

The Tallit

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Visit a Saturday morning synagogue service, and you will notice that all the men and many of the boys are draped in white, fringed prayer shawls that are bordered with either blue or black stripes.

The prayer shawl is the *tallit*. Jewish people who use the East European Hebrew dialect usually pronounce the word "TAH-liss" (plural *tallesim*, "tah-LAY-sim"). The modern Israeli pronunciation, however, is "tah-LEET" (plural *tallitot*, "tahlee-TOHT"). The tasseled fringes on the *tallit* are the *tzitzit* (pronounced TSI-tsit).

The Origin and Significance of the Tallit and Tzitzit

Originally the *tallit* was a four-cornered outer garment to which were attached the fringes, or *tzitzit*. Though the wearing of the *tallit* has its basis in Old Testament Scripture, the word itself is not found in the Bible. The *tzitzit* (tassels), however, are:

Again the LORD spoke to Moses saying, "Speak to the children of Israel: Tell them to make tassels on the corners of their garments throughout their generations, and to put a blue thread in the tassels of the corners.

"And you shall have the tassel, that you may look upon it and remember all the commandments of the LORD and do them...and be holy for your God" (Numbers 15:37-40).

You shall make tassels on the four corners of the clothing with which you cover yourself (Deuteronomy 22:12).

The real significance of the *tallit* is not in the garment itself, but in the fringes. In modern terms, it might be likened to a sweatshirt or stadium jacket, where the importance lies not in the actual piece of clothing, but in the slogan or school emblem it carries.

Like many objects of Old Testament times, fringed garments were also found in non-Hebrew cultures such as Egyptian, Mesopotamian and Midianite. The fringes of the other nations probably were worn as decorations or amulets to keep away evil spirits. But, as with many other Old Testament laws, God took the already known and gave it a new significance for Israel. The tassels or fringes were to remind Israel of His commandments.

Along with the primary purpose of the *tzitzit* based on the Pentateuch, we find another, later meaning. In ancient times, tassels were part of the hem of a garment, and the hem symbolized the wearer's authority. When David spared Saul's life in the cave at En Gedi, he cut off the corner of Saul's robe, symbolically demonstrating that the king's authority would be cut off. This is seen in Saul's response:

And now I know indeed that you shall surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in your hand (1 Samuel 24:20).

Tassels added to the hem were not worn by commoners, but by the nobility or royalty.¹ The second significance of the *tzitzit*, then, is that they showed the wearer to be more than a commoner. He was a noble, or a royal personage.

Not just the presence of the *tzitzit* but their colors also carried meaning. The color was white, but among the white cords on each tassel there was to be one blue strand. This color combination was part of the trappings of royalty, as were the colors blue and purple:

... Who were **clothed in purple**, captains and rulers, all of them desirable young men ... of Assyria... (Ezekiel 23:6-7).

There were **white and blue linen curtains** fastened with cords of fine linen and purple on silver rods and marble pillars; and...couches ... of gold and silver on a mosaic pavement of alabaster, turquoise, and white and black marble (Esther 1:6).

Now Mordecai went out from the presence of the king in **royal apparel of blue and white**, with a great crown of gold and a garment of fine linen and purple... (Esther 8:15a).

Blue was also used in settings where God's kingship was proclaimed. Blue was to cover the ark (and other tabernacle objects) whenever they were moved, and blue was also used with the curtains of the tabernacle where God dwelt "enthroned" between the cherubim (1 Samuel 4:4; 2 Samuel 6:2; 2 Kings 19:15; 1 Chronicles 13:6; Psalm 80: 1; 99: 1; Isaiah 37:16).

Then they shall put on it a covering of badger skins, and spread over that a cloth **entirely of blue**; and they shall insert its poles (Numbers 4:6).

You shall make a veil woven of blue and purple and scarlet yarn, and fine linen thread. It shall be woven with an artistic design of cherubim (Exodus 26:31).

You shall make a screen for the door of the tabernacle, woven of **blue** and purple and scarlet yarn, and fine linen thread, made by a weaver (Exodus 26:36).

The third significance of the *tzitzit*, therefore, was in their colors. They spoke of royalty and kingship. Even today we talk of "royal blue" and "royal purple" from the custom of Roman emperors who wore purple mantles.

If the color symbolized royalty, the fabric of the fringed garment stood for priestly holiness. According to Deuteronomy 22:11 and Leviticus 19:19, the common Israelite was forbidden to wear a garment of mixed wool and linen, a combination called *sha'atnez* (SHAT-nez). The reason, not stated in the text, is apparently because the priestly garments were made of that blend (the "thread" that is not designated as linen below is wool).²

... and they shall make the ephod of gold and blue and purple and scarlet **thread**, and fine **linen** thread... (Exodus 28:6).

... and a sash of fine **linen** and blue and purple and scarlet **thread** woven as the LORD had commanded Moses (Exodus 39:29).

Although *sha'atnez* was a "holy" combination, that did not mean it had special qualities or that the wearer became more spiritual. It simply marked the wearer as being separated for God's service. Early rabbinic sources, perhaps reflecting the still

earlier biblical practice, taught that the *tzitzit* were made of this very combination of wool and linen. The blue cord was wool, the other threads linen. In other words, for this purpose only, the common Israelite would wear a garment similar to that of the priests.

The fourth significance of the *tzitzit* is that they stood for the priesthood and its holiness. The high priest's garments had a blue thread, again a reminder of the color symbolism:

And you shall put it on a blue cord, that it may be on the front of the turban (Exodus 28:37).

It is understandable that the *tzitzit* would be used to remind Israel of God and His commandments. But why would a common Israelite wear garments of royalty, priesthood and holiness? God had said:

Now, therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; ... And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation... (Exodus 19:5-6).

Just as Israel had priests who mediated between God and the people, the people as a whole were to be a "kingdom of priests" to mediate between God and the nations. The continuation of this role, however, depended on Israel's obedience to God, her King. Therefore the *tzitzit* reminded the Israelites of who they were, who God was and what He required of them.

