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STRIPES, HATS, AND FASHION

ABSTRACT

This article examines the relationship between fashion and Jewish clothing. Certain clothing elements that are today considered signifiers of Jewish people, even among non-Jews, did not begin as specifically Jewish clothing. They started as the fashion of the general society but were retained by the Jewish community even after the fashions changed in the general world. In this article, we trace the process by which three such elements became associated specifically with Jews and Jewish ritual practice: the striped tallit, Hasidic dress, and black hats. Black hats are the most recent example of this process, and in this case have also developed legal significance in some Orthodox circles. This results in a fashion element being prevented from ever going out of style by virtue of being considered a halachic requirement.

Keywords: fashion; Hasidic dress; tallit stripe; black hat

There are certain elements of clothing that are today considered distinctively Jewish, even by non-Jews. The fact that these elements did not originally signify Jewishness at all teaches us about how certain symbols can become transformed over time from the universal and general to particularly Jewish due to changes in fashion.¹

TALLIT STRIPES

Today, it is nearly universal for the Ashkenazic tallit (prayer shawl) to have either black or blue stripes. The idea of having these stripes is not mandated anywhere in Jewish sources, yet it is ubiquitous.

doi:10.1093/mj/kjaa011

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The standard color of the non-blue tzitzit fringes was originally white, as found in the Mishna, *Menachot* 4:1, “The [absence of] blue [in tzitzit] does not invalidate the white, neither does the [absence of] white invalidate the blue.” White was also understood to be the color of the garment itself, as we find in TB *Shabbat* 153a, “‘At all times let your clothes be white’ (Ecclesiastes 9:8); this is tzitzit.” Rashi (1040–1105) explains this as referring to the garment that the tzitzit are attached to, that it is white. Joseph Karo (d. 1575) in the *Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim* (9:5) writes that those particular in their observance of commandments make the fringes the same color as the tallit garment itself, which is customarily white, and this is the Sephardic practice, to have an all-white tallit. Even if there is a design of stripes on the tallit, the stripes are white as well. This was taken seriously enough that there is halachic discussion regarding the propriety of wearing a tallit that is no longer purely white due to the passage of time or sweat.²

There are symbolic and mystical reasons for an all-white tallit. The kabbalist R. Bahya ben Asher (1255–1340), in his comments to Numbers 15:38, where he discusses tzitzit, explains the famous aggadic passage in TB *Rosh Hashana* 17b, where God instructs Moses how to pray in a manner so that the Israelites will be forgiven for their sins. “It teaches that God wrapped Himself in a tallit, like a cantor, and showed Moses at Mount Sinai, telling him that whenever the Israelites sin, he should do this and God would forgive them. . . . When the story speaks of wrapping it means in a white tallit, since white is the symbol of forgiveness and atonement, just as red is a symbol of sin so white is a symbol of forgiveness. This is what is written, ‘If your sins are as red as wool, they will become white as snow’ (Isaiah 1:18).” Although the talmudic text does not indicate the color of the tallit God was wrapped in, R. Bahya writes that it was all white symbolizing the attribute of mercy.

This idea of a white tallit representing mercy is also discussed by R. Shlomo Luria (the Maharshal, 1510–1573) in his explanation of the same passage in TB *Rosh Hashana* 17b. Based on this passage, he writes that he is careful to have a completely white tallit, including the thread used to sew the various parts together, and the *atarah* of the tallit, the band of material near the neck of the wearer.³ This approach became popularized when it was noted by R. Chayim Yosef David Azulai (Chida, 1724–1806) in his work on the *Shulchan Aruch*,⁴ and in the commentary *Shaarei Teshuva* (9:4) that accompanies all standard printed versions of the *Shulchan Aruch* and *Mishna Berura*.

There are halachic sources that discuss adding color to the standard white tallit. Rabbi Moses Isserles (the Rema, 1530–1572), in his comments to *Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim* (9:5), notes that Ashkenazic Jews make the fringes white even if the garment is colored. R. David ha-Levi Segal (Taz, c. 1586–1667), in his commentary to *Shulchan Aruch, Orach*

Chayim (9:6), writes that it is best to have the corners of the tallit (*kanaf*) be white in order to match the color of the tzizit strings.

R. Elijah Spira (1660–1712), in his commentaries *Elia Zuta* (9:4) and *Elia Rabbah* (9:5), notes that his grandfather, R. Aaron Shimon Spira (1599–1679), Chief Rabbi of Prague and Bohemia, wore a tallit with blue on the edges. R. Elijah Spira conjectures that this was done as a way to remember the *techelet* (blue-turquoise color mentioned in the Torah) that was no longer in use at the time. This is quoted by R. Joseph ben Meir Teomim (1727–1792) in his *Pri Meggadim* (*Eshel Avraham*, 9:6), who notes that this is customary, and it is also customary to have blue on the edge of the *tallit katan*.⁵ This explanation of *Pri Meggadim* is quoted in the very popular *Sefer Ta'amei haMinhagim u-Mekorei ha-Dinim*.⁶ This is the basis for the popular traditional explanation that the blue stripes on the tallit recall *techelet*.

