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THE DRESS SYSTEM OF TRADITIONAL JEWRY

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Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of
Requirements for Ordination

Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion
Graduate Rabbinic Program
New York, New York

March 27, 1987

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This thesis sprang from an amusing day dream on a Jerusalem street three years ago. I am thankful to friends and family whose enthusiastic interest has encouraged me to transform that dream into the reality of print. My gratitude extends especially to Dr. Lawrence Hoffman, my thesis advisor, whose teaching has expanded my intellectual horizons, giving me new tools and insights with which to understand and to experience the world; to Daniel Mandil, whose meticulous editing worked this thesis into its present form; and to my parents, whose love and support has allowed me to follow my heart.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

This thesis delineates the traditional Jewish dress system as a key semiotic entry into the belief and relational structure of Jewry. The subject matter is visual; the data is textual. A semiotic analysis of the traditional Jewish dress system, requiring a synthesis of visual and textual information, examines the visual descriptions, interpretive devices, and normative conclusions supplied by the rabbinic texts.[1]

Introducing the study is an analysis of the myth of the Fall, the prologue to traditional Jewry's dress practices. In Paradise, living in ignorance, Adam and Eve are nude. Acquiring the knowledge of good and evil, they discover their nakedness, clothe themselves and enter the commandment system. Allegiance to the system is affirmed through clothing. While remaining nude was symbolic of belonging in Paradise, donning specified garments in the human world metonymically assures life in the Paradise of the world-to-come.

Chapter Two leaves the realm of myth and enters the

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[1]Is it justified to research a visual source without consulting actual representations of that chosen visual material? Pictoral sources would corroborate the evidence given in the text; it would present in addition, a web of unanswerable questions: who is being depicted--Jew or non-Jew? What motivates the artist to render the subjects in such fashions--to elevate the comissioner's status or to represent reality? My purpose is not to see what people wore when, but to understand the function of dress within Jewish culture. While pictoral sources would corroborate whether the prescribed styles in the literature were or were not worn, it is the written references to dress which supply the critical rationale for the various dress modes.

world of theory by presenting a general abstract account of the nature of a dress system. Analyzing a dress system into its constituent elements of function, rules, and form, the chapter discusses possible functions of a dress system and examines the interrelation of these constituent elements.

Chapter Three applies the abstract model presented in the preceeding chapter to traditional Judaism. It argues that tzniyut is the central function of the Jewish dress system and proceeds to elaborate the concept of tzniyut as function into three distinct principles of differentiation: the principles of national status, gender status, and personal status.

Chapter Four proceeds with the application of the abstract model of a dress system by examining the manner in which the elaborated functions presented in Chapter Three are refracted through the rules of the Jewish dress system to generate particular formal features of that system. These forms fall into four distint categories: color, material, garment, and hair. Chapter Four, then, completes the abstract elaboration of the Jewish dress system.

Developing the formal and functional analysis of hair begun in Chapter Four, Chapter Five links this analysis to more general remarks about the systemic relations among beauty, sexuality, tzniyut, and study of Torah in the Jewish dress system. It thus offers a hypothesis about the fundamental purpose of the dress system in Jewish culture.

Having now built up a full elaboration of the Jewish dress system by examining the concepts of function, rule, form, and systemic purpose, Chapters Six and Seven offer two modern case studies of the dress system: Eastern European Jewry of the nineteenth century and the contemporary American ultra-Orthodox community.[2] These chapters conclude that modernity and the increasing permeability of the boundary between the secular and the religious have strained the traditional Jewish dress system in different, and seemingly contradictory ways.

The thesis concludes that the Jewish dress system is a construct of two systems: one directed to men, one to women. Men's dress regulations are based both on commandment and the guidelines of tzniyut. Women, not obligated to observe positive commandments, are uniquely guided by the principle of tzniyut. Men thereby preeminently align themselves with

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[2]The chronological sweep of the thesis--from Genesis to Twentieth Century Brooklyn--poses an obvious query. If the structure of the dress system remains consistent and systemically intact from one generation to the next, how does one account for periodic permutations in style?

The Saussaurian distinction between langue and parole is helpful here. Each generation interprets the system's specifications. The "parole," the particular speech of one time, one context, is the mode of dress that one generation wears to fulfill the system's dictates. While the outfit may differ from preceeding generations or one that will be worn in the future, it nevertheless is an adumbration of the "langue," the entire language of the culture. Thus, a diachronic analysis would uncover the parole--the differences in specific styles that arise from one period to another. However, for an analysis of the langue--what the system is, why it is, how it functions--the temporal deviations need only be a tangential focus.

God and Torah by following the laws; women do so by observing tzniyut. As a result, women both secure men's ability to uphold the Torah by protecting them from sexual distraction and preserve the survival of a Torah-based culture by guiding themselves by a system which uniquely emphasizes their procreative capacities. A legal (commandment) system is thus kept functioning by the non-regulated system of tzniyut.

Ernst Cassirer suggests that the entire organism is symbolically present in each of its part.[3] I focus on dress as one aspect of the entire organism of traditional Jewry. Through this endeavor, I hope to glimpse not only what traditional Jews think but how they think it as well.

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[3]2Ernst Cassirer, The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms, vol. 2, trans. Ralph Manheim (New Haven: Yale University Press), 1955, p. 49. see Cassirer, Language and Myth, trans., Susanne K. Langer, (New York: Dover Publications), 1953, p. 92.

I. THE GENESIS OF CLOTHING

Myth. Symbol. Ritual. Time. These four concepts construct the ideational framework for the religious society. A myth is the human attempt in word and symbol to formulate an understanding of the general order of existence. A symbol is a vehicle for conception, a signifier of meaning based on an abstraction from experience.[4] Religious symbols connote the myth. They intimate a system of "historically transmitted patterns of meanings" which reveal the way in which people communicate, perpetuate, and develop their understanding of the world.[5]

The religious system communicates the myth's message through ritual. Through these repeated ceremonial acts such as the recitation of the Passover story or the lighting of sabbath candles, the culture's ethos and worldview align. In the religious society,

> religious belief and ritual confront and mutually confirm one another; the ethos [the moral and aesthetic aspects of a culture] is made intellectually reasonable by being shown to represent a way of life implied by the actual state of affairs which the world view [the cognitive, existential aspects of the culture] describes, and the world view is made emotionally acceptable by being presented as an image of an actual state of affairs of which such a way of life is an authentic expression.[6]

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[4]Clifford Geertz, The Interpretation of Cultures, (New York: Basic Books, Inc.), 1973, p. 126.

[5]ibid., p. 89.

[6]ibid., p. 126-7.

Every culture boasts a myriad of rituals and myths. Some historians of religion contend that harbored within each ritual and each myth is a paradigmatic source: the myth of origin. Mircea Eliade maintains that the primordial myth forms the basis for all myths.

> The myth . . . is the history of what took place in illo tempore, the recital of what the gods or the semidivine beings did at the beginning of time. To tell a myth is to proclaim what happened ab origine. Once told, that is, revealed, the myth becomes apodictic truth; it establishes a truth that is absolute.[7]

In time, the origin myth branches out like an unkempt tree. It undergoes various transmutations, sprouting unabated into variations. Yet the basic meaning of the myth remains within its structure.

In Eliade's metaphor, ritual transports the participant back in illo tempore, "lost time," to the cosmogonic moment preceding the historical, linear rendering of reality. By repeating the origin myth through ritual, a new reality takes shape. The participant returns to non-time and becomes identified with the divine. By entering in illo tempore in the ritual reenactment of the myth, human beings escape temporality and the linear experience of time. They become part of a comprehensive reality.

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[7]Mircea Eliade, The Sacred and The Profane: The Nature of Religion, trans. Wilard R. Trask, (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc.), 1959, p. 95.

I: The Fall from Eden

Genesis 2:25 - 3:19 functions as such an origin myth. Contained within the text are both the literal theme of the exit from Paradise and the metaphoric illumination of traditional Jewry's social and ideational structure.

Genesis 2:25 - 3:19

> The two of them were [nude], the man and his wife, yet they felt no shame.
>
> Now the serpent was the sliest of all the wild creatures that God had made. Said he to the woman, "Even though God told you not to eat of any tree in the garden . . ." The woman interrupted the serpent, "But we may eat of the trees in the garden! It is only about the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden that God did say, 'Do not eat of it or so much as touch it, lest you die!'" But the serpent said to the woman, "You are not going to die. No, God well knows that the moment you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be the same as God in telling good from bad."
>
> When the woman saw that the tree was good for eating and a delight to the eye, and that the tree was attractive as a means to wisdom, she took of its fruit and ate; and she gave some to her husband and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened and they discovered that they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.
>
> They heard the sound of God as he was walking in the garden at the breezy time of day; and the man and his wife hid from God among the trees of the garden.
>
> God called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?" He answered, "I heard the sound of you in the garden; but I was afraid because I was naked, so I hid." He asked, "Who told you that you were naked? Did you, then, taste of the tree from which

I had forbidden you to eat?" The man replied, "The woman whom you put by my side--it was she who gave me of that tree, and I ate."

God said to the woman, "How could you do such a thing?" The woman replied, "The serpent tricked me, so I ate."

God said to the serpent:

"Because you did this,
Banned shall you be from all cattle
And all wild creatures!
On your belly shall you crawl
And on dirt shall you feed
All the days of your life.

I will plant enmity between you and the woman,
and between your offspring and hers;
They shall strike at your head,
And you shall strike at their heel."

To the woman he said:

"I will make intense
Your pangs in childbearing.
In pain shall you bear children;
Yet your urge shall be for your husband,
And he shall be your master."

To the man he said: "Because you listened to your wife and ate of the tree from which I had forbidden you to eat,

Condemned be the soil on your account!
In anguish shall you eat of it
All the days of your life.
Thorns and thistles
Shall it bring forth for you,
As you feed on the grasses of the field.
By the sweat of your face
Shall you earn your bread,
Until you return to the ground,
For from it you were taken:
For dust you are
And to dust you shall return!"

The man named his wife Eve, because she was the mother of all the living. And God made shirts of skins for the man and his wife, and clothed them.

God said, "Now that the man has become like one of

skins for the man and his wife, and clothed them.

God said, "Now that the man has become like one of us in discerning good from bad, what if he should put out his hand and taste also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever!" So God banished him from the garden of Eden, to till the soil from which he was taken. Having expelled the man, he stationed east of the garden of Eden the cherubim and the fiery revolving sword, to guard the way to the tree of life.[8]

Eden is a society based on ignorance. God forbids the man and the woman to eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil on pain of death.[9] Because this knowledge is reserved for God, Adam and Eve must remain ignorant. In this system, there is no need for a litany of rules. Without the ability or need to discern good from bad, the couple is amoral and their world is without morality. There is only one rule placed upon the couple. By obeying this rule, they preserve the system of ignorance and remain loyal to its structure. It is a structure that links God and man through their common immortality.

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[8]Gen. 2:16-17; 1:25 - 3:19. All translations of Genesis are from E.A. Speiser, Genesis: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary by E.A. Speiser, The Anchor Bible, (New York: Double Day & Company) 1979. I have translated עֵרוֹם in its first appearance as 'nude' and in its second, as 'naked.' See infra p. 7-9. Speiser uses 'God Yahweh' to translate יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים and 'God' to translate אֱלֹהִים. I have used 'God' in both instances.

[9]Gen. 2:17.

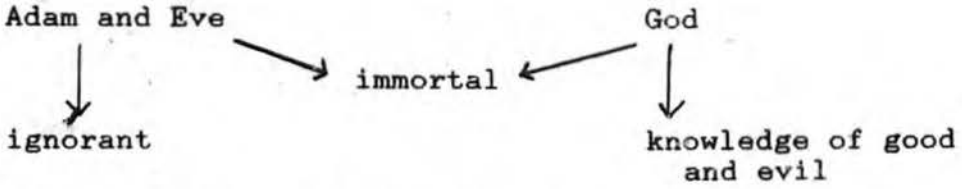
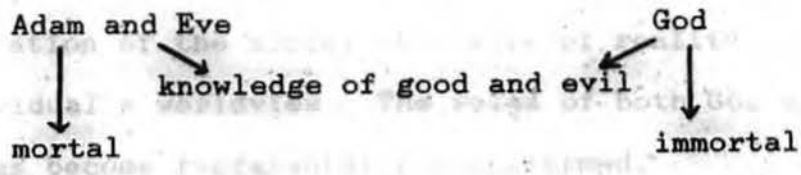


Diagram 1: The System of Ignorance[10]

This system of ignorance, however, is not permanent. The serpent betrays the fragility of its foundation to Eve: "God well knows that the moment you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be the same as God in telling good from bad."[11]

Eating from the tree of knowledge destroyed the system of ignorance. A new system, the system of rules, is imposed from above. In this system, God and Adam and Eve are linked through their common knowledge of good and evil. However the link is incomplete both because the couple's knowledge is incomplete and because their ability to live a good life is incomplete.



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[10]In Gen. 3:22, God's fear that Adam and Eve may eat of the tree of life and live forever seems to indicate that they are not immortal, a conclusion inconsistent with the dominant tone of the story.

[11]Gen. 3:5.

The tree of knowledge of good and evil bestows upon those who partake of its fruit the ability to make moral judgments. With the accession of this new system of knowledge, Adam and Eve recast their roles, thereby transforming God's position as well.

Prior to the fall, God, the Creator of the universe, is the formulator of a one-rule system--the dictate being to remain ignorant. The fall causes God to become the promulgator of a system of many rules--the governing principle of the system being to do what is permitted and to refrain from doing what is forbidden. This is the commandment system (later articulated at Sinai). God, the one who commands, frames the commandments. Human beings, formerly ignorant of morality, now acquire a moral and legal acuity with which to obey the commandments.

II: The Fall and Costume

The transition from ignorance to knowledge is an alteration of the social structure of reality and the individual's worldview. The roles of both God and human beings become fundamentally transformed.

Costume plays a telling role in delineating the scope of this transition. The form and function of costume before and after the fall is symbolic of this shift in ethos. After the fall from Paradise, costume becomes a signifier of the

meaning of the new structure, for clothing is leagally regulated, causing proper dressing to reflect allegiance to the religion's dictates.

In the Genesis myth, both nudity and dress reflect a cultural ethos. Both are, in this sense, costumes.[12] In Eden, nudity presents reality to the observer. It declares Adam and Eve's status as innocent, ignorant, and pure. Their nudity reflects the quality of paradisiacal reality All appears as it was first created. There is no illusion, no artifice, only the simple state of being. Once they eat the fruit of the tree, their eyes open. They discover they are naked. They are no longer nude--living as they were created in simple ignorance of their physical appearance. With the taste of the fruit, they become naked, as if stripped of their clothes for the first time. Henceforth nudity will not suffice as their costume. They will require clothes beyond their nudity to cover what is now not nudity but nakedness.

The narrative begins with a description of the archetypal couple: "The two of them were nude, the man and his wife, yet they felt no shame." Two qualities define their characters to the reader: they are nude and without shame. Upon eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge, they discover they are naked. Presumably, a change in one

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[12]Costume is the dress characteristic of a particular period, country, or class.

descriptive element causes a change in the other. They now feel shame.

Awareness of sexual differentiation accompanies moral discernment. Adam and Eve perceive that their naked state is wrong. Their first cognizant act is to cover up their nakedness. They attempt to regain the bliss of their former state by fabricating a new costume to fulfill the same function as the old. They adorn themselves in order to blot out their physical differences. They put on a costume of deception. Perhaps clad in leaves, they will be able to reject their moral acuity, to place outside the Garden's gate all they now perceive.

III: Dress and the Future Paradise

What begins as an attempt to defy the ability to discern becomes in the new scheme a method to heighten those differences. Dress becomes a source for moral discernment; to dress according to divine dictate is to show allegiance to God's system. By adhering to the dress rules, one offers promise that this time human loyalty will not falter. The daily repeated act of dress is a ritual: upholders of the system, by dressing according to God's dictate, align themselves with the divine. As a result, they sacralize their everyday world.

An explication of this transformation requires a return

to the four concepts introduced at the beginning of this chapter: symbol, myth, ritual, time. Symbols combine to form myths; myths are reenacted as rituals. Performance of the ritual leads participants out of time, in illo tempore. Humankind attempts to regain access to the divine through the repetition of ritual and myth.

