

# Should a Man Cover His Head When Praying?



*by Larry and June Acheson*

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# Should a Man Cover His Head When Praying?

By Larry & June Acheson

Many of us Bible students have come a long way since beginning our quest for truth, and along the way we have been compelled to forsake various teachings that we had been taught from our youth – teachings that we later learned had no foundation in Scripture. At times, in fact, it seems that everything we were taught as we were growing up is completely opposite of what the actual truth is. June and I know, for example, that the Apostle Shaul taught obedience to the Torah (Acts 24:14, 25:8, 26:20, Romans 2:13, 3:31, 7:12, etc.), but the churches we were raised in gave us a completely different version of the Apostle Shaul. The Apostle Shaul we *thought* we knew taught that the law was “done away” and that anyone seeking to obey it is “legalistic” and is trying to “earn” his or her salvation.

To further complicate things, we must consider the fact that the instructions given by Shaul were written in a different language than the one we speak, and were only translated into English around 600 years ago. We certainly know how easy it is for ideas and concepts to get “lost in the translation”! Finally, we have the Apostle Kepha’s own words testifying that Shaul’s writings tend to be “hard to understand” (II Kepha 3:16), even in the language they shared. It is not surprising, then, that we should come to question the writings of the Apostle Shaul. Did he mean what he wrote or do people simply misunderstand his intentions?

This brings us to the topic at hand, the issue of men’s headcoverings. In Shaul’s first letter to the Corinthians, he addressed two issues in one basic context: Men’s headcoverings and women’s headcoverings. Notice what Shaul wrote in I Corinthians 11:3-7:

<sup>3</sup>But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Messiah; and the head of the woman *is* the man; and the head of Messiah *is* the Almighty One.

<sup>4</sup>Every man praying or prophesying, having *his* head covered, dishonoureth his head.

<sup>5</sup>But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with *her* head uncovered dishonoureth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven.

<sup>6</sup>For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn: but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered.

<sup>7</sup>For a man indeed ought not to cover *his* head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of the Almighty: but the woman is the glory of the man.

Here, then, appear to be rather plain and simple instructions, courtesy of the Apostle Shaul. Women should neither pray nor prophesy with their heads uncovered, whereas men should *not* cover their heads.

However, is this what the Apostle Shaul really *meant*? Interestingly, we have noticed that many women believe Shaul did not *really* mean they should cover their heads when praying, and now we observe an increasing number of men who maintain that Shaul didn’t *really* mean that men ought not to cover their heads. In other words, in each instance, Shaul *wrote* one thing, but *meant* another. Let’s examine this line of reasoning to see if it has any merit.

## *Women's Headcovering Issue in a Nutshell*

June and I are accustomed to worshipping with women who do not cover their heads when praying. That is certainly their prerogative. There is no Torah commandment directing women to cover their heads, whether praying or otherwise. Nevertheless, there are Torah examples of women whose heads were regularly covered as a matter of custom. Whether their heads were covered in compliance with cultural practice or religious principle, we are not told. The topic is only addressed by the Apostle Shaul in I Corinthians chapter 11, and he made it clear that a woman should pray with her head covered.

We have met several women who do not follow this practice, and they all explained their reasoning in terms that their long hair is their covering. This belief is based upon their interpretation of I Corinthians 11:15:

<sup>15</sup>But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for *her* hair is given her for a covering.

Some will point to the above verse and exclaim, “See? Verse 15 proves that long hair is a covering for women!” If this is so, let’s apply this view to verse 5, where it says that a woman dishonors her head when it is not covered. If it is clear that it is possible for a woman to pray and prophesy *uncovered*, what can she do – remove her hair? Unless we’re missing something, a woman cannot take her hair off unless she wears a wig! If her hair *is* her covering and she removes it (by shaving it off), how could she be in danger of having her head shaven (v. 6)?

What, then, did the Apostle Shaul mean in verse 15? If he didn’t really mean that a woman’s long hair is her covering, then what did he mean? There are several possibilities. For one thing, the Greek word translated “covering” in verse 15 (*peribolaion*) is completely different from the word translated “covered” in verse 6 (*katakalypto*). Also, there can be no denying that long hair is indeed a *form* of covering. As Adam Clarke, an 18<sup>th</sup> century commentator noted, “The Author of their being has given a larger proportion of hair to the head of women than to that of men; and to them it is an especial ornament, and may in various cases serve as a veil.”<sup>1</sup> Although long hair may serve as a covering, we believe the example of Rebekah illustrates that this woman followed the same principle outlined by the Apostle Shaul. It is apparent that Rebekah did not always have her head covered. However, when Abraham’s servant first identified Isaac to her from a distance, she immediately covered her head. Notice what is recorded in Genesis 24:65:

<sup>65</sup>For she *had* said unto the servant, What man *is* this that walketh in the field to meet us? And the servant *had* said, It *is* my master: therefore she took a veil, and covered herself.

Why did Rebekah cover herself? Was it because she was in the presence of a man? No, for she had previously been uncovered in the presence of Isaac’s servant, who was a male. However, upon being informed that this was her future husband, she promptly put on her veil. As described by C.F. Keil in Keil and Delitzsch’s *Commentary on the New Testament*, Rebekah’s actions were befitting the custom for how a bride meets her husband:

The caravan arrived at the time; and Rebekah, as soon as she saw the man in the field coming to meet them, sprang (לַבַּיִתָּא signifying a hasty descent, 2 Kings 5:21) from the camel to receive him, according to Oriental custom, in the most respectful manner. She then inquired the name of the man; and as soon as she heard that it was Isaac, she enveloped herself in her veil, as became the bride when meeting the bridegroom.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> From *Adam Clarke’s Commentary on the Whole Bible*, by Adam Clarke, Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, Kansas City, MO, 1985, p. 1,110.

<sup>2</sup> From *Commentary on the Old Testament*, by C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, Vol. 1, Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, MA, 2001, originally published by T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh, 1866-91, p. 166.

The custom was for the woman to cover her head in the presence, not only of her husband, but any authority figure (Numbers 5:18), and it is to this custom that Shaul makes reference in I Corinthians 11:1-16.

