Hair in the Bible and in Ancient Egyptian Culture

Cultural and Private Connotations

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In the Bible and in ancient Egypt, as in other cultures in the Ancient Near East, hair transmitted a cultural message.[1] This article will emphasize the variations of the message that was conveyed by hair in Egypt as compared to the Bible.

Egyptian documents were mainly pictographic, but today we have first-hand information about hair. This information has accrued from archaeological excavations in Egypt and includes many findings: locks of hair, wigs, and combs and the hair of mummies, which confirms the pictographic documentation.[2] In contrast, the Biblical descriptions of hair are primarily written. However, depictions of Semites that appear in Egyptian art as well as in other cultures in the Ancient Near East provide valuable information about Semitic hairstyles and dress traditions. Despite the differences between written Biblical records and pictographic evidence, each form manages to transmit a cultural message by means of hair in its own way.

The present article does not relate to hair as an aesthetic element, as a symbol of erotic attraction, or as a sign of humiliation. Nor will it discuss metaphorical images that contain descriptions of hair. This article will, however, try to show how, in Ancient Egypt, hair served as a code to indicate social status, testifying to class, gender, and age, and reinforcing an elitist conception of that order of existence. In contrast, in the Bible, hair transmitted a message about the life of the person as an individual and indicated an inner personal psychological processes experienced by that person.

Hair in Egypt

Most of the Egyptian documentation refers to the social elite. However, in many scenes, alongside members of that elite, people from other social classes are found. Hair styles changed over time in Egypt, but they always served to distinguish between genders and social classes. Until puberty, there was no difference in hair style between boys and girls. Almost every-

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1 Galpaz-Feller, Women 154-155; Leach, Hair.

2 Green, Hairstyles 73.

one had a shaved head, or the hair was cut short, with a small curl or braid left hanging next to the ear on the right sight of the head. This hairstyle appears as early as the ancient dynasty and symbolizes that the person depicted is a young child. Children from lower classes are usually completely bald. The king's children have a hairdo similar to that of the nobility. However, they are differentiated from the social elite mainly by the decorations of their hair. Hair did not indicate gender and social class until people reached full maturity.[3] For example, in plaster no. 1329 from the British Museum Inherkhau is shown with his son. The father wears a long wig, which reaches his shoulders, and the son is shaven, except for two rows of short hair with the braid of youth on his right side.[4]

The hair of male children who reached maturity was shaven. The custom of shaving hair developed mainly to keep the head cool, as well as to promote hygiene. Considerable effort was necessary in order to keep parasites away from hair and to maintain proper cleanliness. The men whose hair was shaven were mainly members of the upper classes who held public office and worked outside of their homes. A man wore a short, light, and airy wig on his shaven head.[5] Only men from the lower classes, who worked in service capacities such as apprentices, shepherds, fishermen, field hands, simple laborers, and the like, appeared in public with their heads shaved or with unkempt hair. We find evidence of this in several tomb decorations, including in the ostraca of Deir el Medina, and in illustrations from the Turin papyrus, where workers are shown in the fields.[6] Similarly, in the plaster from the tomb of Nebamun in the British Museum, the royal scribe wears a short wig, as befits a person with such an honorable profession, whereas the workers who herd the ducks are bald.[7]

Hair played a central role in constructing the hierarchy of the aristocratic society in general and within the family in particular.[8] To create a distinction between father and son, the father wore a wig different from that of the son. The father's headpiece was long and hung down to his shoulders. Sometimes the wig consisted of curls, braids, or was divided into locks. In con-

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3 Some scholars regard this hairstyle as a puberty rite; see Janssen / Janssen, Growing up 37.97.

4 James, Painting 35.

5 Meskell, Life 158-159; Cox, Construction; Fletcher, tale; Lucas, Wigs.

6 Meskell, Life 138; on the controversial meanings of the Turin papyrus see: 138 'עמ; Assmann, Literatur 35 off; Omlin, Papyrus 55001.

7 James, Painting 31.

8 Most of the documentation comes from paintings and reliefs that are found in the tombs of the Egyptian nobility, from the Middle Kingdom on. Meskell, Life 158-161; Robins, Hair; Naguib, Hair.

trast, to show the lesser importance of the son in the family hierarchy, the son wore a short straight or rounded wig. Such wigs were regarded as less honorable than long hairpieces. Occasionally the son appears bald in family scenes, to emphasize his inferior status. The forms of wigs and hairstyles changed according to shifts in the fashion styles of each period. Nevertheless, hairstyles always served as a code to indicate social status and to emphasize the intergenerational connection.

Men from the high social classes did not limit themselves to hair as a symbol of their social status. They also used their beards to indicate their elevated societal positions. Beards were short, in the style of goatees, and they symbolized the status and importance of their wearers. In many cases, Egyptian kings and noblemen are shown with a braided beard looped around their ear. Such beards represented the rebirth of the god Osiris and symbolized monarchy by the grace of the god, a symbol of power and masculinity. Indeed, even Queen Hatchepsut is shown in Egyptian iconography wearing such a beard.[9] When the beard was straight, this was a sign that the person depicted was still alive. When the beard was braided and curved upward, this was a sign that the subject had died. Examples of braided beards, curved upward are often seen in pictures on coffins. In archaeological excavations amulets have been found in the form of beards, apparently giving their owners faith in a long life and sexual potency in the next world.

