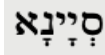


Daf Ditty Eruvin 102: The Fedora



For the Orthodox Jewish community, which dons fedoras on a daily basis, the Borsalino brand has attained even higher status, having established itself as the preferred choice for consumers.

More than simply a fashion statement, head coverings in the Jewish world proclaim an identity and a sense of belonging, often revealing the origin and connection to a movement or stream founded in Russia, Poland or Lithuania. Today, from Sephardic Jews wear hats as well.



Sibling reunion ...
Adrian Lukis as Walter,
David Suchet as Gregory Solomon and
Brendan Coyle as Victor.

Solomon regrets that his hat is not a Borsalino, in spite of looking so.

The Price, Arthur Miller 1968¹

¹ As in an Ibsen play, much of the real action has happened in the past. What we now see are two long-estranged brothers meeting to divide the family's possessions. Victor, married to an alcohol-dependent wife, is a New York cop who sacrificed his studies to look after a dad ruined by the Great Depression. Walter is the brother who got out to enjoy a successful career as a wealthy surgeon. Surrounded by a mountain of mementoes, nicely realised in Simon Higlett's design, the sibling reunion is fraught with resentment but also shows the two men have been playing self-assigned roles. As Walter says, in a line that seems to express Miller's meaning: "We invent ourselves, Vic, to wipe out what we know." The character who is closest to reality is the 89-year-old second-hand dealer **Gregory Solomon**: a blissfully comic creation who, at first, appears to have wandered in from a Neil Simon play, but who is well aware this is his last chance to defy time.

מִתְנִי *קִישְׁרִין נִימָא כַּמְקֻדָּשׁ אַבְל לֹא
 בַּמְדִּינָה וְאִם בְּתַהוּלָה כַּאֲן וּכַאֲן אִסּוּר :
 גַּמְז' וּרְמִינָהוּ נִימַת כְּנֹר שְׁנַפְסָקָה לֹא הִיָּה
 קִישְׁרָה אֲלֵא עֹנְבָה לֹא קִשִּׂיא הֵא רַבֵּנן וְהֵא
 ר' אֲלִיעֶזֶר לְרַבֵּי אֲלִיעֶזֶר דֹּאמַר מִבְּשִׂרֵי מִצְוֵה
 דִּוְחִין אֵת הַשְּׁבֵת קִישְׁרָה לְרַבֵּנן דֹּאמְרֵי
 אִין דִּוְחִין עֹנְבָה אִי רַבֵּי אֲלִיעֶזֶר אֲפִילוּ
 לְכַתְּהוּלָה גַּמִּי אֲלֵא לֹא קִשִּׂיא הֵא *רַבֵּי
 יְהוּדָה וְהֵא רַבֵּנן וּרַבֵּי יְהוּדָה אֲלִיבָא דְמֵאן

ברייתא
The
does not allow wearing
a wide brimmed hat

we initially thought that the ברייתא does not allow wearing a wide brimmed hat, because of making an אהל, but conclude that the concern is that if it is loose fitting it may fall off and the person will carry it four אמות in a הרבים רשות.

בְּשִׁפּוּעָה טָפַח, אָבֵל יֵשׁ בְּשִׁפּוּעָה טָפַח — שִׁפּוּעֵי אֲהָלִים כְּאֲהָלִים דְּמוּ.

its incline does not extend a handbreadth from the center to each side. However, if its incline extends a handbreadth from the center to the side, the *halakha* is that the inclines of tents are considered like tents, and it is therefore prohibited to suspend them.

וְאָמַר רַב שֵׁישָׁא בְרִיהַ דְרַב אִידִי: סִינָא — שְׂרִי. וְהִתְנַיָּא אָסוּר! לָא קְשִׁיא:
הָא — דְּאִית בֵּיהַ טַפַּח, הָא — דְּלִית בֵּיהַ טַפַּח.

And Rav Sheisha, son of Rav Idi, said: With regard to a stiff felt hat [*sayna*], it is permitted to wear it on Shabbat.

The Gemara raises a difficulty: **But wasn't it taught** in a *baraita* that wearing this hat is prohibited?

The Gemara answers: It is **not difficult**. **This** *baraita*, which prohibits wearing a felt hat, is referring to a case **where** the hat extends a **handbreadth** from the person's head and is therefore regarded as a tent; whereas **that** statement by Rav Sheisha, who permits doing so, is referring to a case **where it does not** extend a **handbreadth** from one's head.

RASHI

סיינא שרי - כובע של לבד שקורין פלטרי
מותר לצאת בו בשבת:

JASTROW

סִינָא m. (denom. of סִין) *trowel*, name of a *felt cap with a shade in front*. Sabb. 138^b Ms. M. (ed. סִיאָנָא); Erub. 102^b. Sabb. 119^a אֹתְבָה בְּסִינָא he stuck the jewel on his cap; (Ms. M. בְּסִינָא; Ms. O. בְּסִינָא וְאֵל בְּסִינָא דְרִישִׁיהָ O. Is. 356 בְּסִינָא).—[Nidd. 20^a Ar. ed. Koh., v. סִינָא.]

אֵלָּא מֵעַתָּה: שְׂרִיבִיב בְּגִלְמִיָּה טַפַּח, הֲכִי נִמְי דְּאָסוּר?

The Gemara is surprised at this answer: **But if that is so**, one who **pulled his cloak a handbreadth** beyond his head, **is it also prohibited** for him to do so? This is unreasonable, as it is an article of clothing, not a tent.