In the myth of the fall, Adam and Eve find that they cannot return to Eden. The system has changed. The new system of rules is one in which people have the ability to differentiate between right and wrong. In the system of rules, the operative myth is not the primordial creation account, but the potential entrance into a future paradise. The system of rules marks the departure from the first paradise and the way into the second. What was true in Adam and Eve's paradise, becomes untrue in the historical world. Adam and Eve are ignorant and immortal. Outside of paradise, they possess knowledge and are mortal. Yet in the future paradise, the world-to-come, again people shall become immortal and free of the need for morality.

Paradise in the Genesis myth and the world-to-come mirror one another. They fuse the human and divine realms. Both are ahistorical, without beginning or ending, without birth or death, and without good or evil.

The two versions of paradise represent different points in time. Eden belongs to the past. The world to come is of the future. Yet the two are linked in the traditional

Jewish mind because 'gan eden' refers both to the garden of Eden of Adam and Eve and the garden of Eden which people enter after death.

> The Garden of Eden was the abode of the first man and woman, and the souls of all must pass through it after death, before their final destination.[13]

In Eden, Adam and Eve may eat of the tree of life.

> And out of the ground God caused to grow various trees that were a delight to the eye and good for eating, with the tree of life in the middle of the garden and the tree of knowledge of good and bad. . . . And God Yahweh commanded the man, saying, "You are free to eat of any tree of the garden, except only the tree of knowledge of good and bad, of which you are not to eat.[14]

Before the fall, the couple, like God, is immortal. But to remain so, they may not eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Only God has the capacity for moral judgment. After the fall a reversal occurs. Both we and God possess moral judgment. But now, we lose our immortality. Our mental acuity continues to be sustained by the nourishment from the tree of knowledge. But now the tree of [immortal] life is no longer offered to us.

> Now the man has become like one of us in discerning good from bad, what if he should put out his hand and taste also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever! So God Yahweh banished

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[13]Ber. 8a. I. Epstein, ed., The Babylonian Talmud, (London: The Soncino Press), 1952 [hereinafter, all talmudic translations have been taken from this source unless otherwise specified.].

[14]Gen. 2:9; 2:16.

him from the garden of Eden . . [15]

We are denied its sustenance. Only God now is immortal.

Adam and Eve are tempted to gain knowledge. We are tempted to gain immortality. Adam and Eve obtain knowledge through eating from the tree of knowledge of good and bad. We obtain immortality by eating from the tree of life: the Torah.

The Torah is our tree of life:

> She is a tree of life to those who lay hold on her: and happy are those who hold her fast. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. Length of days is in her right hand, and in her left hand are riches and honor.[16]

By "eating" from the tree of life, by studying, observing the words of the Torah, we shall become immortal. Whereas in Eden immortality would have been attained through the simple act of eating from the tree, in the historical world, immortality is achieved through the act of obeying the Torah's precepts. The Torah houses the system of rules. The Jewish worldview asserts that by performing the commandments, one gains immortality, forever dwelling in the hereafter.

> R. Tarfon said: "Those who occupy themselves with study of Torah [will receive] the full reward for righteousness in the hereafter.[17]

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[15]Gen. 2:22.

[16]Proverbs 3:18, 3:17, 3:16. All following biblical traslations are from The Holy Scriptures, (Koren Publishers: Jerusalem), 1982

[17]Pirke Avot 2:16.

In the first system, Adam and Eve remain in paradise by obeying God's rule. In the second, one gains access to paradise by obeying the system of many rules. The two schemes parallel one another: obedience to the system is rewarded with existence in paradise.

The myth of the world to come is conveyed through ritual: the observance of the commandments. The symbols that convey the myth and imbue the rituals with meaning are the commandments themselves. They proffer the reward of entrance into the non-time of the world-to-come.

Dress, regulated by the commandments, constitutes such a unity of myth, ritual and symbol. Unlike other rituals, however, that occupy discrete periods of time, clothing is worn at all times. It is the way people continuously display their allegiance to the system of rules.

Dress reflects personal conduct. It is a sign of one's loyalty to the system. In one Talmudic passage we find:

> The wise in the time to come will rise [apparelled] in their own clothes. [This is deduced] a minori ad majus from a grain of wheat. If a grain of wheat that is buried naked sprouts up with many coverings how much more so the just who are buried in their shrouds. [18]

The Genesis myth of the Fall, then, is at the root of the dress system of traditional Jewry. The myth details the transition from one system of social structure to another.

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[18]Ket. 111b.

The first paradise was a society based on ignorance. Adam and Eve first are nude, symbolic of innocence, without the ability to discern right from wrong. Although nude, they do not notice the differences between them. By eating the fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, they enter the historic world based on rules. They discern the differences between them. They clothe themselves in an attempt to obliterate their difference, to recapture their ignorance, and to return to paradise. When they find that they cannot, clothing becomes a vehicle by which they prove their ability to follow God's rules, ultimately to reenter paradise: the world-to-come.

II. DRESS SYSTEMS

Time obscures the certainty of the origin of dress. Prehistorical archaeological sites reveal an occasional swatch of cloth, a deposit of ochre pigment, a bone needle. Prior to the mid-Paleolithic era, however, there is no such evidence of adornment. Perhaps, it has been suggested, like the chimpanzees in captivity who decorate themselves with rags, strings, and paint, the first humans too adorned themselves.[19]

Whether a society's costume consists of a mere strand of beads or a layering of many garments, dress is ubiquitous throughout the world's cultures. Despite variation in its visage, the cross-cultural phenomenon of dress peeks human curiosity. Without archaeological evidence and written or visual sources, the inquiry as to origin must remain hypothetical at best. To explicate the ubiquity of dress then, we turn from genealogical to instrumental questions.

Art historians commonly articulate the meaning of an object by discussing the interrelationship of form and function. Form refers to the shaping of raw material into an object. Function refers to the intended use of the constructed piece. Utility requires the alliance of form to function. The neck of a water jug, for example, tapers inward to prevent spilling water. The form, the narrowing

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[19]Mary Ellen Roach & Joanne Bubolz Eicher, eds., Dress, Adornment, and the Social Order, (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.), 1965, p.8.

neckline, is the constructional solution to the jug's function as water holder. The wide mouth of a grain bin serves well for the ease of loading and unloading grain that is this container's function. At a different level of abstraction, vessels generally play a particular functional role within a culture different from that played by tools or furniture or music.[20]

Dress[21] may similarly be viewed as a utilitarian mode of art. Like vessels or tools, the myriad cultural forms of dress suggest that each style is patterned to accord with

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[20]The concept of a 'function' is not simple. It varies depending on the level of abstraction used to describe the form of objects. Thus, as furniture, chairs and beds have the same function--one different from the function of vessels like water jugs and grain bins. At another level of abstraction, chairs and beds serve different functions, as do water jugs and grain bins.

In the case of dress, similar issues of abstraction arise. As dress, shoes and hats may have the same function--one different from the function of furniture or vessels. At another level of abstraction, shoes and hats serve different functions in relation to each other or to scarves, for example. To distinguish these levels of abstraction, this thesis will refer to dress's "generic function" in distinguishing it from furniture or vessels and to shoes' "particular function." Where "function" stands alone it refers to the generic function of dress, either generally or as instantiated in a particular type of clothing.

[21]Dress subsumes two categories, the external and the corporeal: the means by which one covers the body and the means of altering the body. External forms refer to the clothing and jewelry one puts on the body. Corporeal forms include various treatment of the skin: cicatrization: scar embellishment; tattooing; painting; mutilation; deformation; and of the hair: plaiting; growing; shaving; cutting; covering. The line between corporeal and external is not sharp. Rings that elongate the neck, earrings that distend the ear seem to fall into both categories.

the costume's generic function. Thus, by examining the forms of a culture's dress mode, one may begin to glean the function of dress within that culture.

The generic functions of dress are threefold:[22]

Decoration
Modesty
Protection

Decoration incorporates the human tendency to beautify the body as a way to attract others and to enhance one's self-esteem. Modesty is the inhibitory impulse to cloak and hide the body. It is directed against social or sexual forms of display, stifling the desire to present the naked body either unclothed or beautifully ornamented. It quells this desire by means of shame.[23] Protection is only a subsidiary benefit to wearing clothes. Clothing is thus analogous to shelters. Like the home, garments protect the body against uncomfortably low or high temperatures and inclement weather. Similarly, clothing formed into armor, shields its wearer against animal or human enemies.[24] However, unlike decoration and modesty, protection is not a universal generic function of clothing. Inhabitants of Tierra del Fuego, for example, remain naked even in damp and

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[22]J.C. Flugel, The Psychology of Clothes, (London: The Hogarth Press Ltd.), 1950, p.50.

[23]ibid., p. 54.

[24]ibid., p. 69.

cold weather.[25] Thus historians of dress generally conclude that protection, while contributory, is only a subsidiary function of dress.[26]

Deciphering the predominance of one function over and above another is problematic. While in one culture a skirt's generic function may be decorative, in another it may be an indicator of modesty; in a third, it may be a form of protection. Aspects of the three functions often coalesce in a culture's dress system; nonetheless, one typically dominates the system. A common costume of primitive peoples is a ring worn around the hips, a clear form or adornment.[27] The American costume of the 1860's emphasized female modesty, as an advertisement from Harper's Bazaar, 1868, illustrates:

The advertisement delineates proper skirt lengths for young girls, revealing a heightened concern over the appearance of

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[25]ibid., p. 16.

[26]ibid.16, op cit., Roach, p. 6; Bernard Rudofsky, The Unfashionable Human Body, (New York: Anchor Press), 1974, p. 40.

[27]op. cit., Rudofsky, p. 122.

skin as the girl grows into womanhood.[28] Peoples in arctic climates wear garments that fit tightly over the entire body, protecting it from the elements.[29]

While clear examples of each of these three generic functions exist, the line between decoration and modesty is often blurred. The individual's desire to decorate herself and the opposing inclination to moderate such displays motivated by shame or shyness places human beings in a dilemma.[30]

> [C]omplete simultaneous satisfaction of the two tendencies seems to be a logical impossibility, and the inevitable conflict between them can at best be met by some approximate solution by way of rapid alternation or of compromise--a solution somewhat resembling that which some psychologists have eloquently described under the term coyness.[31]

Fluctuation between the desire to decorate oneself and the sense of impropriety at doing so leads to an ambivalent attitude toward dress. We may find that while the function of dress at one point in time or in a particular place may be modesty, in another the same dress item may connote decoration. While in 1868 modesty prescribed that all

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[28]ibid., p. 48.

[29]op. cit., Flugel, p. 127.

[30]The contemporary understanding of modesty incorporates two Latin concepts. Modestia refers to composure, unpretentiousness, moderation in desires; pudor suggests the notion of shame, embarrassment, shyness. op. cit., Rudofsky, p. 25.

[31]op. cit., Flugel, p. 20.

woman's dress lengths reach the ankle, in 1986, without a clear proscription based on modesty, dress length may range from below the torso to the ankle depending on the decorative predilection of the wearer.[32]

The change in form--the length of a woman's hemline--then, does not correspond to a change in function but rather supports the function of decoratation. It is even possible that is 1868 the function of the falling hem-line, although couched as a concern for modesty, may have functioned to allure the onlooker with a subtle form of--albeit puritanical--seduction. Modesty and decoration then, are often woven together into a single cultural ethos.

Visual imagery reflects and enforces the society's cultural ethos. To decipher the function of dress in a particular culture, then, one must examine that culture's costume through visual sources, if available, and then through written descriptions which delineate what it is that a native observer was intended to see. (If the society under study is contemporary, one would be interested to verify whether or not the observable costumes accord with their written descriptions). Such additional sources may tell us also when the costume is worn, the status and occupation of

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[32]Roland Barthes, The Fashion System, (New York: Hill and Wang), 1983, p. 299 (noting that in contemporary secular society the movement of a woman's hemline up or down is done with no regard for modesty but only for decorative purposes, that is, to maintain a sense of mystery needed for sexual stimulation).

the wearer, and the tradition's stated reason for wearing the costume. Discerning what the costume covers and what it reveals and whether the costume acts to disguise or accentuate a body part also provide avenues into deciphering the generic function of dress in a given culture.[33]

Form and function become interrelated by way of a system of dress rules. Society is structured according to guiding principles which dress rules underscore by ensuring that the forms of dress reflect the function of dress in social relations; they enjoin the culture's members to fit dress form to dress function.

Dress rules may be understood as a set of principles, however vague, that divide the universe of dress into the categories of obligatory, permissible and impermissible. In some societies, the demarcation line between the three is sharp. In traditional Moslem cultures, the bikini is never permissible while the chador (the full length, all concealing garment worn by women in Moslem countries) is obligatory. In others, such as the United States, the line is flexible, depending on the social context. Tennis shoes may be permissible at the country club but not at the

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[33]For example, in order to account for the use of the negbie, a round plate worn over the buttocks by women of the Congo, we would note that this is their only item of clothing; their genitalia and breasts remain exposed. However, if we are to conclude that this garment was a form of decoration or of modesty, we would need assistance from intracultural sources, be they written or oral. op. cit., Rudofsky, p. 60.

symphony; bikinis are worn at the beach but not in the office. However, genital covering is obligatory in the United States but not in the Congo. Thus, a complete analysis of the function of dress within a culture would require a description of 1) the permissibility principles for the various situations in which the dress rules are defined; 2) the proper method for applying the principles (the interpretive mode) and, 3) some account of the way in which a group explains its particular dress as against the dress of the other groups it encounters (the rationalization mode).

Form, function, and the dress rules that link them constitute a dress system. The dress rules act as a lens, refracting generic dress functions until they are focused into particular dress forms.

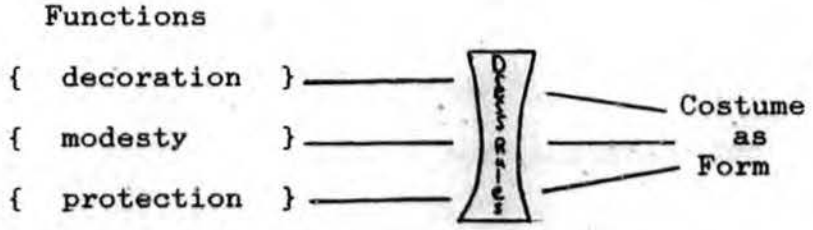

Diagram 3: Relational Structure of Function, Rule, and Form in the Dress System

To understand the role of dress within culture then, we need to analyze both form and function of dress and the mediating set of dress rules. Together, the three present the skeletal foundation of a dress system.

III. THE JEWISH DRESS SYSTEM: FUNCTION

Dress is a rite of communication, articulating group affiliation and personal identity, moral belief and aesthetic predilection. Dress styles are identified with specific ritual events in which a display of appropriate visual messages conveys individual-group outlook: elegant finery and strands of jewels serve to ornament wedding joy. Torn sullied clothes pattern the mourner's despair. For religious Jews, a determinate dress style is associated with varried patterns of daily life. The external donning thus conveys and shapes internal orientations.

Empowered as commandment, dress regulations structure communal and individual activities and beliefs. At the outset, the generic function of dress is labeled. Dress codes typically are said to prescribe tzniyut, which loosely translates into "modesty." Tzniyut refers to the way in which one dresses: "He was a decorous [tzniya] man and would not take off his cloak the entire day."[34] It also serves as an adjective for a person's behavior: "[B]e reserved [tzniyot] even in the presence of your husbands."[35] The second referent is derivative of the former. One is tzniya only if he or she dresses according to the system's regulations.

Talmudic and midrashic texts which circumscribe normative traditional Jewish culture thereby providing a

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[34]Ket. 62b.

[35]Shab. 140b.

sampling of traditional Jewry's casuistic and affective orientation provide a means of illuminating the general structure of the traditional Jewish dress system. Not only does this material provide a description of the forms of dress, it adumbrates the generic functions of dress within the culture as well.[36]

Basic to the dress system are three principles of obligation--and by extension impermissibility--, which reflect the underlying cultural ethos. The three may be termed "difference," or "separation" principles.

1) Preserve differences of national status by maintaining the separation of the Jewish people from all other peoples;

2) Preserve differences of gender by maintaining the separation of women from men;

3) Preserve difference in personal status by separating married from never-married women and Torah scholars from non-scholars.

Represented schematically, the Jewish community is separated from the rest of the world, bifurcated by gender, and then again by personal status.

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[36]This study is by no means exhaustive. A complete analysis of dress would include a study of all external forms, for example, jewelry, as well as of corporeal forms, the revealing of skin for instance, in addition to a study of the impact of various ritual events on dress forms. However, because the purpose here is to describe the basic structure of the system, the present, more limited, approach suffices.

