



1. *Shmatte Chic*, by Alana Newhouse, March 2 2007

At Fashion Week in New York last month, Brazilian designer Alexandre Herchcovitch didn't so much unveil a collection as veil one. His aggressively modest looks included below-the-knee skirts, billowing silhouettes, and, most conspicuously, hats. Lots of elaborate, distinctly undainty hats, which bore a striking resemblance to, of all things, those worn by fashionable Orthodox Jewish women on holy days—making Herchcovitch's runway seem less like a Saturday at the Shows than Sabbath in certain synagogues... Herchcovitch is mining a past very much his own: The 35-year-old, whose Jewish grandparents immigrated to Brazil from Poland in the early 1900s, attended a yeshiva and enthusiastically points to his religious background as an inspiration. "I was influenced by the modest Jewish attitude of dress, of not showing the body," Herchcovitch once told the *Jerusalem Report*, underscoring that "this goes strongly against the body-beautiful culture of Brazil."

2. *Boomer ReJew-vention*, by Maureen Adler-Marks

When I was growing up, in New York, my favorite Rosh Hashanah ritual was the purchase of a new Jewish suit. Despite the threat of Indian summer heat, year after year I'd be in shul, sweltering in blue wool, dripping with sweat and pride; duped by seasonal change again.

In Los Angeles now, of course we're laid back. New clothing merely means a new black cotton T-shirt. The other day at Torah study, we discussed the controversy of Jewish jeans: Is it all right to wear denims and running shoes to services?

"Whatever," shrugged the well-dressed rabbi, dapper in Armani. But with the growing influence of the ashram, and the recent adoption of meditation-style worship, it's only a matter of time until our clothing goes with the flow.

Frankly, I'll miss dress-up Judaism and, like the recent readoption of the yarmulke, predict it will one day stage a comeback. Business attire at services, especially heels, is miserably restrictive, but that's the point, a beginning at self-containment. You've got to start somewhere, you know, and teshuvah, the spiritual chiropractic generally known as "repentance," is hard work. Many of my best intentions fail me. If I can't easily change my habits, drives, ambitions and motivations, at least I can alter my hemline. We change slowly, from the outside in.

3. *Introducing... Rabbi's Daughters*, People, 12/15/2003, Vol. 60, Issue 24

"I've always wanted to do a line called 'Rabbi's Daughters,'" says Daniella, the youngest of Los Angeles Rabbi Jerry Cutler's three gals. "In June we came up with a simple idea, had a brainstorming session and then the next thing you know..." Oy! Two months later their line of tops with Yiddishisms, like "Yenta" (gossipy girl), "Goy Toy" (a plaything for a non-Jewish boy) and "Shayna Punim" (pretty face), on them were selling like hot latkes. The celeb fan-base quickly followed: Madonna, Christina Aguilera and Kelly Osbourne sport "Shiksa" (a non-Jewish girl) and Mandy Moore snagged "Oy Vey" (woe is me).

4. *The Chosen Couture*, by Lisa McLaughlin, Time, 12/22/2003, Vol. 162, Issue 25

Young consumers are turning to micro fashion lines to assert their Jewish pride

Sarah Lefton began her career as head of the hip micro clothing line Jewish Fashion Conspiracy "as a joke, really." Her day job as the marketing director of a summer camp in Yosemite National Park provided the inspiration. She made up a few T shirts bearing the slogan YO SEMITE for her own amusement, and, she says, "I kept getting stopped in the street." Within two days she had taken orders for 36 shirts, and a new career was born....

She has also contributed to a fashion trend: conversation-provoking T shirts, hats and even underwear emblazoned with expressions of secular Jewish pride. At jewishfashionconspiracy.com, you can find Lefton's pro-Semitic shirts. Jewlo.com showcases Julia Lowenstein's Hebraic spin on J. Lo, and at jewishjeans.com, there are no jeans yet, but there are 21 styles of T shirts with slogans like NICE JEWISH GIRL. The new designers join the popular-clothing company Jewcy in celebrating "kosher-style fabulousity."

