

Belief

Jewish Attire

Judaism

Although no specific costume was ever mandated by Jewish law, and no universal Jewish costume ever evolved, certain dress codes have been clearly identified with the Jewish people throughout the ages.

In addition to the influence of Jewish law and custom on the development of these dress codes, these codes were impacted by the **geography and historical setting in which the costume developed, and the extent of integration in the wider, gentile community.**

Slapak, Orpa, and Esther Juhasz. "Jewish Dress." The Berg Companion to Fashion. Ed. Valerie Steele. Oxford: Bloomsbury Academic, 2010. Bloomsbury Fashion Central. Web. 21 Nov. 2021.

Several principal factors have determined Jewish dress throughout the ages:

1. Halachah: the whole legal system of Judaism which embraces all laws and observances, from the Bible henceforth, as well as codes of conduct and customs.
2. Restrictive decrees and edicts by non-Jewish authorities in countries where Jews lived, as well as Jewish inner-communal regulations.
3. Prevailing local styles and dress codes.

Judaism

Judaism is the religion of the ancient Israelites, whose origins purportedly go back nearly four thousand years.

Contemporary Jews are said to be the descendants of Abraham with whom, as stated in Genesis, God made a covenant that was to be kept throughout succeeding generations.

As a sign of this covenant, all Jewish males must be circumcised, a practice which continues to the present day and is celebrated in the ritual of the bar mitzvah, when at age thirteen, a boy attains legal and religious maturity in the Jewish religion, committing himself to fulfil God's commandments.

Thus, the modification of the body is the major physical sign of the covenant between God and all Jewish people.



Judaism

Judaism is an all-encompassing way of life, and there are quite specific laws or standards for almost everything to do with the way one lives, including dress.

Jewish law requires Jewish people to honour their bodies and to dress modestly, a quality that is repeated throughout all of the mainstream monotheistic religions.

Hume, Lynne. "Fashioning Faith: Judaism and Islam." The Religious Life of Dress: Global Fashion and Faith. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013. 50–76. Dress, Body, Culture. Bloomsbury Fashion Central. Web. 22 Nov. 2021.

Judaism

With the exception of the *tallith* and the *tefillin*, items of dress that are essentially the same for all Jews and which will be elaborated upon later, clothing customs vary from country to country, according to the particular branch of Judaism that individuals follow and the extent to which individuals wish to remain true to old traditions or leap with both feet into modernity.

Judaism

The Five Books of Moses (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy), which according to tradition were given by God to Moses on Mount Sinai, make up the Torah.

Torah study, which includes very specific dress codes that Jews must adhere to, is regarded as a religious duty for all Jews, and one of the most important liturgical acts in the synagogue is the reading from the Torah.

Torah and Yad

The books of the Torah are written on scrolls made from parched or tanned leather and are to be found in all synagogues.

As touching the scrolls with bare hands is forbidden, a pointer, called a *Yad*, in the shape of a finger or hand and usually made of silver or wood, assists the handling of the text during the reading.



Sabbath or Shabbat

Jews observe the Sabbath, the seventh day of creation, ritually observed from an hour before nightfall on Friday to sunset on Saturday.

Prior to this celebration, the house is cleansed, the meals cooked, the table set, baths taken and everyone in the family dressed for celebration.

The beginning of the Sabbath is marked by the ritual lighting of two candles.



Shabbat Shalom

Shabbat is celebrated, first and foremost, by observing the holy day as a day of rest from all work.

There are Synagogue services on Friday evening, and on Saturday morning.

At home, candles are lit and blessed, and parents bless their children.

While some Jews observe these laws strictly, others celebrate Shabbat in their own way,

It is traditional to wear nice clothes on Shabbat, and some people also wear white as a symbol of purity and holiness.

There are 39 categories of work that are forbidden on Shabbat.

Menorah

The menorah, a seven-branched candelabrum which is an ancient symbol of Judaism used in the Temple, represents Judaism as 'a light unto the nations' (Isaiah 42:6).

Jewish History

The history of the Jews is a long one that is well covered in other writings.

The destruction of the Second Temple in Jerusalem in the year 70 CE was a catastrophic time in Jewish history which brought on great changes in Jewish life.

The destruction was an important point in the separation of Christianity from its Jewish roots.



'Siege and destruction of Jerusalem', *La Passion de Notre Seigneur* c.1504

Halacha or Halakha

Jewish people lived and dressed in accordance with traditional Jewish law, *halacha*, but the rise and spread of Christianity, especially from the fourth century onwards, influenced the way that Jews were treated, and this extended to dress requirements imposed from without as well as from within.

Halakha is often translated as "Jewish law", although a more literal translation of it might be "the way to behave" or "the way of walking".

