

F- M-0

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FOR TORAH UMADDA BOOK

SUBJECT: Special, Identifiable Clothing

One of the visible differentia between the Right-Wing and Centrist Orthodoxy is the black felt hat, or black suits.

There is a good argument to be made for such outward identifying marks...

However, there is equally good argument to oppose them. For one thing, they set apart Orthodox Jews from others, and thus make them immune to whatever beneficent influence Orthodox Jews can have on other Jews. The "Alter" of Mir used to insist that his students dress "normally" and be shaven... (Check on this).

Moreover, excessive emphasis on outward appearance often becomes a cover-up for inward moral flabbiness. The Kotzker once said: We read in the Torah that, at the occasion of the spies who entered Canaan, that Joshua and Caleb tore their clothing. Why so? The answer is: When the two saw that twelve spies who were all distinguished princes could wear their shtreimlech and white "chupitzes" and yet speak ill of the Land of Israel, they came to the conclusion that outward appearance no longer has any significance whatever, and they therefore tore their clothing, i.e., the clothing of the spies. Why, he asked, do we need any shtreimlech and "chupitzes", when the outward clothing no longer protect inner purity?

si: mpe