We have already pointed out that there is no direct command in the Torah for a woman to cover her head. Nevertheless, it can definitely be *indirectly understood* or implied in Torah that a woman's head must be covered when in the presence of her husband or *any* authority figure. This can be gleaned from the law pertaining to the wife who is suspected of being an adulteress, otherwise known as the "law of jealousies," which is recorded in Numbers 5:11-31. In this account, we read that the wife suspected of adultery is to be brought before the priest, who then prepares a mixture of holy water and dust from the floor of the tabernacle. Before having the woman drink the mixture, we read that he places her before Yahweh, and then *uncovers her head*. Shown below is verse 18:

<sup>18</sup>And the priest shall set the woman before Yahweh, and uncover the woman's head, and put the offering of memorial in her hands, which *is* the jealousy offering: and the priest shall have in his hand the bitter water that causeth the curse:

According to this command, the priest was to uncover the head of the woman suspected of adultery. A valid question is, "How could the priest uncover the woman's head if the woman refused to cover her head?" The answer, of course, is that he could not do so. It is directly implied that the woman's head be covered. This presupposes that she understood it was a requirement to wear a covering, and it is highly unlikely that she only donned the covering before heading out to see the priest. Thus, while there may not be a direct command for a woman to wear a headcovering, it is directly *implied* that she wear one. For those who focus their attention on the lack of a direct command for women to wear a headcovering, I believe we should bear in mind the fact that there are other things we should do that are not necessarily commanded in Torah. For example, I am not aware of a Torah mandate for us to pray to Yahweh, except perhaps by inferences where we are commanded to bless Him. Nevertheless, I hope we can all agree that prayer is a very important aspect of our spiritual walk.

As we have already explained, it was simply understood by early believers that a woman should wear a headcovering. This is not only evident from the account of the "law of jealousies" cited above, but also from the account of Rebecca approaching Isaac for the first time (Gen. 24:65). Something tells me she didn't just act on a whim when she put on her headcovering. These approved examples of Scripture, in and of themselves, are sufficient to demonstrate that women wearing a headcovering is something that the believers of old understood and practiced. We therefore believe it is something that women should do, even if there may not be a direct command to do so.

Whenever controversies of this sort arise, we always like to check out the historical writings to see what others believed and practiced. Philo of Alexandria was contemporary with Yeshua the Messiah (born around 20 B.C.E. and died around 50 C.E.), and he plainly wrote that women's headcoverings were understood as being a "**symbol of modesty.**" Philo mentions this aspect of women's headcoverings while offering his own commentary on "the law of jealousies" of Numbers chapter five. Here is a portion of what he wrote in *The Special Laws, III*, ch. X (52-56):

X. (52) The law has pronounced all acts of adultery, if detected in the fact, or if proved by undeniable evidence, liable to the punishment of death; but cases in which guilt is only suspected, it does not choose should be investigated by men, but it brings them before the tribunal of nature; since men are able to judge of what is visible, but the Almighty can judge also of what is unseen, since He alone is able to behold the soul distinctly, (53) therefore He says to the man who suspects such a thing, "Write an accusation, and go up to the holy city with thy wife, and standing before the judges, lay bare the passion of suspicion which affects you, not like a false accuser or treacherous enemy, seeking to gain the victory by any means whatever, but as a man may do who wishes accurately to

ascertain the truth without any sophistry. (54) And the woman, having incurred two dangers, one of her life, and the other of her reputation, the loss of which last is more grievous than any kind of death, shall judge the matter with herself; and if she be pure, let her make her defence with confidence; but if she be convicted by her own conscience, let her cover her face, making her modesty the veil for her iniquities, for to persist in her impudence is the very extravagance of wickedness. (55) But if the charge which is made against her be contested, and if the evidence be doubtful, so as not to incline to either side, then let the two parties go up to the temple, and let the man stand in front of the altar, in the presence of the priest for the day, and then let him state his suspicions and his grounds for them, and let him produce and offer some barley flour, as a species of oblation on behalf of his wife, to prove that he accuses her, not out of insult, but with an honest intention, because he has a reasonable doubt. (56) And the priest shall take the barley and offer it to the woman, and shall take away from her the head-dress on her head, that she may be judged with her head bare, and deprived of the symbol of modesty, which all those women are accustomed to wear who are completely blameless; and there shall not be any oil used, nor any frankincense, as in the case of other sacrifices, because the sacrifice now offered is to be accomplished on no joyful occasion, but on one which is very grievous.<sup>3</sup>

We only offer this lengthy excerpt so as to allow the reader to read what Philo wrote in complete context. The main point we're trying to make is that he understood the woman's headcovering to be a symbol of modesty. I know there are many folks out there who have little regard for anything Philo wrote, and that is certainly their prerogative. We personally believe, though, that he offered us some first-century insight into how the believers of Old regarded women's headcoverings, and we can demonstrate that Philo of Alexandria's understanding was representative of the beliefs of normative Judaism of that time period.<sup>4</sup>

Given the foregoing information, it seems clear that, at least while praying, women should cover their heads. It could even be argued that they should cover their heads while in the presence of *any* authority figure, based upon Scriptural example. However, as we have already pointed out, there are no direct Scriptural mandates for women to cover their heads. All we have to go on are the instructions given by the Apostle Shaul in I Corinthians chapter 11. While we believe his instructions are inspired, they are nevertheless not designed to add to or otherwise change Yahweh's commandments.

### *Men's Headcoverings*

Neither June nor I really gave much thought to the increasing number of men who have chosen to wear a headcovering when praying, especially since there is certainly no Torah command forbidding such a practice, but also because we know there is at least one Scriptural record of a man whose prayer was answered, even though he prayed with his head covered (II Samuel 15:30-31; 17:14).

However, the example just mentioned involves an unusual setting. The man whose prayer was answered was King David. David, at the time of his prayer, was in a state of lament, having fled Jerusalem from his own son, Absalom, who was attempting to usurp the throne from his father. It was, in fact, customary to cover one's head when in a state of mourning or lament. Notice, for example, the reaction of backslidden Judah when overcome by a ruinous drought:

<sup>3</sup>And their nobles have sent their little ones to the waters: they came to the pits, *and* found no water; they returned with their vessels empty; they were ashamed and confounded, and covered their heads.

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<sup>3</sup> This excerpt is taken from *The Works of Philo*, translated by C. D. Yonge, the treatise entitled "The Special Laws, III," chapter X, sections 52-56, Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, MA, 1993.

<sup>4</sup> For a thorough commentary on how Philo's views were representative of normative Judaism, please read our study entitled *Facing the Pentecost Controversy*, chapter 12, "The Testimony of Philo."

<sup>4</sup>Because the ground is chapped, for there was no rain in the earth, the plowmen were ashamed, they covered their heads.

Why did these people cover their heads? Was it to praise and worship the Almighty? Was it to pray to Him? No, it was because they were *ashamed* and *confounded*.

Another example can be found in I Samuel chapter four, where a messenger came to Eli bearing the tragic news of not only his sons' deaths, but also the capture of the Ark of the Covenant. Notice the state in which the messenger appeared to Eli:

<sup>12</sup>And there ran a man of Benjamin out of the army, and came to Shiloh the same day with his clothes rent, and with earth upon his head.

It appears, then, that based upon Scriptural example, a man would only cover his head out of *shame*, *humiliation*, *lamentation* or *mourning*, but not out of any desires to worship the Almighty.

### ***A Torah Commandment For Men to Cover Their Heads?***

As I mentioned earlier, neither June nor I had really given much thought to the growing number of men who wear headcoverings while praying. It wasn't until we were directed to a certain website article that we realized the issue of men's headcoverings is more than a "passing fancy"; to some, it is apparently a ***salvation issue***. Notice what the website author had to say in the concluding remarks of his article:

I cover my head because I want to please my Master. I want to do my part to move our brothers to jealousy so that they may become saved, even as we have been saved. But that does not mean that **you** need to cover **your** head.