Halakha not only guides religious practices and beliefs, it also guides numerous aspects of day-to-day life

Old-style Jewish garb distinguished Jews from non-Jews and while socially detrimental in the wider world, it was viewed by the rabbis as a type of protection from the pollution of mixing with non-Jews.

In most countries where Jews settled, at some point in history the ruling elite forced Jews to wear some distinctive form of dress or particular garment or sign, so that their religion would be obvious.

Pointed Hat

For example, in 1266, a law was passed requiring the Jews of Gnesen in Poland to wear a special pointed hat,





Depicted here is a religious debate between Christian scholars (left) and Jews (right), in a woodcut from 1483 by Johann von Armsheim:



In this Yiddish ad from the early 20th century published by Yefet in Jaffa, we see various types of Jewish hats from Ashkenazi communities. The headline reads: “Jewish hats from different periods.”

The Council of Ofen in Hungary in 1279 decreed that the Jews had to wear a red badge, among many other efforts to demonize and identify the Jew as the “Other”.



Expulsion of Jews from England



Jews being burned at the in 1349. Miniature from a 14th-century manuscript *Antiquitates Flandriae*

Statues

A Lithuanian statute of 1566 stated that:

“the Jews shall not wear costly clothes nor gold chains nor shall their wives wear gold or silver ornaments. The Jews shall not have silver mountings on their sabres or daggers. They shall be distinguished by characteristic clothes; they shall wear yellow hats and their wives kerchiefs of yellow linen in order that all may distinguish Jews from Christians”
(Rubens, 104).



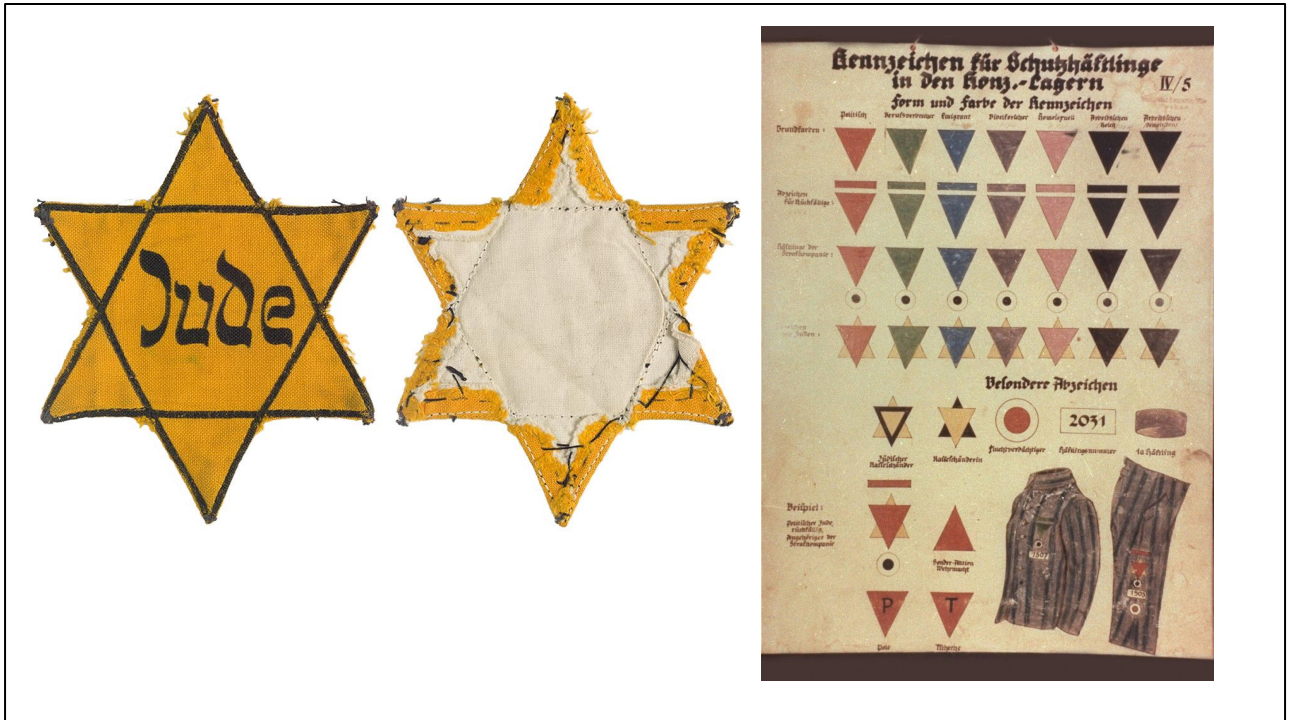
An illustration depicting a Polish Jewish woman in traditional dress with her hand tucked into her distinctive brüsttuch panel, which covers the front of her bodice.