New Testament Mention of the Tallit and Tzitzit

In the New Testament we find the *tallit* and *tzitzit* mentioned as an ordinary all-day garment. Condemning the ostentatious religious practices of some people, Jesus referred to the extreme length of their *tzitzit*.

But all their works they do to be seen by men. They make their phylacteries broad and enlarge the borders of their garments (Matthew 23:5).

Sick people touched the hem of Jesus' garment, that is, the tassels themselves.

And suddenly a woman who had a flow of blood for twelve years came from behind and touched the hem of His garment (Matthew 9:20).

... came from behind and touched the border of His garment. And immediately her flow of blood stopped (Luke 8:44).

... and begged Him that they might only touch the hem of His garment. And as many as touched it were made perfectly well (Matthew 14:36).

Wherever He entered, into villages, cities, or the country, they laid the sick in the marketplaces and begged Him that they might just touch the border of His garment. And as many as touched Him were made well (Mark 6:56).

These verses support the earlier theory concerning the Old Testament account of David and Saul, i.e. that the hem or edge of a garment stood for the wearer's authority. The woman believed that if she could only touch the hem of Jesus' garment, she would experience the power of His person and authority. Her act was not a matter of superstition, but a silent cry for Jesus to grant her His personal attention and healing power.

In contemporary terms the account might be likened to the public appearance of a popular politician or musician where people want to shake hands or in some way touch and connect with a celebrity. Jesus allowed those who "connected" with Him by touch to experience who He was: the Great Physician.

History of the Tallit and Tzitzit

Eventually the *tallit* was no longer worn as an outer garment but an inner one. Some think this change took place after Israel was exiled from the land because the *tallit* wearer, clearly marked as a Jew, would have been subject to persecution or discrimination. Very religious Jews still wear the "innerwear" *tallit*, with only the fringes visible. In this way they fulfill the commandment of Numbers 15:39, which requires the wearer to "look upon" the fringes. This inner *tallit* is called the *tallit katan* (tah-LEET ka-TAN) or small *tallit*.

The outerwear *tallit* of ancient times developed in yet another way that is more commonly known today. It is not the all-day inner garment described above, but a shawl to be worn only during certain times of prayer.

In modern Jewry only males wear the *tallit* and *tzitzit*, but rabbinic sources tell us that in earlier times *tzitzit* were also worn by women.

The *tzitzit* originally contained a cord or thread that was dyed blue. According to some, after the two Roman wars (67-70 and 132-135 A.D.), the dye industry suffered a recession. The community became poor, and the requirement of the blue cord was dropped. According to others, the color was changed to all white because a dispute arose as to what shade of blue the cord should be.

Some Laws of the Tallit and Tzitzit

The rabbis have developed many laws pertaining to the *tallit* and *tzitzit* that are not found in the Bible. Among these are:

- The minimum size for a *tallit* is that which can clothe a small child who is able to walk.³
- The *tallit* is generally worn by men during morning prayers and during all Yom Kippur services.
- The following benediction is recited before donning the *tallit*:

Blessed art Thou, O Lord, our God, King of the universe, Who hast sanctified us by Thy commandments, and hast commanded us to wrap ourselves in the fringed garment.

• One should not recite this blessing if he has borrowed a *tallit* for a short period during the service, nor should the lender recite it upon donning the returned *tallit*.

- The *tallit* must be removed before using a rest room.

Some Customs of the Tallit and Tzitzit

- The fabric of the modern *tallit* is either wool, cotton or silk.

- As a reminder that the *tzitzit* were to have blue cords, blue stripes are usually seen on modern *tallitot*. From the time of the final fall of ancient Jerusalem until Israel once again became a state in 1948, however, black stripes were prevalent on the *tallit* to symbolize mourning.
- In older tradition the usual way to put on the *tallit* was to cover the head first letting it fall naturally into position. More recently, the *tallit* has been handled like a scarf, i.e. first placed around the neck, then draped over the shoulders.
- Very observant Jews pray with the *tallit* covering the head, symbolic of being surrounded by the holiness of God's commandments and submitting to His will. Most Jewish people today, however, pray with the *tallit* covering only the shoulders.
- Ashkenazim--Jews of East European descent--allow the wearing of child-sized *tallitot* for children who have not yet reached bar mitzvah age (13). In some cultures only males past the age of 13 wear the *tallit*, while still others restrict its use to married men. In contemporary America, most boys begin to use the *tallit* after the bar mitzvah, but some parents and teachers encourage its use even prior to that as a way of educating the children in their Jewishness.
- It is customary to touch the *tallit* to the Torah Scroll as it is carried in procession around the synagogue, or to touch the *tallit* to the passage in the Law over which the benediction is recited. One then kisses the *tallit* to show reverence for the Law.
- Many synagogues provide a *tallit*, along with a yarmulke (skullcap, pronounced YAR-mul-keh) and siddur (prayer book pronounced si-DUR), for worshippers who do not own these items. These must be returned after the service.
- In some cultures a Jewish bridegroom wears a *tallit* during the wedding ceremony.
- When not worn, the *tallit* is kept in a special bag, usually of richly embroidered velvet.
- It is customary to bury a Jewish man in his *tallit* with the *tzitzit* removed or torn, symbolizing that the deceased can no longer observe the Law.

Spiritual Lessons From the Tallit and Tzitzit

One writer compares the *tallit* with its fringes to an "ethical string-around-the-finger."⁴ Another compares it to a soldier's uniform, which makes us "mindful to whom one owes one's allegiance."⁵ What is seen affects what one does.

The symbolism of the *tallit* can remind believers in Y'shua of who they are in Christ. Now not only Israel, but all humanity has the opportunity through Messiah Y'shua to become a "kingdom of priests" interceding in prayer on behalf of the world. Of course, as in ancient times, such a privilege is only of effect as we have committed our lives in obedience to God.

