not necessarily, identify them as being women. One of them then turned around and I realized that I had been momentarily fooled by the clothing those two women were wearing. And what were they wearing? Jeans and colored tee shirts. They were dressed very similarly to the jean-clad women pictured above in Mr. Gan's article.

11. What Can We Do?

You may wonder exactly where June and I lean on this topic. After all, we certainly found ourselves in a major disagreement with Brad regarding the jeans that June wore on the evening of our 1995 visit to his home. As I researched this issue, I discovered two things that led me to disagree with Brad's charge:

- 1) Deuteronomy 22:5 does not identify trousers as being either a man's or woman's garment.
- 2) Historical evidence indicates that both men and women wore bifurcated garments.

What we did not address in our initial research and subsequent conclusion is the fact that Yahweh's commandment expressly reveals that the way we dress must reflect a distinction between the two genders. How does a woman wearing jeans and a shirt fulfill the requirement? We are persuaded that Mr. Gan understands how the process is supposed to work. In his culture, the women wear a *samfoo* that is distinguished from a man's *samfoo* by its decorative and often floral designs. Of course, women in our culture can achieve this same effect with their clothing choices because floral designs are commonly associated with women's clothing. Another feature of the *samfoo* is a long tunic that, especially in our society, contributes to a more feminine look. Thus, wearing a dress or tunic over trousers is certainly a means of communicating to those with whom women interact that they are willfully striving to obey the mandate of Deuteronomy 22:5. Regardless of what we wear, there are bound to be some who will question our choices of clothing, but if we stay as far away as we can from the "line," we will not be in danger of crossing it. We are persuaded that Yahweh wants us to stay clear of the line separating men's attire from that of women.

The other aspect of this discussion that we avoided in our original version of this study is the need for us to consider how we are viewed by others. We are like "bugs in a jar," so if we profess to be Torah-observant believers, individuals with whom we interact will be more critical of us as they compare our lifestyle to their understanding of what a Torah-observant lifestyle should be. If our clothing choices demonstrate a clear demarcation of men's attire versus women's apparel, we will minimize the chances of anyone doing what Brad did on the night of our visit to his home, i.e., charging us with violating the commandment found in Deuteronomy 22:5. Moreover, we will be setting a righteous example for those who may be looking to us for guidance. The last thing we should ever want to do is be a stumblingblock to others. Looking back, if we had the opportunity to re-live our 1995 visit to Brad's home, June would have worn a dress or skirt simply to avoid any potential misunderstandings and to create a positive first impression.

Finally, we have seen that this seemingly minor issue has brought out some highly-charged emotions, resulting in what appears to be deliberate misrepresentations of how and why bifurcated garments were invented. Our unbiased research leads us to believe that trousers were most likely invented for men, but if they were designed with protection from the elements in mind, they may very well have been created for women, too.

Regardless of who trousers were primarily invented for, we are persuaded that they should rightly be considered a garment that is well-suited for keeping one's legs warm on cold days. Trousers not only offer protection from the elements, but they are also indispensable for horseback riding and military operations. While it only seems fair that both men and women share the right to cover and protect both legs, the challenge is how to do so while simultaneously leaving no doubt as to our obedience to Yahweh's command in Deuteronomy 5:22. We are enjoined by the Apostle Paul to "prove all things; hold fast to that which is good" (I Thessalonians 5:21), but in the very next verse he challenges us to "abstain from all appearance of evil." If we diligently research the question as to whether or not it is permissible for women to wear trousers, allowing the truth of Scripture, combined with the record of history and cultural understanding, to be our guides, June and I are persuaded that the answer is, "Yes," but this affirmation should not be regarded as a license to disregard the necessary differences that society must assign to men's and women's clothing. As is often the case, balance is important, but obedience to our Heavenly Father is paramount.

We Aren't the "Fashion Police"!

We can well imagine that some folks, upon reading this study, will conclude that June and I are acting as some sort of "fashion police," as though we have the authority to tell others what they should or should not wear. This would be an incorrect summary of the role that June and I choose to play in this matter. Please bear in mind that our original study was only composed in response to the charge that June violated Deuteronomy 22:5 the evening of our visit to Brad's home. This updated version was completed nearly 12 years later when a friend asked us to send her our study. I didn't feel comfortable sending her that study knowing that it was lacking some important details. One thing that really needs to be underscored is the fact that the views expressed here are simply our personal views that we have formulated over the years, hopefully with the truth of Scripture as our primary guide. In the culture in which June and I find ourselves, we observe that we are often surrounded by women whose choice of dress varies from conservative to questionable and even to the point of leaving very little to the imagination. We do not condemn anyone for their choice of apparel, nor do we base our relationships with others on what they wear. We may not approve of what others wear, but that doesn't mean that we should alienate ourselves from them.