Branding in Nazi Germany

By the twelfth century, the despised Jewish minority in Europe and elsewhere were treated as the Other.

This culminated in the Nazi epoch in the 1940s which forced Jews to be even more visibly other.





The Germans implemented a complex system of identifying badges for inmates in concentration camps, usually consisting of inverted triangles whose color denoted the category of the prisoner.

Jews incarcerated in camps were marked with two yellow triangles forming a Star of David.

Made of fabric, these were sewn onto camp clothing. Other categories of prisoners were identified by the red triangle (political prisoners), green (criminals), black (asocials), brown (Sinti-Roma, originally black), pink (homosexuals), among others.

These categories could be further refined by combining

them. Thus, a Jew incarcerated for political reasons would have a red triangle superimposed on a yellow triangle. For non-German nationals, a letter denoting the country of origin was placed inside the badge, such as a P for Polish prisoners.

Adoption of rules to remain separate

Dress codes were also enforced by the Jews' own religious ruling bodies.

A rabbinical edict of 1607 prohibited the adoption of Christian dress, and in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Lithuanian Jewish Council issued various sumptuary laws restricting dress.

Prior to the 1940s, however, in the moral, social and political changes of the New World of the Americas of the early 1900s, many Jews discarded prescribed traditional dress conventions and began to dress like everyone else.

The chance to be fashionable in a high-consumer society provided them with the opportunity for individualism.

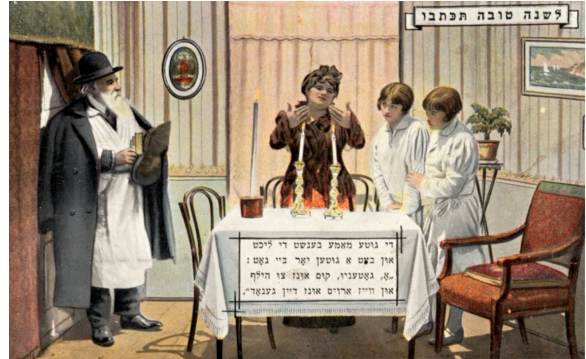
Ultra-Orthodox Jews, however, still clung to traditional dress as an outward sign of community, identity and Jewish values as some do even today.

Kittel

The basic male garment for special ritual occasions is a *kittel*, a white, shroud-like linen gown that signifies purity, holiness, humility and new beginnings.

The Jewish holy book, the Torah, forbids the mixture of linen and wool (specifically the wool of sheep, lambs and rams) in clothes.

However, it is permitted to wear a linen garment over a woolen garment, or vice versa, since they are not attached to each other.



Although the reason for this is unknown, wool and linen attached to each other by any means, whether sewn, spun, twisted, glued or otherwise joined, is forbidden.

Kittel



Kittel

Traditionally, the first time a man wears a *kittel* is on his wedding day, then subsequently for Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur and Passover, and finally as his burial shroud.



Yarmulke (Yiddish) or Kippah (Hebrew)

Both single and married men wear a *yarmulke* or kippah, a small, embroidered or plain cloth skullcap in a variety of styles and fabrics, snugly shaped to the crown of their heads, demonstrating respect and reverence for God.

[Yarmulke or Kippah](#)



Many variations

This item of clothing differs slightly, depending on the community.

Braslav communities (mystic Jews originating from Russia), the *kippah* is very wide, covering the whole head, and is usually embroidered, in a white or cream colour, and has a small pompom on the top.



Modern Variations

In non-Orthodox communities which accept modernity, it is embroidered and can be any colour.



Two boys wearing yarmulkes (skull caps). In the twenty-first century, caps are available in a wide range of designs; these particular caps feature symbolic support for the 2004 U.S. presidential candidates.

Yarmulke

The Torah states no obligation regarding the wearing of the *yarmulke*, but it is a custom which has become obligatory through the passing of time and has become a sign of Jewish identity and of man's humility in his relationship to God.

An Orthodox Jewish man may wear it all day because he believes himself to be in the presence of God at all times.

Prayer Shawls

For morning prayers and at various religious ceremonies, men wear a prayer shawl (*tallith*, *tallis*, *tallit*, *talit*), a large rectangular wrap-around garment, which is traditionally woven of white wool, linen or silk, with black or blue stripes at the ends.

Tallit

From early childhood onwards, men usually wear a small *tallith* or a *tallith katan* under their clothes.

The *tallith* is kept for life and even-beyond; there is a custom of burying the dead in a *tallith*, after the *tzitzith* have been removed.