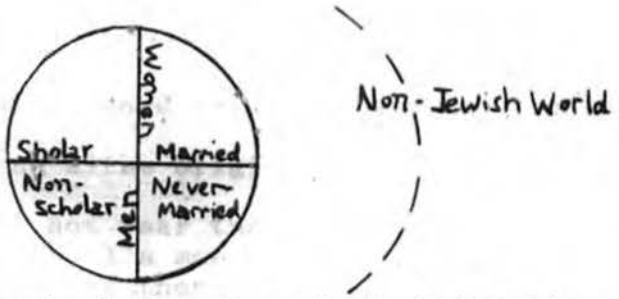

Diagram 4: Sociological Function of the Principles

Together, the three difference principles protect and perpetuate both the community and the individual by imposing a uniform moral and social order. Distinctions between nations isolate the group from foreign influence, thus shielding the Jews from non-Jewish ways, originally idolatry. Division between the sexes provides for a clear role delineation in everyday religious behavior, thus facilitating a consistent religious observance. The hierarchy of men via study and women via marriage establishes an incentive for personal observance and advancement within the culture.

The principle of separate national status stems from Leviticus 18:3 that directs Jews against dressing in the mode of the surrounding culture:

> You shall not copy the practices of the land of Egypt where you dwelt or the land of Canaan to which I am taking you nor shall you follow their customs.[37]

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[37]See Alfred Rubens, A History of Jewish Costume, (New York: Funk and Wagnalls), 1967, p. 2. "The Jewish sumptuary laws were designed only partly to curb extravagance and ostentation; their object also was to prevent the adoption of new fashions, or what was known as chukkath hagoyyim. In another example, the nineteenth century mitnagid rabbi Mendel of Koch and his hasidic contemporary, Simhah Bunen, cited the verse as an admonishment against donning gentile

The second difference principle admonishing men and women from dressing alike originates in Deuteronomy 22:5:

> A woman shall not wear that which pertains to a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment; for whosoever does these things is an abomination to the Lord thy God.

Informing the third principle of personal status, are two laws, one which refers to women, another to men. Regarding women's dress, Numbers 5:18 asserts:

> And the priest shall set the woman [the suspected adulteress] before the Lord, and uncover the hair of the woman's head . . . [which initiates the trial to determine her guilt or innocence].

The verse informs us that women customarily kept their hair covered. At the entry into the common era the relationship between dress and propriety is established. As Paul says:

> A man who keeps his head covered when he prays or prophesies brings shame on his head; a woman, on the contrary, brings shame on her head if she prays or prophesies bare-headed: it is as bad as if her head were shaved. If a woman is not to wear a veil she might as well have her hair cut off; but if it is a disgrace for her to be cropped and shaved, then she should wear a veil. A man has no need to cover his head, because man is the image of God, and the mirror of his glory, whereas woman reflects the glory of man.[38]

For the woman to appear with her head uncovered is an act of sacrilege. Later recast in the Mishnah, a married woman who

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clothing, which might lead to the adoption of other social and religious customs of the gentiles. See Raphael Mahler, Hasidism and the Jewish Enlightenment: Their Confrontation in Galicia and Poland in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century, (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America), 1985, p. 122.

[38]I Corinthians 11:4-7.

walks in a public place with her arms or hair exposed may be divorced by her husband.[39] Maimonides, in his twelfth century Mishneh Torah interprets this verse as a prohibition for any married woman to go about with her hair uncovered. Given the severity of the offense, a woman, out of fear of being divorced or loosing her upright status as a married woman, would comply to the culture's dictates.

The laws regulating male dress as a matter of personal status derive from the historical precedent of the priesthood. Prior to the destruction of the Temples, the priests were the principal functionaries in cultic services. A position of hereditary right, the priesthood constituted a class of men separate from the rest of the community. Reflecting their unique status were priestly vestments worn during divine worship. Two types of vestment costume were donned: the high priest wore eight garments; the common priests wore four.[40]

With the destruction of the Second Temple came the advent of rabbinic Judaism. The Temple was replaced by the synagogue; the sacrifice was supplanted with prayer; the priest was recast as the rabbi, the scholar of Torah.

The religious structure, although transposed to fit an entirely different sociological, political, and economic framework, redesigned historical forms to accord with the

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[39]Ket. 72a.

[40]see Ex. 28:4; 29:29; 31:10; 35:19; 39:1, 40:13.

new setting. The priestly vestments, in the rabbinic scheme, became a refined version of the common man's daily attire. The Torah scholar washed his garments, trimmed his beard more often than the common man. He wore a tallit of larger size and often of a finer material.

The three principles together comprise a compact designation of roles: the external dress modes and the moral system align to determine individual and group behavior; the positions of the group members, both within the Jewish community and the secular community, are secured. As a result, what is required or expected of one group is prohibited or not expected for the other. (The factors (X) and (Y) shall represent the letter of the law, the extremities of the rule. (L) represents the "limit" point dividing the two groups):

1: Principle of National Status

X	L	Y
Jew Tznivut System		Non-Jew Non-tznivut System

2: Principle of Gender Status

X	L	Y
Man No color Non-specified style Expose hair Tallit		Woman Color Specified style No exposure of hair (married women) No tallit

3: Principle of Personal Status

A: Women

X	L	Y
Married Cut/unexposed hair		Never-married Uncut/exposed hair

B: Men

	L	X Y
Scholar Special tallit		Non-scholar Regular tallit
Trim beard		Less trim Beard
Clean		Less clean

Diagram 5: Difference Principle Polarities

As in any system, there will always arise a problem of vagueness concerning interpretation. While the codes specify what one may or may not do, the prevalence of discussion as to the permissibility of a particular type of garment affirms the difficulty in eliminating deviation. Thus, from point (X) to (L) and from point (Y) to (L), there is a range of possible interpretations of the law. The rules on hair may serve as an example (this is based on the contemporary situation within the ultra-Orthodox community. We may assume that the ambiguity resulted in a like configuration of possibilities in the pre-modern system):[41]

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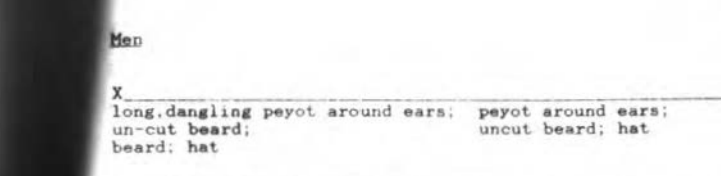
[41]We cannot help but surmise that, as in our own day, a number of interpretations of the law existed. The variety, though, given the comparatively poor economic and technologic state of the pre-modern world, we can assume was less than that of today. In corroboration of this claim is the prohibition issued in the takana [ordinance] of the

Men



Married Women

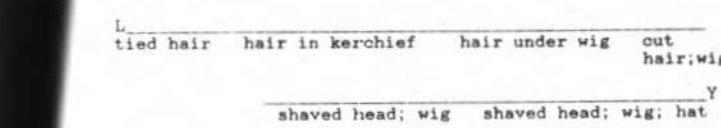


Diagram 6: Interpretive Variations

In both cases, to go beyond the limit line is to exclude oneself from the system. The result is transgression: either of Judaism as a whole (for a man) or of the individual marital unit (for a woman). Thus, the deviating Jew, associated with non-Jews, is called an "idolater." The transgressing woman, identified with men--and by extension

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Tzadik of Mrimnov: "The women shall not go in a shtern tichel [kerchief] or begrond [another type of head-covering] and also shall not wear any type of clothing, even shoes, in the latest fashion as they go in the remaining areas, and shall go in se'efim[scarves] as their mothers went. They shall not go in a red tichel, or even sandals. Young girls are not to go about in peyot harosh [curls] or with lace scarves." Aharon Wertheim, Halachot V'Halichot B'Hasidut, (Jerusalem: Mosad Rav Kook), 1960, p. 196.

improper women--is called a "prostitute" or an "adulteress." Despite the variation, the outcome of such a deviation is uniform.

Because a premium is placed on uniformity of practice, the tradition convinces its adherents to follow the system's dictates through the guise of an all pervasive rationale. The four forms discussed here, color, garment, material, and hair, adumbrate the system's rationale. In order to verify the structure of the system, we therefore now turn to a discussion of the four forms: a cursory look at the function of color, garment, and material in addition to a more detailed analysis of the function of hair shall substantiate the model of the dress system articulated herein.

IV. THE JEWISH DRESS SYSTEM: FORM

Despite its official religious resistance to fashion's dictates, Jewry has been susceptible to the ongoing vicissitudes of fashion. In response, early rabbinic Judaism redoubles its attempts to curtail the influence of fashion within the community. Yet its method of restriction is not to specify the forms in exact detail, providing for example the paradigmatic pattern for a shirt or pants, a dress or skirt, but to institute overarching restrictions that constitute the syntax of fashion: color, mandatory garments material and hairstyle. Instead of addressing the ever changing dress permutations, the rabbis articulate a dress system that permits variation in design, permissible within the confines of that system.

Four central categories--color, mandatory garments, material, and hair--demarcate the three difference principles: Jew from gentile, men from women, and personal status. Each of the four categories may qualify any or all of the difference principles. Color for example, classifies Jews both within and outside of the community; material on the other hand, serves only to differentiate Jew from non-Jew without bearing on intra-Jewish relations. This chapter's focus on these four categories embellishes the structural overview of the system presented in chapters two and three with an examination of a sampling of talmudic and midrashic texts.

I: Color

The majority of rabbinic references to color focus on the second principle: gender differentiation. The rabbis interpret Deuteronomy 22:5, "A woman shall not wear that which pertains to a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment: for all that do so are abomination to the Lord thy God" as indicating that men and women should not dress in the same manner. While this provides a general prohibition to the wearing of gender specific clothing by the opposite sex (men wearing dresses, women wearing pants), it serves as a prooftext to a more subtle form of differentiation as well. Siphrei Devarim elucidates: "A woman shall not wear a man's white garments and a man shall not wear colored garments."[42] Reflecting the second difference principle, color may be depicted as:

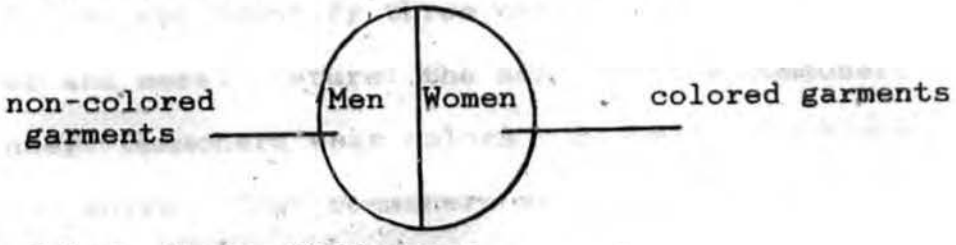

Diagram 7: Color: Gender Difference

A. Color in Men's Dress

While men's clothing is grouped as non-colored for the

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[42]RK"V, p. 115b. Similarly, A.Z.20b notes that women's colored garments differ from men's non-colored garments.

purpose of differentiation with women's wear, color identifies a man's social status as well. Passages thus indicate that men do in fact wear colored garments, but the color spectrum of the male costume focuses on the tonal dichotomy black and white.

> Rabbi Yanai said to his son: 'Don't bury me in black garments or in white ones, black lest I be worthy of a place in gan eden and then I would be like a mourner among bridegrooms, or in white, peradventure I might not be worthy and would be like a bridegroom among mourners [sinners in Gehinom] but [bury me] only in court clothes that are imported from beyond the sea.'[43]

Rabbi Yanai's preference for court clothes which are neither white nor black is problematic for the rabbis. Rather than accepting that he would choose to wear colored garments, they conclude that only his outer cloak was colored. The essential articles of his outfit they insist are white.[44]

Other sources indicate that commoners wore colors.[45] Consequently, we may identify three categories of professional and moral stature: the scholar, the commoner, and the sinner. Commoners wear colors. Sinners wear black. Scholars wear white. That commoners wear colors indicates their potential to incline to either of the two poles. Scholars and sinners establish the boundaries of the male

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[43]Nid. 20a.

[44]Rashi on Nid. 20a proposes that Rabbi Yanai, like all tzadikim, wore white.

[45]Samuel Krauss, Kadmoniot HaTalmud, (Tel Aviv: DVIR), 1945, p. 90.

typology of the "good/bad" discrimination.

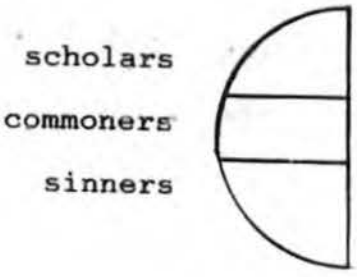

Diagram 8: Color: Difference in Personal Status: Male

Similarly, men's hair coloring is simplified into the shades black and white. Black hair is the sign of youth--the unschooled, the naive.[46] White, an adjective applied to the hair of the righteous, is the sign of the scholars.[47]

A white uniform denotes the wearer's occupation as a student of Torah, as well as his moral nature as a righteous man. White is symbolic of the holy.

> I looked, thrones were placed, and an ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of whose head was like the pure wool.[48]

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[46]M. Ned. 3, 8.

[47]B.K.60a. We find here an application of Levi-Strauss's celebrated cooked/raw dichotomy. Black is raw: youth, unbridled emotion, ignorance, pure "nature" untouched by the "culture" of God's law. White is cooked: maturity, reason, knowledge, and culture. Of course the dichotomy only applies to men, who are permitted to acquire culture. Commoners are neutral. They have the potential to lean in either moral direction. They may become "white" (cultured, good, learned, scholarly) or "black" (the reversion of pure nature, raw, evil). Claude Levi-Strauss, The Raw and the Cooked: Introduction to a Science of Mythology, (New York: Harper and Row), 1968.

[48]Dan. 7:9.

Not only is God imaged in white, but angels are as well: "the students of a sage in Babylonia appear to me! They resemble the ministering angels."[49] Rashi adds: "in white clothes and head coverings similar to the ministering angels."

Rashi asserts elsewhere that the students of Torah wear white: "in every generation, there will be Your white clothes."[50] The way to honor one's status as a scholar, a son of Torah, is to appear in white clothing.[51]

Sarcastically, in another passage, Rashi scoffs at the donning of white garments by some Babylonian scholars:

> Why are the scholars in Babylonia distinguished [in dress]? Because they are not well learned.[52]

Because the so-called scholars cannot identify themselves as learned men by their knowledge alone, they adopt the only means of persuasion available: the scholar's garb.

Deciphering the function of color within the rabbinic dress system may be facilitated by examining the function of color within the Bible. A select range of colors are mentioned in the Bible:[53] white, black, red[54],

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[49]Ket. 72a.

[50]Ket. 85a.

[51]Shab. 145b.

[52]ibid.

[53] Caspar Levias, "Color," The Jewish Encyclopedia, (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Company), 1903, p. 174.

green[55], purple,[56] and gold[57]. However, it seems that biblical references to color intimate that value rather than hue is operative.[58] Echoing the biblical language, rabbinic literature also emphasizes value rather than hue.[59] When color adjectives are used explicitly to indicate value, a reduplication of the last two root letters implies the pale

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[55]Yarak refers to vegetation ("[the wild ass] roams the hills as its pasture and searches for anything green.") (Job 39:8); and to a sickly complexion, ("why then do I see every man with his hands on his loins, as a woman in travail, and all faces are turned to paleness?") (Jeremiah 30:6). In rabbinic literature, yarak is the color of myrtle in Meg. 13a; of crocus in Nid. 2:6 and of the yolk of an egg in Hul. 47b. Sotah 3:4 describes a sickly complexion as pale yellow.

[56]In biblical times, purple dyes colored materials for the Tabernacle and the priestly robes; other references indicate that purple (argaman) was worn by foreign dignitaries (Judges 8:26; I Maccabees 4:23).

[57]The High Priest's daily wear consists of "golden" vestments. Talmudic passages describe a dove's wings as glistening like gold metal (hizhiv) (Hul. 22b) or one's face shining brightly like gold (Gen. Rab. 97:1).

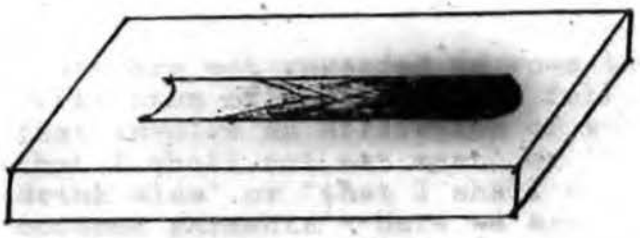
[58]Color may be defined by three terms: hue is the actual color, for example red or yellow; intensity is a degree of purity, strength or saturation; value is the lightness or darkness of a hue. The highest possible brightness is white, the least is black. See Frans Gerritsen, Theory and Practice of Color: A Color Theory Based on Laws of Perception, (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Co.), 1975, p. 95.