Author Norman B. Willis goes on to write, tongue-in-cheek:

You do not need to cover your head, even though the Torah commands it. You do not need to keep the Shabbat, or the Feasts. You do not need to get circumcised, wear a beard, or observe the Laws of Niddah. In fact, you don't have to do any single thing that you don't want to do.

But then, you don't need to be part of Yahuah's covenant people Israel, either.<sup>5</sup>

Needless to say, those are pretty strong words. The author of the above, Norman B. Willis, implies that unless a man covers his head, he is not a part of "covenant Israel," which in turn means he is cut off from Yahweh. If this does not constitute a "salvational issue," then we must presume that non-covenant people will make it into Yahweh's Kingdom!

Mr. Willis provides additional commentary attesting to his apparent belief that men who do not cover their heads when praying will not make it into the Kingdom:

And we see this pattern over and over again, don't we? We see people wanting to be saved **in** their lawlessness, rather than wanting to be saved **from** their lawlessness. We see people who want to believe they are saved, while intentionally violating the Way ('Halacha') of Elohim.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> From the article "Why I Cover My Head," by Norman B. Willis, p. 14; article can be accessed at the following web URL: <http://servant@nazareneisrael.org/freestudies.htm>

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, p. 6.

The subliminal message here is, “Those who do not wear a headcovering are intentionally violating Yahweh’s Way, and are in fact practicing lawlessness. They ‘think’ they will be saved, but they will not.”

In reinforcing his position that those who do not cover their heads will not be saved, Mr. Willis expresses the following:

Ephraim was scattered because they would not keep Yahuah’s Torah. They did not want to keep Yahuah’s Instructions (Torah), desiring instead to do whatever was right in their own eyes. And, by twisting Shaul’s writings, those who are untaught and unstable try to justify the unscriptural position that they can be saved while willfully ignoring the Father’s commandment to cover their head.

The commandment to cover our heads is found in both the Torah, and in the Prophets, and we know that Yahushua our Example did not come to annul the Torah, or the Prophets; and neither did He intend that His servants the talmidim should do so.<sup>7</sup>

Thus, as we see, Mr. Willis has made the issue pertaining to headcoverings a salvation issue.

In Mr. Willis’ article, he attempts to establish a “Torah commandment” precedent for men’s headcoverings. He writes:

And if Yahushua tells us that He did not come to annul the Torah or the Prophets, then we should take note of the large number of verses both in the Torah and in the Prophets that tell us that men (and also women) in Israel are supposed to cover their heads. These passages are too numerous to list them all, but let us examine some of the more critical ones:<sup>8</sup>

Upon reading the above, one might mentally prepare himself to encounter a heretofore hidden set of verses mandating all men to wear headcoverings. However, as we are about to see, Mr. Willis apparently confuses a law pertaining *only to the Levitical priesthood* with laws pertaining to all Israel. Mr. Willis proceeds to list *two “critical” verses* mandating the wearing of headcoverings, neither of which ever applied to all Israel: Exodus 29:9 and Ezekiel 44:18:

[9] And you shall bind **bonnets** for them, and **it shall be a never-ending statute for them in the priest’s office.**

[Sh’ mote (Exodus) 29:9; Green’s Interlinear (smooth translation)]

[18] Turbans (“bonnets”) of linen shall be on their heads, and linen undergarments shall be on their loins. They shall not gird with sweat.

[Yehezqel (Ezekiel) 44:18; Green’s Interlinear (smooth translation)]

A cursory examination of the context of both verses quoted above reveals that each one comprises instructions for the Levitical priesthood, and was *in no way* intended for the general populace. The Levitical priesthood was ordained by Yahweh, and He gave instructions for what that priesthood was to wear when ministering before Him in either the tabernacle or the temple. Those instructions did not apply to the remainder of the Israelites. In other words, whereas the Levitical priesthood indeed wore the “linen bonnets,” the rest of the men of Israel did not!

One has to wonder: If Mr. Willis believes that Ezekiel 44:18 applies to all men seeking to obey the Father, does he practice *all* of what that verse says? In addition to wearing a linen bonnet, does Mr. Willis also wear

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid, p. 13.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, p. 3.



*linen undergarments*? Since he believes the first half of that verse applies to all men, he must certainly believe the second half does, too.

Strangely lacking in Mr. Willis' article is his providing a single "critical passage" proving that *all of Israel* was ever required to wear headcoverings. The only passages he lists pertain to the Levitical priesthood, and to no one else! If one is going to make wearing a headcovering a salvation issue, he needs to be prepared to provide relevant Scriptural evidence supporting his claim.

### *Are There Priests Today?*

It is obvious from Mr. Willis' article that he considers himself to be a priest, since only priests were ever commanded to wear a headcovering. However, in his article he only makes an allusion to be *seeking to be a priest*:

So if all Israelites are to cover their heads, and the priesthood was to cover its head (and will cover its head once more), then is covering one's head bad? And if Yahushua did not come to annul the Torah ('Law') or the Prophets, then should we who seek to be priests before Yahuah also not cover our heads?<sup>9</sup>

There is a major difference between seeking to be a priest and being a priest. It is quite likely that multitudes of ancient Israelites would have loved to have been priests. Yet because they were not Levites, this was not an option for them. Only those who qualified were allowed to serve, and only those who served were required to wear headcoverings.

Notwithstanding, Mr. Willis provides his readers with a quote demonstrating that Yahweh will one day take non-Levites for priests:

[20] "And they shall bring all your brothers (Ephraim) out of all the nations, an offering to YHUH, on horses, and in chariots, and on litters, and on mules, and on camels, to My qodesh mountain Yerushalayim," says YHUH; "As the sons of Israel (Ephraim) bring the offering in a clean vessel to the House of YHUH. **And I will also take some of them for priests, for Levites,**" says YHUH. [Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 66:20-21; Green's Interlinear (smooth translation)]<sup>10</sup>

It is very significant that the verb tense in the above prophecy is *future tense*. This means that, as of its writing, the events described therein had not yet come to pass. The question is, "Has it now been fulfilled?" Are there currently non-Levite priests ministering before Yahweh? The answer is no. There may well be non-Levites who are currently *aspiring* for the priesthood, but only Yahweh can ordain such a priesthood, and He has not done so at this time.

To employ human analogy to this situation, consider the situation in which medical students find themselves. They aspire to be physicians, yet they do not attend medical school dressed in medical garb. A lawyer aspiring to become a judge does not wear a black robe to work. An aspiring police officer dressed in a police uniform is in danger of being arrested for impersonating a police officer. In the same way, when the time comes for Yahweh's priesthood to minister, there will be no need for guesswork. When the priesthood is ordained, all will know. We can all certainly study to become those priests, and we should all be offering sacrifices of praise on a daily basis, but that does not mean the priesthood of Yahweh is currently in place. Let us not usurp an office that has not (as yet) been given to us.