אָלָא, לָא קְשִׁיא: הָא — דְּמִיְהֵדֵק, הָא — דְּלָא מִיְהֵדֵק.

Rather, the previous explanation must be rejected, as the issue with regard to a felt hat is not whether it is considered a tent, but whether there is concern that one might come to carry it in the public domain if it falls from his head.

This is **not difficult**; **this** statement of Rav Sheisha, which permits it, is referring to a case **where** the hat **fits snugly** on his head.

There is no concern lest the hat fall, and one will come to carry it; therefore, it is permitted to wear it.

Conversely, **that baraita**, which prohibits wearing this hat, is referring to a case **where it does not fit snugly** on his head. It is therefore liable to fall, and one might come to carry it in the public domain.



It is מותר to tie a string on a musical instrument to fix it in the מקדש but not outside the מקדש. Putting the strings in the instrument in the first place is even אסור in the מקדש. The גמרא asks that this apparently contradicts a ברייתא which says that it is אסור to repair the string with a knot, and it is only מותר to repair it with a bow?

מִתְנִי' קוֹשְׁרִין נִימָא בְּמִקְדָּשׁ, אֲבָל לֹא בְּמִדְיָנָה. וְאִם בְּתַחֲחִילָה — כָּאֵן וְכָאֵן
אָסוּר.

MISHNA: One may tie up on Shabbat a string [nima] that came loose from a harp used in the Temple, but not in the rest of the country. And tying the string to the harp for the first time is prohibited both here and there.

גַּמְ' וּרְמִינָהוּ: נִימַת כְּפֹנֹר שְׁנַפְסָקָה — לֹא הָיָה קוֹשְׁרָהּ אֶלָּא עוֹנְבָהּ! לֹא
קִשְׂיָא: הָא — רַבָּנָן, וְהָא — רַבֵּי אֱלִיעֶזֶר.



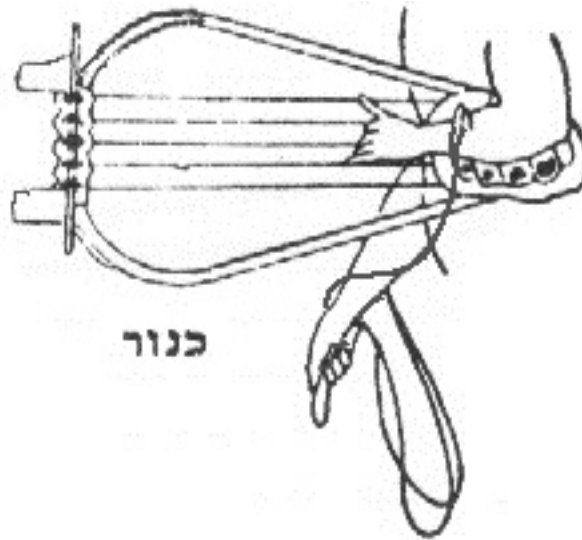
– The first, רבנן והא רבי אליעזר, follows the משה which allows tying
– מכשירי מצוה דוחין את השבת - preparations for a מצוה may be done on שבת, while the ברייתא follows the רבנן who hold
– מכשירי מצוה אין דוחין את השבת -

GEMARA: And the Gemara raises a contradiction from a *baraita*: If a harp string broke, one would not tie it up with a knot, but fashion a bow. This teaching indicates that tying up a harp string is prohibited even in the Temple. The Gemara answers: It is **not difficult; this *baraita***, which prohibits tying, was taught **in accordance with** the opinion of **the Rabbis; and that** mishna is in accordance with the opinion of **Rabbi Eliezer**.

לְרַבִּי אֱלִיעֶזֶר דָּאָמַר מְכַשְׂרֵי מִצְוָה דּוֹחִין אֶת הַשַּׁבָּת, קוֹשְׂרָהּ. לְרַבָּנָן דָּאָמְרֵי
אֵין דּוֹחִין, עוֹנְבָהּ.

The Gemara clarifies this answer: **According to Rabbi Eliezer, who said that the preparations that enable the performance of a mitzva override the prohibitions of Shabbat**, one may tie even the broken harp string, as this is for the purpose of the mitzva of accompanying the Temple service with music.

However, **according to the Rabbis, who say that preparations for a mitzva do not override Shabbat prohibitions**, one may only fashion a bow.



Repairing a Harp on Shabbat

Steinzaltz (OBM) writes²

There is a general principle that most of the Rabbinic ordinances prohibiting activities on *Shabbat*, lest they lead to something that is forbidden on a Biblical level, do not apply in the

² <https://steinsaltz.org/daf/eiruvin102/>

Temple. Several examples of this rule appear in the *Mishnayot* on our *daf* which discuss replacing and securing doors, bandaging wounds and fixing musical instruments.

One may tie up on Shabbat a string [nima] that came loose from a harp used in the Temple, but not in the rest of the country. And tying the string to the harp for the first time is prohibited both here and there.

Stringing a harp for the first time would be forbidden even in the *Mikdash* (Temple), since it should have been done before *Shabbat* began.

The Gemara quotes a *baraita* which rules that when a string breaks it cannot be tied in a knot, but only in a bow, a position more stringent than that of the Mishnah. The Gemara offers a number of possible explanations for this discrepancy, suggesting that there might be a difference of opinion among the *tanna'im* on the matter, or perhaps that the Mishna and the *baraita* are discussing different cases. The Mishna permits the string to be retied in a knot when the string is broken in the middle; the *baraita* permits only to tie a bow when the string is broken on the side.