[59]op. cit., Levias, p. 294.

shade of a color: adamdam means reddish, yerakrak, greenish. For highly saturated hues, amok, meaning 'deep,' is applied.

Recalling the chinese ink block, the value spectrum, seen in terms of light alone, presents an even range of dark to light. The chinese block is a rectangular stone with a diagonal impression as its bottom. The ink is placed at the nadir of the decline. A small amount of water rests along the bottom, creating a shallow to deep gradation. The ink too dissolves into a range of tones. The most intense is the ink itself. The least dense is the pure water.

The value range within the rabbinic dress system, like the ink block, presents a spectrum of light variation. White, like the water, lacks hue. Black, like the ink, is absolute tone. However, unlike the block, the rabbinic dress system demarcates three possibilities--white, color, and black--despite qualitative differences in color hues.



white----------color----------black

The value scale, while applicable to men's clothing, does not apply to men's shoes. No Jewish man was to wear black shoes, for they typically were worn by non-Jews.

Thus, while the color of one's clothing may not have distinguished him as a Jew, his shoes did.[60]

B. Color in Women's Dress

Women wear colors. Unlike men, they are not obligated to observe all the commandments. By wearing colors, the common man identifies himself as neutral on the scale of those who are commanded. He is neither black nor white, neither a sinner nor a sage. The woman, however, to whom colors are actually allocated, acknowledges her perpetual exclusion from that same commandment system. Both extremes are impossibilities for her because she is not fully obligated by the commandment system in the first place. She can never become a sinner or a sage.

Colored clothing is attractive to men, married women are permitted to wear colors in order to please their husbands.

> These are not regarded as vows involving an affliction of soul; and the following are vows that involve an affliction of soul: '[I swear] that I shall not eat meat' or 'that I shall not drink wine' or 'that I shall not adorn myself with colored garments'--Here we are dealing with matters affecting their intimate relations (the vows of which may only be annulled by a husband).[61]

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[60]Ta'an 22a.

[61]Ket. 71a.

Because viewing a woman in colored clothing is to see her explicitly as a woman, the husband alone may permit or forbid his wife the making or breaking of this vow.

While wearing colored clothing is a form of pleasure for a husband it as well is a mode of celebration for the woman.

> Our Rabbis taught: A man is in duty bound to make his children and his household rejoice on a Festival . . . Wherewith does he make them rejoice? With wine. R. Judah said: Men with what is suitable for them, and women with what is suitable for them. 'Men with what is suitable for them': with wine. And women with what? R. Joseph recited: In Babylonia, with colored garments; in Eretz Yisrael, with ironed linen garments [thus, natural colored].[62]

In Babylonia women celebrate by donning colored garments; in Eretz Yisrael women adorn themselves with fine linen, a more precious, more difficult to maintain white cloth.[63]

Because men find colors attractive, they present a potential source for the danger of seduction: "an angel [came] in all sorts of colors and jewelry of women to entice the men to have lustful thoughts and commit sin"[64]. The Targum translates <u>tzivonin</u>, colored garments, as <u>sotah</u>, "for

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[62]Pes. 109a.

[63]Similarly, Ta'an. 26b indicates that women in Israel abide by specifications more closely aligned to men's dress practices. When celebrating the 15th of Av, the women wear white garments. It might be then, that wine: men [study, Torah] :: colored garments : women [non-study, emotional celebration]. Hence, wine finds its way to Torah celebrations and Holy Day matters for men, while women wear white clothes, for example, to dance in fields.

[64]Ber. 247 .

a woman attires herself in these to entice men to take notice of her." The word denotes a garment that attracts notice to its wearer, being a noun formed by יפה, to entice or allure.[65]

Despite this threat, women are permitted to wear colors. Why? In order to differentiate men from women one group must wear colored garments. Furthermore,

> Our Rabbis taught: A dyed garment is susceptible to the uncleanness of a bloodstain. R. Nathan b. Joseph ruled: It is not susceptible to the uncleanness of a stain, for dyed garments were ordained for women only in order to relax the law in regard to their bloodstains.[66]

For a woman to appear in clothing sullied by menstrual blood is forbidden; consequently, a woman may wear colored clothing in order to camouflage possible menstrual stains.

Consequently, her dress is restricted. She may not wear red:

> There was a case of R. Adda b. Ahaba who saw a heathen woman wearing a red head-dress in the street and thinking that she was a Jewish women, he rose and tore it from her. It turned out she was a non-Jew and they fined him 400 zuz.[67]

Just as "ordinary" men may wear colors but still require some differentiation from non-Jews and so do not wear black

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[65]Rashi quotes the Targum in his commentary on Gen. 49:11.

[66]Nid. 61b.

[67]Ber. 20a. See also Ket. 72a where Rab Judah states that the prohibition of spinning in the street applies only if "she spins rose [colored materials and holds them up] to her face."

shoes, so Jewish women are forbidden to wear red, a customary color of non-Jewish women.[68] Within the women's sector, therefore, the wearing of red distinguishes non-Jew from Jew.

Red, being the color of licentiousness, signifies that which is not Jewish. Moreover, red is the color of blood. When applied to women's dress, then, red signifies menstrual blood.

Menstrual blood is tamai, impure. A Jewish women shall not wear the sign of impurity. Gentile women make no distinction between their internal biological states. Whether or not they are menstruating, whether in the so-called clean or impure days, they live without a marked change in lifestyle. Similarly, they make no distinction in their clothing: through the laws of niddah however, Jewish women maintain their purity internally despite menstruation[69]; by rejecting the wearing of red, they protect it externally as well. Men avoid contamination by refraining from physical contact with a menstruating woman and by eschewing visual contact with women in red.

In sum, white and black, I propose, represent opposing responses to the observance of Jewish law in the talmudic

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[68] op. cit., Krauss, p. 87.

[69]Niddah refers to the two weeks during and following a woman's menstruation in which she has no physical contact with her husband.

period. One who disobeys the law is a sinner and must wear black, a tone symbolizing the absence of holiness. One who observes the law is a loyal Jew; he wears colors, intermediate between black and white representing the human potential for good or for evil. One who preserves the law through study is righteous and wears white indicating sanctity. A woman on the other hand, does not wear white or black for she is not fully obligated to fulfill the commandments. She may neither officially be a sinner nor a sage within Judaism. She may only wear colors. Her task as a Jew is to maintain her Jewish identity. Hence, she may not wear red. By doing so, she identifies herself not with the Jewish people and Jewish values, but with gentiles and licentious ways.

II Mandatory Garments and Materials

Beged refers to anything that can be worn as a whole or partial garment. Talmudic discussions on clothing focus on the material, size, and purity of the garment.

Specifications of material derive from Leviticus 19:19:

> You shall keep my statutes. You shall not let your cattle gender with a diverse kind; you shall not sow your field with two kinds of seed; neither shall there come upon you a garment of two kinds of stuff mingled together.[70]

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[70]See also Deut. 22:11 ("You shall not wear clothes woven with two kinds of yarn, wool and flax together.").

Garments may not be made of wool and linen woven together. To count as a garment, the item in question must measure at least three fingerbreadths square, though generally, a garment's minimum measurement is three handbreadths square.[71] It becomes annulled, unclean, unfit for one to wear, when discarded into the rubbish.

Each of these stipulations place restrictions on the manufacture of clothing. In addition, there are rules which address how one wears and tends his clothes.

The rabbis are asked: if a house is on fire and it is the sabbath, what clothes should a man remove from the house? Because the sabbath is a time when no work is done, the hypothesis of a fire on the sabbath provides the rabbis and opportunity to identify the essential male wardrobe.

> These are the eighteen garments: a cloak, undertunic, hollow belt [money belt], linen [sleeveless] tunic, shirt, felt cap, apron, a pair of trousers, a pair of shoes, a pair of socks, a pair of breeches, the girdle around his loins, the hat on his head and the scarf round his neck.[72]

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[71]A piece of cloth that may be used for a patch is considered a garment because it has value. See Meyer Berlin, ed., Encyclopedia Talmudica: A Digest of Halachic Literature and Jewish Law from the Tannaitic Period to the Present Time Alphabetically Arranged., vol. 2, (Jerusalem: Yal Harav Herzog Press), 1969, p. 288.

[72]Shab. 120a. A like list of essential garments appears in the Palestinian Talmud (Shab. 15:4 line 23). While the different names for the clothing items may indicate that Jews in the two regions wore different costumes, it may merely point to a difference in vocabulary. However, some names in the Babylonian Talmud are of Greek origin and give evidence to Hellenistic influence. See Peter Wiernik, "Costume," The Jewish Encyclopedia, (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Company), 1903, p. 295.

Lest we presume that Jews layered themselves in all eighteen garments, another passage presents us with a more realistic depiction of the typical outfit. Rules given for undressing at a bath, in order of removal, identify the daily costume as consisting of shoes, head-covering, mantle, girdle, shirt, and a vest known by the Greek name, "epikarsion."[73]

With garments as with color, we find three difference principles: Jew/non-Jew; men-women; personal status. Jews are warned against adopting garments that are particular to gentiles.[74] So important is this prohibition that the rabbis determine that if a religious principle is involved, it is better to face martyrdom than to change even the style of a shoelace.[75]

Regulations pertain both to items of wear and the manner in which articles are worn. The man's costume blatantly differs from that of the woman's. Men's pants and women's dresses, the man's tallit and the woman's scarf are signs particular to each gender. Specific garments,

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[73]Derek Erez Rabbah, 2:3. See op. cit., Wiernik. The importance in specifying the order of removing clothes derives from the laws surrounding the High Priest's attire.

[74]Sifre 81 prohibits the Jews from wearing the many colored or purple garments of the heathen or their wide pants. Shulhan Aruch, Y. D. 178:1 states a general prohibition against wearing non-Jewish garb.

[75]San. 74b.

moreover, identify the status of their wearer. A married woman's head covering separates her from never-married women; a scholar's tallit distinguishes him from commoners. The scarf and the tallit are thus parallel signifiers of personal status.[76]

Apparently both the scholar and the commoner wear a tallit,[77] but the tallit of a scholar is larger and of a finer material than that of the commoner.[78] In addition to difference in the size and material of the tallit, the standard of cleanliness of one's garments fluctuates depending on a man's status. A scholar is obligated to be fastidious in caring for his clothing.[79] A garment is made up of two sides, the outer and its reverse. The commoner is

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[76]For a fuller treatment of women's head coverings see infra pp. 62-67.

[77]Tos. to Toh. 8:12.

[78]B. B. 98a. In B. B. 57b, we read that the scholar's shirt covers his entire body, so that his skin is not visible. His tallit completely covers his shirt so that the "scholar was recognized by the manner in which he wrapped himself in his tallit." See also Hag. 14b; Shab. 10a; Ned. 77b.

[79]Shab. 114a. Again this practice originates with the treatment of the priestly vestments: "If the priestly vestments were soiled, Tannaim differ: some hold that if they were so slightly soiled that they could be washed clean in water, they might be washed with water or natron [a natural carbonate of soda]; but if they were so badly soiled so that it was impossible to wash them clean except with natron, they might not be washed as all; others that they may never be washed at all, since there should be no stinting where there is wealth (Zeb. 88b). The Halakhah follows the latter view (M. Zeb. 8:5). op. cit., Berlin, p. 304.

instructed to turn his garment inside-out only after it becomes dirty (as determined by soiled seams). He reverses it to its underside so that the garment appears clean.[80] The scholar on the other hand, reverses his garment every sabbath without regard to its visible state.[81]

Cleanliness is an outward mark of a scholar's identity; to go about in dirty clothes is to transgress a crucial distinction in the community. A scholar may not appear in the market place in dirty shoes or clothes, for one who does so "deserves death."[82] The threat of death, is not real but symbolic. The scholar, enlightened by Torah, virtuous through mitzvot, is pure and deserving of eternal life. For such a scholar to turn his back on Torah and the mitzvot, is tantamount to impurity and the loss of eternal life.

Those whom death touches are sui generis and experience a reversal of the normal status rules. If the sinner is one who could keep Torah, wear clean clothes, and wash punctiliously--but who refuses to do so; the mourner is a person who wants to do all of these but cannot. Mourners are forbidden to recite the sh'ma, be counted in a minyan, wash and change clothes. They live in the limbo of their mourning period, as visible make-believe sinners anxiously awaiting release from their enforced separation from the

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[80]M. Mak. 9, 6.

[81]ibid.

[82] Shab. 114a.

norms of virtue toward which they aspire.

Thus we have a model similar to that developed for color differences in Diagram 8:

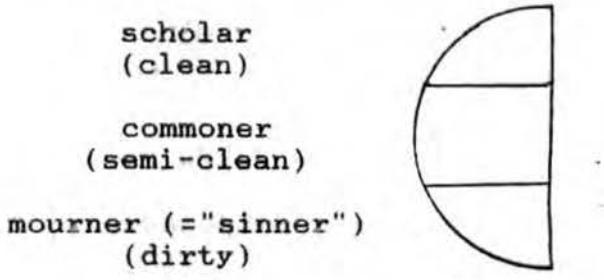

Diagram 9: Cleanliness: Difference in Personal Status: Men

The concern for cleanliness necessitates that the scholar change his clothes weekly (or turn them inside-out). This is not to be done randomly but precisely at the onset of each sabbath.[83]

Indeed, we find that both the scholar and the common man must honor the sabbath with fine clothes. The commoner is advised to have two suits, one for everyday and one for the sabbath. If he cannot afford both, on the sabbath, he should at least arrange his suit in a different manner.[84] Even the mourner sets aside his make-believe status on the sabbath by dressing, washing, and joining the minyan to pray.

The significance of adopting a special attire on the

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[83]Shab. 113a.

[84]P.T. Peah 8, 7.

sabbath intimates the importance of all dress as a form of worship. "The glory of God is man, the glory of man is dress."[85] God's glory may be enhanced through man, but man's holiness is displayed, conveyed, through his dress.

Dress is a form of hiddur mitzvah, the beautification of the commandment. Hiddur mitzvah instructs Jews to choose ceremonial pieces which are aesthetically pleasing. This injunction both ennobles the ritual, and consequently God, and inspires the participant with a sense of awe:

> 'This is my God, and I will adorn Him' [that is], adorn yourself before Him in [the fulfillment of] precepts. [Thus] make a beautiful sukkah in His honor, a beautiful lulav, a beautiful shofar, beautiful fringes, and a beautiful scroll of the Torah.[86]

The injunction to use beautiful ritual objects suggests that the ritual is both for God and for the observer. We show respect to God; we are uplifted by the beauty of the piece we use in performing the ritual.

Hiddur mitzvah when applied to clothing requires a slightly different reading. The individual himself is the object which accomplishes the ritual by appearing in the prescribed clothes. The individual as well is the subject who adds elegance and appreciation to the ritual by selecting appropriate, beautiful clothing. The rabbinic

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[85]Derek Erez Zuta 10.

[86]Shab. 133b.

statement, "A man's dignity is seen in his costume" [87] asserts that by dressing according to Jewish law one not only shows obedience to God but also ennobles his own status. By changing his clothing on the sabbath and the holidays in order to honor God and holy times, he himself becomes ennobled.

III: Hair

A. Men's Hair Regulations

Men's hair regulations derive from Leviticus 19:27:

> You shall not round off your hair from side to side, and you shall not shave the edge of your beards,

and Leviticus 21:5:

> Priests shall not make bald patches on their heads as a sign of mourning nor cut the edges of their beards, nor gash their bodies.

The verses, it is uniformly interpreted, prohibit removing the side-locks (peyot) and shaving the beard. Rabbis agree that the peyot may not be cut or trimmed; however, the law regarding the beard is less clear. Jewish law forbids removing the beard with a razor but not with scissors. Some codes permit using a razor as long as it does not remove the hair smoothly and close to the roots.[88]

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[87]Ex. R. 18:5.

[88]M. Mak. 3, 5; Sifra Kedoshim, 6.

The mode of wearing one's hair differentiates Jew from non-Jew. Christians wear their hair parted and tied in back.[89] The Syrians' hair is worn loose down their backs.[90] The Romans wear the komi, a fringe on the forehead with curls along the back.[91] The Jews wear their hair short except for the peyot.