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid, pp. 4-5.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, p. 4.

Upon quoting Isaiah 66:20-21, Mr. Willis remarks, “So if some of us Ephraimites are also to be priests, and are to stand in the priest’s office, then will we not wear the ‘bonnets,’ as commanded in Sh’mote (Exodus) 29:9? Won’t that be covering our heads?”

In response to his question, the obvious answer is “yes.” Yes, if we are to be priests, then we may well wear the ‘bonnets,’ as prescribed by Yahweh in the book of Exodus. However, this is clearly a case of the proverbial “putting the cart before the horse.” In the case of the Levitical priesthood, prior to Yahweh’s ordaining that priesthood, no one wore a headcovering as an order of service. Instead, headcoverings were worn much as they are today: Out of necessity. For example, I wear a cap when I’m out in the sun to protect myself in much the same way that ancient Israelites wore headgear to protect themselves, not only from the elements, but also from enemies. Headcoverings were worn out of necessity, not in obedience to a mandate. It was only when the priesthood was officially ordained by Yahweh through Moses that they began the practice of wearing the “linen bonnets,” and not before.

As Isaiah prophesied, the day will come when Yahweh will take for priests men from all nations of the earth. Has that day come yet? No, it has not.

### ***Doesn’t the Book of First Kepha (Peter) Prove That We are Now Priests?***

Perhaps the most common argument employed to persuade us that there is currently a priesthood operating in service to Yahweh involves a passage found in I Kepha (Peter) 2:5 and 9. In order to avoid the possibility of taking those two verses out of context, we will quote the entire passage:

<sup>5</sup>Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to Eloah by Yeshua Messiah.

<sup>6</sup>Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Zion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded.

<sup>7</sup>Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner,

<sup>8</sup>And a stone of stumbling; and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.

<sup>9</sup>But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light:

<sup>10</sup>Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of Eloah: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.

According to the passage cited above, Messianic believers are appointed as a “holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to Eloah by Yeshua Messiah.” The implication is that believers today, in the here and now, in offering up spiritual sacrifices, are performing the rites of a priesthood. However, the Greek text reveals something quite different. According to the Greek text, instead of believers being *already built* into that “spiritual house,” they are *being built*, which means the process is not yet complete. The house is not yet built, and the priesthood is not yet complete. Notice the Greek text of I Kepha 2:5 as taken from *The Interlinear Bible*:

2532 848 5613 3037 2198 3618  
καὶ αὐτοὶ ὡς λίθον ζῶντες οἰκοδομῆσθε  
Also yourselves as stones living are being built

3624	4152	2406	40	
οἶκος	πνευματικός,	ἱεράτευμα	ἅγιον,	
a house	spiritual,	a priesthood	holy,	
399	4152	2378		
ἀνενέγκαι	πνευματικὰς	θυσίας		
to offer	spiritual	sacrifices		
2144	2316	1223	2424	5547
εὐπροσδεκτοὺς	τῷ θεῷ	διὰ	Ἰησοῦ	Χριστοῦ
acceptable	to the Almighty	through	Yeshua	Messiah. <sup>11</sup>

Again, as revealed by the Greek text above, believers are *being built* into a spiritual house in which they will one day serve as priests. To coin a popular expression, we are “a work in progress.” The *New International Version* and other versions of the Bible have properly translated I Kepha 2:5 so as to reflect the original intent of the author. The Aramaic text also agrees. Notice I Kepha 2:5 as it appears in the *Holy Bible From the Ancient Eastern Text*, translated from the Aramaic:

<sup>5</sup> You also, as living stones, build up yourselves and become spiritual temples and holy priests to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.<sup>12</sup>

Does Kepha (Peter) indicate that those to whom he was writing *were already* priests? No, he advocated that they work on *becoming* priests. He did not intimate that they could expect to assume that role in this lifetime. Instead, as we are about to see, the apostolic understanding was that all of Yahweh’s servants will one day, in another age, *become* priests serving before the Almighty.

Another Aramaic translation, the *Disciples New Testament*, is even more demonstrative in presenting the original intent of this verse:

<sup>5</sup>And you also like living rocks shall be built up and become spiritual temples and holy high priests that will raise spiritual sacrifices before God, by the hand of Jesus Christ.<sup>13</sup>

As revealed by both Aramaic and Greek texts, the implication is *not* of a priesthood that is presently ministering before Yahweh, but of a *future* administration.

Some will exclaim, “But I Kepha 2:9 plainly states, ‘Ye **ARE** (present tense) a chosen generation, a royal priesthood .... This means we are priests **NOW!**’”

We can certainly understand how one could read I Kepha 2:9 and, without any further study, conclude that this verse is a reference to a priesthood currently operating under the guidance of Yahweh’s spirit, ministering before Him and His Son. However, it is important for us to remember a common linguistic thread found throughout Scripture involving what is known as the “prophetic perfect.” The *prophetic perfect* is when the present tense is used to describe an event that happens in the future. A classic example of this is found in

<sup>11</sup> From *The Interlinear Bible, Hebrew-Greek-English*, Jay P. Green, Sr., General Editor and Translator, Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, MA, 1986, p. 940. Note: We changed the translation of θεῷ from “God” to “the Almighty” and Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ from “Jesus Christ” to “Yeshua Messiah.”

<sup>12</sup> From the *Holy Bible From the Ancient Eastern Text*, George M. Lamsa’s Translations From the Aramaic of the Peshitta, HarperSanFrancisco, 1968, originally published by A. J. Holman Company in 1933.

<sup>13</sup> From *Disciples New Testament*, translated by Victor Nimrud Alexander from the Ancient Aramaic Scriptures, copyright 1995 – 2003.

Psalms 2:7, where Yeshua is mentioned as having been begotten by Yahweh in a text that was written 1,000 years before his actual birth. Notice what it says:

<sup>7</sup>I will declare the decree: Yahweh hath said unto me, Thou *art* my Son; this day have I begotten thee.

Yeshua did not become Yahweh's Son until His birth, which occurred over 1,000 years *after* this Psalm was written, yet it was written in the present tense, as though the event actually transpired the day on which it was written.

Another famous example of the *prophetic perfect* can be found in Psalms 110:4. We all know that Yeshua didn't become our High Priest until His ascension to heaven. Yet He was declared a High Priest well over 1,000 years earlier in this prophetic psalm:

<sup>4</sup>Yahweh hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou *art* a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.

Again, Yeshua did not become a priest "after the order of Melchizedek" until over a millennium had passed from the writing that describes the event.

Now that we see how the *prophetic perfect* is used in the *Tanakh*, we need to demonstrate that this is what was employed in I Kepha 2:9. I Kepha 2:9, on the surface, seems to indicate that there is a human priesthood ministering before Yahweh right here on earth, in the here and now. In fact, since I Kepha 2:9 was written nearly 2,000 years ago, it would also seem to indicate that a priesthood has been ministering since the very day this verse was written. As we are about to see, however, such is not the case.

