

The Story of KIPPON: How a Nuclear Physicist Solved the Age-Old Kippah Dilemma

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Part I: A Problem as Old as the Kippah Itself

On the High Holy Days, at weddings, during bar mitzvahs, and every Shabbat, observant Jewish men confront an all-too-familiar issue: how to keep their yarmulkes from sliding off. Bobby pins, clips, double-sided tape—all have been tried and tolerated. None have offered a perfect solution.

Enter Rabbi Sholom Ber Schapiro, a Brooklyn-based Hasidic scholar with a sharp mind and a keen eye for practical problems. One day, while teaching Chassidic philosophy, he noticed a student sitting bareheaded. When questioned, the young man simply replied that he had lost the bobby pin that held his kippah in place. Concerned that such a minor inconvenience might lead someone to forgo wearing a yarmulke altogether, Rabbi Schapiro decided to act.

He first reached out to Professor Herman Branover, a renowned Israeli expert in magneto-hydrodynamics. Branover, in turn, referred the rabbi to an old friend from the Soviet Union, a mechanical engineer and nuclear physicist working at the Brookhaven National Laboratory in Long Island: Dr. Lev Neymotin.

Part II: From Nuclear Reactors to Velcro

Dr. Neymotin, better known for analyzing the safety of nuclear reactors, immediately recognized the value of a simple mechanical solution over magnetic or chemical ones. After experimenting with different materials and consulting with the manufacturer of Velcro, he devised a new approach: attaching small, hair-friendly strips of Velcro inside the kippah. The result was simple and effective. Thus, **KIPPON-A** was born.

No more bobby pins,
No more clips!

Say goodbye to
anxiety trips!

Fits all sizes –
adult or child,

Fits all hair types –
straight or wild!

The name “KIPPON” cleverly plays on both “kippah” and the phrase “keep on.” The device uses Velcro strips that gently grip hair without pulling, allowing the kippah to stay put under most conditions. A press release highlighted the comfort of the device: “The meshing process is a comfortable one, with no pull felt on the hair, since the Kippon rounded ‘heads’ are tiny and catch the hair easily.”

According to the **Jewish Monthly**, the Kippon was a game-changer. Their review included a hands-on test by a five-year-old boy, who wore both small and large yarmulkes equipped with Kippon. While the smaller knitted kippah came loose during rigorous play, the larger one stayed in place flawlessly—even when the boy hung upside down from a jungle gym and swung vigorously on a swing set.

The **Jerusalem Post**, **Moment Magazine**, and the **Jewish Times** echoed similar sentiments. As noted in the *Jewish Times*: "One imagines yeshiva basketball players being able to dribble downcourt without using one hand to hold their kippot on their heads."

The Kippon kit was even featured in the **New York Times**, which reported:

"Take the Kippon kit. Conceived by Lev Neymotin, a nuclear physicist from Long Island, it is intended to hold yarmulkes firmly in place with four strips of Velcro that grab hair but release gently."

By 1987, Kippon had sold over 35,000 units and was in use across Jewish schools, homes, and synagogues worldwide.

Part III: Interfaith Reach and Vatican Recognition

Seeking broader applications, Dr. Neymotin sent sample kits to leaders outside the Jewish community, including **Pope John Paul II** and **Cardinal John O'Connor** of New York. Their replies were both gracious and humorous.

From the **Vatican Secretariat of State**:

SECRETARIAT OF STATE

VATICAN CITY

November 29, 1986

Dear Mr. Neymotin,

I am writing at the direction of His Holiness Pope John Paul II to acknowledge the gift that you sent for his acceptance.

I have the honor to assure you of His Holiness's gratitude for your thoughtful gesture and his appreciation of the kind sentiments which prompted it.

Sincerely yours,

[Signed] O. Rizzato

Monsignor O. Rizzato

Department Head

And from Cardinal O'Connor's office:

CARDINAL'S OFFICE

1011 First Avenue

New York, NY 10022

September 23, 1986

Dear Lev,

Your gadget is the greatest – If His Eminence ever gets a toupee I trust that it won't come off when removing his "Catholic Yarmulke."

His Eminence is most appreciative of your thoughtfulness.

However, only a very few of the Catholic Clergy (the Bishops) use skull-caps and in this instance because of numbers, there would be no real value in trying to market your product in this area.

Faithfully,

James J. McCarthy

Rev. Msgr. James F. McCarthy

Secretary to the Cardinal

Part IV: KIPPON-B – The Bald Revolution

One limitation remained: Kippon didn't work for those without hair. Bald heads, shaved heads, and smooth scalps remained outside its reach. Dr. Neymotin returned to the drawing board.

In time, he introduced **KIPPON-B**, a new design using discreet rubber patches embedded with micro suction cups. These patches grip the skin securely but gently, offering the same functionality without the need for adhesives or clips.

*No more bobby pins,
No more clips,
No more chasing
Kippah slips!*

*It holds on tight,
While air-lite,
Small head or giant,
Quiet or defiant.*

KIPPON-B was an immediate success. According to product guidance, the suction patches are breathable, skin-friendly, and reusable. The grip can be refreshed throughout the day with a simple press. With proper care, including occasional cleaning with mild soap and water, they offer consistent performance.

This second innovation extended Kippon's utility to every head—hairy or hairless.

Epilogue: A Cultural Icon

Today, Kippon has sold over 250,000 kits. It has become a part of Jewish cultural history, featured in dozens of publications, beloved by rabbis, parents, athletes, and even curious clergy outside the faith. For more on the Kippon legacy, visit www.kippon.io.

In the words of one early user:

"Your product Kippon recently came to my attention and I am thrilled with it!... When I do weddings and Bar Mitzvahs, these are really quite in demand!"

No more bobby pins. No more clips. No more chasing kippahs across windy courtyards.

Thanks to Kippon, your yarmulke finally gets to do what it was always meant to do: **stay on.**