While the predominant hair style for Jews focuses on the sidelocks, passages indicate Jews were inclined to wear the style of the day. Abtalion ben Reuben was allowed to wear his hair in the komi because he worked at the court.[92] However, in another example, the rabbis are not as lenient. "David had 400 children and all of them were beautiful with a long lock of hair."[93] Disapprovingly, the rabbis state: "He who grows his back hair in the form of a lock (blurit) does so for an idolatrous purpose."[94]

The length of one's facial hair too determines one's status. While today we identify the orthodox by their beards, rabbinic literature indicates that clipping one's

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[89]op. cit., Krauss, p.286.

[90]ibid.

[91] B. K. 83a.

[92]B. K. 83a.

[93]San. 21a.

[94]Deut. Rab. 2:18.

beard was customary.[95] How often one's beard was cut depends on one's position in society.

> A king shaves every day, a high priest [goes without] shaving from shabbat to shabbat, a common man shaves every 30 days.[96]

In talmudic times, in presumed analogy with the high priest and in keeping with the model for purity before God, the scholar would clip his beard at the onset of every sabbath. The commoner tended to his beard less often.

Removal of the beard may have been a religious custom among heretical sects. R. Elazar ben Azaryah said to his brother Ishmael: "They said to one: why is your beard grown? He said to them: so as not to ruin anything wantonly." In interpreting this statement, the rabbis conclude that a smooth face was a religious essential among some sectarians.[97] Sometimes, regulations were imposed from above. Upon growing a beard, the Emperor Hadrian forbade Jews to grow beards (indicating beards are the common style

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[95]In fact, unclipped hair in the talmudic period was considered ugly. However, in medieval times, a variety of customs were in practice. Jews in Islamic countries wore long beards; in Germany, France, and Italy, Jews removed their beards with scissors (see David Kimchi on II Samuel 10:5). "Scrupulous German rabbis . . . sought as early as the fifteenth century to forbid the cutting of the Beard, doubtless because the majority paid little attention to the strict letter of the Halakah, and, instead of cutting with the scissors, shaved smooth with a razor." Louis Ginzberg, "Beard," The Jewish Encyclopedia, (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Company), 1903, p. 613.

[96] San. 72b.

[97]op. cit., Krauss, p.290; Shab. 152a.

among Jews) in order to differentiate himself from them.[98]

B. Women's Hair Regulations

The beard and peyot clearly differentiate men from women: "A woman with a moustache ceases to be considered a woman."[99] Some commentators identify the difference between the sexes as a primary reason for maintaining the beard.[100]

Regulations pertaining to women's hair treatment are not explicitly stated as a biblical injunction. Loosely, they derive from Numbers 5:18:

> And the priest shall set the woman [the suspected adulteress] before the Lord, and uncover the hair of the woman's head.

The rabbis find this drama elusive. Does this particular case necessarily apply to all women? What exactly was the woman's offense? What does his action--uncovering her hair-indicate about the normal hair style of women?

Given the ambiguity of Numbers 5:18, the rabbis are not able to determine the intent of the law. However, by focusing on the priest's actions and the language of the passage, it is concluded that this constitutes a legal interdiction. Two categories are provided to account for the ambiguity. Dat Moshe refers to biblical law, laws

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[98]ibid., p. 289.

[99]B. M. 60b; Nezir 39a.

[100]See, e.g., Bahya and Abravanel on Lev. 19:27.

universally regulative for Jews, because they clearly derive from the Bible. Dat yehudit refers to those legal rules that evolved over time within specific Jewish communities.

Maimonides concludes that the practice of covering one's head was "hinted at in the Torah."[101] Rashi determines that covering one's head is "a minhag [custom] of the daughters of Israel . . . the women shall follow the manner of tzniyut."[102] While not viewed as having been derived from the law of Moses, but from Jewish law, in time it became part of the halacha.

> This is the halacha with no division among the Tannas; there is no controversy; the halacha is clear. It was expounded upon in scripture, and in the mesorah [tradition] and in the responsa which were given [to us] from heaven. The decision of the RI'F [Rabbi Isaac ben Jacob Alfasi], Rambam [Maimonides], . . . and all the poskim.[103]

Any woman who is or has been married is obligated to cover her hair.[104] On the other hand, any woman who has never been married, regardless of age, has no obligation to cover her hair.

At no point--either day or night--may a woman expose

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[101]See Moshe Wiener, Glory of the King's Daughter: The Laws of Modesty in Women's Dress, (New York: Empire Press), 1980, p. 4 (quoting Maimonides). (All citations from Wiener are taken from the Hebrew section unless otherwise specified and are the author's translations).

[102]ibid., p. 5 (quoting Rashi on Ket. 72a).

[103]ibid.

[104]Ket. 72a.

her hair. This prohibition includes exposure of small portions of hair at the hairline or neckline and protrusion of short hairs from beneath the covering or in front of the ears. [105] The care over accidentally or intentionally exposing one's hair leads to the conclusion that women did not cut their hair in talmudic days as they do now.[106] A talmudic reference adds further substantiation: Kimhit, a mother of seven sons who held the office of the high priesthood, was once asked by what merit of hers was she so blessed with such sons. "Because," she said, "the beams of my house have never seen my hair."[107]

Not only is hair itself important, but the hair style worn underneath the head-covering is as well. Braiding, plaiting, and wearing the hair in a crown called the kilkul are the primary modes of arrangement. A proper woman ties her hair back, itself an act of propriety. An improper woman exposes her hair first by undoing it, which is viewed as an egregious act of promiscuity by the rabbis:

When they [women] remove their scarves and loose

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[105]The covering itself has given rise to much dispute. Presently the sheitel [wig] is the most common form of head covering. Wearing a hat or even a tichel [scarf] leaves a part of the hair uncovered (at least for short periods of time). See op. cit., Wiener, p. 18 However, this was not always so. Up to the 16th century, the preferred head-covering was the kerchief.

[106]The halacha states that the woman is to cut her natural hair to one half to one tepach [handbreadth] in length. See op. cit., Wiener, p. 24.

[107]Yoma 47a.

> their hair, free it, uncover it: this is licentiousness, as if they removed their clothes from upon them and stood naked. Women with uncovered, loose hair are similar to men and the [the men] regard them as if they are men.[108]

Consequently, disobeying this rule results in the appropriate punishment:

> A woman who goes about in public with her hair totally or partially exposed, in deliberate disregard of these laws, may be divorced by her husband without payment of her marriage contract just as if she had committed adultery.[109]

There is no ambiguity regarding a married woman's hair style. She may never appear with any part of her hair exposed. Walking in the marketplace with only a basket on her head is forbidden as is wearing a kerchief with small holes.[110] Because this text isolates the area of the "public," the rabbis question the application of the ruling to the private sphere of the home. Within the home if men are present, no matter the relation, the woman must keep her hair completely covered. Only when secluded in a closed room with her husband may the wife expose the side hair extending beyond her tichel.[111] If she is in a "well concealed" place where men have no access, such as a bathroom, bath-house, or swimming area, a woman may uncover

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[108]op. cit., Krauss, p. 294.

[109]Ket. 72a.

[110]op. cit., Weiner, p. 5.

[111]ibid., p. 20 (English section) (citing Responsa Chasam Sofer, O. Ch. 36 and Responsa Temach Tzedek).

her hair.

While to the modern observer, the extremities of the system may seem nonsensical, it is precisely the extreme quality that allows it to function from generation to generation. The participants within the system do not have to surmise how they are to dress. Ambiguity is excluded from the structure. External appearance is controlled to fit within the prescribed boundaries. Moreover, the fundamental rationale undergirding the dress system persuades Jews to maintain the system's dictates. It is to this that we now turn.

V. THE JEWISH DRESS SYSTEM: PURPOSE

In an effort to confirm the proposed structure of the dress system, we have examined the relationship of the dress forms (color, material, garment, and hair) to the three difference principles (Jew/non-Jew; man/woman; and personal status). We may conclude that 1) the difference in national status circumscribes a metaphoric boundary around the Jewish community which restricts physical involvement with the gentile population and affects ideological segregation; 2) the difference in gender creates distinctive communal and familial roles for both men and women; 3) the difference in personal status provides an incentive for men to uphold the religion through observance of the commandments and compels women to assist men in perpetuating the religion by desiring marriage.

Dress rules mediate the functions and forms of the dress system.[112] The stated function of the Jewish dress system is tzniyut. Commonly translated as 'modesty,' tzniyut implies moderation, freedom from excess or exaggeration and self-control. Dress rules mandate that one select from the universe of clothing possibilities only those articles which are expressly permitted by the system. The rules moreover assert that modest dressing is a virtue.

The contemporary reader identifies clothing with the material world. It may be startling then to note that while the Jewish dress system requires that a person be aware of

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[112]See supra pp. 26-27.

what he or she wears, it is primarily designed to link the human with the divine. To be concerned with how one dresses in this scheme, is to identify oneself not with temporal fashions but with God's eternal law.

We may begin to glean the import of the function through analyzing commentary on any one of the primary four dress forms. Yet because women's hair is identified as the primary signifier of tzniyut,[113] it is the logical focus in our examination. The function shall be further explicated through a discussion of midrashim on human beauty. Together, the legal and midrashic material exposes the function: Dress laws regulate beautification efforts so as to curtail sexuality, thereby fortifying the Jewish communal and belief structure.

We have noted that women's hair regulations bifurcate the set of all "women" into the sub-sets of "married" and "never married." Given the two categories of women, the rabbis question how to regard a woman who is in the transitional state between "never married" and "married." How are men to respond to the betula, the virgin, as she proceeds from her father's house to the marriage canopy? She is transported from one locale to the other--from one status position to the other-- on a heynuma, a curtained sedan. The rabbis describe a common scene: as the bride is carried in the sedan, her hair is loose about her shoulders.

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[113]op. cit., Wiener, p. 24.

May a man look at her hair?

The bride-to-be is in a transitional state. While the man may look at a virgin's hair, as a bride-to-be, her status is not like the unbetrothed virgin. Thus, the man may not look at her as he may have before the marriage was arranged. Similarly, the man is told that he may not look at a married woman. Yet the bride-to-be, still a member of the never married, may be looked upon. By way of resolve, the rabbis conclude that one is "permitted to look at the jewelry she wears or at her uncovered head--[but] it is forbidden to look at her hair."[114] Although it is impossible to restrict a view in this manner, that the rabbis propose this compromise attests to the importance of maintaining the boundaries between the categories of married and never-married.

In addition to delineating status, hair is the signifier of female beauty. The rabbis ask: "If a woman is old or ugly, is it forbidden for her to expose her hair?"[115]

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[114]Maimonides adds that the bride goes out with her head uncovered, which is not to say that her hair is not covered, but rather that the head itself is uncovered; the hair falls here and there. See op. cit., Wiener, p. 15 (quoting Maimonides SHU"T Divrey Yisrael: Orah Hayyim, 34). Perhaps she appeared in a mode common in the middle ages. Women wore a head covering from out of which her hair fell to her shoulders, either in curls, braids, or contained within some sort of snood. See Therese and Mendel Metzger, Jewish Life in the Middle Ages: Illuminated Hebrew Manuscripts of the Thirteenth to the Sixteenth Centuries, (New York: Publishers of Fine Art Books) 1982, chapter 4.

[115]ibid., p. 20 (quoting Orach Hayyim 75).

They divide the category "married" into four parts:

1) ugly (mechu'eret)

2) old (zekeyna)

(and by extension)

3) pretty

4) young

All married women must cover their hair regardless of their appearance or their age, for "the hair of a woman is ervah:" forbidden, obscene.[116] Even if a woman is unattractive she is still required to cover her hair. The rabbis assert that even if a woman herself may be considered ugly, her hair is always attractive. She therefore must adhere to the ruling.[117]

> Hair is considered the source of a woman's beauty.
>
> [I]t causes hirhur [lascivious fantasies about women] and thus it is a sin [to have it uncovered]. [The law] establishes that if the hair is less than a tepach [three fingers width in length] then it causes no [sinful] thoughts or hirhur. . . .
>
> Our matriarchs went about in covering upon covering, in an extremely precise manner so that their hair would not be seen at all. . . . This is the tradition handed down to us from the time of Moshe Rabeynu: to take the utmost care in [preventing] the exposure of woman's hair. . . . The tzniyut laws [pertain] mostly to hair; we must be precise in covering all of it entirely.[118]

Juxtaposing beauty and sexual availability, then, hair

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[116]ibid. (quoting Maimonides, Ishurei Biah 21:17).

[117]ibid.

[118]ibid.p. 24.

becomes a sign of sexual desirability as the following argument attests: What should the practice be for a woman who is without hair? Is she nonetheless required to cover her head?

> With regard to a bald woman, the head-covering increases her beauty and grace. Thus, she is not obligated to cover her head.[119]

While all women with hair--ugly, old, pretty, young--must cover their hair, the bald woman may leave her head uncovered, for she is more sexually desirable with her head covered. Hair regulations thus are designed to mar a woman's physical beauty, to reduce her sexual appeal.[120]

Literary sources indicate that not only do the laws on hair specify a woman's external appearance, they suggest possible affective responses of both men and women as well. If a woman's hair is uncovered against her will, she feels embarrassed.

> A man uncovered the head of a woman in the marketplace; she came before rabbi Akiva and the man was obligated to give her 400 zuz on account of embarrassment.[121]

Elsewhere, we read:

> The ten curses that she herself had voiced were made known. . . . [The woman was veiled] like a mourner [on account of her] shame at going with

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[119]ibid., p. 22.

[120]Perhaps this explains why today's ultra-strict ultra-Orthodox women [mehadrin min hamehadrin] choose to shave their heads rather than to leave the permissible less-than-tepach length of hair.

[121]B. K. 90b.

her head uncovered.[122]

Unwitting exposure of hair is shameful. It causes a woman embarrassment which, if the fault is her own, results in self-chastisement; if it is caused by another, the infringment is recompensed monetarily. An involuntary transgression is a disgrace to the Jewish people. If intentionally committed by the woman herself the severity of the affront is magnified. This woman is called a prostitute or an adulteress. She has uncovered her hair with the intent of seducing a man. To see a women with her hair exposed tells men that she is sexually available. If indeed she is not (and if the exposure of hair was conscious), it can be surmised that she nonetheless intended to indicate her "availability" to the men. Upon finding out the ruse, it is only logical for them to assign to her the epithet "adulteress" or "prostitute."

A married women belongs to one man. The married woman appears with her hair covered as a way to separate herself from available women. To expose her hair would be to reject her position within the structure. However, a virgin may appear with her hair down, for "a betulah is not called a woman."[123] She is <u>panuit</u>, meaning free, empty, vacant, single. For her to appear with her hair down is the sign of

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[122]Rashi on Eruvin 100b.

[123]op. cit., Wiener, p. 23 (quoting <u>SHU"T MaHaRI ha-Levi: Even ha-Ezer 9</u>).

her sexual availability. She needs to expose her hair to tell men that she is available for marriage. Therefore it is concluded that a virgin is "not forbidden" to uncover her hair.

The rabbis use the double negative: she is not forbidden[124] to uncover her hair rather than the positive: she may expose her hair. They phrase the directive in this manner in order to reiterate the imperative that the women, once married, must cover their hair. The use of the double negative corroborates with the sentiment that the married woman's hair is nevel or sinful, ugly.[125]

Men's emotional response is also described in the legal material. While the woman is admonished to cover her hair, the man is told that if ever in the presence of a married woman with exposed hair, he is not to look at her. The tradition indicates a two-fold response: looking (histaklut) is followed by desiring the woman (hirhur). As a prooftext, Leviticus 9:14 is cited: "Before the blind, you shall not place a stumbling block." As discussed in a rabbinic text,

> The hair of married women when exposed on the head

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[124]ibid.

[125]It is ironic that the rabbis describe a married woman's hair as nevel considering that hair enhances the desirability of never-married women to men. This is reflected in the modern practice among the Bobov hasidim whereby the groom's family pays the bride's family an amount of money based on the weight (therefore length) of the bride's newly shorn hair (based on private conversation with a Bobov Hasid).

> is a stumbling block to men and causes them to sin greatly in the area of averah which is the worst type of transgression.[126]

The passage suggests that men and women have different roles in maintaining the system. Women's hair--their beauty--is their "stumbling block." They are responsible for not "placing it before the blind," that is, making it visible to men. Men are chastised for being "blind," for being unable to help but look at and "stumble" over the woman's beauty. The rabbis rebuke men for their metaphoric blindness while a self-imposed "blindness," closing one's eyes to a woman's beauty, is precisely what is encouraged.