... [Y'shua] has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

1. Jacob Milgrom, *Numbers. The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation* (Philadelphia and New York: Jewish Publication Society, 1990), p. 411. Much of the following material on the significance of the *tzitzit* is based on Milgrom's discussion.

2. Ezekiel 44:17 does not contradict this, because many of the regulations described for Ezekiel's temple are different than the laws found in the Five Books of Moses. The Mishnah (*Kilayim* 9:1) confirms that the priests who served in the Temple in the time around Christ wore the linen-and-wool mixture.

3. Shulchan Aruch, OH 16: 1.

4. Joseph Telushkin, *Jewish Literacy: The Most Important Things to Know about the Jewish Religion, its People, and its History* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1991), p. 659.

5. Hayim Halevy Donin, *To Pray as a Jew: A Guide to the Prayer Book and the Synagogue Service* (New York: Basic Books, Inc. 1980), p. 155.

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Tzitzit and Tallit

By Carl J. Stevens

An explanation of the history and practices of the tzitzit and the tallit

A man wrapped in a prayer shawl during prayer is a common image of Judaism. How did this practice develop, and what is the significance of the long fringes hanging from the corners of the shawl? An explanation of the history and practices of the *tzitzit* and the *tallit*

A *tzitzit* is a fringe, and a *tallit* is a long, rectangular-shaped, usually striped prayer shawl, both developed in accordance with B'Midbar (Numbers) 15: 37-41:

Adonai said to Moshe, "Speak to the people of Isra'el, instructing them to make, through all their generations, *tzitzityot* on the corners of their garments, and to put with the *tzitzit* on each corner a blue thread. It is to be a *tzitzit* for you to look at, and, thereby, remember all of *Adonai's mitzvot* and obey them, so that you won't go around wherever your own heart and eyes lead you to prostitute yourselves; but it will help you remember and obey all My *mitzvot* and be holy for your God. I am *Adonai* your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt in order to be your God. I am *Adonai* your God." (*Complete Jewish Bible*)

The purpose of the *tzitzit*, the fringe mentioned in the above passage, was to be a visual reminder to the Israelites of their covenant with God. Specifically, they are reminded to bring to mind the *mitzvot* (commandments) of God and to comply with them. It serves in the same way as a note on the refrigerator or a string tied around a finger. The root of the word, *tzutz*, means "to gaze." So the Jew is to gaze upon the *tzitzit* and, in that gazing, remember and obey the commandments.

The *tzitzit* also serves as a type of bumper sticker. Hopefully, a person with a bumper sticker reading, "I'm a Believer" will not exhibit road rage on the highway or park in a way so as to take up multiple parking spaces. This would bring disrepute to God in the eyes of third parties observing these behaviors. Likewise, wearing *tzitzit* on the garments proclaims to others that the person is a Jew, a monotheist. If the Jew goes into a place which would dishonor God, others might ask him "what is a Jew doing in a place like this?" The embarrassment might serve as a deterrent from participating in wrongful activities.

The blue thread in the *tzitzit* is making a comeback. A custom arose that the dye for this thread could only be obtained from a snail-like creature living in the Mediterranean Sea. When that source became unobtainable, some Jews refrained from dying one thread blue — hence the phenomena of the completely white *tzitzit*. The snail has again been identified, so the inclusion of a blue thread is now more common.

The *tzitzit* is traditionally wound and knotted in a particular manner in order to symbolize the 613 commandments of the *Torah*.

This commandment was given at the time when men wore four-cornered outer garments, so attaching *tzitzit* to this garment was easy. After Jews were dispersed throughout the world, cornered garments were not the common dress. Therefore, other customs have developed to maintain the commandment. Some sects of Jews developed the *arba kanfot* or the *tallit katan*, a smaller version of the four-cornered cloak which fits over the head and is worn under the shirt. The *tzitzit* attached to this undergarment are either worn inside, or hang over, the trousers as a visual reminder to the Jew.

Another garment developed to which the *tzitzit* were attached. The *tallit* (or *tallis* to some European Jews) developed as a rectangular prayer shawl. Some are decorated with black stripes in remembrance of the destruction of the Temple. Some have blue stripes, like the *tzitziyot* (plural of *tzitzit*) which are attached to them. Still others have a colorful decor. Some are rather small, to be draped around the neck like a scarf. Others are large, so that one can wrap himself inside. Many Jews are buried in their *tallitot*.

Traditionally, the *tallit* is only worn at Morning Prayer because of the command to "see" the *tzitzit*. During late afternoon and evening services, it was considered too dark to properly "see" the *tzitzit*, so the *tallit* was not worn. (The exception is at the evening service during *Yom Kippur* — Day of Atonement — because that is considered to be a single, continuing day). It is common practice, however, for the prayer leader to wear a *tallit* at these services. A *tallit* is not usually worn by mourners between the time of death and the funeral of loved ones, and during the morning services at *Tishah B'Av* (the 9th of Av, a day of mourning).

In some traditions, a boy is given his first *tallit* at his Bar Mitzvah; in others, the first *tallit* is worn after marriage. A *tallit* has been commonly used to create the *chuppah* under which couples are married. The flag of the State of Israel has stripes which are reminiscent of a *tallit*. Although some traditions limit the wearing of the *tallit* to males, more liberal traditions allow women to wear them during worship.

When one dons the *tallit* he recites a blessing: "Blessed are You, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who has sanctified us with commandments, and has commanded us to wrap ourselves in *tzitzit*."

In this way, an ancient command to the Jews has survived to the present day.

