

Jerusalem peak shaving

According to halacha (Jewish religious law), married Jewish women are expected to cover their hair when in the presence of men other than their husband or close family members. Such covering is common practice among Orthodox Jewish women.

Different kinds of head coverings are used, among them the mitpa'at or tichel (headscarf), shpitzel, snood, hat, beret, fall, bonnet, veil, headscarf, bandana, and sheitel (wig). The most common head coverings in the Haredi community are headscarves in the form of the tichel and snood, though some wear hats, berets or sheitels; the tichel and snood remain the historic and universally accepted rabbinical standard for observant Jewish women.¹ The headscarves can be tied in a number of ways, depending on how casually the wearer is dressed.

Covering the hair is part of the modesty-related dress standard called tzniut.

According to Jewish religious law (halacha), a woman must cover her hair after marriage.²³ The requirement applies in the presence of any men other than her husband, son, father, grandson, grandfather, or brother,⁴ though a minority opinion allows uncovering hair within one's home even in the presence of unrelated men.⁵

The obligation to cover hair applies in public areas.⁵ In a private home, some sources recommend hair covering (even in the absence of unrelated men), but the consensus is that hair may be uncovered if no unrelated men are present.⁴

The consensus is that all or most of the hair must be covered.⁶ Some sources rule that every single hair must be covered,⁷ but many others permit a small amount of hair (each source defines the amount differently) to emerge from the head-covering.⁸⁶

Various reasons have been suggested for this head-covering, among them:

Numbers 5:18¹⁰ requires, as part of the sotah ritual, that a married woman's head be made parua (a word which has been understood to mean "uncovered" or "with loose hair"),¹¹ suggesting that, normally, her hair is not parua. According to the Talmud, this indicates that the Torah prohibits married women in general from appearing parua in public.¹²¹³

The Zohar, a commentary on the Hebrew Scriptures and the primary source of the beliefs of Kabbalah, also describes the mystical importance of women making sure to not expose their hair. The parashat Naso 125b-126b²⁰ suggests that a woman who strictly obeys head covering traditions will reap many blessings for her husband and children.

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In Yemen, unmarried girls covered their hair like their Muslim peers; however, upon Yemeni Jews' emigration to Israel and other places, this custom has been abandoned. Aharon Roth praised this custom; Magen Avraham ruled that while unmarried women need not cover their hair, they must braid it so that it is not disheveled; This ruling is practiced in some Hasidic communities nowadays;

When a woman gets married, opinions differ regarding when exactly she must begin covering her head: after betrothal (rare today), after the chuppah ceremony, after yichud, or only after the couple has spent a night together; Even according to the more stringent opinions, the bridal veil (which partly covers the hair) may be considered sufficient cover for the remainder of the ceremony;

Conservative and Reform Judaism do not generally require women to wear head coverings. Some more traditional Conservative synagogues may ask that married women cover their heads during services. However, some more liberal Conservative synagogues suggest that women, married or not, wear head-coverings similar to those worn by men (the kippah/yarmulke); and some require it (or require it only for women receiving honors or leading services from the bimah) - not for modesty, but as a feminist gesture of egalitarianism;

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Email: energystorage2000@gmail.com

WhatsApp: 8613816583346