According to Revelation chapter 5, there was a sealed book in heaven that no one, either on earth or in heaven, was able to open. At last, however, the Lamb of Yahweh came forward and opened the book. In His presence, those whom He redeemed said the following:

<sup>9</sup>And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou was slain, and hast redeemed us to the Almighty by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;

<sup>10</sup>And hast made us unto our Mighty One kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.

According to Revelation 5:10, the redeemed were made "kings and priests." One might ask, "**Exactly 'when'** were they made kings and priests?" Or, to be more specific, when were they made priests? Was it the day Yeshua ascended into heaven? Or is this referring to a day yet future?

The definitive answer to the above questions can be found in Revelation 20:6. Notice what it says:

<sup>6</sup>Blessed and holy *is* he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of Eloah and of Messiah, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

According to the above prophecy, those who have part in the first resurrection are the ones who "shall be priests" of Yahweh and His Son Yeshua. The verb "shall be" is a futuristic expression, leaving no room to doubt that those who will serve as priests before Yahweh will not do so until a time yet future.

Equipped with this understanding, let us now return to I Kepha 2:9, where, at first glance, it appears that true believers are referred to as being a "royal priesthood" that is currently ministering before Yahweh. Is this "royal priesthood" ministering in the here and now, *or* is this a reference to the priesthood that will reign with Messiah for 1,000 years? Clearly, this is a reference to one priesthood ... the priesthood of the Millennial

Reign. Just as we see in the *Tanakh*, so it is in what is known as the “New Testament.” The Apostle Kepha employed the *prophetic perfect* in reference to that future time when the “faithful few” will become priests of Yahweh and of Yeshua.

Therefore, since the priesthood referenced by Kepha is not one that is currently ministering, we cannot properly use this passage to justify a need for anyone to wear a “kippah” or any other form of headcovering. We can wear headcoverings to protect us from the elements, we can wear headcoverings to make fashion statements, we can even wear headcoverings for no reason at all ... but it is not Scriptural to teach that all men should wear headcoverings, simply because such a teaching is not found in Scripture.

### *Effeminate Men in Corinth?*

In his 14-page study entitled “Why I Cover My Head,” Norman Willis devotes four pages towards explaining what the Apostle Shaul “really meant” when he penned the original text of I Corinthians chapter 11. In developing his case, Mr. Willis gives his readers an overview of Shaul’s purpose in writing his first letter to the believers in Corinth, highlighting the fact that the Corinthian assembly was allowing an immoral man to remain within their midst. Shaul, of course, directed the Corinthians to either remove him from their assembly or he would do it himself when he came to visit them.

Mr. Willis goes on to describe the sad state of affairs then pervading the city of Corinth (Qurintaus):

But it is also interesting to note that Qurintaus was (in that day) a center for Hellenic Temple Prostitution, and particularly male temple prostitution to the false ‘gods’ of Apollo, Poseidon, and others. The Hellenic male bisexual temple prostitutes were reputed to cross-dress, and to wear their hair long (though shaven faced), so as to seem more feminine. And while this disgusting practice would go over well in San Francisco or in certain areas of New York today, it is the exact opposite of the Hebraic way, and I am certain that Shaul found it to be odious, as it is completely against the Teaching (Torah).<sup>14</sup>

You may wonder what all these heathen practices have to do with a man covering his head. That is exactly what I was wondering as I read Mr. Willis’ article. Please allow me to fast-forward you to the point Mr. Willis is attempting to make in his discourse: In describing the heathen bisexual prostitutes who apparently enjoyed dressing like women, wearing their hair long and shaving their faces so as to seem more feminine, Mr. Willis is preparing his readers for one more aspect of this sort of practice: The aspect of headcoverings. Mr. Willis concludes that there were men in the Corinthian assembly who wore *veils*, apparently in imitation of the heathen effeminate men, and it was to *this* practice that Shaul alluded in I Corinthians chapter 11. In summarizing his interpretation of what Shaul “really meant” when he wrote that “a man indeed ought not to cover his head,” Mr. Willis writes:

The Hebrew custom is for men to cover their heads, (but not with a veil), while Hebrew women do cover their heads completely (as with a veil). And women who are engaged also veil their faces, as did Rivkah.<sup>15</sup>

You might ask yourself, “If Shaul wrote that a man ought not to cover his head when praying, then how could anyone conclude that he meant something else?”

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<sup>14</sup> From the article “Why I Cover My Head,” by Norman B. Willis, p. 7; article can be accessed at the following web URL: <http://servant@nazareneisrael.org/freestudies.htm>

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, p. 10.

Great question.

In arriving at his conclusion that Shaul “didn’t really mean that a man shouldn’t cover his head,” Mr. Willis employs a method that all too commonly causes otherwise sincere believers to depart from the realm of proper exegesis. The term for this method has been referred to as a “faulty generalization based upon a misunderstanding of the evidence.” Where, then, did Mr. Willis make his wrong turn?

As we have already covered, Mr. Willis emphatically holds that men’s headcoverings were mandated in the Torah for *all men* and not just for priests. Although we have previously quoted his commentary wherein he reveals this line of reasoning, we do so again in order to illustrate the root of his misunderstanding:

And if Yahushua tells us that He did not come to annul the Torah or the Prophets, then we should take note of the large number of verses both in the Torah and in the Prophets that tell us that men (and also women) in Israel are supposed to cover their heads.<sup>16</sup>

As you may recall, Mr. Willis went on to list the Torah mandates requiring *priests* to wear headcoverings. He did not list a single Torah commandment requiring other men to cover their heads. Since only the priests were commanded to wear a special headcovering, does this mean that the remaining Israelite men went without headcoverings? Of course not! We know that men routinely covered their heads to protect themselves from the elements. However, they *did not* cover their heads in compliance with any Torah directives ... unless they were priests.

Since Mr. Willis is thus persuaded that *all men* are commanded to wear headcoverings, which is a misunderstanding of the evidence supplied in Scripture, he then proceeds to reach a faulty generalization/interpretation of Shaul’s intent in I Corinthians chapter 11. When we operate off of a faulty premise, we usually reach a false conclusion, and this is precisely what Mr. Willis did with regard to his interpretation of I Corinthians 11.

Shaul plainly wrote that a man ought not to cover his head when praying or prophesying. Since Mr. Willis is persuaded that such a teaching is in violation of the Torah, and since he agrees with us that Shaul was obedient to the Torah, he concludes that our English translation of this passage “must” be a mistranslation. Notice what he wrote:

But if Shaul is truly saying that men should not cover their heads while praying or prophesying, then Shaul is going against the Words of Yahuah and Yahushua, saying that the commandment for the priesthood to be covered before Elohim is no good. And that would make ‘Paul’ a genuine heretic for writing against Torah, and it would mean that his words could not be inspired. But we know from Kefa Bet 3:16 (2 Peter 3:16) that Shaul’s writings are inspired, so this passage in English must obviously be a mistranslation.<sup>17</sup>

Since Mr. Willis agrees that Shaul was obedient to the Torah, and since he likewise believes headcoverings were mandated for all Israel, which is not true, he arrives at the mistaken notion that Shaul would have been a heretic to write that a man should not pray or prophesy with his head covered. His only way of establishing such a claim is to somehow demonstrate that the traditional English translations of I Corinthians 11:4 & 7 are flawed.