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Israeli Flag



The flag of Israel is based on the design of the *tallit*, the prayer shawl worn by Jewish men (and by some women in Reform and Conservative congregations) during certain services. The *tallit* is worn during all morning services. In addition, it is worn on the eve of Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. The *tallit* is also worn when reading the Torah during Shabbat (Sabbath) afternoon services and by the person leading evening services. (Jews pray three times a day: the morning service is called **shacharit**; the afternoon service is called **minchah**; and the evening service is called **ma'ariv** or **aravit**.) There are two basic traditions regarding who wears the *tallit*. According to one tradition, any Jewish adult should wear the *tallit* (at the appropriate times). A Jewish adult is one who is thirteen years of age and older (a *Bar Mitzvah*, or "Son of the Commandments.") According to another tradition, only married Jews wear the *tallit*. In addition to the exterior *tallit*, there is also a *tallit katan* ("small *tallit*"), which pious Jews wear all day under their clothes.

Because the *tallit* is one of the most recognizable symbols of the Jewish people, it was chosen to be the basis of the flag. (Indeed, in coming up with a design for the flag, the early Zionists came to the realization that the Jewish People had had a flag all along - the *tallit* - and there was thus no need to design a flag from scratch.) In the center of the flag is the *Magen David*, or "Shield of [King] David," better known in English as the "Star of David" or "Jewish Star," another recognizable Jewish symbol.

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Tekhelet Tidbit Tisha b'Av and Tekhelet

The *Shulchan Aruch* (555:1) states:

It is customary not to lay *Tefillin* on Tisha b'Av at *Shacharit*, and not a *Tallit*. Rather, one should wear a *Tallit Katan* beneath his clothes, without a blessing. And at *Mincha*, we put on *Tzitzit* and *Tefillin*, with the blessings.

The *Mishna Brura* explains the custom of delaying the wearing of the Tallit, based on a Midrash on *Eicha*, The Book Of Lamentations 2:17.

בצע אמרתו - "He carried out His decree" is interpreted as בזע פורפירא דיליה - "He tore His Royal garments". [This is the Tallit.].

The word *porphyra*, connoting "royal garments", refers to garments dyed with purpura snails (Murex). As a sign bemoaning the rending of the Royal garments, we delay donning the Tallit, which includes strings dyed in this manner.

Rabbi Shimon Eider, in his "Summary of Halachos of the Three Weeks", explains that this Midrash is also the source of the halacha to remove the *parochet* (curtain) from the Ark containing Torah scrolls on the eve of Tisha b'Av. The torn "Royal garments" in the Midrash refer to the *parochet* of the *Beit HaMikdash* partitioning off the Holy of Holies. This curtain, made from fine textiles, including those dyed with purpura, was brazenly pierced by Titus.

What is a tallit?

The tallit (also pronounced tallis) is a prayer shawl, the most authentic Jewish garment. It is a rectangular-shaped piece of linen or wool (and sometimes, now, polyester or silk) with special fringes called *Tzitzit* on each of the four corners. The purpose of the garment is to hold the *Tzitzit*.

Most tallitot (alternative plural: talleisim) have a neckband, called an *Atarah*, which most often has the blessing one recites when donning the tallit, embroidered across it.

Why wear a tallit?

The Lord said to Moses: Speak to the Israelites and instruct them to make for themselves fringes on the corners of their garments throughout the ages; let them attach a cord of blue to the fringe at each corner. That shall be your fringe; look at it and recall all the commandments of the Lord and observe them, so that you do not follow your heart and eyes in your lustful urge. Thus you shall be reminded to observe all My commandments and to be holy to your God. I, the Lord, am your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt to be your God: I, the Lord your God. [Numbers 15:37-41]

The purpose of the tallit, then, is to hold the Tzitzit, and the purpose of the Tzitzit (according to the Torah) is to remind us of God's commandments.

The tallit is worn for morning prayer, during the week as well as on Shabbat and other holy days. It is not worn for afternoon and evening prayers because of the commandment that one should see the Tzitzit, which has been interpreted as meaning to be seen by the light of the day. The Shaliach Tzibur (who leads the prayer) usually wears a tallit, as well, even in the afternoon and evening.

Who wears a tallit?

Generally, a Jew who has reached the age of majority (in most communities, this is 13, though in some communities, girls reach the age of majority at 12) wear a tallit. There exists a custom, not widely practiced, of not wearing a tallit prior to marriage: This custom was explained by the Maharil (Rabbi Yaacov Mollen, 1356-1427) based on the juxtaposition of two verses in the Torah. The first, Deuteronomy 22:12 articulates the commandment concerning the wearing of tzitzit. It is followed by Deuteronomy 22:13, which says, "If a man takes a wife..." This custom is not widely practiced, however, in large measure because it prevents one from fulfilling a commandment between the age of 13 and the time one marries.

In congregations where a tallit is generally worn, you will find a rack of tallitot available for use by visitors near the entrance to the sanctuary.

How are the Tzitzit tied?

Tying Tzitzit is a Jewish art, a form of macrame. A hole is carefully made and reinforced in each corner of the tallit. Through each hole, four strands are inserted: three short strands and one long strand. The longer stranded is called the shammash and this is the one which is used for winding around the others. To tie the Tzitzit, line up the four strands so that the three of equal length are doubled evenly, and the four strand is lined up at one end with the other seven ends. With four strands in one hand, and the other four in the other, make a double knot at the edge of the fabric. Then take the shammash and wind it around the other seven strands seven times in a spiral motion. Make a second double knot, with four strands in one hand and four strands in the other. Then wind the shammash around the seven strands eight times and make another double knot. Wind the shammash around eleven times and make a double knot. Finally, wind the shammash thirteen times around the remaining seven strands and make one final double knot. When done correctly, the Tzitzit will have 7-8-11-13 winds between the double knots.

What does the 7-8-11-13 windings pattern mean?

There are a number of wonderful interpretations for this pattern of windings.

One interpretation is that each set of windings corresponds to one of the four letters in God's name.

Another interpretation employs Gematria, Jewish numerology, which assigns to each Hebrew letter a numeric value: aleph is 1, bet is 2, gimmel is 3, and so on. In this second interpretation of the windings of the Tzitzit, the numbers 7-8-11-13 have special meaning: 7+8=15, which in Hebrew is written yod-hay, the first two letters of God's name (the Tetragrammaton); 11=vav+hay, the third and fourth letters of God's name. Hence the first three windings "spell" God's holy name. Thirteen, the last set of windings, is equivalent in value to the word "echad" which means "one." Hence, all four windings can be interpreted to say, "God is one."