Especially during prescribed ritual times, men must avoid looking at women. If, while saying the sh'ma, the rabbis ask, a woman with uncovered hair happens by, shall a man continue to pray? The rabbis direct him to refrain from saying the words of the prayer, for when there "are pleasant looks, there are licentious thoughts."[127] To utter the prayer would then be hilul ha'Shem, defaming God's name, taking God's name in vain. By turning away from women with their beauty exposed, men are able to remain loyal to God.

The talmudic references to women's hair indicate that hair is the sign of a woman's availability, beauty, and desirability. Men must beware the power of this beauty, for

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[126]op. cit., Wiener, p. 14. (quoting Hidushim 'al ha-Sha"s).

[127]ibid., p. 10. (quoting HaR"AH on Berachot).

to fall prey to its charm leads men to look and then to lust after women. Consequently, as the example of the sh'ma indicates, their concentration in worship is broken and their allegiance to the faith is jeopardized.

In further corroboration with this scheme, we find that midrashim addressing human beauty display a like fear of the power of the female. In their own day, the rabbis isolate hair as the central signifier of tzniyut. (We may now define tzniyut as an appropriately modest non-display of a woman's beauty and sexuality). Midrashim clarify that a woman acquires power by decorating herself with forms of adornment. The use of dress forms within the midrashim suggest that hair itself is a type of ornamentation. Like other dress forms, hair is inanimate. It must be manipulated, "put on"--left uncovered--and "taken off"--covered up--in order to convey the intent of the wearer.[128] The role of beauty features prominently in texts on Joseph and Sarah, the post-Eden biblical archetypes of human beauty. An examination of these two adds to our understanding of the role of dress as that which accentuates human beauty. It further clarifies the function of dress as attempting to regulate sexuality in order to fortify the Jewish communal and belief structure.

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[128]We must also acknowledge that hair is a unique form. Unlike color, material, or jewels, hair is produced by the body. Perhaps its semi-animate, semi-inanimate quality lends potency to its role within women's dress regulations.

While the rabbis comment on Joseph's beauty soon after his introduction into the Genesis narrative, it is not until he arrives in Egypt that his beauty plays into the chain of events.[129] Joseph is sold to Potiphar, an officer to Pharoah. One rabbi proposes that his looks appeal to both sexes: Potiphar buys Joseph intending to sodomize him.[130] Once a slave in Potiphar's house, Joseph becomes the object of Potiphar's wife's desires. She lusts after him only to be frustrated by his insistent denial.

The stream of questions and answers that flow from this scene uncover the rabbis' concern with beauty and its use. Initially, they ponder the behavior of Potiphar's wife. They know women to be more reserved, more passive than is this Egyptian lady. After all, men initiate a conversation. Such aggressive actions by this woman could only have been prompted by prior suggestive maneuvering by Joseph. So they ask: what initially stimulated Potiphar's wife to look at Joseph? Because they assume that a man must struggle if he is to resist such an offer, they question further: how did Joseph squelch the temptation presented by the willing woman?

One response is to blame Joseph for inciting the woman's desires.

> Why does scripture say, 'And Joseph was of

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[129]B. R. 34:7.

[130]B. R. 86:3.

> beautiful form and fair to look upon' [and immediately follows this with] 'His master's wife cast her eyes upon Joseph.' It may be illustrated by a man who was standing in the marketplace, pencilling his eyes, fixing his hair, and lifting his heel . . . .[131]

We imagine Joseph a prostitute in the marketplace who pretties himself with cosmetics and stands in a seductive, frivolous pose. (Given that the midrash is from Greco-Roman times, a reference to male prostitution would not be far-fetched).

The rabbis condemn Potiphar's wife for her seducing efforts as well. Zuleika, meaning spark, is the name the rabbis give to Potiphar's wife. She tries to attract Joseph in the same way he was said to have enticed her. She dresses in "the attire of a harlot."[132]

> This may be compared to a she-bear, standing in the street decked with costly gems and precious stones. The people remarked, 'Whosoever rushes upon her can take what she is wearing.' But a wise man there answered them; 'You look at what she is wearing, but I look at her fangs!' From that very she-bear, he fled, observed Rabbi Berekiah, and can there be a greater flight than this?[133]

Donning beautiful ornaments, Zuleika becomes tantalizingly beautiful. The common man, in view of such beauty, is propelled toward her jewels. He cannot reason out the consequence of taking liberties with the bear. Only the wise man perceives the danger in succumbing to her refined

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[131]B. B. 87:3 and Tanh. 155.

[132]B. R. 87:1.

[133]B. R. 86:4.

trappings. Giving in to enticement leads to suffering (or punishment). Joseph understands the potential danger Potiphar's wife presents. In an act of great moral strength, he resists her prodding and as a result bolsters his righteous stature.

To avoid falling victim to the seductiveness of women, men are admonished to close their eyes.[134] Eyes are the instruments through which sin enters a person's mind and soul. Zuleika lusts after Joseph only after she sees his beauty. According to one midrash, Joseph is able to resist her powers precisely because he refuses to look at her.

> How far did she [Zuleika] go?' asked Rav Huna in Rav Aha's name. 'She went as far as to place an iron form under his neck so that he should have to lift his eyes and look at her. Yet in spite of that he would not look at her.'[135]

In a gruesome tale, the rabbis appeal to men to avoid looking at women. The main character is a Torah scholar, who, because he spends all of his time studying Torah, is pure of sin and beyond succumbing to temptation. Satan finds him an appealing pawn. He convinces God to let him sport with the scholar. Satan pulls out his most powerful card: the disguise of a beautiful woman whose beauty resembles that of Na'ama, sister of Tubalkain, whom even the ministering angel could not resist lying with.

> Satan stood before him. When he [the scholar] saw

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[134]Ned. 20a.

[135]B. R. 87:10.

> him, he turned his face away. Satan went to the other side [of him]. Again he turned his face away from Satan. When he [the man] noticed that he had to turn his face in every direction in order to avoid seeing him, he said to himself: 'I am not afraid, lest he overcome my evil inclination and cause me to sin.' What did the righteous man do? He called to his students who were serving him: 'My sons, bring me a fire and some nails.' When they brought them he passed them through the fire and poked out his eyes. . . .[136]

As a reward for such restraint and moral courage, God, through the angel Raphael, restores his sight.

This extreme reaction to the temptation of sin reiterates the pattern: histaklut, looking, leads to hirhur, fantasizing, that in turn leads to sin. The scholar's noble actions suggest the proper male response to female beauty (that is, the beauty of any woman except a man's wife): to avoid looking at a woman. While these midrashim alert men to the power of external ornaments, the dress codes inform us that beautification requires that a woman merely uncover her hair. Hair is her natural ornament. As was the case with the bedecked Zuleika, men must shield their eyes from a woman with uncovered hair in order to remain pure.

Sarah presents men and women with the model of desirable, female beauty. Commenting on Genesis 23:1, "Sarah lived for one hundred years and twenty years and seven years," the rabbis write:

> The Lord knows the days of them that are without blemish; and their inheritance shall be forever. As they are unblemished so are their years

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[136]Tanh. 514.

> unblemished. At the age of twenty she was at the age of seven in beauty and at the age of one hundred she was at the age of twenty in sin.[137]

As to beauty, the ideal numbers do not fit our customary western outlook. To us, the age most reflective of female beauty is twenty; to the rabbis, it is seven. This corroborates with our sense of the rabbis' understanding of women and beauty. Unbridled beauty is a dangerous seductive force in women, but only in post-pubescent women. The seven year old, her enticing power still gestating, can be beautiful in a harmless childish way without sparking desire in men. Although a woman of twenty, Sarah is like the child who remains unaware of the potential power of her sexuality. We imagine a woman without sexual desires or wiles, without understanding as to the power her sex holds. Sarah, the ideal, is objectively beautiful, but sexless, and therefore sinless.

A woman, consequently, is instructed to suppress her sexuality, to be modest in every regard so as avoid enticing men. Men, on the other hand, are instructed to follow the example of the scholar and avoid looking at women. To abstain from doing so is rewarded:

> And he who was warned against looking at a woman, [and does not look at her], he will fear the Kavod, as it is written (Isaiah 32:17) "Thy eyes shall see the King in His beauty."[138]

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[137]B. R. 58:1.

[138]op. cit., Wiener, p. 14 (citing Sefer Hasidim).

The proper focus for a man's gaze is not women but God.

The dress system, then, asserts that women compete with God for the attention of men.[139] If a man allows himself to look at her, to desire her, and possibly to be seduced by the woman, he will be unable to practice as a proper Jew (he may not in fact, practice as a proper Jew, for example, by saying the sh'ma). A woman who deviates from the dress rules betrays the system's dictates; she is no longer a proper Jewish woman. She becomes a prostitute, an adulteress, and, like the male transgressor, is considered an adulteress, an out-cast.

> Those who go with [their] heads uncovered go according to the ways of the idolatrous; behold, for she goes in the way she wants.[140]

A proper women therefore, is instructed to alter her natural appearance, by covering her hair in order to disguise her natural beauty. In this way, she assists men in their efforts to uphold the religious structure.

The purpose of the dress system, we may conclude then,

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[139]In the modern period, the relation of women and Torah is again made, though now women are said to complement the Torah rather than to compete with it for men's attention: women perpetuate the physical existence of the Jewish people; the Torah perpetuates its spiritual existence. Despite this assumed shift in focus, the initial premise remains. Contemporary sources praise tzniyut-keeping women as being beautiful; they resemble Torah; they perpetuate the physical existence of the Jewish people. The opposite of this claim holds as well: Men are attracted to Torah because it, like a beautiful woman, is ornamented.

[140]op. cit., Wiener, p. 16 (quoting Bamidbar Rabba Nassah 9:16).

is to curtail the desirability of women and increase male desire for Torah.

Torah is the primary focus of men's attention. Women are secondary. This suggests a hierarchy of roles: women cater to men who cater to Torah,

Torah
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Men
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^
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Women

A man is prohibited from pursuing any form of pleasure beyond the pleasure he is allowed to take with his lawful wife. However, even this pleasure is limited. The stated goal of marriage, of sexual relations, is not sexual satisfaction but procreation.[141] Pleasure comes through Torah. Left in her natural state, woman is evil, dangerous because of her power to entice. This power is muted through dress. She beomes objectified, mechanized, made into a means of reproduction. The Torah, on the other hand, is the source of wisdom and religious fulfillment.

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[141]"Do no desire beauty, desire a family." Ta'an 26b.

VI. THE IMPACT OF MODERNITY:
EASTERN EUROPE IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Traditional Jewish dress, once donned by all Jews, now clothes a minority of the Jewish community: the ultra-orthodox and the Hasidim. A walk through any of Jerusalem's religious neighborhoods will expose one to an elaborate show of long black frock coats, black brimmed hats, long pants or knickers worn with white or black socks. The untrained observer responds to the overall impression of the male hasidic outfit: it is black, heavy, modest, and anachronistic. Subtle permutations in style go unnoticed. Yet when taken into account by a trained observor from within the system, these very same minor differentiations in dress style alert the viewer to their function as a delineator of group affiliation.

As if along a horizontal axis, dress styles identify the hasidic sects. Members of hasidic groups don styles unique to their sect, with no possibility of infringement into another group's attire. The every day garb of the Neturei-Karta hasidim in Jerusalem comprises black knickers, long black socks, a black kapote (long coat), and a hat, nicknamed the "flying dish" for its wide brim. The Lithuanian hasidim wear long black pants and socks, a short black coat. The Visznitz hasidim tilt their hat to the right; the Belz tilt their's to the left. The way one wears peyot too identifies one's group. The Gur let their peyot fall loosely; the Lithuanian wrap them around their ears; the Edah HaHaredit who reside outside of Jerusalem tuck them

under their kippot; those who live in Jerusalem wrap them around their ears.

Clothing modes, falling along a vertical axis, delineate the status of the members within each individual sect as well. Married members of the Edah HaHaredit wear white socks with their knickers; single men wear black. The Gur hasidim wear a "spodik," a variation on the fur brimmed shtreimel, which, because it is expensive, is awarded to its members only after achieving a specified maturity.[142]

Recently, the Israeli media has begun to use these differentiations in dress as a way to identify the political leanings of Israel's newsmakers in their political analyses. The wearer of the "kippah seruga," the black crocheted kippah, is linked to the moderate orthodox right; the wearer of the black velvet kippah is affiliated with the conservative to extreme orthodox element.

Traditional Jewish dress today thus signifies male group affiliation as well as vertical status within each group.

Prior to the emancipation in Eastern Europe, traditional Jewish dress uniformly clothed the Jewish populous.[143] Emancipation efforts included attempts to

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[142]Hadashot, July 27, 1984, p. 25.

[143]op. cit., Wertheim, p. 196. Jewish codes of law specify particular dress modes for certain holiday and life cycle rituals (the wearing of white on Yom Kippur, for instance). Consequently, these dress styles inherently indicate group affiliation and religious intent. This thesis

modernize the Jews' appearance. Jewish attitudes towards traditional Jewish dress reflected the Jewish responses to the modernization process. The symbolic system of dress now took on a fourth dimension of expressiveness: reaction to modernity, with all the connotations that factor entailed. At one extreme, maskilim appealed to the Russian government to ban traditional garb, which they perceived as limiting Jewish involvement in modern society. The traditional religious--both mitnagdim and hasidim (who allied on this fourth factor of meaning regardless of their quarrels regarding the factor of group differentiation)--interpreted biblical passages as injunctions for wearing traditional Jewish dress; they theologized dress in order to assert its validity as a part of Jewish tradition. This study of Jewish attitudes towards dress in the 19th century, then, reflects the larger issue of Jewish responses to the Enlightenment.

In 1841, the Russian government under Nicholas I, planned to adopt measures to ban traditional Jewish dress. Prior to the enactment of this edict in 1843, the government organized a committee of Jews to examine and suggest ways to educate the Jews in order to assimilate them into Russian

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refers to the every day garb of Eastern European Jewry which by the 19th century had become uniform not only in ways discussed in the last chapters but moreover in the actual pattern of the clothing articles.

society.[144]

This is where the maskilim played their above-mentioned role. Desiring integration with the enlightened secular world, they saw the adoption of modern dress as desirable. A branch of the committee, a group of Vilna maskilim, therefore sent a petition to the Minister of Education, which comported with the government plan. Written in Russian, the document appealed to the government to issue a decree which would prohibit the wearing of traditional Jewish dress.[145]

Their appeal began by alerting the government to the current pervasive Jewish attitude towards dress. The two-point summary indicates the traditional Jewish community's view on tradition and change as well:

> 1) this particular people is rigidly attached to everything that is traditional, and would consider this change in clothing to be a rejection of faith.
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> 2) the abrupt change in clothing would become an economic burden on most members of the Jewish population.

The government confronts a group dedicated to tradition.

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[144]The document which records their suggestions only mentions the participation of maskilim (Mordechai Aaron Guenzburg, Isaac Ben Jacob, and Mathias Strashun to name a few), members of guilds, and a rabbi. The various religious proclivities of the group members therefore cannot be determined fully.

[145]O. Margolis, Di Geshikhte fun Yidn in Rusland, (Moscow), 1950, doc. 140. The translations which appear in this paper are based on the oral translation into English by Gella Fishman.

The latter argue first that every-day dress, although regarded as a minhag, a custom which evolved out of human experience, and not halachah, a law prescribed by God, functions as a mainstay of the religious tradition.[146] Moreover, altering one's clothes would be economically prohibitive. Most Jews, they assert, would oppose an edict to change their clothes simply because they could not afford such a change.

The maskilim respond by insisting that an integrated society may come about only with the government implementation of a modern dress code.

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[146]Isaac Joel Linetzky concurs in his scathing satire on hasidic life, The Polish Lad, (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America) 1971, p.156-157. As one hyperbolic account affirms: "I wish to prove merely that Jews have been wearing the same traditional garb since time immemorial, and that it is worn by Polish Jews to this very day. It follows that the Lord of the Universe must have shown this hallowed garb to Moses on Mount Sinai, and enjoined him to cause Jews to wear it to the end of time, when the world crumbles into dust! And it follows that the garb of Polish Jews must foster even greater saintliness than the Ark of the covenant, for God showed the model of the Ark only to Moses, and Moses in his turn, out of six hundred thousand Jews was barely able to find one Bezalel, one single, solitary, lonesome Jew intelligent enough to put an ark together and as a matter of fact, since the time of Moses and Bezalel no synagogue has contrived to follow the authentic design because no Jew knows what it was, whereas this hallowed garb was manifested by God to all Jews alike, so that in every generation there are, heaven be thanked, quite ordinary Jews--tailors, cobblers, hatters--who can copy this style in meticulous detail. Is it not a crying shame that there should be young Jewish rascals who thrust aside such saintliness and such things of beauty? And they actually glory in their ludicrous attire. Even the blind can perceive that whoever exchanges the hallowed Mount Sinai garb for bobtailed coats and visored caps, at once forfeits the image of God and has his Jewish identity extinguished forever."

