

Kippot

How Minhagim Becomes Halacha

“And the watchman told, saying: 'He came even unto them, and cometh not back; and the *driving* [minhag] is like the *driving* [minhag] of Jehu the son of Nimshi; for he driveth furiously” (2 Kings 9:20; emphasis added.)

Minhagim are value rated on a few criteria:

- Age. The older the minhag, the more binding
- “Practice of your father”. Tosafot to Menahot 20b s.v. nifsal. This is where familial customs and community standards are passed down generationally. Converts take on the minhagim of their communities in lieu of “fathers”
- Does it uplift mitzvot?
- If we remove it, does it take away from Jewish life?

Minhagim are hard to get rid of. Some say you have to ceremonially eliminate a vow (neder) when stopping a custom.

Minhagim are also more powerful than Torah because they are spread as “memes”, even if they are wrong. Examples: spitting to cast away the evil eye, wearing red bracelets, burying treif dishware.

How Kippot Relate To Minhag

Men are required to cover heads in prayer (Rambam Mishna Torah Tefillah 5:5)

Talmud relates that wearing a kippah is a spiritual reminder to remain holy (Shabbat 156b, Kiddushin 31a)

The argument that one should always be praying, and therefore always wearing kippah, won popular opinion.

Traditional Jews who normally wear kippah all the time are given leniency about wearing one in a place that could be anti-Semitic or if it could cause you to lose your job.

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