Why this vogue now? "Younger Jews are accepting their Jewish identity and looking for ways to 'represent,'" says Jew.Lo's Lowenstein, 27. "With the alarming rise in anti-Semitism on college campuses, as well as in the national consciousness, young Jews are feeling that now is an especially important time to be forthright and proud of who they

are." She notes, "Though it's hard to implement mass change through fashion, the shirts are a positive step toward more Jewish pride among the younger generation."

Jews and Clothes

5. *Jewish Life in the Middle Ages*, Israel Abrahams, pg. 242

Tailoring became in course of time the most common Jewish occupation, and in the ghettos on a summer day the Jews might be seen seated by hundreds at their doors plying their needles and shears. By the beginning of the eighteenth century three-fourths of the Roman Jews were tailors.

6. *Readmission of the Jews into Brandenburg*, 1671

The Jews must not practice any deception with their weights in buying or selling. We permit them to trade in new and old clothes, to slaughter meat in their own homes...

7. *Charter for the Jews of Prussia*, 1750

We herewith establish, regulate, and order earnestly that in the future no Jew shall presume to engage in any manual trade, nor venture upon any, except seal-engraving, [art] painting, the grinding of optical glasses, diamonds, and jewels, gold and silver embroidery, fine cloth needlework...

8. *Uniting the Tailors, Trade Unionism Amongst the Tailors of London and Leeds, 1870-1939*, by Dan Weinbren, *Labour History Review*, Fall '95, 60:2

There were also disputes between the Lithuanian Jewish tailors and those from Romania; between the numerous unions' leaders, between the religious Jews and the more secular anarchists, socialists and communists and between the skilled bespoke tailors of west London and the rag-trade workers of the east.

9. Canada

- Daniel Hiebert, *Jewish immigrants and the Garment Industry of Toronto, 1901-1931: A Study of Ethnic and Class Relations* <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2563495>
- Stan Carbone, *A Stitch in Time: Winnipeg Jews and the Garment Industry* http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/mb_history/77/stitchintime.shtml

10. Malcolm Gladwell, *Outliers*, pp. 142-143

Jewish immigrants like the Floms and the Borgenichts and the Janklows were not like the other immigrants who came to America in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The Irish and the Italians were peasants, tenant farmers from the impoverished countryside of Europe. Not so the Jews. For centuries in Europe, they had been forbidden to own land, so they had clustered in cities and towns, taking up urban trades and professions. Seventy percent of the Eastern European Jews who came through Ellis Island in the thirty years or so before the First World War had some kind of occupational skill. They had owned small groceries or jewelry stores. They had been bookbinders or watchmakers. Overwhelmingly, though, their experience lay in the clothing trade. They were tailors and dressmakers, hat and cap makers, and furriers and tanners.

11. Malcolm Gladwell, *Outliers*, pg. 147

"The threshold for getting involved in the business was very low. It's basically a business built on the sewing machine, and sewing machines don't cost that much," says Daniel Soyer, a historian who has written widely on the garment industry. "So you didn't need a lot of capital. At the turn of the twentieth century, it was probably fifty dollars to buy a machine or two. All you had to do to be a contractor was to have a couple sewing machines, some irons, and a couple of workers. The profit margins were very low but you could make some money."

12. Malcolm Gladwell, *Outliers*, pp. 151-153

The most important consequence of the miracle of the garment industry, though, was what happened to the children growing up in those homes where meaningful work was practiced. Imagine what it must have been like to watch the

meteoric rise of Regina and Louis Borgenicht through the eyes of one of their offspring. They learned the same lesson that little Alex Williams would learn nearly a century later—a lesson crucial to those who wanted to tackle the upper reaches of a profession like law or medicine: if you work hard enough and assert yourself, and use your mind and imagination, you can shape the world to your desires.

In 1982, a sociology graduate student named Louise Farkas went to visit a number of nursing homes and residential hotels in New York City and Miami Beach. She was looking for people like the Borgenichts, or, more precisely, the children of people like the Borgenichts, who had come to New York in the great wave of Jewish immigration at the turn of the last century. And for each of the people she interviewed, she constructed a family tree showing what a line of parents and children and grandchildren and, in some cases, great-grandchildren did for a living.