Most of the commentaries explain that if the string is broken in the middle, unless a solid knot is made, the music will not sound right. If it is broken at the end of the harp, however, even a weaker knot will suffice to produce the proper sound. Rabbenu Yehonatan and the Bartenura explain this differently. According to them, the reason that one is permitted to tie a knot when the string is broken in the middle is because the *Levi* will certainly not leave it there after *Shabbat* – he will untie it and have it replaced.

Therefore, the knot is not considered a permanent one that would be forbidden to make on *Shabbat*. If the string breaks at the very edge, however, tying a knot would fix the problem and there would be no need to replace the string after *Shabbat*. In that case, the knot would be considered a permanent one, which is forbidden on *Shabbat* on a Biblical level.

Rabbinic measures relaxed in the Mikdash

מחזירין רטיה במקדש

The Mishnah teaches that it is generally prohibited to replace a bandage off of one's hand if it has fallen off on Shabbos.

However, in the Mikdash, it would be permitted for a Kohen to do so.

Rashi explains that this Kohen had a wound on his hand before Shabbos. He came to the Mikdash and wanted to do the service, so he removed the bandage from his hand. He is allowed to replace the bandage after he is finished his service. The reason for this is that we are afraid that if he would not be allowed to replace the bandage, he would be reluctant to remove it in the first place to

perform the service in the Mikdash. Therefore, in order to ensure that the service is completed without hesitancy, we inform this Kohen that he will be permitted to replace his bandage.

This is one of three situations which the Gemara (Beitza 11b) defines as “*the outcome is allowed due to the beginning.*” We allow replacing the bandage due to our desire to make sure the service will not be interrupted. Rashi clearly holds that we are not using the universal rule of “*במקדש שבות אין*—we do not enforce rabbinic measures in the Mikdash,” but we only relax the law of replacing bandages because it is necessary for the service—it is *העבודה צורך* .

Rashi apparently holds that the rule of suspending rabbinic laws is **not** a function of the Mikdash, but it is rather due to the service that takes place in the Mikdash.

Rambam (in Commentary to Mishnah, also Hilchos Shabbos 231:27), however, defines this rule as a function of either the Mikdash or the service.

The sugya in Beitza does seem to suggest that the definition of Rashi seems more precise, because it mentions that the only reason, we allow replacing a bandage is for a Kohen who would otherwise not perform the service. This suggests that a Kohen would not be granted this dispensation if he happened to be in the Mikdash but not involved in the service

Wearing a Fedora

Rav Avrohom Adler writes:³

The Gemora quotes Rav Shisha as saying that one may wear a hat with a wide brim on Shabbos. The Gemora asks, there is a braisa that says this is forbidden!

The Gemora answers, when it has a brim of a tefach it is forbidden, as putting it on is akin to making a tent.

The Gemora then asks that this should not be forbidden, as it is akin to one stretching out his cloak one tefach, which surely does not mean he made a tent!

The Gemora answers, rather, one case is where it is tight, and one is where it is not. Rashi understands that this last answer is retracting the entire previous discussion. The Gemora is explaining that the problem here is not making a tent, but rather the possibility that a person’s garment will fly off and he will end up carrying it.

³ http://dafnotes.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Eiruvim_102.pdf

This is why the Gemora says that if the clothing is secure, he can wear it and there is no such suspicion. If it is loose, like a loose hat, he cannot wear it as we suspect he will end up carrying it. Tosfos quotes Rabeinu Chananel who understands the Gemora is not retracting that we are discussing a problem of making a tent.

Rather, the Gemora is saying that if the brim is a tefach wide and solid (does not bend), it appears like a tent and is forbidden to be worn according to Rabbinic law. Otherwise, it is permitted. According to Rabeinu Chananel, Tosfos explains, it would be indeed forbidden to wear a hat with a solid tefach brim on Shabbos.

The Rosh (in Perek Tolin) and others (see Toras Chaim here) comment that according to this explanation, the Gemora's text does not have the word "Ela" -- "rather" as this word means that we are going away from the reasoning of the previous discussion.

Orach Chayim 301:40

כובע שהוא מתפשט להלן מראשו טפח אסור להניח בראשו אפילו בבית
משם אהל:

It is forbidden to use a broad brimmed hat (that exceeds a tefach around one's head) even in the house due to the prohibition against erecting a tent.

The Shulchan Aruch above indeed rules that it is forbidden to put on a hat with a tefach wide brim even in the house, because of making a tent. However, the Mishna Berura there explains that this is only when the brim is very hard and does not bend at all. However, even for this kind of hat there are Acharonim who are lenient (see Mishna Berura below).

WEARING A WIDE-BRIMMED HAT ON SHABBOS

Rav Mordechai Kornfeld writes:⁴

The Gemara discusses the conditions under which one may wear a "Siyana" on Shabbos. What is a Siyana, and under what conditions may one wear it on Shabbos?

RASHI explains that a Siyana is a wide-brimmed hat. If it is not worn *tightly* (Mehudak) on the head, there is a concern that the wind might blow it off and one will pick it up and carry it in Reshus ha'Rabim. (According to Rashi, "Mehudak" means "tight" and is the condition that *permits* a wide-brimmed hat to be worn on Shabbos.)