The black stripes often found on the *tallit* have traditionally been explained as a substitute for the blue ones since Maimonides (d. 1204) in *Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Tzizit* 2:8, mentions that black resembles the color of *techelet*.⁷ In some contemporary works the black stripes are explained as “a remembrance or memorial to the destruction of the Holy Temple and the exile.”⁸

However, in all these explanations there is no rationale offered as to why the design incorporates stripes on either side of the garment rather than some other representation of blue or black, or why the stripes are specifically positioned a few inches from the edge.

In ancient Rome, there were different toga designs “to indicate precisely the status or the nature of the wearer.” The normal toga/tunic of the average male citizen was called *pura* (indicating clean, clear) to describe its natural off-white color. The senatorial class had their togas decorated with broad (about three-inch wide) vertical purple stripes, the *latus clivus*. Members of the equestrian class were permitted to have narrow stripes (about one inch wide) on their togas, *angustus clavus*.⁹ The stripes ran down either side of the garment, close to the edge, but not touching the edge itself.¹⁰ A purple stripe on a garment was considered a symbol of special status.¹¹ Other groups of men wore tunics with *clavi* (stripes) of various widths.¹²

Material evidence from archeological findings indicates that the Jews in the Roman era “did not have any distinctive national costume,” however “the customary dress of tunic and mantle (*tallit*) was altered to conform with Jewish law,” the rules of *shaatnez* and *tzitzit* in particular.¹³ While Jewish garments did not appear radically different from others at the time, these changes could make them identifiable as Jews.¹⁴

Because of this, it seems that “the fact that the tallit is striped is probably because of the tradition of *clavi* bands.”¹⁵ In the 1960s, Yigal Yadin discovered such striped tallitot dating from the Bar-Kochva

period.¹⁶ “The remains of tunics found together with the bones of Bar Kochba’s companions . . . are the most ancient garments which are known to have been worn by Jews,” and were found to have “long horizontal stripes over the whole fabric . . . this is still the Jewish tallit today.”¹⁷

These stripes are also seen on tunics in the artwork of the Dura-Europos synagogue (Syria, mid-third century CE). “Moses’ garment is decorated with dark horizontal stripes which make its decoration identical to that of the second-century remains. One cannot insist too strongly on the importance of what may seem to be only a minor detail of representation: Jewish art and the archeology of Eretz Israel thus combine to produce a single image of the Jewish costume in the period of the Mishnah.”¹⁸

These ancient purple lines persisted as the blue or black lines on tallitot to this day.¹⁹

These lines would famously become incorporated into the flag of the State of Israel.²⁰ There is a certain irony that Jews have preserved an element of fashion prevalent among Romans, the destroyers of the Second Temple and the Jewish state of that time, and have now incorporated it into the flag of the contemporary rebirth of the State of Israel. Although it is popular to say that “blue and white, the colors associated with the State of Israel and its flag, actually originated as the ‘Jewish colors’ because of the tallit,”²¹ it is more accurate to go further back in history and say that they are Jewish colors because the Jews kept up the clavi long after the Romans vanished.

Although these stripes are ubiquitous on Ashkenazic tallitot, it was never suggested that they are a halachic (legal) requirement. As R. Yechiel Michel Epstein (1829–1908) (*Aruch Hashulchan*, *Orach Chayyim* 9:26) states, the blue on the edge of a tallit is for purposes of beauty only.²²

HASIDIC CLOTHING

Although the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 and the regulations that followed insisted that Jews be visually distinguishable from Christians, this took the form of specific badges or hats that Jews had to wear.²³ The thirteenth-century *takkanot Shum* (community rules) of the Jewish communities of the Rhineland, and the rabbinic ordinances that followed, had more general rules: that Jews should not cut their hair or beards like Christians, that they should not wear *shaatnez* (a mixture of wool and linen in one garment), and that they should generally not dress like Christians.²⁴ The idea of Jewish attire in the sense of an entire

Jewish look, such as the easily identifiable Hasidic look recognized today, emerged later, and was established in the eighteenth century.²⁵

A description of the clothing of Frankfurt Jews published in 1714 describes that, “the Jews wear black coats, black hats, generally clothes of dark color and around the neck a collar made of linen; the older and more distinguished ones also a round white linen ruff . . . which, in addition to the beret, have their origin in the former Spanish costume,” common in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Spain. German Jews adopted this clothing and retained it “when it became otherwise unfashionable.”²⁶ The Spanish black cloak and ruff had fallen out of fashion in the Christian world and became the dress of the relatively conservative Jewish communities of Frankfurt am Main and Furth.²⁷ A similar development occurred in Poland with what would come to be known as Hasidic clothing.