Are the traditional English translations of I Corinthians 11:4 and 7 mistranslations of the Greek text, as taught by Mr. Willis? Let us examine what he believes is the “correct” translation, as well as his reasoning, to

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid, p. 3.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, p. 8.

see if his conclusion has any merit. In the following excerpt from his article, Mr. Willis provides the literal translation of I Corinthians 11:1-8, as taken from *The Interlinear Bible*, and then he offers his view on what Shaul “really meant” in the two verses in question (I Cor. 11:4 &7):

[1] Imitators of me be, as I also of [Messiah]. I praise but you, brothers, because all things of me you recalled, and as I delivered to you, **the traditions you hold fast**. I wish but you to know, that of every man the Head [Messiah] is; head and of a woman, the man; (the) Head and of [Messiah], [Eloah]. **Every man praying or prophesying down over his head having, shames the Head of him**. Every but woman praying or prophesying uncovered with the head, shames the head of herself; one for it is and the same with being shaved. If for it is not covered a woman, also let her be shorn. If but shameful for a woman to be shorn or to be shaved, let her be covered. **A man indeed for not ought to be covered (katakalupto) the head**, (the) image and glory of [Eloah] being. The woman but glory of a man is.<sup>18</sup> (Emphasis by Norman Willis)

Mr. Willis proceeds to comment on the “true meaning” of Shaul’s words:

Shaul says that a man ought not to wear anything down over his head like a woman does in Middle Eastern custom, speaking of a veil. And where Shaul says that a man indeed for ought not to be covered the head, this word ‘covered’ is *Strong’s* Greek #2619, katakalupto, ‘**to cover wholly, i.e. veil**: - cover, hide.’ Shaul is merely saying that a man ought not to cover his head wholly with a veil like a woman, as the Hellenic temple prostitutes were known to do.<sup>19</sup>

This, then, in the opinion of Mr. Willis, is what Shaul “really meant” in I Corinthians 11:4 & 7. According to Mr. Willis, when Shaul wrote, “For indeed a man ought not to be covered (katakalupto) the head,” what he *really* meant was that a man “ought not to veil himself like a woman.” In other words, according to Mr. Willis’ reasoning, when Shaul wrote that a man should not cover himself when praying or prophesying, he didn’t mean that a man couldn’t wear a kippah, or a cowboy hat, or a ball cap ... there is nothing at all wrong with a man praying or prophesying with his head covered, so long as he isn’t veiling himself as a woman does. This is the logic presented by Mr. Willis.

Earlier, we used a translation of the Aramaic New Testament to validate that there is not currently a human priesthood operating on planet earth. We can also turn to the Aramaic New Testament for evidence that the Apostle Shaul was in no way making allusion to men wearing a woman’s veil in I Corinthians 11:4 & 7. June and I own four English translations of the Aramaic New Testament text, and all but one of them translate the Aramaic word as “covered,” not “veiled.” There is no implication that Shaul is making reference to cross-dressers or any other effeminate practices that the Corinthian assembly may have been guilty of. Note, for example, the rendering of I Corinthians 11:7 provided by Vic Alexander in his *Disciples New Testament*:

<sup>7</sup> For a man is not under obligation to cover his head, for he is in the likeness and for the glory of [the Almighty].

Again, there is no indication or implication that this is a reference to a woman’s veil.

Shown below is the same verse as found in *The Aramaic New Covenant: A Literal Translation and Transliteration*, translated by Herb Jahn:

<sup>7</sup> For a man is indebted to not cover his head because he is the image and glory of [the Almighty].<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid, p. 8.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, p. 9.

<sup>20</sup> From *The Aramaic New Covenant: A Literal Translation and Transliteration*, translated by Herb Jahn, exeGeses Bibles, Orange, CA, 1996.

As before, Jahn's translation leaves no indication that Shaul was referring to a woman's veil.

The third Aramaic translation is that of *The Holy Bible From the Ancient Eastern Text*, translated by George M. Lamsa:

<sup>7</sup> For a man indeed ought not cover his head, because he is the image and glory of [the Almighty]; but the woman is the glory of man.

Again, there is nothing in the above text indicating that the author's original intent was to address effeminate men wearing a woman's veil while praying or prophesying.

Finally, we have a translation entitled the *Hebraic-Roots Version "New Testament,"* translated by James S. Trimm. His translation favors rendering the Aramaic word as "veiled" instead of "covered," even though this same word, as found in the *Tanakh* (Scriptures), is usually rendered "covered" in a variety of applications. Notice Trimm's translation:

<sup>7</sup>For a man ought not to veil his head because he is the likeness and glory of Eloah; but the woman is the glory of the man.

At first glance, we can see how one might believe that Shaul was referring to a woman's veil in the above translation, and this is precisely how Trimm believes the passage should be interpreted, as he conveniently provides a footnote to this effect for his reading audience. The footnote refers them to Deuteronomy 22:5, the verse wherein men and women are commanded not to wear each other's garments. However, as in each of the previous translations of I Corinthians 11:7 that we have listed, such an interpretation simply does not fit the context. If Shaul were addressing a problem with effeminate men in this passage, he most certainly would have come up with stronger words than a simple, "A man ought not to veil his head"!

Curiously, in the above translation, Mr. Trimm also offers his readers a footnote pertaining to the Aramaic word that he translates "veil." He writes:

"Veiled" throughout this section in the Aramaic is various verb forms of כִּסָּה "covered, concealed, hidden, secret, veiled."

It is true that the Aramaic/Hebrew verb כִּסָּה (*keçah*), in addition to meaning "covered," can also mean "veiled," even though this particular meaning is not listed in *Strong's Hebrew and Chaldee Dictionary* (word #3680). Yet, as we all hopefully know, when something is covered, it is veiled. This does not necessarily mean the individual who is covered is wearing a woman's garment. For example, in II Kings 19:1, King Hezekiah covered himself with sackcloth upon learning of an impending invasion by Assyria. There should be no doubt that he did not cover himself with a woman's garment, even though this verb can indeed be used to mean "veiled."

Interestingly, if we are left to conclude that Shaul was making reference to men donning feminine headgear while praying, one could just as easily conclude that King David and his company of men were also wearing veils during his lament over Absalom's conspiracy. King David, as we know, prayed with his head covered (II Samuel 15:30-31). As David prayed, was his head "veiled like a woman"? Shown below is this passage for your review:



<sup>30</sup> And David went up by the ascent of *mount Olivet*, and wept as he went up, and had his head covered, and he went barefoot: and all the people that *was* with him covered every man his head, and they went up, weeping as they went up.