> Living among them [the traditional Jews] has convinced us that the first real hurdle to overcome in their education is their strange dress which has separated them from everyone else. All attempts to educate the people will remain unproductive until that time when the Jew will change his fashion and be dressed like all other citizens.

Not only will the adoption of a dress code improve the status of the Jews, it is claimed, but it will align the Russian government with the other countries which have liberated and modernized the Jews: "Our people will be on the road to a modern education which all other peoples have already attained, including Jews outside of this country." Hence, the edict can offer only positive results for both the Jewish people and the Russian government.

The body of the letter stresses the value of modernizing Jewish dress:

> The Jews, separated on account of the distinction in clothing, are unable to relate to other educated citizens. Similar dress on the other hand, would give the Jew access to Christian society from which he would gradually begin to adopt cultured manners, and in the course of time, he would become a useful man and citizen.

Without an external display of formal differences, the Jew may participate as an equal, productive, member of Russian society. In time, such involvement further would lead the Jews to assimilate into the secular community.

The maskilim take pains to explain why such an edict must come from the government. Though the Jews themselves would benefit from the change of garb, they are resistent to it because within the Jewish community are Jews who are

"superstitious." These people persecute any Jew who affronts their sense of propriety. Consequently, the non-superstitious Jews dare not change their dress for fear of provoking the anger of these "hooligans." Even the petition's authors wear the traditional outfit, so as to avoid internal strife, and for the benefit of all Jews. But "once Jews receive some education, they no longer are superstitious," and in the meantime our authors "express this to His Excellency and request that the order come from the government." Only a decree imposed from the outside promises to be adopted, for then, the factions within the Jewish community will have no sway over the actions of the collective body.

In preparation for a vociferous Jewish reaction to the edict, the maskilim intimate to the government an appropriate placating response to offer the traditionalists. Unable to logically counter their first point--that tradition sanctions the wearing of the outfit-- they latch onto the second one: the economic factor. They assure the government that the decree will not place any economic burden on the Jews. Because the secular garb is made of wool, an inexpensive material and is shorter than the Jews' kapote, the poor Jew can simply "remodel his long [wool] frock coat by making it shorter." Moreover, the edict would save Jews money by prohibiting them from buying "fur hats that cost between 10 to 30 rubles," a luxury which has

resulted in the impoverishment of many Jews.

Echoing these sentiments is a memorandum submitted by Abraham Ben Gottlober in which he asserts that the Polish-Lithuanian dress is the "thickest partition . . . separating Jews from Christians in social as well as religious life." The Rabbi of Sambor, Samuel Deutsch, espouses a similar dress reform for Galician Jewry in 1851.[147]

These denunciations of traditional Jewish dress emphasize the maskilic dedication to the Haskalah and their perception of the Russian government as a benevolent regime. Governmentally enforced change, they assumed, even if against the will of the ignorant populous, would elevate the status of Jewry. Their actions expressed this belief as well. After the edict went into effect, some maskilim informed the government of ways in which the masses defied the decree.[148] In one example, the government imposed a tax on anyone who wore a yarmulke. The amount of the tax, 5 rubles per year, was a prohibitive sum to the average Jewish citizen. (A fur hat cost 10-30 rubles, a large sum). Weighing tradition and economic concerns, the hasidim affected a compromise: their community no longer wore the yarmulke under their hats. Only the tzadikim and rabbinic leaders did so--reenforcing a status differentiation within- and paid the tax (with the help of the rest of the community

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[147]op. cit., Mahler, p. 122.

[148]ibid., p. 123.

community who thereby underwrote their support of the status system).[149]

The maskilim appealed not only to the Russian government, but to the Jewish community itself as well. Ayzik-Meyer Dik, the maskilic Yiddish author, penned such an appeal in Di Yiddishe Kleyder a quarter of a century after the government edict banning the garb went into effect.[150] The short story attempted to convince the Jewish population that the decree was not an affront to tradition. He indicates countervailing religious, economic, and historical factors. On the religious front, he claims clothes are a false indicator of piety. Appealing to the economically minded, he notes that since this apparel is suitable only for ritual purposes (for instance, the shtreimel is only worn on the sabbath) it encourages the existence of beggars and indigents who would spend their earnings on religious accoutrements rather than on necessities for their own subsistence. Referring to historical precedents, he points out that in the first and second Temple periods Jews wore the clothes of the neighboring peoples; today, he concludes,

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[149]op. cit., Wertheim, p. 196.

[150]David G. Roskies, Ayzik-Meyer Dik and the Rise of Yiddish Popular Literature: A Dissertation. Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, Brandeis University, Department of Near Eastern and Judaic Studies, September, 1974, p. 117. Roskies refers the reader to Dik, Ayzik-Meyer, Di Yidishe Kleyder Umbekslung (umbaytung) vos/iz geshen in dem yor 1844, (Vilna), 1870, p. 1-13.

we may wear the clothes of our neighbors without offending tradition.

The petition to the Minister of Education and Dik's Di Yiddishe Kleider present two basic arguments of the maskilim: The appeal to the government emphasizes that only by abandoning the traditional Jewish outfit will Jews be able to enter into gentile society and become productive citizens within the secular milieu. The appeal addressed through Dik's story to the Jews is in the form of a classical "kritik:" it identifies clothing customs as a primary perpetrator of Jewish poverty.[151]

The Russian government enacted the law in stages (the effect of the petition is subject to debate). In 1844, a levy was imposed on Jews who wore the traditional costume. To equalize the status of the Jews in Poland with that of the Jews in Russia, in 1845 (later extended to October 10, 1846) the Jewish mode of dress was forbidden in Poland. The government explained the act:

> [Jewish dress] sets apart the members of the Old Testament faith from the other inhabitants of the country in an unseemly fashion, and constitutes one of the chief causes for the curbing of the progress of the civilization of that people.

But in a subtle reversal of strategy, the Russian government determined in January, 1850, that Jewish dress now was permitted (emphasizing that the Jews freely choose their dress) to those who paid the annual tax of 3 to 50 rubles;

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[151]ibid., p. 117.

the amount paid was determined by one's professional status. Exemptions were permitted for "men over 60 and for boys under ten years of age."[152]

Apparently, the maskilic assertion that economics would not impinge on the failure or the success of such an edict proved to be untrue. The poor Jews could not afford to pay the tax nor could they afford to purchase new clothes.

Howeover of greater importance was the fact that traditional Jews disdained the injunction because it challenged the religious values with which the clothes were associated. They feared adopting the customs of the gentiles. It threatened their self-preservation. Rabbi Simhah Bunem interpreted the verse: "And their laws are diverse from those of every people" (Esther 3:8) to mean, "This is their law that they shall be different from any other people."[153] And of Genesis 21:27, "And they two [Abraham and Abimelech] made a covenant" he concluded, 'they two,' and not one [means that] there shall be no unity between them; they should never be joined together to be alike in their deeds."[154] R. Menahem Mendel of Kotzk interpreted the prophecy of Balaam (Numbers 24:12) "What this people shall do to thy people in the end of days" as referring to the days when "this people [the goyim] and Your

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[152]op. cit., Mahler, p. 199.

[153]ibid., p. 313. (quoting Siah Sarfei Kodesh 1:18:11).

[154]ibid., p. 314 (quoting Siah Sarfei Kodesh 215:46).

people, will, God forbid, be alike in all their manners and actions."[155]

Moreover, the decree explicitly abrogated the injunction against imitating gentile customs (Leviticus 18:3). The Russian law (with this stipulation enacted in 1850) forbade men to grow peyot and women to cover their hair, both considered inviolable religious imperatives. Refusing to comply with the edict, many Jews were attacked or imprisoned as army detachments or the police brutalized those who appeared with peyot or beards in the streets.[156]

R. Isaac Meir and R. Isaac of Warsaw attempted to alter the early edict by engaging the aid of Sir Moses Montefiore in 1846. However, their efforts failed. R. Meir, the leader of the opposition to the decree, was arrested (although he was freed the following day because of the popular feeling aroused by the news of his arrest).[157] Isaac Meir and R. Abraham of Ciechanow further state that the Jews are obligated to risk their lives in order to dress as Jews. R. Menahem Mendel of Kotzk, however, opposed this advise and pointed out that Jews have changed their costume

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[155]ibid., p. 314 (quoting Siah Sarfei Kodesh 366:72).

[156]Simon Dubnov, History of the Jews: From the Congress of Vienna to the Emergence of Hitler, Volume V., (Thomas Yoseloff: New York), 1973, p. 316.

[157]According to hasidic lore, it was due to R. Isaac Meir's efforts that the pious chose the Russian and not the German style of dress. See J. Shatsky, Yidn in Varshe 2:81:85.

more than once in their history: "The Jews wore Brandenburg-Kaftan and fringes and they began to change [their mode of dress] but there is no need to let oneself be martyred over this."[158]

In further reaction to the attempt to modernize Jewish dress, the traditionally religious adopted a theological rationalization for specific dress motifs. Once incidental to the clothes items, theological explanations began to be formulated as a central argument in favor of maintaining the particular pattern of costume. Thus, costume became "divinized," invested with divine sanction, which resulted in both the elevation of the wearer and of the item. Efforts to replace the traditional styles with modern ones, consequently, became more difficult. For now, the wearer of this particular traditional garb indeed was enjoined by tradition, the rule of God, to dress as a Jew.

Exemplifying this development is the hasidic explanation for how the Jew must button his coat. The modern coat buttoned with left lapel over right. The Jewish coat buttoned from right to left. In its divinized form, the buttoning of right over left borrowed kabbalistic notions of right and left sides of the Godhead, and expressed the supremacy of God's will (the right) over demonic powers (the left). The Hebrew word for left, smol,

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[158]op. cit., Mahler, p. 314 (quoting Meir Einei Ha-Golah, p. 128; Emet ve Emmunah, nos. 140, 270).

שכנ signifies the Hebrew phrase שמאל נופל ימין רם "Samael, [the devil] falls by the high right hand [God]." R. Menachem Mendel, Tzadik of Mrimnov elaborates: "The new type of late has adopted a custom of the idolaters who changed the right for the left."[159] To don the coat which buttons left side over right is to advocate gentile ways over the divinely ordained Jewish practices.

R. Shalom Rokeah of Belz admonishes the Jews further against adopting the gentile dress:

> A man needs to be very, very careful not to follow the laws of the goyim so that he should not assimilate with them and learn their ways. For this is what Esau said to Jacob: "Let us go and walk," meaning that their manner of dress should be the same. "And I will walk with you," [means that] all other matters shall be the same. But Jacob assured him: "For the children are tender." I no longer fear being scorned on account of my clothes. But the children were scorned because of this [their clothes] and therefore mixed with the goyim and learned their ways.[160]

The Jews must remain separate in their dress. The adoption of gentile garb, the system proposes, leads to the future adoption of other gentile practices. To avoid the temptation of donning their clothes, one requires strength and self-assurance, for only if one adopts the external costume of the Jewish community, can one remain loyal to its beliefs.

The imposition of a religious rationale on the pattern

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[159]op. cit., Wertheim, p. 197 (quoting Guttman: Mi Gedolei Ha Hassidut, Part 4, p.55).

[160]ibid.

of clothing articles was a response to the maskilic efforts to disband the particularistic mode altogether. It resulted in investing the precise hasidic costume with religious significance. To wear the traditional Jewish dress was to assert allegiance to God's will and law.

In further elucidation of this trend, we find the explanation for the wearing of the shtreimel on the sabbath. Pinchas of Koretz explains: "it stems from the letters of Shabbat, ש.ב.ת which are the abbreviations for שטריימל במקום תפילין, shtreimel in place of tefilin."[161] In a telling double-imposed symbolism, the shtreimel becomes a replacement for the tefilin. The tefilin are worn during week day prayers in consonance with the biblical injunction that the commandments shall be a sign (אות) "upon your hands and a symbol before your eyes" (the verse assumed the visual form of the tefilin and the ritual of wearing them). Because the sabbath also is referred to as a sign ("The children of Israel shall keep the sabbath . . . as a sign"), it was determined that it is not necessary to wear tefilin on the sabbath. Only one sign may be observed at one time. In this explanation formulated by Pinhas of Koretz, we find that the shtreimel is a proxy for the tefilin, and like the week day tefilin, the shtreimel becomes an added, if not a necessary, ritual adornment to the sabbath observer's costume. The week day prayers are valid only if said with

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[161]ibid., p. 196.

tefilin. Similarly, the Sabbath prayers are ennobled (though not made valid) by the fur hat.

In a parallel example, Pinhas derives the wearing of the yarmulke from the phrase, יראת שמים --fear of God.[162] He plays on the hard pronunciation of the chaf as a kuf, as an observant Jew would pronounce the name of God in speech so as to avoid taking God's name in vain.

In sum, the Emancipation resulted in the transformation of traditional Jewish dress into a sign system indicative of Jewish identity. In order to prohibit the modernists efforts to disband with the garb, traditionalists theologized their particularistic dress modes. Although technically considered a minhag, the practice of wearing traditional clothing functions within the hasidic world as if it were an halachic stipulation, for to deviate from the uniform style would be to abrogate the group's identity and beliefs. Through examining Jewish attitudes towards dress in the 19th century then, we are introduced to the dress system as it operates within the contemporary ultra-Orthodox community, where we see it functioning along the four symbolic axes, not unlike the examples discussed previously.

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[162]ibid.

VII. THE UNITED STATES TODAY

Examining the dress system within the contemporary community involves two main lines of inquiry. How are the principles of the traditional dress system manifested in the community's contemporary fashion? Why is the mode of application persuasive and binding on the community?

While visual data supply concrete examples of the system, this chapter focuses instead on written material. A written description is beneficial: a picture alone allows for a large number of possible interpretations. The written language appended to an item, however, reveals the specific code for reading the garment, indicating its place within the system.[163] In an attempt to examine sources which would best reflect the community's practice and beliefs, I have selected popular and widely disseminated material. Principle sources are taken from the Satmar weekly Yiddish newspaper, Der Yid, the weekly Lubavitch women's magazine, Der Yiddishe Heim (in Yiddish and English), and Rabbi Moshe Wiener's collection of the "laws of modesty" directed toward the Lubavitch community, The Glory of the King's Daughter.[164]

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[163]For a discussion of the qualitative function of writting on clothing, see op. cit., Barthes, p. 3-18.

[164]Fully to describe and account for this dress system one's analysis would need to expand the data base and interpretive method. The analysis of the contemporary system would need to include pictorial sources (what, in fact, do people wear in a given situation); how this evidence corroborates or deviates from the written statements; interviews (does the function posited by the texts correspond to the understanding of the individual community

Contemporary ultra-Orthodox dress reflects a post Emancipation model of the dress system. In addition to maintaining all four distinctions mentioned above (Jew/non-Jew; men/women; personal status) each ultra-Orthodox group's costume also attests to intra-group differentiation.

The Satmar hasidim of Williamsburg have been described by Solomon Poll as stratified into six social classes:

1. Rebbes (R)
2. Shtickel Rebbes (SR)
3. Sheine Yiden (SY)
4. Talmidei Hachamim (TH)
5. Balebatishe Yiden (BY)
6. Yiden (Y)

Stratification criteria are consistent with the pre-modern system: ritual observance rather than wealth, vocation, or place of residence is the determining factor. Poll defines the six sub-sets of the Satmar Hasidim:

> The Yiden observe hasidic religious practices which differentiate them from non-Hasidic Jews.
>
> The balebatishe Yiden, have wealth which they expend on Hasidic luxuries. These expenditures in themselves constitue religious observance.

> The Talmidei Hachamim lack wealth and are educated in religious matters.
>
> The sheine Yiden lack wealth, are educated, and have a professional affiliation as "religious performers."
>
> The Shtickel rebbes may or may not have wealth, have education, professional affiliation, and some degree of kinship with a famous rebbe.
>
> The rebbes may or may not have wealth, have education, professional affiliation, and lineage, and are identified with a dynasty and have inherited its followers.[165]

The economic position of an individual is of no importance in this community. Rather, religious observance and one's relation to the rebbe determine one's status. Mobility varies with one's community--sanctioned religious observance and ritualistic behavior.