Here is her account of "subject #18":

A Russian tailor artisan comes to America, takes to the needle trade, works in a sweat shop for a small salary. Later takes garments to finish at home with the help of his wife and older children. In order to increase his salary he works through the night. Later he makes a garment and sells it on New York streets. He accumulates some capital and goes into a business venture with his sons. They open a shop to create men's garments. The Russian tailor and his sons become men's suit manufacturers supplying several men's stores.... The sons and the father become prosperous.... The sons' children become educated professionals....

Farkas's Jewish family trees go on for pages, each virtually identical to the one before, until the conclusion becomes inescapable: Jewish doctors and lawyers did not become professionals in spite of their humble origins. They became professionals because of their humble origins.

13. Parents in the less-creative aspects of the business

Examples: Isaac Mizrahi, Donna Karan, Ralph Lauren (Ralph Lifshitz)

14. Links on Jews in the Fashion Industry

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Jewish_fashion_designers

http://www.jewcy.com/carousels/fashion_week_jewish_geography

<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/biography/Fashion.html>

<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/History/NeumanFashion.html>

Clothing with a Jewish Message

15. *The Epiphany of Female Flesh: A Phenomenological Hermeneutic of Popular Fashion*, by Richard J. Alapack, Journal of Popular Culture, December 2009

Insofar as fashion interweaves wardrobe and skin, makeup and hairstyles, perfume, jewelry, and accessories, it mediates the shifting winds of social climate. From the viewpoint of semiotics, this pattern is an intricate system of cultural change and tribal belonging... Maurice Merleau-Ponty demonstrates that the human body is not only an object of observation, but also a meaning-creating subject and a medium of culture. Clothing does not just drape the flesh but extends it. Clothing reveals personal ambitions, social aspirations, and the prevailing zeitgeist.

16. Don Isaac Abarbanel (15th century Spain) to Shemuel I 9:2

The fourth reason: His beauty and splendid appearance. Upon him it says, "taller than all of them, from his shoulders and up," the type which is attractive for mastery, and his appearance indicating power.

17. Radak (12th-13th century France) to Shemuel I 16:12

It reported this to inform that he was suited for monarchy, for he was attractive.

18. Rabbi Yosef Karo (16th century Israel), Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 673:3

If one lights a clay lamp on one night, it is considered "old" and one may not light it on another night; rather, one must take new lamps every night. One who only has an old lamp should fire it every night.

19. Rabbi Yisrael Meir Kagan (20th century Poland), Mishneh Berurah 673:29
"on another [night]" – For it is repellant, and this would degrade the mitzvah.

20. Proverbs 31:30
Charm is false and beauty is empty; a woman who is in awe of Gd is to be praised.

21. Talmud, Taanit 7a
The Caesar's daughter said to Rabbi Yehoshua ben Chananiah: Woe, beautiful wisdom in an ugly vessel! He replied to her: Your father puts wine in clay vessels! She responded: Then what should he put it in? He replied: You are important, put it in vessels of gold and silver! She went and told her father, and he put the wine in vessels of gold and silver, and it went bad. They told [the Caesar]. He asked his daughter: Who told you to do this? She told him it was Rabbi Yehoshua ben Chananiah. They called him, and [the Caesar] said to him: Why did you tell her to do this? He replied: As she told me, so I told her.

22. Talmud, Shabbat 133b
"This is my Gd, and *v'anvehu*" – Beautify yourself before Him with mitzvot! Make before Him a beautiful succah, a beautiful lulav, a beautiful shofar, beautiful tzitzit, a beautiful Torah scroll, and write it in His Name, with beautiful ink and a beautiful quill from a professional scribe, and wrap it in beautiful silks.

23. Exodus 28:2
And you shall make sacred clothes for your brother Aharon, for honour and for splendour.

24. Guidelines During Prayer, United Synagogue Youth, National Youth Commission, April 2002
Clothing on which any profanity or inappropriate language, pictures or symbols are written, printed or depicted is not permitted. No visible underwear is permitted for both males and females. During Tefillah (Services), inappropriately short skirts or shorts, or tight garments, are not permitted; shoulders must be covered for both males and females... No shorts or jeans are to be worn on Shabbat and dress shoes are encouraged during Shabbat Tefillot and meals.