What is today identified as Hasidic dress began as the fashion of the Polish nobility (*szlachta*). “In traditional (Jewish) men’s dress, from at least the sixteenth century, styles were influenced by those of the Polish gentry (*szlachta*), which itself had borrowed many elements from Turkish and other Near Eastern dress. While the *szlachta* abandoned certain types of clothing for newer fashions, in Jewish society the styles endured for a much longer period.”²⁸ An example of this is the Varangian cap, the base of which had a circle of fur, and the caftan which “in the sixteenth century . . . became the national costume” of Poland.²⁹ The Varangians, a term used in the Byzantine Empire for the Vikings, ruled the medieval state of Kievan Rus between the ninth and eleventh centuries and settled among many territories of what is now modern Belarus, Russia, and Ukraine, impacting that region in many ways, including dress. Thus, rather than being a particularly Jewish clothing item, “in Eastern Europe, on the contrary, the *shtreimel* in the seventeenth century was no more a specifically Jewish hat” than any other. When fashions changed, and “under the rule of the French and Saxon kings new modes began to prevail, and, as in many other aspects of Polish life, western fashions were adopted . . . Polish Jewry developed a strict conservatism.” This “led to the favoring of the headgear most common at the time, namely the *shtreimel*.” The Jews “clung to the Varangian cap longer and more intensely than any other community.”³⁰

The difference in headgear among various Hasidic groups was “largely influenced by climatic conditions.”³¹ Of course, homiletic and symbolic interpretations were given to Hasidic headgear, such as the comment by the Baal Shem Tov’s student R. Pinchas Shapiro of Koretz (1726–91) that the word *Shabbat* stands for “*shtereimel* [elegant fur hats] in place of *tefillin*.”³²

The general character of Polish Jewish men's clothing in the mid-eighteenth century, "was similar in general type regarding cut, length and folding to the men's national costume. Jewish caftans were made according to the cut of the Polish *zupan* and were of similar length, that is, usually reaching the ankle. They distinguished themselves, however, by their darker color, often black."³³ The darker colors, considered more modest, are in accordance with the ruling of Rabbi Moses Isserles (*Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah* 178:1) that one may not mimic non-Jewish clothing chosen "for the sake of licentiousness. For example, they [non-Jews] are accustomed to wearing red clothing, which is princely clothing, and other clothing that is similarly immodest."

While members of the Polish nobility "increasingly adapted to a more Western European style of clothing, incorporating and adapting new fashionable cuts and accessories," Jews retained traditional garments.³⁴ "Jews, encumbered by pogroms, economic deprivations and mandatory dress codes ... remained attired in ... garb that now increasingly appeared anachronistic and distinctively Jewish."³⁵ Inventories and wanted posters from the mid-1700s in Poland indicate that by then Jews wore *zupans* and caftans, while Christians did not.³⁶ This would become the clothing identified as Hasidic garb today.

Hasidic leaders forcefully encouraged the retention of the old fashions, particularly R. Menachem Mendel of Rimanov (1745–1815) a major Hasidic leader in Poland. He wrote a number of times that new fashions are a cause of new diseases and troubles.³⁷ In 1815, he issued a set of thirteen communal ordinances, three of which were specifically aimed at prohibiting men and women from wearing "new fashions." A tailor who made such clothing was to be fined the first time and expelled from the tailor's guild if it happened again.³⁸ We also have many homilies and exhortations in the name of R. Sholom Rokeach (1781–1855), the first Belzer Rebbe, regarding the importance of not changing fashions according to the styles of the Gentiles.³⁹

In the nineteenth century, large segments of German Jewish society "participated in the development of a bourgeois society and adopted the respective sartorial style," putting an effective end to specific Jewish attire in those areas.⁴⁰ On the other hand, the majority of the Polish Jewish population continued to wear their distinctive fashions, resisting integration into the general society. In that era, "sartorial differentiation was not compatible with a modernizing ethos of homogeneity," which sometimes resulted in government decrees against clothing seen as particularly Jewish.⁴¹ Still, many traditional Jews preserved old Polish fashions, which would become known as Hasidic garb since those original fashions were no longer in use in general society, and less traditional Jews also adopted more modern dress. Despite various folkloric

explanations for Hasidic clothing, the simple origin is that it mimicked the style of the wealthy and honorable in Polish society.⁴²