The social position of the six groups is reflected by their clothing too. The most observant wear zehr Hasidish dress while at the bottom of the list, the Yiden may don only a minimum of the Hasidic outfit: the bord und payes, the beard and peyot. Poll delineates the relationship of social rank and dress. (I quote his table in full).[166]

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[165]Solomon Poll, The Hasidic Community of Williamsburg, (New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, Inc.), 1962, p.63 ff.

[166]ibid. p. 67.

Descending Social Rank Order	(SZ)	(SB)	(K)	(BH)	(BP)	(SHI)
Class 1 (R)	+	+	+	+	+	+
Class 2 (SR)	-	+	+	+	+	+
Class 3 (SY)	-	-	+	+	+	+
Class 4 (TH)	-	-	-	+	+	+
Class 5 (BY)	-	-	-	-	+	+
Class 6 (Y)	-	-	-	-	-	+

Identifying Status Symbols:

(SZ) Shich and Zocken (slipper-like shoes and white knee socks)

(SB) Shtreimel and Bekecher (fur hat made out of sable and long silk coat)

(K) Kapote (long overcoat worn as a jacket)

(BH) Biber hat (large-brimmed hat made out of bear)

(BP) Bord und Payes (beard and side-locks)

(SHI) Some Hasidic identity

+=positive -=negative

Women's dress, too, enlarges upon the pre-modern model. Rather than merely indicating a woman's marital position, her dress in the contemporary scheme reflects her husband's personal status as well. Thus, it may be that a woman whose husband is one of the Yiden wears a wig but does not cut her own hair. However the wife of the Rebbe not only cuts her hair--indeed she most likely shaves her head--but wears a wig too, and, in case anyone should doubt the artificial

nature of her wig, she wears in addition a hat. Her conduct is beyond reproach.[167]

Rabbinic advocacy of tzniyut has undergone a change in rationale. Its pre-modern ideology centered on the group; the contemporary appeal addresses the individual. The early system stressed group identity and preservation through common dress. Current discussion revolves around the notion of acceptable female beauty: the rabbis condemn an outer and spurious beauty, notably referred to as "fashion," and promote an inner beauty associated with the spiritual life of the community.

Exemplary of this new rationale is a full page declaration which appeared in the Satmar weekly paper, Der Yid:

> The religious tradition of the daughters of Israel towards modesty is the foundation stone in the life of the Jewish people from generation to generation, and through it [tzniyut], the Jew beautifies and hallows herself against all the goyim and other peoples. Our mothers in each generation have instructed our souls about this matter, and have warned us against idolatry.
>
> The basis of tzniyut is that . . . a woman's clothing cover all the places that need to be covered . . . . the clothes must be the simplest with regard to beauty, and without wild colors [red, for example] or in a fashion which is seductive. . . .[168]

Delineated, it reads:

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[167]Based on a conversation with Ms. Marleen Shiffman who refers to the wife of the Boston Rebbe.

[168]Der Yid, April 23, 1986, p. 45.

a. The woman whose clothing:

1) covers her body

2) is not beautiful ("simple with regard to beauty")

3) eschews wild colors

4) is styled in a non-seductive design

b. obeys the laws of tzniyut and

c. perpetuates the Jewish people and Jewish values.

Thus, through the donning of appropriate dress, the ultra-Orthodox women uphold the moral purity of the Jewish people. However, tzniyut is not said to hide one's beauty, but to cultivate an "inner beauty." In the pre-modern texts, the rabbis call the transgressing woman nevel, by which they mean disgusting; but they never blatantly conclude the opposite, that is, that the follower of the dress laws is beautiful.

"Outer beauty" is identified with external fashions. Fashionable clothing, though admittedly attractive, is spurious because it focuses the wearer (and consequently on-looker) on appearance. Proper behavior, on the other hand, reflects her true "inner beauty:

"Through following the laws of modesty, the Jew beautifies and hallows herself against the other nations."

Through donning prescribed dress styles, the woman protects the community from immoral, idolatrous influences. As a result, she becomes hallowed and beautiful. True beauty, then, does not refer to dress but to human action.

Outer beauty is feared and aligned with idolatrous ways; the act of wearing simple, subdued dress is approved of and linked with righteous behavior.

Wiener, in the preface to his book on the laws of modesty, appeals to women to return to modest dressing. He interprets the verse: "The entire glory of the daughter of the King lies on the inside." (Psalms 45:11). Every Jewish woman is a noble "daughter of the King" whose grandeur is manifested not outwardly in a display of wealth as one would expect of royalty, but rather through the cultivation of her "inside," her private self.

The enhancement of the woman's inner self derives from 1) her childbearing ability; and, 2) her choice to dress according to the dictates of the dress system. These two factors mirror one another: her internal, sacred state is to be matched by a noble external appearance.

The Jewish woman's body is holy because it is able to bear life. As a creator of human life, the woman resembles God, the Creator of all life:

> [The] woman's body. . . reflects. . . more of G-d's essence than does man's. For woman has the ability to create within herself new life, a new creature, a 'something from nothing,' and this parallels and derives from the power of the essence of G-d to create ex nihilo, to create something from nothing. This is one of the ways in which woman holds a more sensitive spiritual position than man.[169]

Woman's position, due to her ability to bear children,

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[169]op. cit., Wiener, p. 7.

transcends that of man's. But such a holy state is fragile; it needs a protective covering.

Wiener makes the telling comparison of the woman to the Torah. God's message is hallowed within the Torah scroll, which is of such a holy stature that it is to be protected:

> The holiest objects, such as the scrolls of the Torah are kept covered. In Torah, 'modesty,' inwardness, is a prime spiritual value in contrast to the prevailing norms of contemporary culture.[170]

We here are provided with a model for protecting the holy. To enclose, to cover, is to preserve the spiritual core of the Torah. The woman, similarly, is to be protected. While the Torah is inherently holy, however, only the woman who dresses according to the laws of tzniyut is considered holy:

> . . . a woman who is private in her life and ways even if she is an Israelite, is deserving to marry a Kohen (priest) and give birth to Kohanim Gedolim (high priests).[171]

A woman's biological life-bearing ability is consecrated the dress system. She is likened to God in her ability to give birth; furthermore, she is awarded with the possibility of bearing children who ascend to the high priesthood, the holiest male status position.

The woman, like the Torah, is a holy "vessel," that is externally shielded in order for its internal holiness to be

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[170]ibid., p. 8.

[171]ibid., p. 8.

protected. Just as the Torah mantle protects its inner treasures of divine message, so too does the woman protect her inner treasure, the ability to bear the future leaders of the Jewish people.

Not only is the woman herself made holy by her observance of the dress system, but the clothing items permitted by the dress system themselves are made holy She invests the neutral garments with a quality of holiness.

> The world itself is made holy; the physical becomes refined, spiritual. . . . By engaging in a physical world, partaking of it and using it for the sake of holiness, the world itself becomes refined and a vessel for G-dliness.[172]

Rather than focusing on the unity and solidarity of the group, the contemporary rationale promotes the woman as an individual who, through her adherence to the dress laws, ennobles herself and the group.

Not surprisingly, then, the process of selecting the clothes becomes important. Thus the Satmar weekly newspaper elucidates:

> 4605 16 Avenue, Brooklyn (718) 438-3454
>
> EXCLUSIVELY OURS . . .
> LARGE SELECTION OF HOSTESS DRESSES FOR THE QUEEN OF THE SEDER
>
> YOUR ONE STOP STORE FOR ALL YOUR YOM TOV & SUMMER LINGERIE NEEDS
>
> FOR YOUR CONVENIENCE WE WILL BE OPEN LATE THIS SUNDAY 4/20/86 11-8 pm[173]

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[172]ibid., p. 7.

[173]Der Yid, April 18, 1986, p.15.

This advertisement emphasizes both that the clothes are "exclusively ours," fit, that is, for the "queen." The image of royalty is carefully selected to emphasize the woman's noble position as daughter of the divine King, and quenn of her own home. She may dress as a "hostess," but this woman does not work in the kitchen. She entertains her guests.

A second advertisement reiterates the twin theme of appropriate clothing, uniqueness, and female royalty:

HATS OFF TO . . .[174]

Exclusive One of a Kind Custom finish
Hats imported from Great Britain
Shop the Royal Collection

1323 49 St.
Brooklyn, N.Y. 11219
435-7256

Sun-Wed 11-4
Evening hrs.
by appt only[175]

Again we find the imagery of royalty, this time transferred metonymically to the clothing which is "royal." And again, its uniqueness is stressed. The clothes are "exclusive", "one of a kind." This is what the modern ultra-Orthodox woman wants: something special which shall enhance her own unique stature.

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[174]The colloquial expression "hats off to . . ." is ironic. This community never takes its hat off to any one, for a continually covered head is deferential to God.

[175]Der Yid, April 18, 1986, p. 15.

While religious leaders attempt to isolate the modern traditional woman from the fashion world, the business sector has obviously counteracted such efforts by appealing to the woman to participate in fashion, albeit for religiously acceptable reasons. But some advertisements go ever farther, simply drawing even the orthodox women into its ubiquitous mass appeal.

Sylvia's Shoes
FOR THE LADIES & JUNIORS WHO KNOW
WHAT DESIGN & COLOR IN SPRING SHOES
ARE ALL ABOUT

Bandolino-Vercani-Impo-Lorenzo
DE MEDIA
Caressa-Gola-
5515 13 Avenue
VISA American Express Master Card[176]

In the heart of the Satmar community, no less, this store caters to the experienced shopper, who, like her non-Orthodox sister, uses neither cash nor personal check, but charges her purchases. She is praised for being au courrant: "for the Ladies and Juniors who know." And what does she know? She knows precisely about that which the Satmar rabbinate wishes she did not: fashion! Women are warned against knowing "what design and color. . . . are all about." Yet she is familiar with the qualities of fashion in abstract and concrete terms: she prefers designer wear, as the very title of the story advertised below makes clear.

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[176]Der Yid, April 18, 1986.

SHUFRA'S DESIGNER BOUTIQUE
149 DIVISION AVE. 384-9491
1467 48th ST. 435-8405

NO MORE RUNNING AROUND, WE'VE GOT
EVERYTHING UNDER ONE ROOF
DESIGNER RAIN COATS, SPRING COATS,
JACKETS, SUITS AND DRESSES,

WE HAVE A LINE OF DRESSES DESIGNED
EXCLUSIVELY FOR YOU
WE CARRY MISSY, JUNIORS AND LARGE SIZES[177]

A last advertisement, again emphasizing the individuality of the woman, introduces something else: the vocabulary differs from secular fashion advertisement language by several decades: While the haute culture fashion industry speaks of petite, small, medium, and large, here we read of missy, junior, and large sizes, a labeling more consistent with the 1950's.

The result is a conflict between ideology and reality. No wonder Wiener writes his book to urge the former despite the latter! Indeed his is no isolated example; we find a continual condemnation of current dressing practices for women. In 1960, the Convention of Neshei Ubnot Chabad, resolved:

> WHEREAS the moral standards of our youth, and the restoration of the high standards of modesty of Jewish womanhood, are two of our chief concerns, the convention therefore
>
> DIRECTS the attention of all Jewish women to the sorry state of modesty in our present society, and particularly to the immodest dress that is so

[177]Der Yid, April 18, 1986.

> common, with its consequent demoralizing effect on our youth.
>
> CALLS on the responsible members of our community, such as rabbis, educators, parents, etc., to restore to its proper importance that exemplary modesty which has always been the badge of honor of Jewish womanhood.[178]

The resolution stresses that the purpose of dress: to maintain moral standards and to convey a badge of honor of Jewish womanhood. Mothers are thus "directed" to instruct their daughters in proper dress behavior, so as to reverse the demoralization of the youth. The call to communal leaders indicates that the problem is one of individual observance and of communal enforcement as well. Rabbis, educators, and parents should increase their efforts to inform the youth of the importance of exemplary Jewish dress.

In Der Yid, the Satmar rabbinate is even more specific in its condemnation of impermissible wear:

> Lately, we have descended ten levels in this matter; women wear clothing in the latest fashion, in loud colors . . . .that resemble the women of other people's and cause them [our women] to be idolatrous, which encourages the increase of sin.

They continue by specifying precisely what they find objectionable:

> wearing uncovered long locks of hair, boastful, revealing clothing, see-through stockings, an

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[178]Der Yiddishe Heim, Spring, 1961, Vol. 2, No. 3, p. 23. Note the form of the warning. Not a Talmudic ruling, nor a traditional responsum or azharah but a modern democratic resolution. The women are not the only ones touched by the reality of modern life.

exposing neck-line, short sleeves.[179]

These two sources emphasize the tendency to defy the rules of the dress system. The Satmar declaration further points precisely to the problem of vagueness within a system that is not made up of measurable parts. The first paragraph comprises a statement of principle, but the system's components--color intensity, resemblance to secular fashion and so on--are not quantifiable entities, so that it is not immediately clear what the women may or may not wear. An indication of this lack of clarity is their list of what women do wear. One would have to conclude, given the rigid nature of the community, that such a defiance of the system is due to a concious misinterpretation of its rules. The result is a misreading of the system, whereby women dress in a way that men find defiant and women find to be in keeping with its dictates:

> Modesty and fashion could go hand in hand. What a happy marriage it would make. And just think of the Kiddush Hashem--'Religious and so fashionable;' 'Such stylish clothing, such a figure, and mind you, all with long sleeves and high necks!' So, the spirit of modesty was slowly replaced with Jewish lady ambassadors, flaunting their charms instead of concealing them, and all in the name of the high and mighty mission of 'Kiddush Hashem.'[180]

An elusive and shifting line divides proper from improper dress behavior. While the dress system promotes

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[179]Der Yid, April 23, 1986, p. 45.

[180]Bas Leah, "Vanity versus Values," Der Yiddishe Heim. Summer. 1963, Vol. 5, No. 1 p. 16.

the line as being an unchanging, solid division, the actual choice in clothing reveals it to be easily breached. The transgressors of the line claim to adhere to the dress system's rationale. They too purport to be God's "ambassadors," displaying God's message through the visage of their dress. Yet because they deviate from the system's principles, they, in effect, threaten the foundations of the traditional system.

We may thus conclude that ultra-Orthodoxy is in the troublesome position whereby its group members uniformly subscribe to a system of principles (the dress system) but are confronted with the fact that no set of rules can cover all the possibilities of dress within the system. Consequently, the application of principles to practice will always be open-textured and vague, creating constant tension between what can be done according to the "letter of the law" but what, to some, may seem contrary to its "spirit."

CONCLUSION

Dress Systems combine form, function and rules in such a way as to serve more generalized cultural ends. In the specific case of the traditional Jewish dress system, we have seen that it is geared towards the goal of the perpetuation of Judaism. Torah and the Jewish people form the basic unit of Jewish culture. Each alone is only an element of the fundamental conceptual unit. The preservation of Torah without the people reduces the Torah to the status of museum piece much as the Egyptian Book of the Dead, the Greek myth, or Gilgamesh have become textual artifacts of demised cultures. Similarly, the preservation of the people without the Torah reduces the people to an anthropological curiosity. No longer linked to that element which gives the people its existential rationale, the people becomes nothing more than an historical fact.

The preservation of this complex unit requires both the continuing biological integrity of the people and their continuing theological integrity. The dress system elaborates principles that function to differentiate Jew from non-Jew, man from woman, scholar from commoner and sinner, and married from never married women. It also incorporates these functional principles of differentiation into specific forms of dress by means of an articulated set of rules. The Jewish dress system thereby succeeds in being remarkably adaptive to the ends it seeks to achieve.

The Jewish male is set apart--as Jew, as man, and as

student of Torah--in ways that encourage him to promote the continuing theological integrity of Judaism. Similarly, the Jewish woman is set apart--as Jew, as female, and either as sexually available or unavailable--in ways that encourage her to promote the continuing biological integrity of the Jewish people. Moreover, the men's system of theological integrity is dependent upon the women's system of biological integrity. Rabbinic cosmology understands the human world to be a dangerous sexual place. Order depends on law-keeping by men, who themselves depend on tzniyut-keeping by women. If women fail, men fail.

Thus the dress system uniquely exemplifies different yet integrated roles that men, women, scholars, commoners, sinners, husbands, wives, bachelors and virgins play in the ongoing effort by a traditional society to preserve its cultural integrity. It is this insight into the cultural anthropology of traditional Jewry that has motivated this thesis from the outset and it is the same insight that will give value to this study in the end.

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