Tallith with Tzitzit

In the twenty-first century, the *tallith* is worn like a scarf and is sometimes pulled over the head to aid in concentration during prayer.

Talith

A blessing is sometimes embroidered in Hebrew across the top of the *tallith*.



Tzitzith or fringes

At each of the four corners of the *tallith* are the *tzitzith*, or fringes, in order to follow the commandment that man must be wrapped in fringed garments.

In principle, the *tzitzith* should be made of the same material as the *tallith*:

- a silk *tallith* should have silk *tzitzith*;
- a linen *tallith*, linen *tzitzith* and so forth,
- common practice is to use wool for the *tzitzith*, regardless of whether the *tallith* is made of wool.

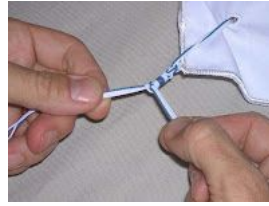


made explicit in Numbers 15:37–40:

The Lord said to Moses as follows: Speak to the Israelite people and instruct them to make for themselves fringes on the corners of their garments throughout the ages. That shall be your fringe; look at it and recall all the commandments of the Lord and observe them. Thus you shall remember all My commandments and to be holy to your God. I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt.

And in Deuteronomy 22:12: ‘you shall make yourself tassels on the four corners of your cloak with which you cover yourself’.

Tzitzith



Twined or knotted fringes or twisted cords (*tzitzith*) are affixed to the four corners of the *tallith*, and each tassel has four strings each corner has ten knots, which serve as reminders to the wearer to keep the Ten Commandments.

There are different traditions of how to knot the *tzitzith*.

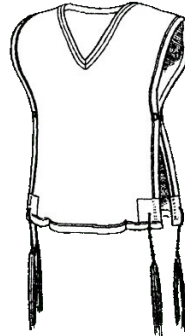
Since they are considered by Orthodox tradition to be a time-bound commandment, they are worn only by men;

Conservative Judaism regards women as exempt but not prohibited from wearing *tzitzith*.

Tallith Katan



The fringes were once attached to an outer garment with no attempt at, or reason for concealment but due to later persecution, they became an inner garment, *tallith katan*, enabling the wearer to observe the Law secretly.



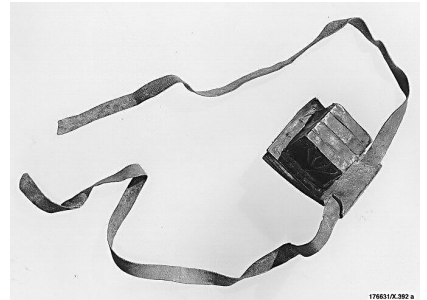
Tzitzit are specially knotted ritual fringes or tassels, worn in antiquity by Israelites and today by observant Jews and Samaritans. *Tzitzit* are usually attached to the four corners of the Tallit (prayer shawl) usually referred to simply as a *tallit* or *tallis*; and tallit katan (everyday undergarment).

Tefillin

Another prescribed item of dress is the *tefillin*, worn by men during prayer, except on the Sabbath and on holidays.

The *tefillin* consists of two long, thin leather straps, each one with a small leather box attached inside of which are tiny parchments, inscribed with texts from the Torah.

These items of dress are a form of both memory and memorial, allowing a man in prayer to become conscious of his ability to open up to the infinite, despite the finite nature of his material being.



The Hebrew word tefillin designates a pair of small leather boxes containing parchment inscribed with verses from the Torah (Exod 13:1-10; 13:11-16; Deut 6:4-9; 11:13-21).

A Jewish ceremonial object whose form is explicitly prescribed by Jewish law, tefillin are traditionally worn by Jewish men on the forehead and on the upper arm and hand during weekday morning prayers.

On both sides of the tefillin "shel-rosh" or "head-tefillin," the Hebrew letter "shin" (ש) is inscribed; however, the two letters are written differently, one with three branches and the other with four branches. Rabbinic texts provide several interpretations for this epigraphic variation. According to Jewish mystical tradition, for example, the seven combined branches correspond to the seven branches of the menorah (Zohar 3:245a-b).

Enclosed within the phylactery are four compartments currently containing three parchment scrolls inscribed with passages from the Torah. Traditionally, the head phylactery contains four parchment scrolls. The absence of the fourth parchment renders

this object religiously invalid (unkosher).

Tefillin

One leather strap is worn on the left arm by wrapping the strap around it seven or eight times, and one is worn on the forehead positioned between the eyes, the strap being wound around the head and knotted. [Tefillin wrap](#)



Hasidic Jews

Hasidic Jews belong to one relatively small, but visibly apparent, branch of Orthodox Judaism which strictly adheres to the laws of the Torah, *halakha* (*halacha*), accepting that the Torah is divine revelation, regulating not only religious observance but also the entirety of the behaviour of its followers.