MEN'S HATS

Maimonides (*Hilchot Tefilla* 5:5) and R. Joseph Karo in the *Shulchan Aruch* (*Orach Chayyim* 91:6) state that, "It is the way of scholars and their students not to pray when they are not wrapped," something accomplished by covering the head with a tallit.⁴³ A similar ruling is found in *Shulchan Aruch* (*Orach Chayyim* 8:2) where it is stated that "it is appropriate that one covers his head with a tallit."⁴⁴ R. Yosef Karo writes that this is based on TB *Shabbat* 10a, "Rav Ashi said: I saw that Rav Kahana, when there is suffering in the world, would remove his cloak and clasp his hands and pray." He said that he did so as a servant before his master. When there is peace in the world, he would dress, and cover himself, and wrap himself, and pray, and he said that he did so in fulfillment of the verse: "Prepare to greet your God, Israel (Amos 4:12)."⁴⁵ Rashi explains that Rav Kahana would remove his cloak in times of suffering so as not to appear important. Thus, in peaceful times, it is understood that he wrapped himself in an important garment.

Distinct from this is the matter of wearing a hat in particular for prayer. Rabbi Abraham Danzig in his *Chayei Adam* (22:8), published in the early 1800s, writes regarding the proper attire for prayer, "and he puts a hat on his head the way he walks in the street." Similarly the nineteenth-century *Mishna Berura* (91:11) states that, "in our times during tefilla one must put a hat on his head in the way he walks in the street," and that this is the manner of standing before "important people." Both *Chayei Adam* and *Mishna Berura* require a hat because that is "the way he walks in the street." Similar language is used in *Aruch haShulchan* (*Orach Chayyim* 91:6), that a hat is needed for prayer "like how one walks in the street," and that "the general rule is that one must pray in clothing that is worn in the street."

This view of the hat reflects the fact that "in the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, hats were worn by members of all social classes, including the lowest social strata," and that "hats in previous centuries were worn in what we would now call the public sphere."⁴⁶ Writing in 1948, George Orwell stated that "Even thirty or forty years ago, indeed, bare-headed men were booed at in the street," however, "Then, for no very clear reason, hatlessness became respectable."⁴⁷

President John F. Kennedy ("Hatless Jack") is often credited with the demise of men wearing hats as a societal given.⁴⁸ In fact, although

Kennedy's choice to remove his top hat for the speech at his inauguration may have aided the process, hat sales had already been on the decline for decades.⁴⁹ Already in 1899, the *North Adams Transcript*, in an article titled "What's the use of a hat?," reported that "Nobody wears them anymore. Nobody, that is, except for a few old fogies who imagine that they are duty bound to wear hats."⁵⁰ *Hat Life*, the journal for hat sellers, ran an eight page special report in November 1934, "Hatlessness: What Shall We Do About It?"⁵¹ A study by the Grey Advertising Agency in 1947 found that 57 percent of men in the twenty-five- to thirty-five-year age bracket preferred not to wear a hat. On the other hand, 78 percent of men over forty-five liked to wear hats. Only 15 percent of men under twenty said they preferred wearing a hat to going hatless. This led the report to conclude that, "The younger the man was, the less he cared for hats."⁵² Various reasons were given by the younger men for not wearing hats, the biggest factors being: "Don't feel comfortable," "Hat is a nuisance," "Habit," and "Just don't like to wear one."⁵³

The hat industry was in free fall by the late 1940s and early 1950s, with the situation worsening over time. "Men's dress hat sales in the United States in 1960 were half of what they had been a decade earlier."⁵⁴ The three major popular theories about the decline in men's hats are: a reaction by World War II veterans who had to wear hats as soldiers and now rebelled against it; the increase in private automobiles with little space for a hat worn by the driver; or JFK not wearing a hat (actually removing the hat he wore) during his inaugural address.⁵⁵ However, the decline of public wearing of men's hats in America is understood by historians to have begun for reasons having to do with the desire of younger people not to conform to what were perceived as outdated societal conventions.⁵⁶ The abandoning of hats among college students was a fad noted in *The New York Times* in 1925, and it "spread to the young business man and even to his father."⁵⁷ Hats were perceived as a symbol of conformity to be abandoned.⁵⁸ A telling comment is found in a 1944 *Chicago Daily News* column, where a young reporter writes that he and his friends, "resented the bland uniformity of the dumb-looking hat," and "would not be caught dead in a hat."⁵⁹ This reflected the trend among younger people to prefer a relaxation of the rules of formal etiquette and to feel that they "operate at all times as spontaneous individuals."⁶⁰

By the time of JFK, young men considered the hat a superfluous clothing item, similar to the current trend of more casual work attire without neckties.⁶¹ "This is an interesting example of the changes in outlook that can suddenly make an all-powerful taboo seem ridiculous."⁶²