TOSFOS cites RABEINU CHANANEL who says that a Siyana is a hat or head covering. If the brim is made from a hard material that does not bend, the hat may not be worn on Shabbos, because it is considered an Ohel. When the brim is soft and pliable, the hat may be worn on Shabbos.

⁴ <https://www.dafyomi.co.il/eruv/insites/ev-dt-102.htm>

(According to Rabeinu Chananel, "Mehudak" means that it "does not bend" and is the condition that *prohibits* wearing a hat on Shabbos.)

RAMBAM writes that a Siyana refers to any Talis or overgarment which a person drapes over his head and which protrudes in front of him or to the sides. If it is tightly bound to his head *and* it is stiff and does not bend, it is like an Ohel and may not be worn. (Apparently, according to the Rambam, "Mehudak" means both that it is "tight" and that it "does not bend," and it is the condition that *prohibits* wearing a hat. See TESHUVOS RADVAZ in Leshonos ha'Rambam.)

HALACHAH: Is one permitted to go outside with a hat with a wide, stiff brim on Shabbos?

According to Rabeinu Chananel, to wear such a hat should be prohibited, because it is like an Ohel. According to Rashi, it should be prohibited only if it is not worn tightly on one's head.

Orach Chayim 151:14

דבר שהוא דרך מלבוש אפילו אם אינו לובשו אלא משום אצולי טינוף
מותר לצאת בו בשבת: הגה ולכן מותר ללבוש בגד מפני הגשמים או כובע על ראשו
אבל אסור לאשה ליתן בגד על צעיפה מפני הגשמים דאין זה דרך מלבוש [הגהות מיי]:

Regarding going out with a hat on one's head which is made to provide shade from the sun - there is one who forbids it because we worry that the wind will blow it off his head and he will then travel 4 amos in the public domain, unless it is fastened on his head or if it covers a large portion of his head which is inside it and the wind cannot separate it from his head, or it is fastened with a strap under one's chin. [In these cases,] there is no concern at all.

Orach Chayim 151:41

לצאת בשבת בכובע שבראשו העשוי להגין מפני החמה יש מי שאוסר
משום דחיישינן שיגביהנו הרוח מראשו ואתי לאתויי ד' אמות ברה"ר אא"כ
הוא מהודק בראשו או שהוא עמוק שראשו נכנס לתוכו ואין הרוח יכול
להפרידו מראשו או שהוא קשור ברצועה תחת גרונו דבהכי ליכא למיחש
למיד:

Regarding going out with a hat on one's head which is made to provide shade from the sun - there is one who forbids it because we worry that the wind will blow it off his head and he will then travel 4 amos in the public domain, unless it is fastened on his head or if it covers a large portion

of his head which is inside it and the wind cannot separate it from his head, or it is fastened with a strap under one's chin. [In these cases,] there is no concern at all.

MISHNAH BERURAH (OC 301) lists a number of reasons to permit one to wear a hat on Shabbos:

First, the **MAGEN AVRAHAM** rules that if the brim of a hat is sloped downward, it is not considered an Ohel and may be worn.

Second, one may rely on Rashi's opinion that it is prohibited only when it is worn loosely.

Third, the hats commonly worn today are not worn in order to provide shade, and thus they do not serve the purpose of an Ohel.

Finally, if the brim is not stiff, the hat certainly is permitted.



**A fedora made by Borsalino,
with a pinch-front teardrop-shaped crown**

A **fedora** /fi'dɔ:rə/ is a hat with a soft brim and indented crown. It is typically creased lengthwise down the crown and "pinched" near the front on both sides. Fedoras can also be creased with teardrop crowns, diamond crowns, center dents, and others, and the positioning of pinches can vary. The typical crown height is 4.5 inches (11 cm). The term *fedora* was in use as early as 1891. Its popularity soared, and eventually it eclipsed the similar-looking homburg.

The fedora hat's brim is usually wide, approximately 2.5 inches (6.4 cm) wide, but may be wider, can be left raw-edged (left as cut), finished with a sewn overwelt or underwelt, or bound with a trim-ribbon. *Stitched edge* means that there is one, two, or more rows of stitching radiating inward

toward the crown. The Cavanagh edge is a welted edge with invisible stitching to hold it in place and is a very expensive treatment that can no longer be performed by modern hat factories. Fedora hats are not to be confused with small brimmed hats called trilbies.

Fedoras can be made of wool, cashmere, rabbit or beaver felt. These felts can also be blended to each other with mink or chinchilla and rarely with vicuña, guanaco, cervelt, or mohair. They can also be made of straw, cotton, waxed or oiled cotton, hemp, linen or leather.

A special variation is the rollable, foldaway or crushable fedora (rollable and crushable are not the same) with a certain or open crown (open-crown fedoras can be bashed and shaped in many variations). Special fedoras have a ventilated crown with grommets, mesh inlets or penetrations for a better air circulation. Fedoras can be lined or unlined and have a leather or cloth or ribbon sweatband. Small feathers are sometimes added as decoration. Fedoras can be equipped with a chinstrap, but this is rare.

Fedoras in early American society

During the early twentieth century, a hat was a staple of men's fashion and would be worn in almost all public places. However, as a social custom and common courtesy, men would remove their hats when at home or when engaged in conversation with women. In addition, the ability to own a hat was culturally considered a sign of wealth due to fashion being recognized as a “status symbol.

Only those with few economic resources would venture out without a hat.^[15] The introduction of a new line of felt hats made from nutria, which is an animal similar to the beaver, helped establish the fedora as a durable product.