<sup>31</sup> And *one* told David, saying, Ahithophel *is* among the conspirators with Absalom. And David said, O Yahweh, I pray thee, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness.

The Hebrew word translated “covered” in verse 30 is the word *chaphah*, which is word #2645 in *Strong’s Hebrew and Chaldee Dictionary*. This word, just like the word *keçah*, can be used to mean “to veil.” Notice *Strong’s* listing for this word, as shown below:

2645. חָפַה **châphâh**, *khaw-faw’*; a prim. root [comp. 2644, 2653]; to *cover*; by impl. to veil, to *incase*, *protect*:—ceil, cover, overlay.

Since the word *chaphah* could have been translated “veiled” in II Samuel 15:30, those who employ the logic promoted by both Trimm and Mr. Willis would be “justified” in accusing David and his followers of cross-dressing. It would make just as much sense to portray King David as wearing a woman’s veil as it does to teach that the Apostle Shaul was admonishing the Corinthian men to not wear this same veil.

We know that many men are seeking pretexts to better identify with and relate to those of the Jewish faith, and one way to accomplish this is to wear a headcovering. There is nothing unscriptural about a man wearing a headcovering, nor is there even a law against praying while one’s head is covered, but to employ I Corinthians 11 as evidence that the Apostle Shaul taught men to not wear women’s veils is certainly “reaching.”

### *The History of Men’s Headcoverings*

In his article “Why I Cover My Head,” Norman Willis attempts to establish an historical precedent for the custom of men’s headcoverings. For his historical support, he turns to Alfred Edersheim, who authored the book *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* in 1883. In Book III, chapter XXVI of his work, Edersheim offers a commentary pertaining to men’s headcoverings. What follows is Mr. Willis’ quotation from this commentary:

On pages 426 to 431 of his book, ‘[Yahushua] the Messiah,’ Alfred Edersheim writes that during the Second Temple period (when Yahushus first came) the Jewish people kept their heads covered. He writes, ‘In regard to the covering of the head, it was deemed a mark of disrespect to walk abroad, or to pass a person, with a bared head. Slaves covered their heads in the presence of their masters. The ordinary covering of the head was the Sudar, a kerchief twisted into a turban. A kind of light hat was also in use, either of a light material or of felt. [The rabbis twisted the Sudar] in a peculiar manner, (in order to) distinguish them (selves) from others.... We read besides of a sort of a cap or hood attached to some kinds of outer or inner garments....’<sup>21</sup>

Equipped with this testimony from a scholar of Edersheim’s reputation, it appears on the surface that first-century believers routinely covered their heads. However reliable Alfred Edersheim’s works may otherwise be considered, the above instance is one in which his scholarship is noticeably lacking. How does a nineteenth century scholar know that believers predating him by over 1,800 years wore headcoverings as a show of respect? He provides no documentation to validate his comment, so the reader is left to presume that Edersheim “just knew” that this was the practice of early believers.

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<sup>21</sup> From the article “Why I Cover My Head,” by Norman B. Willis, p. 11; article can be accessed at the following web URL: <http://servant@nazareneisrael.org/freestudies.htm>

Elsewhere in his writings, Edersheim validates his information by citing the writings of such first-century authors as Philo and Josephus. In the above instance pertaining to headcoverings, however, he offers nothing to support his claim, which greatly diminishes the credibility of his remark.

Incredibly, in the same chapter cited by Mr. Willis, Edersheim himself admits that the attire of second century Jews is “in dispute.” Notice what Edersheim wrote in the paragraph that immediately precedes the one quoted by Mr. Willis:

If the meaning of all the terms could be accurately ascertained, we should know precisely what the Jews in the second century, and presumably earlier, wore, from the shoes and stockings on their feet to the gloves on the hands. Unfortunately, many of these designations are in dispute.<sup>22</sup>

If Edersheim had difficulty ascertaining the attire of the second century Jews, how can we know that he properly ascertained the attire of *first century Jews*? Without supplying any supporting documentation to validate his statements, they cannot be considered factual. To add to the complexity of this dilemma, we must reiterate the fact that we do not doubt that first century Jews did indeed wear headcoverings, but not for the reason mentioned by Edersheim. Headcoverings were worn for protection. In other words, we need more than the testimony of a first-century historian (such as Josephus) attesting to the attire of Jewish men. We need 1) a Torah commandment directing all men to cover their heads and 2) a statement from a contemporary writer (first century or earlier) indicating that it was disrespectful to “walk abroad with bared head.”

What is so ironic about this entire discussion is the fact that Jewish authorities admit that the custom of men wearing a headcovering is of late origin. Notice what Rabbi Hayim Halevy Donin wrote in his book *To Be a Jew*:

To wear a headcovering was the ancient Roman stigma for a servant. Free men went bareheaded. The Jews adopted this practice in a House of God and in prayer or whenever God’s name was mentioned in blessings (such as during meals which are preceded and followed by blessings) to emphasize that they were the servants of the Lord. Gradually, the practice was extended to wearing a headcovering also under the open skies. It became the Jewish way of showing reverence for God. ‘Cover your head, so that the reverence of Heaven be upon you’ (Shabbat 156b).<sup>23</sup>

Other Jewish sources confirm that the practice of men wearing a headcovering is merely a custom adopted by Jews ... not one that was ever mentioned or even sanctioned by the Torah. For example, here are a few excerpts to illustrate this fact:

From *The Book of Jewish Knowledge*, p. 191: “Actually, there is no Biblical law or directive for covering the head. To cover one’s head with a turban or a skullcap (yarmulke) as a sign of humility, respect, or reverence has been a widespread custom among many peoples in the Orient, especially among the Hindus, Arabs, and Persians.”

From *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, pp. 530-532: “Bareheadedness was customary among men in biblical times, as shown in the story of Samson (Judges 13:16) and in that of Absalom (2 Sam. 14:26), and by the use of the name ‘crown’ for the long hair of the Nazarite (Num. 6:5).

“David Halevi of Ostrog (17<sup>th</sup> century) was the first to declare that the prohibition against uncovering the head was based on religious law, in opposition to the Christian mode of worship. He founded his decision on

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<sup>22</sup> From an online version of *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* by Alfred Edersheim, Book III, chapter XXVI, originally published in 1883. This work may be accessed at the following URL: <http://www.ccel.org/e/edersheim/lifetimes/htm/viii.xxvi.htm>

<sup>23</sup> From *To Be a Jew* by Rabbi Hayim Halevy Donin, BasicBooks, 1972, p. 180.

the Talmudic interpretation of Lev. 18:3: ‘You shall not walk in their ordinances.’ The same view was taken by the physician Solomon Levi of Verona, Amsterdam, 1731. On the other hand, Elijah of Wilna, like Solomon Luria, holds that the prohibition is based merely on custom or propriety.”