Yet another interpretation holds that when we consider the windings between the knots, 7, 8, 11, and 13, the first three numbers equal 26, which is numerically equivalent to the Tetragrammaton and the remaining number, 13, is equivalent to "echad" ("one). Hence the windings tell us that God is One. If we take the sum of the first three numbers (7+8+11) and equate that with God's Name, then the 13 which remain can also be interpreted to reflect the 13 attributes of God, as articulated by Moses Maimonides and set to verse in the Yigdal.

By still another interpretation, the Gematria value of the word "Tzitzit" (tzadi-yod-tzitzit-yod-taf) is 600. To this we add the eight strands plus the five knots, totaling 613 in all. According to tradition, God gave us 613 mitzvot (commandments) in the Torah. Just looking at the tallit with its Tzitzit, therefore, reminds us of the commandments, as the Torah says, "You should see them and remember all God's commandments and do them."

How to put on a Tallit

1. Open tallit and hold in both hands so you can see atarah (the collar band on which the blessing is often embroidered).
2. Recite the berachah (Transliteration: BA-RUCH A-TA A-DO-NAI E-LO-HAY-NU ME-LECH HA-O-LAM A-SHER KI-D'SHA-NU B'MITZ-VO-TAV V-TZI-VA-NU L'HI-TA-TAYF BA-TZI-TZIT.)

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
 אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו
 וְצִוָּנוּ לְהִתְעַטֵּף בְּצִיצִית.

Blessed are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the universe, who makes us holy with commandments, and has commanded us to wrap ourselves in the tzitzit.

1. Kiss the end of atarah where the last word of the blessing is embroidered, and then and beginning where the first word is.
2. Wrap the tallit around your shoulders, holding it over your head for a moment of private meditation.
3. Adjust the tallit on your shoulders comfortably.

Customs of wearing a tallit

1. If you borrow the tallit for the service, say the berachah
2. If you use it just for an aliyah, no need to say the berachah
3. Don't take it into the bathroom
4. If you take the tallit off for a short time (eg. to go to the bathroom) you don't need to repeat the berachah when putting it on again.

Kissing the tzitzit

There are several times during the service when people kiss the tzitzit symbolically. First is during the recitation of the third paragraph of the Shema (Numbers 15:37-41) which mentions the tzitzit three times. As the worshiper reads the word "tzitzit," it is customary to kiss the tzitzit, which were gathered together in one hand prior to reciting the Shema.

When the Torah is removed from the Ark and carried around the synagogue in a Hakafah (procession), those within reach touch the Torah mantle with tzitzit (if they are wearing a tallit) or a siddur (prayerbook) if they are not. They then kiss the tzitzit or siddur which touched the Torah scroll. This is an expression of love and affection for the great gift which Torah is to our people.

Further reading and study about Jewish liturgy

Here are some books about Jewish liturgy which may be helpful to you:

- *The Enchantments of Judaism: Rites of Transformation From Birth Through Death* by Jacob Neusner
- *Jewish Liturgy* by Esmar Elbogen (trans. by Raymond P. Scheindlin)
- *Jewish Liturgy and Its Development* by A.Z. Idelsohn
- *Jewish Worship* by Abraham Millgram
- *Hasidic Prayer* by Louis Jacobs
- *To Pray As a Jew* by Hayim Halevy Donin

Mitzvah of the Month
 TEMPLE B'NAI JESHURUN

Jewish tradition is filled with numerous *mitzvot*, or "commandments." Some of these commandments are ethical in nature, such as *tzedakah* (creating a just world) and some are ritual in nature, like lighting the Sabbath candles. This column will explain several of Judaism's *mitzvot* and suggest ways we might incorporate them into our lives. We hope the "Mitzvah of the Month" helps enrich your Jewish practice and knowledge.

The

Tallit

by Rabbi Laurence W. Groffman

Jewish prayer is a complex amalgam of song, reading, movement, location, time, ritual garb and a person's own spirit. One of the oldest and most externally identifiable aspects of Jewish worship is the *tallit*.

The *tallit* is the garment with which a worshipper is wrapped during prayer. Interestingly, the *tallit* was not originally associated with prayer at all. The *Torah* in Numbers 15:38 ff. teaches, Speak to the Israelite people and instruct them to make for themselves fringes (*tzitzit*) on the corners of their garments throughout the ages; let them attach a cord of blue to the fringe at each corner. That shall be your fringe; look at it and recall all the commandments of the Lord and observe them, so that you do not

follow your heart and eyes in lustful urge. Thus shall you be reminded to observe all My commandments and to be holy to your God.

This *mitzvah* was originally fulfilled by wearing a four- cornered garment with *tzizit* (fringes) at all times as a reminder of God's commandments. But during the Middle Ages in Europe, four-cornered garments were not in style, and there was a danger that the precept of wearing *tzizit* would be forgotten. To prevent this occurrence, Jews began to wear a four-cornered garment to which they would be required to attach the *tzizit*, thereby preventing this commandment from being forgotten. This new garment was called a *tallit*, which simply means a robe or a cloak. Note that there is no religious import attached to the *tallit* itself, only the *tzizit*.

In theory, the *tzizit* must be worn the entire day, but since Jews could not, practically speaking, wear such a strange looking garment the whole day, the wearing of the *tallit* was limited to the time of the morning prayers. It is also worn on Kol Nidre as a sign of special honor for the occasion. A *tallit katan* (a small *tallit*) is worn underneath one's clothes by the more traditional Jews. In addition, according to tradition, the *tallit* is worn by those who participate in the *Torah* service. There are conflicting Talmudic opinions concerning the wearing of the *tzizit* by women. In Orthodoxy, this is generally prohibited, whereas in the Reform movement and all liberal branches of Judaism, it is permitted.