Prices, in the first decade of the twentieth century, for a nutria fedora ranged from ninety-eight cents to two dollars and twenty-five cents. Starting in the 1920s, fedoras began to rise in popularity after the Prince of Wales adopted the felt hat as his favored headwear. As a result, “*the soft felt hat replaced the stiff hat as the best seller in the decade.*” The fedora soon took its place as a choice hat and joined other popular styles that included the derby and the homburg.

In America during the 1940s, the brims of fedoras started to increase in width, while the British maintained a slightly smaller brim size. The colors of fedoras traditionally included shades of black, brown, and gray. However, this palette would grow at the onset of the second world war to include military themed colors such as khaki, blue, and green. One of the most prominent companies to sell fedoras was the department store Sears, Roebuck and Company. In addition, famous hat manufacturers which still exist today include Bailey, Borsalino, and Stetson



Douglas Fairbanks in 1918 speaking in front of a large crowd of people wearing hat styles ranging from the fedora to the bowler

Fedoras are usually made by pressing a piece of felt over a mold, and using some kind of heat or sealant to help the felt keep its shape.

In the past, molds were created by using a series of wooden blocks to create the shape of the hat, and the felt was pressed on with an iron.

The current method is to use metal molds and machinery to create enough pressure to form the shape of the hat.

After the general shape of the hat has been achieved, the hat makers attach some sort of decoration, usually a ribbon, between the brim and the crown of the hat. The brim is either left raw, or hemmed.

The fedora is considered a “soft hat,” which means that it is usually constructed from felt, fur, or animal hides. There are variations from hat to hat, but the standard design includes a creased crown, angled brim, a pinch at the top of the hat, and some sort of decoration above the brim of the hat.

Men's fedoras especially tend to have stylized brims with edges that are turned down in the front and up in the back. As mentioned earlier, the width of the brim, overall size and color of the hats are subject to change with fashion trends.

Women's hats also tend to have more elaborate decorations and slimmer designs



A hat making factory in the 1940s.

Because of the soft nature of the hat, many variations are possible with Fedoras.

One variation of the hat includes the Stetson playboy hat which was popular in the 1940s.

The Stetson playboy hat involved a marketing success story, with a simple variation on the general form of the fedora becoming a huge hat trend in America.

Al Capone was very fond of the playboy style. Many famous pictures of Capone depict him sporting a Stetson playboy hat.

Contemporary takes on the fedora include asymmetrical brims, bright colors, eccentric patterns, and flashy decorations. Some fedoras are now made from straw, and other unconventional materials.

However, despite the increase of artistic hats, the most commonly worn fedoras are still neutral colored, with simple shape and design



**Humphrey Bogart wearing a fedora
in the film *Casablanca***

The History and Abuse of The Fedora

ROBERT RATH writes:⁵

For all the jokes about game journalists and their fedoras, I can't actually recall seeing a colleague wear one. Oh, I'm sure they exist, and I've been to PAX enough times to have seen the odd snap-brim or trilby bobbing around in the wild, but even when the infamous Yahtzee visited Escapist Expo last year, his trademark Trilby seemed to stay at home (Though he briefly experimented with cat ears). But since the meme about nerds and their fedoras doesn't seem to go away, I figured the topic warrants enough public interest for a discussion - so screw it, let's talk about why nerds wear fedoras.

To understand the fedora's appeal, you have to go back to its origin as a costume piece in the 1882 play *Fédora*. Sex-symbol actress Sarah Bernhardt sported the hat in her title role, and on its debut the fedora became the new "in" fashion among young women. But saying the fedora started as "a woman's hat" ignores one crucial aspect - from the start the fedora represented assertiveness and more than a hint of masculinity.

⁵ <https://v1.escapistmagazine.com/articles/view/video-games/columns/criticalintel/11083-The-History-And-Abuse-of-The-Fedora>

Sarah Bernhard liked to wear men's clothing, and she alternately scandalized and titillated Victorian audiences by playing male roles like Hamlet and, in a particularly incendiary production, Judas Iscariot.

Due to the fedora's linking with a public figure who was assertive, sexually liberated and took on masculine roles, the women's rights movement adopted it as a symbol and from there it spread to women in general. It finally ended up as a hat of, after an advertising push, men in cold weather climates who needed a hat to keep the rain off them. From there the style became ubiquitous, but is especially associated with film stars like Humphrey Bogart and Frank Sinatra, and gangsters, who appreciated that the hat could withstand the elements while obscuring their faces.

In other words, the hat went from being a symbol of coopted masculinity, to one simply considered masculine. While phased out of everyday fashion by the 1960s, it remained a staple of period films like *Indiana Jones* and a testosterone-boosting accessory for celebrities like Johnny Depp and Michel Jackson who don't fit the traditional masculine mold.

In other words, ever since its inception the fedora has been a symbol, though originally an inverted symbol, of what it means to be male. Men who wear fedoras tend to see it as a callback to an older age of style, but it's also a way to engage in fashion without appearing fussy - a reaction to an upbringing that more often than not told them that caring about their appearance or dressing in nice clothes made them seem a derogatory "gay."

This coincided with looser trends in men's fashion through the '80s and '90s - decades where being a "suit" became another derogatory term, and dressing down connoted authenticity.

While men in 1950s and 60s TV shows dressed impeccably, by the '80s the fashion-inept husband became a running gag. Meanwhile, office dress standards fell across most professions as Baby Boomers took the helm, to the point that even traditionally conservative professions like lawyers and news anchors stopped wearing ties. Casual dress might've led to comfortable work environments, but it also raised a generation of men who felt uncomfortable around fashion - now that's changing.