From *What Is a Jew?*, by Rabbi Morris N. Kertzer, p. 93: “We know from archaeological remains that in ancient days, the people of Israel were often bareheaded. In the British Museum, I saw a bas-relief of the Assyrian king, Sennacherib, portraying Jews who wore no headgear. The modern Orthodox practice, therefore, of keeping the head covered at all times does not go back to ancient Palestine.”

From *Jewish Worship*, by Abraham Millgram, pp. 351-352: “Though covering one’s head was regarded during the Talmudic period as a sign of respect, there is scant evidence that Jews in the Temple court or in the early synagogue were required to wear any headgear.<sup>24</sup>

Without question, men’s headcoverings as a form of worship (outside the priesthood) is an act whose roots stem, not from Scriptural mandate or even approved example. Where, then, did this modern custom originate? The most ancient record of Jews wearing headcoverings that we have found reveals, not a tradition founded on the bedrock of Scripture, but on heathen oppression. This ancient record goes back to 168 B.C.E, during Antiochus Epiphanes’ “reign of terror.” Many within the ranks of Judaism wince when this name is mentioned. It is recorded that he slaughtered over 80,000 Jews within the space of three days and at least 40,000 more were sold into slavery.<sup>25</sup> Four years later, on Chisleu 25, when Judah Maccabee and his men gained the victory over Antiochus Epiphanes, the celebration of the festival known as *Hanukkah* was born.

What many Jews do *not* know is that this same tyrant issued the first recorded mandate for Jews (outside the priesthood) to wear hats. We are not told what these “hats” consisted of, but it should be safe to presume that before anyone was ordered to wear hats, no such requirement or fashion existed within Judaism.

The record of Antiochus Epiphanes’ command for Jews to wear hats is found in 2 Maccabees 4:7-17:

- 7 But after the death of Seleucus, when Antiochus, called Epiphanes, took the kingdom, Jason the brother of Onias laboured underhand to be high priest,
- 8 Promising unto the king by intercession three hundred and threescore talents of silver, and of another revenue eighty talents:
- 9 Beside this, he promised to assign an hundred and fifty more, if he might have licence to set him up a place for exercise, and for the training up of youth in the fashions of the heathen, and to write them of Jerusalem *by the name of* Antiochians.
- 10 Which when the king had granted, and he had gotten into his hand the rule, he forthwith brought his own nation to the Greekish fashion.
- 11 And the royal privileges granted of special favour to the Jews by the means of John the father of Eupolemus, who went ambassador to Rome for amity and aid, he took away; and putting down the governments which were according to the law, he brought up new customs against the law:
- 12 For he built gladly a place of exercise under the tower itself, and brought the chief young men under his subjection, and made them wear a hat.
- 13 Now such was the height of Greek fashions, and increase of heathenish manners, through the exceeding profaneness of Jason, that unrighteous wretch, and no high priest;
- 14 That the priests had no courage to serve any more at the altar, but despising the temple, and neglecting the sacrifices, hastened to be partakers of the unlawful allowance in the place of exercise, after the game of Discus called them forth;

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<sup>24</sup> The foregoing quotations, although we do not question their authenticity, were actually borrowed from an article entitled “Men’s Headcovering – A Blind Tradition,” by Donald R. Mansager, published in *The Master Key* magazine, November-December 1985, pp. 6-7.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. 2 Maccabees 5:11-14.

- 15 Not setting by the honours of their fathers, but liking the glory of the Grecians best of all.  
 16 By reason whereof sore calamity came upon them: for they had them to be their enemies and avengers, whose custom they followed so earnestly, and unto whom they desired to be like in all things.  
 17 For it is not a light thing to do wickedly against the laws of the Almighty: but the time following shall declare these things.

Earlier in this section, we read an excerpt from Rabbi Hayim Halevy Donin’s book *To Be a Jew* in which he traced the Jewish custom of wearing a headcovering to Roman times. We maintain that Donin did not go back far enough. Had he done so, he would have seen that this now-accepted custom springs from the “heathenish manners” of Greek fashions imposed upon Judaism by the rebellious Jason, who dared to purchase the office of high priest from Antiochus Epiphanes. Shown below is an image of the Greek idol Hermes, as found on a relief in Athens, Greece.<sup>26</sup> Notice the hat he is wearing:



Is the cap depicted above, known as “Hermes’ cap,” the forerunner of the modern headcoverings worn by Judaism? While we can only speculate, the evidence certainly seems to favor such an understanding, especially since there is no Scriptural justification for this apparel. The fact that Jason compelled Jewish young men to wear hats certainly implies that, prior to the adoption of this custom, no such practice existed. As revealed by the Jewish sources cited above, not only is there no Torah requirement for men to wear headcoverings, but the very custom is of relatively late origin, possibly borrowed from Eastern religions. It is peculiar that these Jewish sources, while acknowledging the recent development of their headcovering tradition, omit the account found in 2 Maccabees chapter four.

Therefore, with all due respect to Alfred Edersheim, the testimony gleaned from other reputable Jewish sources indicates that the custom of men wearing a headcovering is *exactly that*: A custom. It is a custom that is not based on any Scriptural mandates, and is devoid of any sound Scriptural examples. As we have shown, the only Scriptural examples of Israelites (other than priests) who wore headcoverings were those who were

<sup>26</sup> From the online article “Hermes / Mercury,” by Michael Lahanas of the Hellenica web site. Mr. Lahanas’ article may be read by accessing the following URL: <http://www.mlahanas.de/Greeks/Mythology/Hermes.html>.

either in a state of lament, mourning, or severe consternation, such as the rigorous drought mentioned in Jeremiah chapter 14.

Even in the example we previously mentioned of King David's prayer (II Samuel 15:30-31), this prayer can be properly classified as a prayer of *lamentation* over the circumstances wrought by his son's attempt to wrest the kingdom from David's rulership. Did the author of II Samuel mention David's head being covered because he was praying or was it because he was weeping, in lamentation over the distress caused by his son's actions?

Those who attempt to interpret the Apostle Shaul so as to portray him as being supportive of men's headcoverings come up far short in their efforts. Undoubtedly, as they claim, Shaul would not have sanctioned men wearing a woman's veil while praying, but the translation "covered" is not a mistranslation, either from the Greek or the Aramaic texts. If Shaul would have intended to convey a requirement for men to wear a basic headcovering, it would have been unusual to have left out such a "Torahless" teaching while simultaneously admonishing the Corinthian men to not wear a woman's veil while praying or prophesying.

With the understanding that the most ancient account of Jews being coerced to wear a hat stems from a wicked high priest who imposed this heathen Greek custom on young Jewish men, we get a better picture of why the Apostle Shaul may have cautioned the men of Corinth to not pray with their heads covered. Corinth, a city founded on Greek culture and antinomian principles, would have been a city where the "cap of Hermes" would have been quite popular. Who *wouldn't* want to wear the cap of one of Greece's most popular idols?