Ways of combing hair and wigs changed from period to period. During the Old Kingdom (2640-2134 BCE) wigs were ordinarily simple and short, and those of men were shorter than those of women. During the Middle Kingdom (2134-1650 BCE) and the New Kingdom (1552-1070 BCE), longer and fuller wigs became fashionable, indicating the wealth of their owners. In the Amarna Period, in the mid-eighteenth dynasty, for a short time, men and women had almost an identical hairstyle or wig: short, curled, Nubian style. This fashion recurred in the twenty-fifth dynasty. The gender difference in these periods is expressed mainly in the quality of the wig; a man's wig was of better quality. Along with adoption of short Nubian wigs, traditional wigs continue to appear and distinguish between the genders.[10]

Despite the brief overlap in styles during the Amarna Period, women's hair was different from that of men almost throughout the history of ancient Egypt. When girls reached puberty, they were regarded as young women. Chronological age was not as important as the indication of the new social

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[9] Galpaz-Feller, Women 155; Green, Hairstyles 74; Forbes, Beards; Tyldesley, Hatchepsut 129-132; Watterson, Women 140.

[10] Green, Hairstyles 71; Samson, Amarna; Tyldesley, Daughters 157; Watterson, Women 102-104.

status they had attained.[11] Young women wore a wig, from which locks of hair showed. Egyptian women usually wore their hair long or down to their shoulders unlike the men of ancient Egypt, who usually worked outside the home, the primary responsibilities of women in ancient Egypt were in the home. Thus there was no reason for the women to shave their heads because they had the time to invest in the intricacies of hair care. During the Middle Kingdom, women used to part their hair in the middle, so that it fell on both shoulders, and the rest of their hair fell on the napes of their necks and their backs. This hair style was typical of the Egyptian goddess Hathor, who symbolized eroticism and was known for her beautiful hair. The goddess Rnpt-nfr.t, who symbolized one of the embodiments of Hathor, was also recognized for her beautiful tresses and called "she with the beautiful hair."[12] In paintings from the New Kingdom, women appear with flowing or braided hair that reached their shoulders. Many of these hairstyles were apparently wigs. Two kinds of wig were especially prominent in the New Kingdom. In the beginning of the eighteenth dynasty, the tripartite wig, similar to the hairstyle of the goddess Hathor is prominent. At the end of the period, the enveloping wig became prominent.[13]

The erotic implications of the woman's hair remained even after she had donned a wig. In the examination of embalmed women, abundant hair was found beneath the wig.[14] More than anything else, the women's hairstyle symbolized gender and age and had less to do with social status. Unlike the hair of men during this time, women's hair lacks a symbol of intergenerational connection. Sometimes it is difficult to distinguish clearly between with wig of a matron and that of a servant.[15] The social status of women was indicated by the type of hair and the nature of the braiding and decoration of the wig. Among women of the lower classes, hair was sometimes singed at the ends and a wig of plant fibers was added. The nature of the braiding was

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11 Robins, Hair 64.

12 Paintings of female hairdressers and the design of hairstyles, in addition to hairpins and hair ornaments, were connected with the goddess Hathor. On that see Riefstahl, Hairdresser; Riefstahl, Two Hairdressers. Derchain, perruque 59.

13 These wigs symbolized the goddess Hathor, the symbol of the divine mother, the fertility goddess; see Malaise, Histoire; Blackman, Position. Derchain, perruque. Hairstyles in the eighteenth dynasty became one of the important criteria for the figurative drawings that have been found in archaeological excavations in Egypt. On them see Davies, Queen; Haynes, Development.

14 Hair as an erotic expression stands out in Egyptian love poetry in the story of the two brothers, al Bata and his sister-in-law, and the story of the shepherd and the goddess; on this see Manniche, Life 64-69; Lichtheim, Literature II 182-192; Hollis, Tale 89-91.

15 Robins, Hair 64-65.

expressed in the airiness of the wig and in the number of hairs braided into it (an average wig contained 120,000 braided hairs).[16] The ornaments of the wig indicated the socio-economic condition of the woman who wore it. These ornaments varied and included pins, silver cones, and similar decorative pieces which can be seen in tombs of noblewomen and royalty from the twelfth dynasty onward.[17]

In the Middle Kingdom, dancers are shown performing acrobatics, while their heads are decorated with various ornaments. Hair ornaments began to appear as early as the Ancient Kingdom, and they were often braided with ribbons. Flowers and wreaths of leaves, both for decoration and for fragrance, were attached to the ribbons. Women who had recently given birth and wet-nurses also had special hairstyles, as we see from the ostraca of Deir el Medina.[18]