This would seem to make wearing a hat in a society that does not consider a hat to be an essential clothing item irrelevant to proper prayer attire, as noted in the *Mishna Berura* (91:11), “it all depends on the custom of the places.”⁶³ R. Eliezer Waldenberg (1915–2006) when asked about wearing a hat for prayer wrote that based on the wording of *Chayei Adam*, there could be a leniency for those that don’t wear a hat in the street, but since *Mishna Berura* emphasizes that one must dress in the manner that one does when meeting important people, if a person wears a hat on that occasion he should do so for prayer as well.⁶⁴ Still, the implication is that if a person doesn’t wear a hat even when meeting important people, it would not be required for prayer either.⁶⁵

A similar situation can be found described by Maimonides (*Hilchot Tefilla* 5:5) that “Before beginning the service, the dress should first be adjusted and the personal appearance made trim and neat, as it is said, ‘O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness’ (Psalms 96:9). One should not stand in prayer wearing a money belt, nor bareheaded, nor barefoot, where the local custom is not to stand in the presence of the great without shoes.” R. Yosef Karo (1488–1575) in his *Kesef Mishna* comments that this comes to exclude people who live in Arab lands where they do stand barefoot in front of important people, and that if nobody cares whether or not you are wearing shoes in front of someone important, the same applies for prayer as well.⁶⁶

HATS FOREVER

Among certain groups, hat wearing is still considered significant. “Hats still have a place in African-American communities, where being perfectly turned out for church and recreation still carries the meaning it once did for the population at large – as a sign of respectability and success,”⁶⁷ a phenomenon most commonly associated with women’s “church hats.” And of course it is a distinguishing feature among some Orthodox Jews, particularly those associated with the Lithuanian tradition,⁶⁸ who retain this article of clothing even when the fashion trend has been basically abandoned by the rest of society.

In contemporary rabbinic writings it is not unusual to find the opinion that hats must still be worn by Jews today.⁶⁹ The Klausenberger Rebbe, R. Yekutiel Yehudah Halberstam (1905–94), writes in his *Divrei Yatziw* that even if people no longer wear hats in the streets and public places, this should not influence a person, since “the custom of the foolish is nothing.”⁷⁰ Similarly, R. Moshe Sternbuch writes that although some claim that since in Israel people appear

before government ministers without a hat and jacket then one may pray that way as well, this is not the case. He writes that this practice of appearing without a hat and jacket before important people was learned from non-Jews, who picked it up from Communists who wished to demonstrate that everyone is equal and everyone is a “comrade.” Therefore, the fashion of the outside world to abandon hats in formal and public settings should not impact Jews.⁷¹ While attributing hatlessness to Communist influence is debatable, we have seen that it is understood to have originated with the trend of young men to abandon what they consider “old fashioned” ideas and conformity, arguably things that R. Sternbuch values.

The upshot of these rulings is that although hats began as an article of clothing in general society, expected to be worn by men in public situations, and thus giving it the status of a clothing item required for prayer, the reverse fashion trend is not considered an acceptable reason to no longer require hats during prayer. The hat has now been transformed into a Jewish ritual item that cannot be forfeit.

Still, considering that the *Mishna Berura* (91:11) states that wearing a hat is the manner of standing before “important people,” in a society where the important people neither wear hats themselves nor expect them to be worn by people meeting them, it would seem unusual to demand hat wearing. When asked this directly by a questioner who pointed out that in many places in Israel and the U.S. it is not customary to walk in the street with a hat, R. Chaim Kanievsky responded that, “even in our times also most people wear a hat and jacket when meeting with important people.”⁷² Of course, in a society where it is still customary to wear hats for formal occasions and public appearances, hat wearing would be considered important for prayer as well.⁷³ Thus, the very fact that a certain community retains the fashion of hat wearing in the public sphere, even though it is abandoned by society at large, creates an obligation to continue maintaining this practice. This is pointed out by R. Shlomo Blumenkrantz who states that although the general society no longer wears hats in the public arena, the “*bnei Torah*” do. And even though they may not wear a hat when visiting an important person in the secular or Gentile world, they still wear a hat when visiting a Torah scholar. This leads to his conclusion that a hat is still necessary for prayer.⁷⁴ Maintaining this fashion creates a loop that reinforces the continuation of the fashion.

