"It shall be on his forehead at all times"
Torah Study for Parashat T'etzaveh
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1. **Exodus 28:36-38**

(36) You shall make a frontlet of pure gold and engrave on it the seal inscription: “Holy to the LORD.” (37) Suspend it on a cord of blue, so that it may remain on the headress; it shall remain on the front of the headdress. (38) It shall be on Aaron’s forehead, that Aaron may take away any sin arising from the holy things that the Israelites consecrate, from any of their sacred donations; it shall be on his forehead at all times, to win acceptance for them before the LORD.

2. **Rashbam on Exodus 28:36:1**

The name ציץ reflects the fact that this head-plate is worn on a place

א. שמות כ"ח:ל"ו-ל"ח
ב. רשב"ם על שמות כ"ח:ל"ו:א'
Rashi on Exodus 28:38:1
AND AARON SHALL BEAR [THE INIQUITY OF THE HOLY THINGS] — The word נשא is an expression of forgiveness, but nevertheless it does not move from (lose) its ordinary meaning of “bearing”: Aaron bears the load of iniquity so that it follows that the iniquity is lifted off the holy things.

Rashi on Exodus 28:38:3
— It is not possible to say that this means that it should be on his forehead continually because, as a matter of fact, it was on it only at the time of the sacrificial service. But the word תמיד is to be connected with the words that follow: “continually to make atonement for them”, even if it be not then upon his forehead, i. e. when the High Priest was not officiating, and therefore was not wearing the Plate, at that time when the unclean animal was being sacrificed by an ordinary priest. But according to the opinion (if we adopt the opinion) of him (Rabbi Judah) who says that only whilst it was on his forehead did it atone and effect pardon, and that if it was not on his forehead it did not effect pardon, the following inference must be derived from the phrase על מצחו תמיד: it informs us that he must constantly touch it whilst it is on his forehead, so that he should not divert his attention from it (Yoma 7b).
5. **Ibn Ezra on Exodus 26:38**

"It shall be on his forehead at all times," At all times when he comes into the sanctuary.

6. **Rabbi Kerry Olitzky, "We are All Holy Before God"**

If the Israelite community—the Jewish people—are to be a “nation of priests,” as it says previously in Exodus 19:6, then we are required to mimic the activities and garments of the priests.

I recognize that the priests had a special responsibility and a special relationship with God, identified as “holy,” but everyone can enjoy such a relationship, priest or not. Perhaps the sign that they were to wear—concretized in part in the tefillin that is now placed on our foreheads temporarily but probably worn all day at a previous time—is a reminder that all of us, whoever we are in the community, old-timer or newcomer, are indeed holy to God.

The priest in all of us must remember this as we make the weighty decisions about the future and the community we are trying to create.

https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/we-are-all-holy-before-god/

7. **Rabbi Mary Zamore, "What is Holy to God? Each of Us"**

It is easy to assume that “Holy to God” signifies the High Priest’s elevated status. However, he was not intrinsically holier than anyone else. Certainly, the priestly class had an auspicious role in the community with the High Priest at the top of this societal and religious structure. Yet, his function was to expedite holy actions, not to personally gain from his position. Speaking of the tzitz on Aaron’s forehead “at all times” (Exodus 28:38), Rashi clarifies that this means when wearing it, the High Priest had to be focused on it and the holiness required of his work. Modern commentator Aviva Zornberg teaches: “…to be a kohen is both to act out a role of service, to submit to a superior force, and to be an aristocrat, aware of power in oneself (The Particulars of Rapture, 363). Zornberg cites this teaching as a reflection of the grave responsibility of thought and action: “The High Priest's vestments invest him in anxiety, no less than in glory. Ultimately, it is not only the diadem [tzitz] that is to be ‘Holy to God,’ but its wearer” (369). Therefore, the phrase is instructive, not descriptive.

Offering a different interpretation of “Holy to God,” the Zohar (Kabbalistic text, 13thc.) describes the object of the phrase as the person who has come to offer a sacrifice. According to the Zohar, the phrase would be reflected from the High Priest’s headpiece onto the face of the person standing before him. When this occurred, it indicated that the person was righteous. If there were no reflection of “Holy to God,” then the High Priest knew that the one offering the sacrifice was arrogant, not ready to submit to God’s will and in need of his intervention. Then,
the High Priest would pray for God to have mercy and forgive the person, accepting the sacrifice as pure (Zohar, 2:217).