Some scholars seek to establish a distinction between young women who had reached full maturity and older women on the basis of the style of their wigs. Sometimes young women appear in a wig divided into three parts, but instead of hair flowing down to their backs, the hair is plaited into braids. However, this distinction between young and older women is difficult to demonstrate, because the braided hairstyle appears in only a very limited number of drawings.[19] Similarly, variations in the style of hair or wig may also indicate specific professions such as priestesses or servant of the gods with no specific distinction made for age or maturity. Priestesses of all ages of the goddess Hathor, for example, appear with abundant, curly hair, which was sometimes braided.[20] Women mourners are depicted with loose ungathered hair. Female dancers and musicians did not wear wigs; their hair was long and gathered in a ponytail, or in a braid that ended in the form of a ball. Dancers can also be seen with their hair flowing over their shoulders, arranged in two thin braids that reached down to their breasts.[21]

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16 Tyldesley, Daughters 155; Cox, Construction 69. Extensive chemical analysis shows that in most cases wigs were made of human hair, and only a few wigs, belonging to people of lower classes, were made of vegetable fibers, including date fibers; on this see Fletcher, Hair 499; Eisa, Study; Garetto, L'Accouncian-tura.

17 In the Westcar papyrus from the time of King Snefru, hairpins are mentioned. See Lichtheim, Satire 216-217; Watterson, Women 110.

18 On nursing women's hairstyles see the example of the statuette of a nursing woman and her maid, who is arranging her hair. Janssen, Growing up 16, and illustrationi 7; Brunner-Traut, Wochenlaube; Kemp, Wall Paintings; Pinch, Childbirth.

19 Robins, Hair 64.

20 Derchain, Senefrou.

21 Lexová, Dances 59-60 fig: 24, 30, 31, 50, 75; Robins, Women 69.

Thin hair and baldness symbolized illness and was regarded as shameful in both sexes. The Queen Ahmose Nefertari, who died at a relatively old age, appears with thinning hair.[22] The embalmers placed a wig of full hair on her head, to spare her the shame of arriving in the world to come with a bald head. When people's hair became thin, it was customary to attach extra hair to their heads. Additional hair was also added to the wigs, so that it would appear to be fuller.[23] The hair of Queen Maryet-Amun of the eighteenth century appears to have been thin. Among the items buried with her in Thebes was a basket of curls that were apparently meant to be added to her hair or to her wig.[24]

Hair, as it appears in drawings, paintings, and reliefs, is dark brown or black, as it seems that this was the Egyptian ideal of beauty. In medical papyri, prescriptions were found for preventing white hair, hair loss, and the like. For example, the Ebers papyrus prescribes, "fat of lion 1; fat of hippopotamus 1; fat of chrocodile 1; fat of a cat 1; fat of snake 1; fat of ibex 1. Make as one thing. Smear (or anoint) the head of the bald person with it. ..."[25] In wig factories dark powders have been found which were apparently used to dye the wigs.

Because of the importance of hair as a symbol of social status, members of the upper classes tried to avoid appearing in public either bald or with gray hair. Only rarely is white or gray hair seen in tomb drawings belonging to the aristocracy. White or gray hair is usually found in the tombs of members of the lower classes. For example, in a drawing from the nineteenth dynasty in Deir el Medina, from the tomb of Pashedu, his family appears in a drawing with three registers. The upper register shows Pashedu's father with white hair, and his mother with gray hair. After Pashedu's parents, his three younger brothers appear with black hair. One of the brothers is bald, and the other two wear black wigs that hang down to their shoulders. The bald brother was apparently the youngest. The middle register shows Pashedu's father-in-law, with grayish hair, and his mother-in-law, also has gray hair. After them appears a woman with a black wig with white locks peeking out from underneath. The third register shows Pashedu's children and his wife, all of whom have black hair. In the tomb of the sculptor Ipy, from the nineteenth dynasty in Thebes, Ipy is shown with gray hair in the scenes that

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22 Tyldesley, Daughters 155.

23 On additions to hair see Cox, Construction.

24 Winlock, Tomb 9-10, pls. 13, 33.

25 Medical prescriptions for preventing the graying of hair are found in the Ebers papyrus, pars. 451-463, and prescriptions for preventing hair loss are found in pars. 464-474. The Edwin Smith papyrus relates to the prevention of diseases and offers prescriptions for preserving youth; see Nunn, Medicine 149-150.

depict his transition from life in this world to life in the next world, while in other scenes he appears with black hair.[26]

Even when designing the coffins for the dead, Egyptian artists were meticulous about the depictions of the hair styles of the departed. When mummies were laid to rest in coffins, it was customary to draw them on the coffin with a hairstyle different from the one they while still alive. Long, straight wigs are seen on the coffins of both men and women, though the women's wigs are typically longer. This archaic style characterized kings and gods. Kings usually had a royal beard as well, rounded at the end.[27]