CONCLUSION

The *Pesikta d’Rav Kahane* (Beshalach 11:6), an early medieval midrash, brings the famous teaching of R. Huna in the name of Bar Kappara that

in the merit of four things the Israelites were redeemed from Egypt: “they did not change their names, they did not change their language, they did not speak *lashon hara*, and no one among them was promiscuous.” There are various versions of this teaching, but although often included in the list, the statement “they did not change their clothing” is not found in the early midrashic literature.⁷⁵ It is first attested to in the eleventh-century work *Midrash Lekach Tov* (commenting on Exodus 6:6).⁷⁶ This different reading is understood to have arisen due to the fact that in the ancient world Jews fundamentally “wore clothing that was indistinguishable from that of non-Jews.”⁷⁷ In contrast, medieval European Jews did have a distinct dress, often not by choice.⁷⁸

However, when choosing to adopt a distinctive dress, Jews “had always adopted the dress from the surrounding nation, preserving some elements that distinguished them from the strangers and determined their national membership.”⁷⁹ This is part of the “pre-modern ethos that condoned and sometimes required visible distinction among estates, social classes, and residents of different locales.”⁸⁰ As fashions changed, so did the manner of dress of Jewish people, while preserving certain distinguishing elements. So long as the non-Jewish clothing was not considered immodest, changing styles were not viewed as problematic.⁸¹

Even so, certain fashion elements that were not originally perceived as particularly Jewish were vigorously preserved by Jews even when discarded by their surrounding environment. In these cases, the clothing item underwent a transformation into something that was perceived as a mark of traditional Jewish values or custom, and in some cases even ritually or spiritually significant. Over time, even the outside world would then tend to view these fashion relics as emblematic of Jewish people, reinforcing and cementing their elevation, transformation, and even conversion, for example, from Roman to distinctively Jewish. This is what happened to the hat, once a staple of men’s fashion in the Western world. With the advent of various forces of social change in the early 1900s, formal hats became less popular in general society. This trend continues today in the realm of jackets and ties with the acceptance of more casual dress for men. Within the Orthodox world, however, the older, less casual, fashions have persisted.

In the case of the tallit stripes, although an ancient practice, it was never mandated by halacha, and while the stripes were explained, they were not particularly encouraged. They remained in the realm of popular fashion choice, although one very widespread and considered “traditional.” The case of the hat is different; in certain circles it evolved beyond a fashion choice into a halachic obligation, thus giving it the

special status of a fashion trend that can never end by virtue of being understood to be mandated by halacha.

INDEPENDENT SCHOLAR

NOTES

1. This article will focus on the clothing worn by Jewish men. For a study of the changes in the understanding of modest fashion as it relates to Orthodox Jewish women, see Yehuda Henkin, *Understanding Tzniut: Modern Controversies in the Jewish Community* (Jerusalem, 2008).

2. See Simcha Rabinowitz, *Piskei Teshuvot*, Vol. 1 (Jerusalem, 2006), 9:6, p. 111, and n. 51 there.

3. Shlomo Luria, *Yam Shel Shlomo – Yevamot* (Szczecin, 1862), siman 3, p. 1b. Maharsha brings this same idea from “an old book of kabbalistic wisdom” in his comments to TB *Rosh Hashana* 17b. See also S. Rabinowitz, *Piskei Teshuvot*, vol. 1, 9:6, p. 111, and n. 49 there.

4. Chayim Yosef David Azulai, *Birkei Yosef – Orach Chayim* (Jerusalem, 2019), *shiurei bracha* nn. 1 and 2 to 9:5.

5. A tallit katan is a small garment with fringes that men wear under their clothing.

6. Abraham Sperling, *Sefer Ta’amei ha-Minhagim u-Mekorei ha-Dinim* (Jerusalem, 1999) p. 10, siman 15.

7. Hertzel Hillel Yitzhak, *Tzel Heharim: Tzitzit* (Jerusalem, 2006), p. 90, n. 39.

8. Wayne D. Dosick, *Living Judaism: The Complete Guide to Jewish Belief, Tradition, and Practice* (San Francisco, 1995), p. 223.

9. Shelly Stone, “The Toga: From National to Ceremonial Costume,” p. 15, and Norma Goldman, “Reconstructing Roman Clothing,” p. 221, in Judith Lynn Sebesta and Larissa Bonfante (eds.), *The World of Roman Costume* (Madison, 2001).

10. N. Goldman, “Reconstructing Roman Clothing,” p. 221.

11. Laetitia La Follette, “The Costume of the Roman Bride,” in *The World of Roman Costume*, edited by Judith Lynn Sebesta and Larissa Bonfante (Madison, 2001), p. 62, n. 19.

12. Lena Larsson Loven, “Roman Art: What Can It Tell Us About Dress and Textiles? A Discussion on the Use of Visual Evidence as Sources for Textile Research,” in *Greek and Roman Textiles and Dress: An Interdisciplinary Anthology*, edited by Mary Harlow and Marie-Louise Nosch (Oxford, 2014), p. 274.

13. Lucille Roussin, “Costume in Roman Palestine: Archaeological Remains and the Evidence from the Mishnah,” *The World of Roman Costume*, edited by Judith Lynn Sebesta and Larissa Bonfante (Madison, 2001), p. 188. Mantle is the term used for a tallit, p. 183.