Today, there is no Temple, no High Priest, no need of the golden headplate to strive for holiness. Instead, let us imagine that the words “Holy to God” shine forth from each of our foreheads. These words are far more valuable than pure gold or precious gems, for they reflect God’s light, challenging us to behave in ways that honor the holiness in ourselves and in others.

8. Baruch S. Davidson, "Why Do we Wear a Kippah?"

The tradition to wear a kippah is not derived from any biblical passage. Rather, it is a custom which evolved as a sign of our recognition that there is Someone “above” us who watches our every act. The Talmud relates that a woman was once told by astrologers that her son is destined to be a thief. To prevent this from happening, she insisted that he always have his head covered, to remind him of G-d’s presence and instill within him the fear of heaven. Once, while sitting under a palm tree, his headcovering fell off. He was suddenly overcome by an urge to eat a fruit from the tree, which did not belong to him. It was then that he realized the strong effect which the wearing of a kippah had on him.

In Talmudic times, the practice of wearing a headcovering was reserved for men of great stature. In later generations, though, it became the accepted custom for all Jewish men to wear a kippah at all times, and especially during prayer. As with all Jewish customs, once they become a universally accepted Jewish practice, they become halachically obligatory. According to some opinions, since wearing a kippah has become a form of distinction between Jews and non-Jews, failure to wear a headcovering falls under the prohibition of “you shall not follow their statutes.”


9. Rabbi Jeffrey Salkin, "Why I am considering wearing a kippah in public"

The truth is: It was not until relatively recently that Orthodox men wore kippot outside the home. The late Rabbi Joseph Lookstein, one of this country’s most prominent Orthodox rabbis, had always taught that the kippah was an “indoor garment.” You wore it at home. Not on the street. To paraphrase Herman Wouk: The kippah was for inside; the bare head was for outside. Inside the home, you were a pious Jew; outside the home, you would be an undifferentiated American.

So, when did Jewish men – and then, Jewish women – start wearing kippot in public? It was during the Soviet Jewry movement – when we donned the kippah or yarmulke as a symbol of Jewish ethnic pride and solidarity.
My own personal practice? I wear a kippah when I pray; when I study; when I teach; when I eat in a kosher restaurant.
So, why, then, would I consider wearing a kippah in public?

It is about what is happening in Germany today. There has been a dramatic rise in violent antisemitism – both physically and verbally. Recent government statistics show a 20 percent rise in the number of antisemitic crimes reported in the past year, with a total of about 1,800 in 2018. The vast majority of crimes for which a perpetrator or motive is known were attributed to the far-right wing. Read last week’s story in the New York Times magazine. It is startling.
As a result, Germany’s commissioner on antisemitism, Felix Klein has said: It is dangerous to identify publicly as Jewish in Germany. In an interview with the Berliner Morgenpost on May 24, Felix Klein said: “I can’t recommend that Jews can wear a kippah everywhere and any time. Sad to say.”

And yet, others have called on German Jews and non-Jews to wear the kippah – as a sign of pride, as a sign of defiance, and as a sign of solidarity.

Why, then, do I hesitate to put on a kippah in public?

I have discerned that the settings in which I wear a kippah – prayer, study, and eating at kosher establishments – all have one thing in common.

These are places where I demonstrate – to myself, to God, and to others – a certain level of piety, and a certain level of havdalah – of distinctive behaviors, and of kedusha, of holiness.

- To pray is to speak. But it is a different kind of speech. When I speak to others, I am bareheaded. When I expect to speak to God, I cover my head. It reminds me of what is above me.
- To study Torah is to learn. But, it is a different kind of learning. When I read a biography of Abraham Lincoln, I am bareheaded. When I read the words of the biblical Abraham, in the original, I cover my head. It reminds me of what is beyond me.
- To eat in a kosher restaurant is to eat. But, it is a different kind of eating. When I go into an Italian restaurant, I eat bareheaded. When I eat in a Jewish manner, with other Jews, in a Jewish restaurant, I cover my head. It reminds me of what is within me.

Were I to start wearing a kippah in public, it would be for one reason, and for one reason only: to be defiant. That is not the reason for the kippah.

It is not to identify the haters.
It is to identify with God.
I do not wear a kippah because they hate me.
I wear a kippah because God loves me.

https://religionnews.com/2019/05/31/kippah-germany-antisemitism/