Extensive concern with hair gave rise to various professions and to the development of an entire industry, a profitable branch of the economy that dealt with hair care. Wigs were regarded as a necessity for both life in this world and the life in the world to come. The Book of the Dead, Spell 99 refers to wearing a wig or adding hair during the embalming of the deceased person's head.[28] Wigs and parts of wigs have been found in tombs from the time of the Middle Kingdom on, and mainly during the New Kingdom. Archaeological excavations have unearthed workshops for making wigs, though it is still not clear whether wigs were made to order individually or whether they were sold commercially, ready to wear, as it were.[29] As part of the hair industry, special aromatic oils were made for hair, and fine hair ornaments were developed.[30] The written documents as well as the pictographic findings mention the profession of hair-stylist. Urban hair-styling developed along with private hair-styling.[31] For example, in the tomb of Nefru, on a relief from Deir el Bahri, from the eleventh dynasty, which is found today in the Brooklyn Museum, Henut, the hair-dresser, is shown

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[26] Meskell, Life 92-93; Mahmoud, Ii-neferti; Janssen / Janssen, Growing up 15. 23-25.

[27] Robins, Hair 68.

[28] Faulkner, Egyptian Book 111.

[29] In 1974, an archaeological expedition from Poland discovered remains of a wig workshop in Deir el Medina; see Laskowska-Kusztal, atelier; Müller, Perücke.

[30] In depictions of feasts, one can see conical forms on the heads of guests and servants. These cones were bodies of oily ointment made of tallow imbued with myrrh; see Green, Hairstyles 73.

[31] Private hairdressers, especially women who served the queen, were of particularly high status. In reliefs from the eleventh dynasty, Inu is shown weaving an addition into her mistress' hair, as well as in a relief from Deir el Bahri, Queen Nefru appears with her hairdresser Henut; Capel / Markoe, Mistress 96.105; Speidel, Friseure, esp. 91-95.137-149; Riefstahl, Hairdresser; Riefstahl, Two Hairdressers; Gauthier-Laurent, scènes. On a public barber and his life, see the satirical papyrus of the professions: Lichtheim, Satire 186.

holding a curl, while trying to braid it into her mistress' wig.[32] Because the Egyptians attributed great importance to hair as a definer of social status, hair-dressers appear in burial scenes as part of Egyptian iconography. In these scenes, hairdressers are shown combing or arranging the hair or wigs of their mistresses. Such scenes appear on coffins, steles, and in tomb painting from the eleventh dynasty on.

By its nature as a definer of social status, hair served as a code of ethnic identification. People of foreign ethnic origin were painted with hair different from the common Egyptian style. For example, in a plaster in the tomb of the vizier Rekhmire, foreign delegations are shown bringing tribute from conquered lands, and their hair is depicted differently from that of the Egyptian officials. Another example of a foreign delegation appears before King Akhenaten in the tomb of Ramose, and their hair, too, is styled differently from that of the Egyptians. In another example, the tomb of Horemheb, from the eighteenth dynasty, on a sunken relief an Egyptian soldier is shown leading a Nubian prisoner. The Egyptian soldier wears a wig that reaches to his shoulders, whereas the Nubian soldier has short, curly hair.[33] In a stele found at El Amarna, a woman is shown next to her husband, who has a foreign hairstyle. Foreignness is also depicted in the skin color and dress of the individual. In a painting from the tomb of Harmhabi, foreign women are shown with their children. In this painting, too, their foreign ethnic origin is shown mainly by the hairstyle.[34]

A clean-shaven man with short dark hair was regarded as the Egyptian ideal of beauty. In Egyptian art, men of foreign ethnic origin are hairy and bearded. In the "Story of Sinuhe," when Sinuhe returns to Egypt after a long exile, he is described as having wild, loose hair which allows the Egyptians to identify him as a nomad. They say, "Here is Sinuhe, come as an Asiatic, a product of nomads!"[35] Similarly, the god Seth, is depicted with loose hair implying his status as an insurgent. He is revealed on one of the walls of the temple in Dendara as rebellious hirsute who disturbs the social order (*šnty*).[36]

Hair in ancient Egypt symbolized obvious gender distinctions as well as social status and age. As part of the standard social codes of Egypt, hairstyles were only changed at specific times. These changes reflect the cycle of life – the transition from childhood to adulthood, from life to death. Ultimately, the great significance of hair in Egyptian culture became a source of

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32 Capel / Markoe, Mistress 105.
33 James, Painting 42.
34 Tyldesley, Daughters 46-47; Bouriant, women Plate 4.
35 Lichtheim, Satire 262 line 265.
36 On this see Naguib, Hair 11.

income and profit for Egypt. Hair care became a professional occupation that included wig making and the production of combs, hairpins, and hair dye.

Hair in the Bible

Unlike in Egypt, the Bible sees men with long hair as a sign of beauty, strength, and masculinity. Assau the masculine hunter is described as having a lot of hair: "Assau my brother is a man of hair ..." (Gen. 27,11). Elijah the prophet is similarly described as "a man of hair" (2 Reg. 1, 8). His unique and impressive appearance allowed Ahaziah to identify him as a holy prophet. The rambunctious children who cursed Elijah by saying "Go up, thou bald head; go up, thou bald head" (2 Reg. 2, 23) are met by the fierce reprimand of Elisha, Elijah's loyal student. Elisha understood that Elijhah's abundance of hair was a sign of his divinity and holiness.