The word *hasidim* translates as 'pious ones', reflecting their fervent passion for maintaining strict adherence to Jewish law.

Rebbe

The *rebbe*, or master, is regarded as the spiritual intermediary between God and man; his interpretation of Jewish law is regarded as the paramount authority in a Hasidic community, as he is believed to possess a higher soul than others.

Each Hasidic community is directed by its own *rebbe* and his interpretation of Jewish law.



The words rabbi and rebbe come from the same root Hebrew word, *rav*, meaning teacher or spiritual guide. Both terms can refer to a teacher of Torah a personal mentor or teacher, or a spiritual leader.

Rabbi is the commonly used word to describe a teacher or mentor in most modern Jewish movements.

Rebbe is a Yiddish-German word that connotes a spiritual leader and master of theology in the Hasidic movement.

Hasidic Jews refer to the leaders of different Hasidic dynasties as rebbes.

A rebbe is required to be a *tzaddik*, or righteous man, in the eyes of God.

Hasidic movement

The Hasidic movement began in the eighteenth century in Eastern Europe, and consequently, much of their distinctive dress and hairstyle are based on clothes worn by the nobility of eighteenth-century Poland and other places in Europe.



Hasidic Jews

Some men wear traditional dress only on the Sabbath and holy days, but others dress in this way every day.



Payos

Atop either black or very dark clothing, the most strikingly visible part of male dress which sets them apart from others is their hair, worn in long side curls, called *payos*, which hang conspicuously in front of the ears, though the rest of the hair may be cut short.



the Jewish rule is that a man must not cut or trim his hair within a special facial region. The boundaries of this prohibited zone are on each side of the face - roughly between the middle of the ear and the eye, below a bone which runs horizontally across there. Many Orthodox Jews simply do not trim their sideburns above this line. Other Jews - primarily Hasidic ones - go further with this tradition. They do not trim or cut their hair here at all. Rather, they allow it to grow indefinitely. The result is long sidecurls that visibly extend downward.

The bone which delineates the forbidden boundary is called the Zygomatic Process of the Temporal Bone. According to Jewish law, you cannot cut, trim or shave the hair above this bone. The question which Jews are not all unanimous about is: what do you do below this bone. Here are the different possibilities:

- Many religious Jews *will* fully cut or shave their hair below this line. So they will simply have fairly- typical sideburns which do not stand out or attract much attention.

- Then there are some who maintain their hair longer here beyond the line - so it's openly visible - but they trim it or cut it occasionally.

- Finally, most of the strictest Ultra-Orthodox Hasidic Jews do not *ever* cut their hair below the line. Therefore, they have conspicuous, pronounced bunches of hair that protrude here.

Streimel

All males are required to wear a head covering to show respect for God, a reminder that there is a creator, a higher power, above humans.

Biber (Beaver) hats can be smooth or textured and high or flat. This style is considered a “flat style” for Hasidic weekday wear,

In Hasidic communities, a fur-trimmed hat called a *streimel* is common.



APPEARANCE

Though the *shtreimel* once featured a fur border six centimeters high, current models can reach a height of twenty centimeters.



The *shtreimel* worn by Rozhiner Hasidic masters has a velvet crown poking up at its center

Color: Brown

WORN BY

Married men in Hasidic sects originating in Ukraine, Russia, Galicia, Hungary, and Romania wear a *shtreimel* on Sabbaths and festivals. Also worn by non-Hasidic Jerusalemites known as Perushim, whose ancestors arrived from Europe in the 18th century

Within certain Hasidic sects, including Jerusalem's extreme Toldot Aharon community, males wear a *shtreimel* from the age of bar mitzva

Shtreimel



SOURCE

Primarily Canadian or Russian sobel, but also gray fox, stone marten, or European marten and mink



HOW MUCH?

From \$760 for a boy's *shtreimel* to \$6,500 for a Canadian sobel pelt version

Rebbes

The Hasidic top-ranking religious leaders clothing consists of the most highly valorized signs of the men's dress code.

Individuals who are not *rebbe* but consistently display intense religious observance, can gradual with a process can be invited by the *rebbe* to wear such elaborate clothing to demonstrate their commitment to the faith.

A person who wears extremely Hasidic clothing would be ridiculed if his behaviour were not consistent with his appearance.



Beards

Jewish mystics ascribe esoteric significance to the beard, and, according to Scripture, it is forbidden to cut the corners of a man's beard.

Among European Jews, the emphasis shifted from the obligation to wear a beard to the prohibition of shaving.

However, it is permitted to clip the beard using scissors or an electric shaver with two cutting edges.