It's no accident that in the last decade we've seen an explosion of shows, from *Mad Men* to *Boardwalk Empire* that depict characters being fashion conscious while retaining their masculinity. Not coincidentally, these shows packed with tough men in snappy suits all take place in the past, with all the distance that affords.

These shows provide an outlet for men who are interested in clothes, but retain the worry that this makes them appear feminine. Clinging to yesterday's most iconic hat is a way to assert fashion sense without worrying about public perception.

Unfortunately, wearing a fedora often has the opposite effect, coming off as a desperate grab at confidence by someone who doesn't know better.



**Giuseppe Borsalino (1834–1900),
the founder of Borsalino**

On 4 April 1857, Giuseppe Borsalino started a workshop in Alessandria that specialized in the production of felt hats. The workshop eventually grew to industrial production, and in 1888 the company moved to a new factory designed by Arnaldo Gardella, located on Corso Cento Cannoni, Alessandria. In these years Borsalino produced 2,500 hats a day, but when the company won the Grand Prix, an important quality certificate, at the Paris Exposition Universelle in 1900, spread the brand's fame globally. The succession of Giuseppe Borsalino was complicated: the designated heir, Teresio Borsalino, was opposed to his cousin Giovanni Borsalino, son of Lazzaro, who inaugurated a new hat factory using the family name. Between Borsalino Antica Casa and Borsalino Fu Lazzaro were years of hard commercial battles but in the end the Teresio came out and the name Borsalino became one again.

On the eve of the First World War Borsalino produced about 2,000,000 hats annually. The manufacture employed over 2,500 employees, representing a significant resource in the economy of the Piedmontese city. Abroad, the brand spread everywhere, conquering the most important markets: the British, but especially the US, where the hats produced in Alessandria were adopted by the Hollywood starsystem.

The downsizing of the company occurred in 1950 in conjunction with the beginning of the fall into disuse of formal hats: Borsalino is thus transformed from mass product into a cult object. In 1987

the hat factory moved from the historic center in Alessandria to the current one of Spinetta Marengo, in the suburbs of the city, and the president Vittorio Vaccarino, the last descendant of the Borsalino family, sold the company to a group of Milanese entrepreneurs.

In Orthodox Judaism, fedoras have been an important addition to a man's wardrobe. Lithuanian yeshiva students in the first half of 20th century wore light hats (as was popular in much of the Western world) during prayer and sometimes even while studying, as evident in a rare footage of the Ponevezh Yeshiva and a photo of the Lomza Yeshiva both in Eastern Europe. Both the footage and the photo show students' studying in their hats. Hasidic Jews wore black hats, albeit not fedoras, and in the latter half of the 20th century, non-Hasidic (Lithuanian style) yeshiva students began to wear black fedoras (or dark blue or gray). Today, many yeshiva students and Orthodox men wear black fedoras for prayer and many even while walking outside. In recent years, Sefardic Jews began to wear black fedoras too.

For Orthodox Jewish men, the hat known as a Borsalino is tops

A fedora worn by Rihanna and Indiana Jones has also been the hat of choice for Jews from Eastern Europe to the United States for more than a century.



**The wing trimming process for new Borsalino hats
in Alessandria, Italy.**

Bill Motchan writes:⁶

The bar and bat mitzvah ceremony is usually followed by an elaborate celebration and windfall of gifts. But many 13-year-old Jewish boys covet just one item: a hat.

The head covering preferred by Orthodox Jewish boys and men especially is a stylish black Italian fedora known as a Borsalino. It has a hoiche (high crown in Yiddish), a noticeably wide brim and a \$325 price tag. That's due in part to its unique construction. This is not a mass-produced hat.

“It's a very complex process and it takes about eight weeks to make one hat,” said Steven Goldstein, owner of Bencraft Hatters in Brooklyn, New York. “What separates the Borsalino from just about all the other companies is that they start out from the beginning and produce their own felt bodies and they can control the quality and the stiffness from the start.”

Bencraft is the largest retailer of Borsalino in the world. Goldstein said he sells “quite a few thousand” each year, many of which are gifted to a boy after he is called to the Torah.

“When a boy turns 13 and gets bar mitzvahed, it's a step to manhood and one of the rituals is that he gets a new hat, sometimes two — one for weekdays and the other for the Sabbath. And usually the one for the Sabbath, if the parents can afford it, it's a Borsalino,” Goldstein said.



Vintage storage carts hold hats at the Borsalino factory in Alessandria, Italy.

⁶ https://religionnews.com/2019/04/09/for-orthodox-jewish-men-the-hat-known-as-a-borsalino-is-tops/?fbclid=IwAR2dBIONgi7jzThzzqpwX61bPMiuFH3Be1xgP1ZzKHqfl-5TIQfTMB_FDIY

The Borsalino is considered the Cadillac of fedoras. Harrison Ford wore it in the various Indiana Jones movies, as did Humphrey Bogart in “Casablanca.”

So did Ernest Hemingway and Winston Churchill. More recently, celebrities from Johnny Depp to Rihanna and Madonna have sported it.

This special black hat has been made in Alessandria, Italy, since 1857, when the company was founded by Giuseppe Borsalino.

The hat’s quality and meticulous 52-step handmade construction process may explain its popularity among glitterati. Its ascendance among Orthodox Jews is more complicated.

