



A Cultural History of Jewish Dress (Dress, Body, Culture)

Eric Silverman

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A Cultural History of Jewish Dress is the first comprehensive account of how Jews have been distinguished by their appearance from Ancient Israel to the present. For centuries Jews have dressed in distinctive ways to communicate their devotion to God, their religious identity, and the proper earthly roles of men and women. This lively work explores the rich history of Jewish dress, examining how Jews and non-Jews alike debated and legislated Jewish attire in different places, as well as outlining the big debates on dress within the Jewish community today.

Focusing on tensions over gender, ethnic identity and assimilation, each chapter discusses the meaning and symbolism of a specific era or type of Jewish dress. What were biblical and rabbinic fashions? Why was clothing so important to immigrant Jews in America? Why do Hassidic Jews wear black? When did yarmulkes become *bar mitzvah* souvenirs?

The book also offers the first analysis of how young Jewish adults today announce on caps, shirts, and even undergarments their striving to transform Jewishness from a religious and historical heritage into an ethnic identity that is hip, racy, and irreverent. Fascinating and accessibly written, *A Cultural History of Jewish Dress* will appeal to anybody interested in the central role of clothing in defining Jewish identity.

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