Not many physical descriptions exist about hair and hairstyles in the bible. Women usually grew their hair until it reached their shoulders (Cant. 4,1). Jesaia the Prophet describes the hairstyles of the women of Jerusalem. He describes the hair as "well set" as opposed to baldness. Such well set hair apparently implies gathered hair that was fastened at the nape of the neck (Is. 2,24). Samson the Judge is described as having hair of weaves (Jud. 16,13) and the hair of Abshalom was the source of his beauty as well as the reason for his death (2 Sam. 14,25-26; 18,9). Long beards were a sign of dignity and honor (Ps. 133,4). Thus the Egyptian practice of shaving the hair and beard was not acceptable to the Jews of the Ancient Near East. In fact, Semites regarded shaving the beard is a sign of disgrace and humiliation (2 Sam. 10,4) or a sign of mourning (Is. 41,5).[37]

Archeological evidence of the long hair of women and the full beards of men also testifies to the Ancient Near Eastern mores of hair. The Egyptian scenes from the pre-dynastic and old kingdom include descriptions of Semites, the Asiatics, who are different in their facial features and hairstyles than the local Egyptians. The male Asiatics are identified by their thick dark hair that they wore at neck length and their long beards.[38] Women are depicted with long hair. For example, the palette from Hierakonpolis includes drawings of Asiatics who have full heads of hair and thick beards. Similarly, the palette of Nar-Mer from the first dynasty and the ivory engraving from

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[37] Fishbein, Hair.

[38] Hair color appears to have been black, therefore the biblical narrator show a necessity in emphasizing the color of Assau's hair (Gen. 25,25) and David's hair (1Sam. 16,12; 17,42).

Abydos depict King Dan grabbing and Asiatic enemy by his long hair.[39] The drawing in the tomb of Beni Hasan from the middle kingdom illustrates a group of thirty seven Asiatics that includes men, women, and children. The men have beards and full heads of hair and the women have long hair that reaches their shoulders.[40] The hairstyle that symbolized the Asiatics in the ancient and middle kingdom did not change even in the new kingdom. From this period there is a significant amount of evidence from the tombs of Saqqara, Thebes, and the walls of the Egyptian temples.[41] Besides the reliefs and the depictions on the wall there are also depictions drawn on earthenware and clay figurines from the Land of Israel which include women with long hair and men with full beards. After the eighth century there is an Assyrian influence on hairstyles; from this period on hair is worn in curls as was the custom of the Assyrians.[42]

Hair in the Bible gives outward expression to inner personal processes undergone by an individual. For example, the Nazirite is forbidden to shave his hair (Num. 6). The laws of the Nazirite do not allude to the motives that led a person to take the Nazirite oath. However, it is clear that the motive is personal, and it is reminiscent of other oaths of renunciation, by which people obligate themselves to assume certain forms of asceticism (Num. 30,3).

The biblical legislator specifically states: "When either man or woman shall separate themselves to vow a vow of a Nazirite, to separate themselves unto the LORD" (Num. 6,2). The possibility of becoming a Nazirite is available to any man or woman, with no distinction of gender, age, or status. The Nazirite consecrates him or her self for a determined time. When a person takes the Nazirite oath, he or she must refrain from drinking wine or eating the products of the vine, from contact with dead bodies, and from cutting their hair: "there shall no razor come upon his head" (Num. 6,5). A Nazirite, the person taking the vow, allows his or her hair to grow as a special sign of consecration. That consecration breaks the routine of life and is achieved by withdrawal from the general community and by refraining from doing actions that are permitted to other people.

If those taking the oath become impure before the term of their oath, they must be purified, and only afterward can they shave off their hair. The impurity cancels the Nazirite oath, and the Nazirite must begin counting the

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39 Pritchared, Pictures 1-5 ff.; Aldred, Art 34-36; Smith, Art 32; Robins, Art 14-18.

40 Goedicke, Abi-Sha(I)'s.

41 Pritchared, Pictures 14-15.20; Aldred, Art 185; Smith Art 243. Yurco tries to identify the Israelites that are mentioned in the Stella of Merneptah according to reliefs that appear in Karnak Temple; see Yurco, Merenptah's; Yurco, Picture; Galpaz-Feller, Exodus 185 no. 8.