(This is the Chabad Rebbe, a Hasidic rabbi, donning a black hat and jacket with a long beard. This style of dress is very common among Hasidic and other ultra-Orthodox rabbis.)

Women and Modesty

In general, within Judaism, both men and women are advised to dress modestly and both must cover their heads in the synagogue and when in prayer in reverence for God.

The expectation for women is only that they dress modestly, adhering to certain laws.

“All her glory shall be within, and she is to conceal herself from every man in the world in every manner possible. Her eyes shall always be cast down and her speech moderate. Not even the smallest part of her body shall be exposed, so that no man will come to sin through what he sees...”

Jewish Bride

A Jewish bride often wears white, but it is not obligatory.

Before the ceremony, the bride is veiled in remembrance of Rebecca, who veiled her face when she was brought to Isaac to be his wife.

The white wedding dress signifies purity and her new beginning as a married woman.



Here the veil is a symbol of the modesty, takes the idea that it doesn't matter the fact of having physical beauty.

Laws

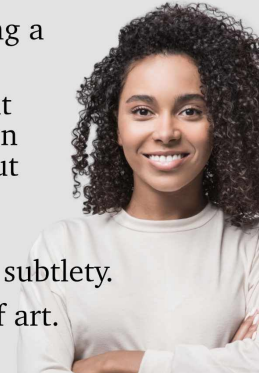
Laws concerning clothing and appearance derive from two sources:

- Those requirements specified in the Torah itself
- Or varying written traditions which have defined the practice of Jewish women through generations by means of community interpretation.

Tzniut

צניעות

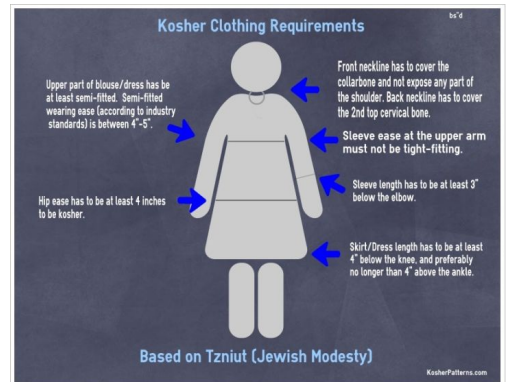
- 1 The act of having a private life.
- 2 A sensitivity that discerns between what belongs out there and what stays inside.
- 3 Beauty through subtlety.
- 4 Life as a form of art.



Tzniuth

The appropriate clothing for women in Hasidic law is inseparably bound to modesty, or *tzniuth*, and applies to women of all ages.

Modesty in dress leads to women being restricted from wearing any form of trousers or slacks in some communities.



There has been a long history of the interpretive struggle to construct an appropriate embodied representation of *tzniuth* and Hasidic womanhood.

Women

Just as a Torah-observant man's skullcap or hat is required to cover his head, a woman's head covering (wig, hat, scarf or any combination of the three) is believed to serve the same purpose.

While single women and girls may leave their hair uncovered, married (and formerly married) women are required to cover their hair entirely:



What is the particular mark of the married woman's modesty? She covers not only her body, but the hair of her head as well. A woman's hair is lovely. Reserved for her husband's eyes, her loveliness is sacred, in keeping with the laws of modesty.

The long hair of a woman is considered erotic, a theme found throughout various religions, across cultures, and even in Hollywood movies, a universal feature which commonly depicts loose flowing hair as being the mark of the loose woman.

In Judaism, just as in many other religions, hair is considered to be a very sensual part of a woman's body; it is a symbol of her 'libidinal energies'.

Certainly, long, abundant hair allowed to fall loosely has

always been depicted as a sign that a woman is as loose in her morals as the hair falling down her back.

Hollywood has made much of this idea. Some rabbis compare the exposure of a married woman's hair to the exposure of her private parts.

Schpitzel

In the Middle Ages, married women cut or shaved off their hair, covering their heads with kerchiefs.

Some women wore, on the forehead, a facsimile silk band known as a *schpitzel* (brown pleated material) or front piece as a substitute for the colour of their hair.

At the end of the eighteenth century, some Jewish women began wearing wigs as their primary manifestation of head covering.



The Torah-observant Jewish man's skullcap or hat covers his head, while a woman's head covering, whether it is a wig (*sheytl*), hat, scarf (*tikhi*) or any combination of the three, is believed to serve the same purpose in addition to serving as a symbol of modesty and marriage.

Head coverings, particularly those that reveal no natural hair whatsoever, are the quintessential symbol of Hasidic womanhood, followed by leg coverings and appropriate length of skirt.