The *tallit* is usually made of wool or silk, and ideally is long enough to cover most of the body. However, in modern times, many Jews wear a silk *tallit* (*atarah*), which is essentially a neck scarf. An embroidered version of the *atarah* (without *tzizit*) has been worn by the rabbis and cantors of Bnai Jeshurun for many years. It is the blue and gold embroidered mini-*tallit* affixed to their pulpit robes.

At Bnai Jeshurun, members should feel free to wear their *tallitot* during worship services. As a Reform congregation, we encourage people to experiment with their Jewish practice. We cherish the diversity that is the hallmark and strength of Reform Judaism.

Sources

The Jewish Religion A Companion by Louis Jacobs
Questions and Reform Jewish Answers, New American Reform Responsa by Walter Jacob
July 2000

THE SCRIPTURAL SIGNIFICANCE OF TZITZIT

Tzitzit are one of the most maligned and most ignored **direct commands** of G-d. Both Jews and Gentiles have been known to make "fun" of them, to hide them if they **do** wear them, or find some way to twist the scriptures to "prove" that they no longer required to wear them. Nevertheless, G-d has commanded that they be worn, and even has shown in His word **why** we need to wear them.

They are needed to remind us of G-d.

He illustrates this very nicely by telling the story of a man who, although he was a Jew, felt that something else was more important than obeying the Creator of the Universe:

Numbers 15:32-41 ³² While the Israelites were in the desert, a man was found gathering wood on the Sabbath day. ³³ Those who found him gathering wood brought him to *Moshe* and *Aharon* and the whole assembly, ³⁴ and they kept him in custody, because it was not clear what should be done to him. ³⁵ Then *ADONAWY* said to *Moshe*, "The man must die. The whole assembly must stone him outside the camp." ³⁶ So the assembly took him outside the camp and stoned him to death, as *ADONAWY* commanded Moses.

³⁷ *ADONAWY* said to *Moshe*, ³⁸ "Speak to the Israelites and say to them: `Throughout the generations to come you are to make tassels on the corners of your garments, with a blue [*tekhelet*] cord on each tassel. ³⁹ You will have these tassels to look at and so you will remember all the commands of *ADONAWY*, that you may obey them and not prostitute yourselves by going after the lusts of your own hearts and eyes. ⁴⁰ Then you will remember to obey all my commands and will be consecrated to your God. ⁴¹ I am *ADONAWY* your God, who brought you out of Egypt to be your God. I am *ADONAWY* your God."

G-d does not punish for an accidental breaking of a commandment, and so we must assume that G-d knew that the man purposely disobeyed. Although there was a (death) penalty to be paid for desecrating the Sabbath, G-d, in His divine grace created a way to help people remember His commands. But helping us to not "forget" is only part of the remedy -- it also stops us from purposely breaking His commandments by reminding us of the Scripture and especially the story of the wood-gatherer. G-d doesn't force us to obey. He only helps us to realize that we need to make a decision to obey, contrary to our sinful nature which tempts us to go after things of this world rather than things of G-d.

Whatever You Wear

Deut. 22:12 Make tassels on the four corners of the cloak you wear.

G-d did not say "if or when you wear a four-cornered garment, put *tzitzit* on the corners." The focus of this command is **not** the garment itself, but the fringes! It says to make *tzitzit* on the four corners of "**the cloak you wear!**" If we were to spiritualize any further meaning into this Scripture, it would be a requirement to wear a four-cornered garment, not to only wear fringes when we wear one!

Zechariah 8:22-23

²³ This is what *ADONAWY* Almighty says: "In those days ten men from all languages and nations will take firm hold of one Jew by the hem of his robe and say, `Let us go with you, because we have heard that God is with you.'"

What is taken hold of is the *kanapf* -- corner or edge of the garment --on which the fringes of the cloak are tied. This passage illustrates several ideas:

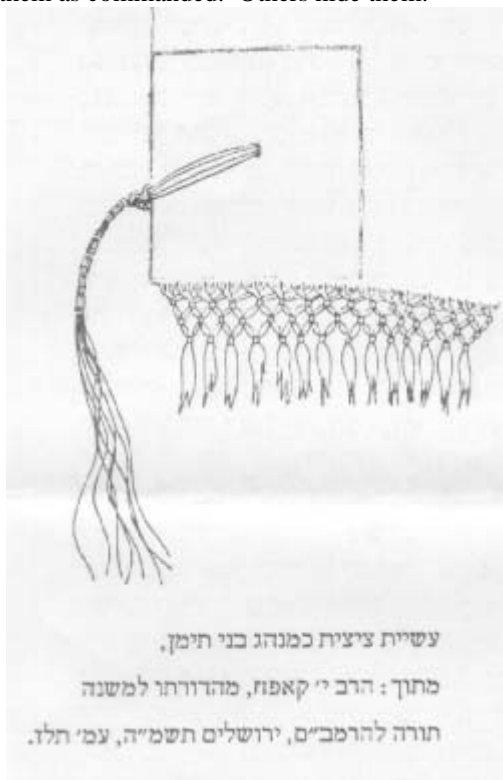
- The confirmation of the custom that, having taken hold of the fringes of someone's garment, one could compel the wearer to obey one's request.
- That the Jews of Zechariah's times-- 5th and 4th centuries B.C.E.-- were commonly wearing and being identified by fringes.
- That Jews, in Zechariah's vision, were sought after and followed as moral guides, so the identification has a positive outcome.

Yahshua Wore Them

Matt. 9:20-22²⁰ A woman who had had a hemorrhage for twelve years approached him from behind and touched the *tzitzit* on his robe.²¹ For she said to herself, "If I can only touch his robe, I will be healed."²² Yahshua turned, saw her and said, "Courage, daughter! your trust has healed you." And she was instantly healed.