42 Stern, Hair; Dayagi-Mendels, Perfumes 73 etc.; Pritchared, Pictures 128-129.

days of his or her pledge again. After the period of renunciation, the Nazirite shaves his or her hair and burns it in the fire beneath the peace offering. Growing hair symbolized the separation of the Nazirite from ordinary life. The law of the Nazirite emphasizes that the outward expression of the renunciation of normal life is expressed by wild growth of the hair. Allowing the hair to grow wild and remain unkempt symbolizes the inner process that the Nazirite undergoes. If the person swearing the oath becomes impure during the period of renunciation, shaving the hair also expresses this change that took place.[43]

The biblical laws of war discuss a beautiful woman who is taken prisoner (Deut. 21,10-14). The legislator seeks to make the status of the prisoner desired by her capturer equal to that of a wife or a married maidservant. To receive this legal status, she must cut off her hair and nails, remove the dress of her captivity, be kept separate from the man who captured her, and mourn for her family for a month. Only then is she considered a woman married to the man who captured her. Shaving the woman's hair, among the other actions, is intended to give her a new identity. The captured woman is cut off from her past, as is expressed by the external signs of hair, nails, and clothing, as well as in mourning for her family. In this case, too, shaving the hair is a private and personal ceremony that symbolizes the death of the past. The ceremony symbolizes a psychological alteration that will lead to social, cultural, and religious change. She shaves off her hair by herself. The prisoner woman, separated from her nation, is removed from the society where she was used to living and passes through a transitional stage, which lasts for about a month. During that month she undergoes an external change that includes shaving off her hair as an indication of the more personal change she experiences. Only after that change can she join the new community of her captor.[44]

The laws governing the Sotah ("wayward woman," Num. 5,11-28) describe the trial of a woman suspected by her husband of infidelity. The priest places the woman before God and makes her hair unkempt. The precise meaning of the root "*p-r-ʿ*" (rendered here as "to make unkempt") is not clear. According to the intent of the action, her unkempt hair appears to symbolize freedom, lack of control, and the disruption of order.[45] The woman is in a situation of uncertainty. It is not clear whether she is innocent or adulterous. The priest symbolizes her unclear psychological situation by the exter-

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[43] Milgrom, Numbers; Diamond, Self-Offering; Cartledge, Nazirite; Botterweck, gillach 12-15.

[44] Olyan, Rites 617; Stern, Woman; Elman, Deuteronomy; Mayes, Deuteronomy; Du Buit, contacts.

[45] Fishbane, Accusations; Frymer-Kensky, Case; Milgrom, Adulteress.

nal action of making her hair unkempt. This action appears here in a matter that is personal, private, and intimate. The Nazirite and the woman prisoner are themselves responsible for the change in the condition of their hair, whereas in the case of the "wayward woman," the priest is responsible for making her hair unkempt.[46] He is the one who enacts the change in her status.

Chapters 13 and 14 of Leviticus describe various signs of the disease of leprosy as well as the ceremonies that accompany a person's purification from that disease. According to the biblical description, the leper is regarded as impure.[47] For that reason, he must take exceptional measures of reclusion and isolation to avoid infecting others and contaminating the camp. The leper is removed from society and sent out of the camp (Lev. 13,46; Num. 5,2-4; 12,14-15; Deut. 23,11-15) or out of the city (2 Reg. 7, 3; 15, 5). The leper is relegated to an area designated as no-man's land.[48] A leper who is cured undergoes a process of reintegration into the society, as in the case of Miriam (Num. 12,14-15), Naaman (2 Reg. 5, 3. 6. 7. 11) and others.

To be reintegrated into the society after recovering from the disease, the leper must undergo three actions of purification: shaving the hair of the body, from head to foot, laundering the clothing, and bathing. The shaving of the infected person's hair (Lev. 14,7) symbolically describes the removal of the infection and the beginning of the reparation. The person recovering may return to the camp, but he or she must remain outside the tent for another seven days, after which he or she must again shave off all hair, including beard, and eyebrows, as part of the final purification which takes place in the tabernacle. Removal of hair for the second time seals, as it were, the final removal of the infection. Henceforth, the new hair will symbolize rebirth, purification, and the new person's rejoining the ordinary circle of life.[49] Shaving the hair from the head of the purified leper symbolizes that he or she has returned after undergoing a difficult physical and psychological processes, a time of ostracism and isolation from the national support group. In the case of the Nazirite, the state of consecration ends following the act of shaving, which allows the Nazirite to return to secular life, whereas in the case of the leper, the situation of impurity ends only

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[46] Margalit, Hair 46-47.

[47] Milgrom, Leviticus 1-16, 805-806; 816-824; Margalit, Hair 49-50.

[48] In documentation from the Ancient Near East, as well, the leper is ostracized and sent out of the area of culture to a no-man's land; see Milgrom, Leviticus 1-16, 806-808; Malul, Knowledge, 82-83.

[49] Olyan, Rites 619-620; Botterweck, *gillaḥ* 5-20, esp. 17-19; Gorman, Ritualizing; Lewis, Lesson.

after the act of shaving, enabling the leper to return to regular life. In each case, the change in the state of the hair serves to transmit a manifest message regarding change in the private individual.