14. Faith Pennick Morgan, *Dress and Personal Appearance in Late Antiquity* (Leiden, 2018), p. 26. See also Steven Fine, “How Do You

Know a Jew When You See One? Reflections on Jewish Costume in the Roman World,” in *Fashioning Jews: Clothing, Culture, and Commerce*, edited by Leonard Jay Greenspoon (West Lafayette, 2013), p. 20.

15. Susan Karla Greenberg, *Tallitot: History and Design* (Madison, 1975), p. 19.

16. Yigael Yadin, *The Finds from the Bar Kokhba Period in the Cave of Letters, Volume 1* (Jerusalem, 1963), chapter 11.

17. Élisabeth Revel-Neher, *The Image of the Jew in Byzantine Art* (Oxford, 1992), pp. 52–53. See the pattern for replicating a Roman tunic, which looks just like a tallit, N. Goldman, “Reconstructing Roman Clothing,” in *The World of Roman Costume*, p. 222.

18. É. Revel-Neher, *The Image of the Jew in Byzantine Art*, pp. 52–53.

19. Although brightly colored tallitot were popularized by Zalman Schachter Shalomi from his time as a Camp Ramah counselor in the 1960s, as part of his “do-it-yourself religious artifacts” projects, and would have an impact on more people over the following decades, particularly among members of the Renewal and Havurah movements, the original design of a plain white garment with simple parallel stripes dating from ancient Roman times remains the most popular tallit design to this day. See Chava Weissler, “Performing Kabbalah in the Jewish Renewal Movement,” in *Kabbalah and Contemporary Spiritual Revival*, edited by Boaz Huss (Beer Sheva, 2011), p. 28.

20. See Daniel Sperber, *Minhagei Yisrael*, Vol. 5 (Jerusalem, 1998) pp. 207–08, n. 5. On the history of the tallit stripe design on the flag of the State of Israel, see Ari Chwat, *Leharim et haDegel* (Jerusalem, 2014), pp. 25–31.

21. Michael Strassfeld, *A Book of Life: Embracing Judaism as a Spiritual Practice* (Woodstock, 2006), p. 198.

22. See also *Mishna Berura*, 9:16, which states that the blue stripes are halachically insignificant.

23. Françoise Piponnier and Perrine Mane, *Dress in the Middle Ages* (New Haven, 1997), pp. 136–37.

24. Cornelia Aust, “From Noble Dress to Jewish Attire: Jewish Appearances in the Polish-Lithuania Commonwealth and the Holy Roman Empire,” in *Dress and Cultural Difference in Early Modern Europe*, edited by Cornelia Aust and others (Berlin, 2019), p. 91.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 90.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 94.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 111.

28. Olga Goldberg-Mulkiewicz, 2010. “Dress”. *YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*, <https://yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Dress> (accessed November 20, 2019).

29. Raphael Straus, “The ‘Jewish Hat’ as an Aspect of Social History,” *Jewish Social Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (1942), p. 70.

30. *Ibid.*, p. 71.