Modern Day Use

Obviously, fringes were commonly worn on everyday outer garments so as to comply with G-d's command. eventually Jews wished to dress more like those around them. This was in part a desire to assimilate and also to avoid identification that could lead to cruelty and persecution. In Greek and Roman times a special purpose rectangular prayer shawl, the *tallit*, was adopted and mostly used when reciting prayers. Some thought that it would satisfy the commandment because it was being used when "meeting with G-d." Some individuals wore the *tallit* when studying *Torah* or beneath their outer garments. Eventually a special garment came to be worn beneath other clothes. The *arba kanfot* ("four corners") or *tallit katan* ("small prayer shawl") is a rectangle of cloth with an opening for the head and with fringes at the four corners. Today those who wish to comply with the spirit as well as the letter of the law wear them with the *tzitzit* (fringes) hanging out so as to be able to constantly see them as commanded. Others hide them.



Question

11.1.3:

Dress: What is a Tallis? Tzit-tzit(those fringes)? Why do Jews wear them?

The Torah commands us to wear *tzitzit* (fringes) at the corners of our garments as a reminder of the commandments [Num. 15:37-41, which is in the third paragraph of the *Sh'ma*, recited during the morning and evening prayers]. This commandment only applies to four-cornered garments, which were common in biblical times but are not common anymore. Since the normal clothing in our time does not have four square corners, Traditional Jews wear a garment that is specifically made to have four corners so that the *mitzvah* can be fulfilled. This is known as the "*Tallit Katan*" and is usually worn under the shirt. This garment is similar to a poncho. The *tallit katan* is worn under the shirt, sometimes with the *tzitzit* hanging out so they can be seen.

All garments of a certain size or larger that have at least four corners must *tzitzit* attached. The original requirement was to have a blue thread among the white threads. However, since the precise shade of blue is no longer known and the source of the dye used, only the white threads are used (except among certain chassidic groups that claim to know the dye formula). There is a complex procedure for tying the knots of the *tzitzit*, filled with religious and numerological significance.

During prayers, the custom is to wear a four-cornered shawl with *tzitzit* (*Tallis Gadol*) and pray while wrapped in it. There are different customs as to when this is done. Most Ashkenazic men will begin wearing the *Tallis* when they get married. In some

Sephardic and German-Ashkenazi communities, a boy will put on a tallis when he becomes a bar-mitzvah (13 years old). There are some communities that begin this earlier. Customs vary among liberal Jews as to who wears a tallis, and when it's worn.

Should Christians Wear "Tassels"?

A New Look at Biblical "Fringes"

Most modern Christians would think that wearing "fringes" on their garments, or using prayer shawls with "fringes," would be a ceremonial, ritualistic part of ancient Jewish worship, and has nothing to do with New Testament Christianity. But is this necessarily the case? What is the truth about "fringes," or "tassels"? What are they? Who should wear them, if anybody? Why were they commanded in the first place?

William F. Dankenbring

One of the areas of Biblical Law which most Christians reject today is the subject of wearing "fringes" or "tassels" attached to one's garments. Generally speaking, only Orthodox Jews even attempt to follow this Old Testament commandment, today, and most of them seem to disregard the commandment about the "blue" fringes.

In a recent article in the *Pastor General's Report*, Joe Tkach (Junior), or "Little Joe" as some call him, picks on the subject of wearing "tassels" or "fringes" in the garments worn by men. He scorns this Biblical commandment as useless ritualism and worthless works which have been abolished by the New Covenant.

Is this true? Notice what the word of God says about this matter:

"Again, the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 'Speak to the children of Israel: Tell them to make tassels on the corners of their garments *throughout their generations*, and to put a *blue thread in the tassels* of the corners. And you shall have the tassel, that you may look upon it *and remember all the commandments of the LORD to do them*, and that you may *not follow the harlotry to which your own heart and your own eyes are inclined*, and that you may *remember and do ALL My commandments, and be HOLY for your God*. I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: I am the LORD your God" (Numbers 15:37-41).

What an interesting commandment! I brought this commandment up in a letter to the then "Radio Church of God," writing to Robert C. Boraker, a writer in their letter answering department in Pasadena, California, in 1957 -- almost 40 years ago! At that time, I also asked many other questions, and this one was conveniently ignored. He obviously did not want to get into it.

But what about this command? Tkach ridicules it as a senseless relic of an old ritual which no longer has any true meaning or significance. But is this true? We are still flesh and blood human beings, just like our ancestors. Many of us believe strongly that we are descended from the "lost ten tribes of Israel," and have amassed impressive evidence to back up that claim (see my articles on "United States in Prophecy," and the book *Tribes*, and *Ephraim*, by Israeli scholar Yair Davidy). Although our ancestors went into captivity centuries and millennia ago, and adopted pagan customs, and pagan religious ideas and holidays, does this mean we have no need to repent, change our wicked ways, and return to the God-ordained customs of our fathers?

The New Testament Witness

Jesus Christ, or Yeshua Ha Moshiach, was a Jew, and lived a perfect life. He set us an example of how we ought to live, in every way. He was even baptized, setting us an example (Matt.3:13-17). The apostle John tells us: "He who says he abides in Him ought himself to *walk just as He walked*" (I John 2:6). Peter adds that Christ left "us an example, that you should *follow His steps*" (I Pet.2:21).

Did Jesus Christ, our example and pattern for living a holy life, therefore, wear "tassels" or "fringes" in the corners of his garments? That is an interesting question! Let see the answer:

"And suddenly, a woman who had a flow of blood for twelve years came from behind and touched the *hem of His garment*. For she said to herself, 'If only I may touch His garment, I shall be made well.' But Jesus turned around, and when He saw her He said, 'Be of good cheer, daughter; your faith has made you well.' And the woman was made well from that hour" (Matt.9:21-22).

The Jewish New Testament, translated by Dr. David Stern, of Jerusalem, makes this passage plain, explaining just what the "hem" of Jesus' garment was. Notice!