In Egypt, hair carried a clear gender message in addition to symbolizing social status and age. Hairstyle was subject to the general dictates practiced in Egyptian society, which demanded changes in hairstyle at determined times. Transitions from childhood to maturity prescribed a change in hairstyle. People mourning a family member also wore their hair differently to mark their bereavement. The change in the mourner's hairstyle expresses private grief and personal pain. But even as the individual message of grief was expressed publicly in changes of hairstyle in times of sadness, on coffins, the hair of the departed person continues to expresses social codes.

Comparison of the functions of hair in Ancient Egypt and in biblical society shows that hair played an important role in both societies. Whereas in Egyptian society, hair indicated transitions of age and social status, usually related to economic status, the Bible mainly documents changes in hair connected with important psychological transitions in a person's life. In Egypt, treating hair became a commercial matter, a profession that subsequently enriched the state's treasury. In the Bible, however, change in the condition of the hair is usually a message unconnected to gender, age, or social and economic status. The Biblical discussion of hair, however, points to changes in hairstyle as a personal expression of emotions directly related to an individual's private life.

Biblical and Ancient Egyptian Hairstyles – Common Connotation

Thus far the discussion of the social and cultural significance of hair has articulated the differences of hair's significance in the Bible and in ancient Egypt. Despite these differences, however, there are two connotations of hair that are common to both these cultures: shaven hair as a sign of priesthood, and loose unkempt hair as a sign of mourning.

After their inauguration ceremonies, the heads of both biblical Temple servants and Egyptian priests were shaven, indicating their separation from other people. Egyptian priests were required to be especially scrupulous about cleanliness and purity. Therefore, they shaved their heads carefully. The shaven head became a sign of their special status, which derived from their function as clergy. In many tombs, razor blades for the removal of hair have been found as well as texts with instructions for plucking out hair with minimal pain. It appears that the goddesses Isis and Nephthys also used to pluck the

hair from their bodies.[50] In tomb paintings showing scenes from the life of high society, bald-headed priests are conspicuous. They are mainly differentiated from the lower-class servants by their clothing. In some scenes, the priests wear wigs with a sign of the youthful curl, the children's hairstyle. In these cases, the Ka priests served in funerals, making sure to bring offerings for the deceased kings, a function that was filled by the eldest son in private families. In these scenes, the priest acts like the faithful son of the ruler. Therefore, the king's children also wear his special hairstyle or wig.[51]

In the Bible, too, the heads of the men who performed the holy service were shaven, and this can be understood as a sign of social stratification. The Tribe of Levi had a special social status, which was expressed publicly by shaving their heads. They were differentiated from the rest of the society and consecrated to a spiritual role. Moses is commanded: "Take the Levites from among the children of Israel and purify them" (Num. 8,6). The purification ceremony includes shaving off all the hair of their bodies and sprinkling them with purifying water. The final step in the inauguration process is a change of clothing. This ceremony is a kind of change of identity; after the purification ceremony, the Levites assume a new social status. Henceforth they are permitted to guard the tabernacle (Num. 3,4-29) and to carry it. To fulfill this role they must be separated from the other children of Israel. Shaving symbolizes the final change in this separation.[52] Olyan emphasizes that this social status is connected to the development of obedience and submission and is expressed in the acceptance of religious duties, as can be seen in other religious sects in the Ancient Near East.[53]

For both the Egyptian priests and the Levites in the Bible, shaving symbolized transition from secular to sacred life. However, the main function of hair shaving was apparently to symbolize a state of purity, which was shared by those involved in holy rituals in the majority of cultures in the Ancient Near East. The similarities between the biblical and Egyptian hair cultures can also be seen in the prescribed rituals for mourning. In bereavement ceremonies, changes in hair and beard were generally common in the cultures of the Ancient Near East.

In Egypt, funerary scenes show mourners with unkempt hair. Wild hair was apparently intended to prevent demons from getting a grip on the hair.[54] In the tomb of Raia in Saqqara from the nineteenth dynasty, Raia's wife is

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[50] Green, Hairstyles 73; Robins, Hair 62; Sauneron, Priests 36-37; Faulkner, Brenner-Rhind.

[51] Robins, Hair 62.

[52] Margalit, Hair 43-52, esp. 46-47; Milgrom, Leviticus 1-16, 61.

[53] Olyan, Rites 611-622.

[54] Tyldesley, Daughters 154.

shown kneels mourning at the foot of the coffin. Her hand cover's her face as a gesture of mourning and her hair is unkempt and wild as a sign of her bereavement. Similar depictions of mourning are expressed in many tombs including the pictures of the widow of Ipuki in Thebes and the widow of Thutemhab in Saqqara.[55] In the depiction of Spell no. 1 in the Book of the Dead, we see Ani's wife weeping over her dead husband and her hands are on her hair. A similar depiction of Hunefer can also be seen in Spell no. 23 in the Book of the Dead.[56] In Meskell's opinion, unkempt hair is a symbol of the disturbance of the familial order.[57] Both men and women are shown in mourning ceremonies with unkempt hair. It was customary to spread dust or mud on the heads of the mourners. Sometimes mourners are shown with a ribbon or band holding their unkempt hair. The Egyptian hieroglyph for mourning has three curls, apparently because of the influence of the myth of Isis, who cut off locks of her hair in sorrow for the death of her husband Osiris. [58] In Egyptian there are many words that express mourning. Each of these words includes the descriptive hieroglyph of three curls. Thus a clear connection between the word hair and the word mourning is made. For example, to mourn, widow, professional weepers, hair pulling, etc.[59] In mourning ceremonies women are shown performing special rituals, and they wear wigs that recall the incarnation of Isis and Nephthys mourning for Osiris. Similarly, mourners would cut off a lock of hair as a sign of identification with Isis. As a symbol of mourning, men would grow their beards for seventy days, from the death to the interment.[60]