31. Tzvi Rabinowicz, *The Encyclopedia of Hasidism* (Northvale, 1996), p. 94.

32. Aharon Wertheim, *Halachot v’Halichot b’Hasidut* (Jerusalem, 1960), p. 197.

33. Irena Turnau, "The Dress of the Polish Jews in the 17th and 18th Centuries," *Proceedings of the World Congress of Jewish Studies*, Vol. 10 (1989), D:2, pp. 104–05.
34. C. Aust, "From Noble Dress to Jewish Attire," p. 100.
35. Eric Silverman, *A Cultural History of Jewish Dress* (New York, 2013), p. 122.
36. C. Aust, "From Noble Dress to Jewish Attire," p. 103.
37. See Menachem Mendel of Rimano, *Menachem Zion* (Jerusalem, 2007), pp. 261–62, 295–98.
38. Menachem Mendel of Rimano, *Ateret Menachem* (Bilgoraj, 1910), p. 12, items 1, 5, and 11.
39. Abraham Sperling, *Sefer Ta'amei ha-Minhagim u-Mekorei ha-Dinim* (Jerusalem, 1999), p. 553 in the notes.
40. C. Aust, "From Noble Dress to Jewish Attire," p. 112.
41. Glenn Dynner, "The Garment of Torah: Clothing Decrees and the Warsaw Career of the First Gerer Rebbe," in *Warsaw: The Jewish Metropolis*, edited by Glenn Dynner and Francois Guesnet (Leiden, 2015), p. 102.
42. Aryeh David Wasserman, *Otzar haKippa*, Vol. 2 (Jerusalem, 2014), p. 505.
43. See also *Mishna Berura* 91:6.
44. See *Mishna Berura* 8:4 regarding the opinions about whether this means for Shmoneh Esrei only or the entire service.
45. *Kesef Mishna, Hilchot Tefilla* 5:5.
46. Diana Crane, *Fashion and Its Social Agendas: Class, Gender, and Identity in Clothing* (Chicago, 2000), p. 83.
47. George Orwell, "George Gissing," first published in *London Magazine* (June, 1960), written in 1948.
48. Nicholas Storey, *History of Men's Fashion: What the Well-dressed Man is Wearing* (Barnaby, 2008), p. 130.
49. Maria Mackinney-Valentin, *Fashioning Identity: Status Ambivalence in Contemporary Fashion* (London, 2017), p. 7.
50. Neil Steinberg, *Hatless Jack* (New York, 2004), p. 248.
51. *Ibid.*, p. 254.
52. *Ibid.*, p. 211.
53. *Ibid.*, p. 212.
54. *Ibid.*, p. xix
55. *Ibid.*, p. xix
56. *Ibid.*, p. 220.
57. *Ibid.*, p. 233.
58. *Ibid.*, p. 232
59. *Ibid.*, p. 218.
60. Alison Lurie, *The Language of Clothes* (New York, 1981), p. 179.
61. N. Steinberg, *Hatless Jack*, p. 256, n. 7.
62. George Orwell, "George Gissing", *London Magazine* (June, 1960).
63. Simcha Rabinowitz, *Piskei Teshuvot*, Vol. 1, (Jerusalem, 2006) 91:3, p. 720.
64. Eliezer Waldenberg, *Tzitz Eliezer*, Vol. 13 (Jerusalem, 1984), 13:1, p. 33 and 13:4, p. 34.

65. See Aryeh David Wasserman, *Otzar haKippa*, Vol. 2 (Jerusalem, 2014), pp. 43–44.

66. *Ibid.*, pp. 45–46. This also led to a discussion of whether it is appropriate to wear a jacket draped over the shoulders during prayer, or have one arm sticking out of the jacket, as this would not be done in the presence of an important figure. See pp. 57–59.

67. N. Steinberg, *Hatless Jack*, p. 294.

68. A. D. Wasserman, *Otzar haKippa*, Vol. 2, p. 502.

69. For example, Moshe Tzuriel, *Otzrot haMussar* (Jerusalem, 2002), p. 1175; A. D. Wasserman, *Otzar haKippa* (Jerusalem, 2014), a two volume work whose second volume deals comprehensively with the obligation to wear a hat.

70. Yekutiel Yehudah Halberstam, *She'elot U'Teshuvot Divrei Yatziv, Orach Chayyim*, Vol. 1 (Kiryat Sanz, 2004), 60:8, p. 125.

71. Moshe Sternbuch, *Teshuvot v'Hanhagot*, Vol. 4 (Jerusalem, 2001), siman 26, p. 23.

72. R. Chaim Kanievsky, *Daat Nota*, Vol. 1 (Bnei Brak, 2009), p. 280, question 102.

73. Simcha Rabinowitz, *Piskei Teshuvot*, Vol. 1 (Jerusalem, 2006), 91:3, p. 721.

74. Shlomo Blumenkrantz, *Brauch Tzuri* (Brooklyn, 1972), siman 12:2, p. 12.

75. Solomon Buber, *Pesikta* (Lvov, 1868), p. 83b, n. 66. See also Moshe Svar, *Michlol haMa'amarim v'haPitgamim* (Jerusalem, 1987), p. 348.

76. See the discussion in Menachem Kasher, *Torah Shleimah – Shmot*, Vol. 8 (Jerusalem, 1992), p. 239, miluim 3.

77. Shaye J.D. Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness: Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties* (Berkeley, 1999), p. 31. See the discussion there on pages 30–34. There are specific exceptions, such as black shoes, which according to TB *Taanit* 22a seem to have not been normative for Jews to wear, although according to Rabbeinu Tam (TB *Baba Kamma* 59b, Tosafot s.v. *have*), this may refer to the shoelaces rather than the shoes themselves.

78. Steven Fine, “How Do You Know a Jew When You See One? Reflections on Jewish Costume in the Roman World,” in *Fashioning Jews: Clothing, Culture, and Commerce*, edited by Leonard Jay Greenspoon (West Lafayette, 2013), pp. 20, 26, n. 13.

79. I. Turnau, “The Dress of the Polish Jews in the 17th and 18th Centuries,” p. 102.

80. G. Dynner, “The Garment of Torah: Clothing Decrees,” p. 101.

81. See the responsum by R. Moshe Feinstein on this topic (*Iggerot Moshe, Yoreh Deah* 1:81), dated 1952.