Rabbi Shaya Mintz, executive vice president of Kollel Toronto, likens it to a businessman dressing for an important meeting.

“It brings a presence,” Mintz said. “Whenever we stand in prayer when we greet our creator and thank our creator for that which we’ve been provided, we don’t go into a private meeting of that nature in plain clothing.”



Jewish men wear fedoras in St. Louis.

Torah-observant Jews generally wear a yarmulke during prayer and just about everywhere else as a reminder that God’s presence is always above. There are a number of references to the practice

in the Talmud. Any type of hat would theoretically suffice. However, Jewish men who wear the Borsalino fedora also have a generic yarmulke on underneath it.

One theory is that the “Chofetz Chaim,” a treatise on Jewish ethics and laws by the influential Belarussian rabbi Israel Meir Kagan, proclaimed that it’s proper to wear an extra head covering at a time of prayer.

That text didn’t specify the type of hat, though. The practice of wearing a fancy hat may be traced to the mid-1800s and Nosson Zvi Finkel, an Eastern European Orthodox Jewish teacher who had many poor young men as students, according to Rabbi Menachem Tendler, the head rabbi at U. City Shul in St. Louis.

“Finkel’s thing was that if the Torah is the manual for the world, you’ve got to be respectable, to be dignified,” said Tendler. *“He instituted a uniform and he raised money so every boy in his synagogue would walk around in a suit, a hat and a tie. They would walk around town and people would say, ‘That is a successful person.’ It was an image he created for the yeshiva boys.”*

Tendler owns three Borsalinos, which he wears only for prayer or special occasions. He admits that when he puts one on, he feels its presence.

“A person who wakes up and looks like a schlepper starts to treat himself like a schlepper,” Tendler said. “A person who wakes up, if you dress like a millionaire, it has a big influence.”



Rabbi Menachem Tendler sports a Borsalino fedora in St. Louis.

Tendler was quick to point out that wearing one or two head coverings does not make a man a better person. That can only be proved by his actions.

“It doesn’t mean I’m a better Jew than anybody else,” he said. “The hat doesn’t make you more observant, and you’re not less observant if you don’t have a black hat.”

When questioned about the hat’s popularity among Orthodox Jews, Borsalino official Lorenzo Lodigiani was noncommittal.

“Our only belief is quality, and we take very seriously the importance of keeping our production at a high level for all the people who share this value with us, no matter their provenance, their beliefs or even their religion,” Lodigiani said.

There’s no question that Torah-observant Jews place a special significance on it, according to Bencraft Hatters’ Goldstein.

“In the religious community, the loyalty is there to the Borsalino,” Goldstein said. “It is still the best hat that is made, and especially popular with the younger generation. It’s similar to how sneakers are popular with young kids all over the country. It’s considered a status symbol and it’s easily recognized from all other hats.”

Say you're an Orthodox Jew about to be sentenced for a crime.

Should you downplay your identity?

Marvin Schick writes:⁷

In the course of human events there are religious people who do wrongful things.

When reporting their acts there is a simple guideline for the media to follow when determining whether the religious aspect is to be included in the story.

If the wrongful behavior involves a religious institution - fraudulent contributions and money laundering are examples - or was committed by a clergyman, it is appropriate to note the religious angle. If neither factor is present, the religious connection does not belong in the story.

The media generally adhere to this approach. Persons of various faiths, including Jews, have been implicated in major corporate scandals in the US. Yet the accused were not identified by their religious affiliation. Their church or synagogue membership was regarded as irrelevant. But a

⁷ <https://www.jpost.com/israel/jack-abramoffs-black-hat>

different journalistic path is often taken when appearance identifies the accused as being of a particular faith.

Let's face it, Orthodox Jews tend to be distinctive. When one does wrong, the entire community is fair game to those in the media who play unfairly. This journalistic sin is not benign because, as a consequence, people come to believe that there is a higher incidence of wrongdoing among the Orthodox than among others, particularly among the other 90 percent of American Jews, despite definitive statistical evidence to the contrary.

As with African Americans, appearance begets a particular emotional dynamic. In the case of blacks, we call this racism. For Orthodox Jews, the result is bigotry. While racism is widely condemned, bigotry against the Orthodox is considered kosher.

WHICH BRINGS me to Jack Abramoff's hat, **the dark fedora he wore when he came to court to plead guilty to corruption charges involving political influence-peddling. Such hats are worn by no more than half of Orthodox men, and generally not by the modern Orthodox, the subgroup Abramoff identifies with.** They are also worn by men who aren't Jewish. But Abramoff gave reporters an opportunity they could not refuse, and so bigotry poured out of their journalistic pores.

Sadly, liberals led the way, meaning that hypocrisy was added to bigotry, with Frank Rich of The New York Times once more striking a rich lode of anti-religious sentiment. As far as I know, none of our defense organizations have protested against the linking of Orthodox Jews to Abramoff's wrongdoing.

Because it is convenient for reporters to call attention to religious identity, when an Orthodox Jew does wrong and is called to account, I wonder whether the wrongdoer should take care to limit the religious factor. Beards cannot be cut off, but what about a kippa or dark fedora? Is it preferable to come to court bareheaded?

Should Orthodox Jews try to divert attention away from their religious identity?

There is no one answer to such questions because much depends on the circumstances that are peculiar to each situation. It's best to consult a rabbi or some other respected authority. If a religious Jew chooses to cover his head, that's his right, and his right must be respected because it arises out of a sincere religious commitment.