Mourning customs similar to those noted in Egypt were widespread throughout the Ancient Near East.[61] Almost all of the mourning rituals involved changes in hair, beard, shaving, cutting the beard, placing of dust on the head, and the like. Some of these practices, such as shaving the beard and creating a bald spot on the head, are also mentioned in the Prophets (Is. 3,24; 22,12; Jer. 16,6; 41,5; 48,37; Amos 8,10). These customs emphasize the personal grief of the mourner, who laments the loss of the deceased person. Because changes in hair and beard in times of grief were common,

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55 Robins, Art 186; Wilkenson, Art 34-35. In Wilkenson's opinion the depiction of a woman with an outstretched hand implies that she has recently put dust on her head as a sign of mourning.

56 Faulkner, Ancient Egypt Book 38.54.

57 Meskell, Archaeologies 123.

58 Robins, Hair 67; Shaw / Nicholson, Hair; Gardiner, Grammar 450, sign D3.

59 Naguib, Hair 19.

60 Desroches-Noblecourt, méconnue; on the length of the time of mourning, see Galpaz-Feller, Description.

61 Anderson, Time 62-64; Hartley, Leviticus 320-321.348.351.

the biblical legislator (Lev. 21,5; Deut. 14,2) forbids shaving a bald spot or a corner of the beard. These customs were common among the surrounding nations not only in times of mourning but also as part of the cult of the dead. For that reason, the biblical author repudiates these customs, emphasizing the separateness of the children of Israel in processes of personal mourning.[62]

Unkempt hair, cutting hair, putting dust on it, anointing and trimming hair all symbolized processes of mourning. These external signs illuminated the psychological processes that the mourner experiences. Just as these external signs effect the removal of the mourner from the routine of life during the time of bereavement, when he or she returns to the regular circle of life at the end of the mourning period, the hair also returns to its ordinary condition.

Only the High Priest, who is separate from the entire nation, is subject to the prohibition: he "shall not uncover his head, nor rend his clothes" (Lev. 21,10). Thus, we find that the High Priest was forbidden to adopt mourning customs. He did not allow his hair to be unkempt. Janzen[63] points out that unkempt hair symbolized a break with the social and religious order, which was clearly forbidden to the High Priest.

The changes in hairstyle of the priests in Egypt, the clergy in the Bible, and mourners are common to the hairstyling of the Ancient Near East in general. However, changes in hair as described in the Bible were temporary, whereas the hairstyles and their symbols and messages in Egyptian society were long-term and indicated the situation of the individual and his membership in the proper age group. Changes in hair in biblical society indicated psychological transitions undergone by the individual, whereas in Egyptian society, changes in hair were possible only in passage from one age group to another. In the Bible, changes in hair do not reflect gender, whereas in Egypt, hair provided a clear distinction between the genders. Unlike Egypt, in the Bible hair does not indicate socio-economic status. Furthermore, the biblical descriptions of hair express the private experiences of marginalized individuals. These marginalizations can be a result of their degraded moral-religious standing as is the case of the Sotah or leper. Conversely, the status of a Nazarite expresses his lofty marginal position of extreme religious purity. Also, the unique case of the beautiful female war prisoner articulates the specific social experience of marginalization that she must undergo.

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62 Schwartz, Doctrine 346-348 (Hebrew); Milgrom, Demythologization; Milgrom, Leviticus II, 1772-1785.1800.

63 Janzen, Root; Carmichael, Death.

Summary

In Ancient Egypt, hair served as a code to indicate social status, testifying to class, gender, and age, and reinforcing an elitist conception of the order of existence. In the Bible, however, hair transmitted a message relating to the life of the person as an individual, and it indicated an inner psychological processes experienced by that person. This article will emphasize the variations of the message that was conveyed by hair in Egypt as compared to the Bible.

Zusammenfassung

Im antiken Ägypten war das Haar ein Statussymbol, an dem sich der gesellschaftliche Stand, das Geschlecht und das Alter ablesen ließen; es unterschied das elitäre Weltbild, das der Ordnung der Dinge zugrunde lag. In der Bibel dagegen gab das Haar Auskünfte über den Einzelnen als Privatperson und über sein seelisches Innenleben. Dieser Aufsatz vergleicht die verschiedenen Funktionen, die das Haar in Ägypten und in der Bibel erfüllte.

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