Women's head coverings within Hasidic Judaism symbolically display a hair hierarchy of orthodox

modesty, from those deemed 'most religious' to those deemed 'least religious': absolute absence of any display of hair is at the top of the category of 'most religious'.

The woman who wishes to show that she is extremely religious has her hair completely hidden under a *tikh*

Hair

Hasidic women make every effort to follow this ordinance for hair covering, and in some Hungarian sects, women either shave their heads completely or closely crop their hair following the wedding ceremony, ensuring that not one hair will be seen even unintentionally.

Unorthodox

Strictly speaking, the Torah forbids a married woman to appear in public without her hair covered, and when taken literally, if a woman disobeys this ordinance, her husband has grounds for divorce and her dowry is forfeited, as her hair is supposed to be reserved for her husband's eyes only.

Following this is hair covered by the *tikhel* but with the addition of a *schpitzel*, a piece of brown pleated material that feigns the appearance of hair.

A 100 percent synthetic hair wig demonstrates a more religious woman than one who wears 50 per cent synthetic hair; and a woman who wears a wig made of human hair is considered to be much less religious than the aforementioned.

They are, however, all religious because their natural hair is covered by a wig.

Wigs that look like natural hair are viewed with suspicion.

Orthodox, non-Orthodox and Hasidic practices

While the wearing of the wig became popular for a time with all Jewish women, it now marks the women of the Orthodox Jewish community, when it is worn as a head covering rather than a fashion statement.

Most American Jewish women no longer wear a head covering of any kind.

According to Jewish law, *ervah* is the term that implies erotic stimulus, and a woman's hair, along with several other parts of a woman's body, is *ervah*.

Other areas include her neck (below and including the collar bone), her arms (the upper arms, including the elbow) and her legs (the thighs, including the knees).

One *halakhah* states that it is a serious transgression for an observant Jewish woman, through clothing or appearance, to follow the ways of the non-Jew or nonobservant Jew.

Present-day Hasidism is a **sub-group within ultra-Orthodox ("Haredi") Judaism**, and is noted for its religious and social conservatism and social seclusion. Its members adhere closely both to Orthodox Jewish practice – with the movement's own unique emphases – and the traditions of Eastern European Jews.

Modesty

The *sheytl* and *tikhel* have become the symbol of the Torah-observant woman, both the traditional Orthodox woman and the Hasidic woman.

To be truly Hasidic, one should not desire fashionable dress.



<https://www.vogue.com/article/orthodox-judaism-fashion-laws-of-modesty>

“The more my modesty causes others to look askance at my clothes, the more modest I want to dress.”

Today, American modern Orthodox Jews take a different approach to dress

Young Jewish adults might demonstrate their Jewish identity in somewhat rebellious ways, transforming Jewishness 'from a religious and historical heritage into an ethnic identity that is hip, sexy, and cheeky'.



The rapper Shyne at the Western Wall in Jerusalem. "My entire life screams that I have a Jewish neshama," he said, using the Hebrew word for soul.



Jewish clothing, 'expresses unresolved yet open-ended conversations about Jewish identity'.

The 'New Jew Cool', a 'hip-hop style of Jewishness', is one of the latest to enter this conversation.

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Shoes

The traditional non-leather shoes worn at Yom Kippur might appear as canvas sneakers or colourful plastic Crocs, and women may be seen in the synagogue in previously forbidden pantsuits or slacks or even hot pants and miniskirts.



Yarmulkes

North American pop culture has influenced styles of yarmulkes, and there are names that show this new trend such as 'KoolKipah', 'Lids for Yids', and character names from pop culture.

Modern Orthodox Jews tend to wear small, colourful knitted or suede yarmulkes, often fastening them on with a bobby pin or a 'kippah clip'.



Even the placing of the yarmulke on the head conveys meaning: the more tradition oriented place it more toward the front of the head, whereas the more liberal wearer places it toward the back of the head.

Women and Prayer Shawl

Women have asserted their right to wear fringed prayer shawls in the synagogue, demonstrating both their commitment to Judaism as well as feminism.



Women In Prayer Shawls Detained At Judaism's Holiest Site
Western Wall in Jerusalem - 2013

Prayer shawls that women wear might be 'made from silk, hand painted with pastel colors' and often display images of flowers.

A woman might also personalize her prayer shawl, having it made from a wedding dress or a deceased relative's neckties.

Bat Mitzvah and Bar Mitzvah

In the twentieth century, girls began to be included in the ritual of maturity that was previously only a celebration for boys.

Some of the more Orthodox communities still reject this celebration for girls however.



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For the important rituals of circumcision (the *bris*), merchants now offer special *bris* garments that allow for circumcision to be performed on boys with less hindrance from clothing.

Instead of the trousers normally worn, the white suit tops sit atop a skirt-like lower half.