FOR MANY Orthodox, the headgear question raises other issues. The American (and British) job market is a prime example, as it remains a place of serious discrimination against religious Jews. For all the US legislation, federal and state, prohibiting workplace discrimination against religious persons, there are employers who refuse to hire Orthodox Jews.

Fact: **Male Orthodox graduates of Columbia Law School who went to job interviews bareheaded fared far better than those with yarmulkas perched on their heads.**⁸ Even when a job is not at stake there are questions about head coverings. Should an Orthodox public-school teacher cover his head in class? Is it perhaps best to avoid any possible invitation to students to focus on his religiosity?

⁸ As did I, pay a price wearing y yarmulke in a British medical school circa 1969

Much the same can be asked of others in authority. Although wearing a yarmulka may intrinsically be of little halachic significance, it is a symbol - an important one at that - and its removal may be regarded as an expression of discomfort or shame over one's religiosity, and therefore inappropriate.

Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, the preeminent authority on Jewish religious law, dealt with this issue in several responsa. Younger Orthodox Jews tend to be more comfortable with their religiosity and more resistant to going bareheaded. AS A COLLEGE student, I wore a yarmulka in class. At NYU, where I did my graduate work, I co-authored scholarly papers with professors Joseph Tanenhaus and Albert Somit.

They had authored an important study of higher education, and when James Hester came in as NYU's president, he asked them to recommend a graduate student to serve on his staff. I was their candidate - **but the yarmulka turned out to be a barrier**. When I began teaching at Hunter College in 1962, the yarmulka came off because I regarded it as a possible diversion. My older son, now a deputy attorney-general of New York, proudly wears a black yarmulka on his head, even when he is in court.

Again, the choice has to be the individuals. In a country that prides itself as tolerant it's time that religious choices were respected. Is it too much to expect that when a religious Jew acts wrongfully the media will not put their instinct for hypocrisy on full display? Is it too much to ask that Jack Abramoff's hat not be a signal to those who traffic in bigotry that it is acceptable for them to follow their baser instincts?

MOSHIACH'S HAT (A Poem to Ponder)

By Anonymous ben Kolonymous (who else?)

'T was the night of the Geulah, — And in every single Shtiebel
Sounds of Torah could be heard — Coming from every kind of Yeedel.
This one in English, — Some in Hebrew, some in Yiddish.
Some saying P'shat — And some saying a Chiddish.

And up in Shamayim—The Aibishter decreed:
“The time has come — For My children to be freed.
“Rouse the Moshiach — From his heavenly berth.
Have him get in his chariot, — And head down to earth.

“The Moshiach got dressed — And with a heart full of glee,
Went down to earth and entered — the first Shtiebel he did see.

“I am the Moshiach! — Hashem has heard your plea!
Your Geulah has come! — It’s time to go free!
“They all stopped their learning; — This was quite a surprise.
And they look at him carefully, — With piercing sharp eyes
“He’s not the Moshiach!” — Said one with a grin,
“Just look at his hat, — At the pinches and brim!”
“That’s right!” cried another — With a grimace and frown,
“Whoever heard of Moshiach, — With a brim that’s turned down?”

“Well,” thought Moshiach, — “If this is the rule,
I’ll turn my brim up — Before I go to the next shul.”

So, he walked right on over — To the next shul in town.
Sure to be accepted, — Since his brim was no longer down.
“I’m, the Moshiach!” he cried, — As he began to enter
But the Jews wanted to know first — If he was Left Right or Center
“Your clothes are so black!” — They cried out in fright.
“You can’t be Moshiach–You’re much too far right!”
“If you want to be Moshiach, — You must be properly outfitted.

“So, they replaced his black hat — With a Kippah that was knitted.
Wearing his new Kippah, — Moshiach went out and said:
“No difference to me — What I wear on my head.

“So, he went to the next shul, — For his mission was dear.
But he was getting frustrated — With the Yidden down hear.
“I’m the Moshiach!” he cried, — And they all stopped to stare,
And a complete eerie stillness — Filled up the air.
“You’re the Moshiach?! — Just imagine that!
Whoever heard of Moshiach — Without a black hat?”
“But I do have a hat!” — The Moshiach then said.
So he pulled it right out — And plunked it down on his head.
Then the shul started laughing, — And one said” Where’s your kop?
You can’t have Moshiach — With a brim that’s turned up!

If you want to be Moshiach — And be accepted in this town,
“Put some pinches in your hat — And turn that brim down!”

Moshiach walked out and said: — “I guess my time hasn’t come.
I’ll just return — To where I came from.

“So, he went to his chariot, — But as he began to enter,
All sorts of Jews appeared — From the Left, Right, and Center.
“Please wait – do not leave. — It’s all their fault!” they said,
And they pointed to each other — And to what was on each other’s head.

Moshiach just looked sad — And said, "You don't understand."
And then started up his chariot — To get out of this land.
"Yes, it's very wonderful — That you all learn Torah,
But you seem to have forgotten — A crucial part of our Mesorah.
"What does he mean?" — "What's he talking about?"
And they all looked bewildered, — And they all began to shout.

Moshiach looked back and answered, — "The first place to start,
Is to shut up your mouths — And open your hearts.
"To each of you, certain Yidden — Seem too Frum or too Frei,
But all Yidden are beloved — in the Aibishter's eye."

And on his way up he shouted: — "If you want me to come,
Try working a little harder — **On some Ahavat Chinam!**"