No prescribed dress is worn by the girls.

Jewish Death practices

While mourning practices are extensive within Judaism to show respect for the dead and to comfort the living, death is regarded as a natural process and a part of God's plan.

The corpse is thoroughly cleaned and wrapped in a simple, plain linen shroud, and may also be clothed in the deceased person's *tallit*, the *tzitzit* having been removed beforehand.

Traditionally, Jewish corpses do not generally undergo embalming or cosmetic restoration, although some Jewish families may select these procedures.

When a person dies, the eyes are closed, the body is laid out and covered, and someone keeps vigilance over the body until burial.

A window in the room where the deceased passed away is usually opened so that the *neshamah* (soul) can escape as soon as possible.

The presence of a dead body is considered a source of ritual impurity, so anyone who has been in the presence of a corpse must wash their hands before entering a home whether or not they have physically touched the body.

The body is not embalmed, must not be cremated and is never displayed in an open casket, something which is considered disrespectful.

At the appropriate time, it is placed in a plain and simple coffin, ready for burial in the earth.

Keriah

The ritual of *Keriah* (tearing one's garments) is performed by mourners either before the chapel service or at the graveside service, as a display of separation or immediately upon hearing of the death of a loved one.

It represents the tear in your heart when losing a loved one. It is a way to show outwardly that you are in mourning.

The mourner may wear a black ribbon on their clothes.



Certain practices are carried out, such as covering all the mirrors in the house, refraining from wearing leather shoes, avoiding washing clothes or wearing new clothes, and avoiding bathing, shaving and cutting the hair or nails.

In Judaism, there are five stages of mourning that last a year in total. Sitting shiva is the third stage; after the initial mourning and burial, shiva is the time where mourners sit in their homes as visitors come to give comfort (the fourth stage is *sheloshim*, which is 30 days after the deceased has passed. It is often commemorated with a public memorial service outside of the home. The fifth and final stage is the *yahrzeit*, where the mourner commemorates the death of a loved one after a year). *Shiva* is the Hebrew word for seven, because this period of mourning lasts a full week. Only immediate family members are required to sit shiva — a child, a parent, a sibling or a spouse.

Jewelry

Bracelets, more often worn by women, but also by men, might show specifically Jewish symbols such as the *Chai*, the *hamsa*, and the Star of David, among others.

The Star of David, or the *Magen David*, is a major symbol which figures on clothes as well as jewelry.



A Jewish toast is *l'chayim* ('to existence').

An entire symbol such as the *Chai* might be made of crushed opals, set in gold, on a gold chain and worn as a pendant.

Chai

The *Chai* is from the Hebrew related word *chaya*, meaning 'life' or 'living thing', a combination of the two Hebrew letters *Cheit* and *Yod*.

It reflects Judaism's focus on the importance of life.



Hamsa

The *hamsa* is a stylized hand with the thumb and little finger pointing upward showing the five digits, said to represent, for Jews, the five books comprising the Torah.

It is an ancient Middle Eastern amulet symbolizing the Hand of God and can be found in many faiths throughout the Middle East and Africa to symbolize protection, happiness, health and good fortune.

Hamsa



It is also called the Hand of Miriam, named for the sister of Moses. Arab culture refers to this symbol as the Hand of Fatima.

The *hamsa* hand is a symbol that is used in both Judaism and Islam.

Bracelets that are shipped throughout the world from Israel and other places via the Internet include a gold plate or silver *Chai* attached to a black leather cord, a sparkling *hamsa* on a gold-plate disc attached to a red leather cord, or a leather cord with multiple symbolic charms such as a pair of shoes, a *hamsa*, a peace symbol or a heart.

Ben Porat Yosef

A *Ben Porat Yosef* - words that signify a prayer against the evil eye

Some with the letters ALAD on one side of a rectangular shape, often in gold or silver, and the words *Ben Porat Yosef* on the other side.



Gems such as turquoise, crystal, diamonds and sapphires, among others, might be inlaid on any jewellery.

Wedding rings

Gold or silver wedding rings might bear Hebrew phrases from the Song of Songs, such as, 'I am to My Beloved as He is Mine'



Mezuzah pendants

Biblical motifs such as the Mezuzah, the ancient Jewish symbol for good luck and Jewish identity, and the words *El-Shadai* (God all mighty) from Deuteronomy.

It refers to the words that are often written on house doorposts or gates as a reminder of God's presence.



Kabbalist Tree of Life

The Kabbalist Tree of Life, a symbol of the Book of Creation has ten attributes and the twenty-two letters combining to form the thirty-two 'paths of secret wisdom'.



Like jewellery in all traditions there are a multitude of combinations of symbols and materials that are used.