"A woman who had had a hemorrhage for twelve years approached him from behind and touched the *tzitzit* on his robe. For she said to herself, 'If I can only touch his robe, I will be healed.' Yeshua turned, saw her, and said, 'Courage, daughter! Your trust has healed you.'"

The gospel of Mark records the same event, but adds some other noteworthy features to the account:

... a large crowd followed, pressing all around him. Among them was a woman who had had an hemorrhage for twelve years and had suffered a great deal under many physicians. She had spent her life savings; yet instead of improving, she had grown worse. She had heard about Yeshua, so she came up behind him in the crowd

and touched his robe; for she said, 'If I touch even his clothes, I will be healed.' Instantly the hemorrhaging stopped, and she felt in her body that she had been healed from the disease. At the same time, Yeshua, aware that *power had gone out from him*, turned around in the crowd and asked, 'Who touched my clothes?' His *talmidim* [disciples] responded, 'You see the people pressing in on you; and still you asked, "Who touched me?"' But he kept looking around to see who had done it. The woman, frightened, and trembling, because she knew what had happened to her, came and fell down in front of him and told him the whole truth. 'Daughter,' he said to her, 'your trust has healed you. Go in peace, and be healed of your disease'" (Mark 5:24-34, JNT).

The Jewish New Testament Commentary explains about this passage:

"A woman who had . . . a hemorrhage approached him from behind and . . . touched his tzitzit. She was in a state of ritual impurity because of her hemorrhage. She touched the holiest part of Yeshua's garment. No wonder she approached from behind -- she was afraid; this is also why she hesitated to answer Yeshua's question, 'Who touched my clothes?' (Mark 5:29-33). For normally the impure defiles the pure (see Haggai 2:11-13; also the Talmud, *Toharot*). But in this case, the opposite

happened: the purity of Yeshua the Messiah and of his *tzitziyot* ["tassels," or "fringes"] remained uncompromised, while instead the cause of the woman's impurity was instantly removed. In the following incident, the raising of the dead girl, this principle is exemplified even more strongly, since Yeshua himself initiates contact with what is regarded in Judaism as the primary source of all impurity, a dead body (v.25) . . ." (comment on Matthew 9:20).

What are these "*tzitziyot*" or "tassels" on the garments of men? David Stern, the author of the Jewish New Testament, explains:

"Tzitzit (plural *tzitziyot*). Observant Jewish men in Yeshua's time and today have worn fringes on the corners of their garments, in obedience to Numbers 15:37-41, the third of the three Torah passages recited in the *Sh'ma* portion of the synagogue service. These fringes are made in a special way and have a unique appearance.

Their purpose is to remind God's people to obey his commandments. Since they are not merely decorations, the usual renders of Greek *kraspedon* -- 'hem,' 'fringe,' 'border,' 'tassel' -- are replaced here by '*tzitzit*.' Today Jewish men wear *tzitziyot* on a *tallit gadol* ('large *tallit*'), which is not an article of clothing but a ritual cloth donned primarily for synagogue worship, or on a *tallit katan* ('little *tallit*'), which is an undergarment especially designed with corners for the *tzitziyot*. But Yeshua wore his on his **robe**, a heavy blanket-like over-garment similar to that worn by Bedouins today."

These "tassels" or "fringes" were commanded by God to be worn by His people, to remind them to always keep His commandments. They are in full view, and therefore would be a constant reminder of God's law. Even today you can sometimes see the tassels hanging out over the belts of religious Jewish men who wear a four-cornered undershirt, and pull the tassels to the outside of the garment. These tassels are tied into knots, as a reminder of all 613 of the laws of Moses (of which there are 248 prohibitions or negative commands, and 365 affirmations or positive commands). The numerical value of the letters of the word *tzitzit* is 600; there are eight threads in each "fringe," and five knots; add these all up and you get 613, the number of God's commandments!

The Blue Thread

Each tassel was to have a blue thread. During the Biblical period, blue was probably the most expensive color to produce. Therefore, it was generally reserved for royalty and the very rich. Historically, the only source for the blue was a small gland in the murex snail. It took some 12,000 snails to fill up

a thimble of blue dye. In 200 B.C., one pound of cloth dyed blue cost the whopping sum of \$36,000 in terms of today's dollar. By 300 A.D., the cost had soared to a staggering \$96,000. This indicates that Lydia, mentioned in the book of Acts as being a seller of purple, was one very wealthy lady -- perhaps one of the wealthiest in the entire Roman Empire (Acts 16:14).

Why was each tassel inclusive of a blue thread? Of the primary colors, "red" represents man (Adam's name was actually "red," for the red clay from which he was made). "Blue" is the color representative of the heavens, and of God the Father. "Purple," the combination of "red" and "blue," is the color of the Messiah, Yeshua, the coming king. As very God who became very man, He combined the two colors, forming His own color, "purple."

Therefore, for each man of God to have something blue in his tassels, was symbolic of having something of the divine -- a connection with God the Father! This served to remind each person not only of God's commandments, but of their direct connection to God Himself, as their Father and God, as He said: "I am the LORD your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, to be your God. I am the LORD your God" (Num.15:41).

Such an expensive and treasured thread of costly blue would probably have been passed down from generation to

generation, from father to son as one of his precious legacies.

A Symbol of Authority

The tassels, or fringes, in a man's garment, were symbolical also of his authority. We find an interesting story in the first book of Samuel, where David sneaks up on king Saul in a cave at En Gedi, and cuts off his tassels. Notice the account:

"Now it happened, when Saul had returned from following the Philistines, that it was told him, saying, 'Take note! David is in the Wilderness of En Gedi.' Then Saul took

three thousand chosen men from all Israel, and went to seek David and his men on the Rocks of the Wild Goats. So he came to the sheepfolds by the road, where there was a cave; and Saul went in to attend to his needs, (David and his men were staying in the recesses of the cave.) Then the men of David said to him, "This is the day of which the LORD said to you, "Behold, I will deliver your enemy into your hand, that you may do to him as it seems good to you." And David arose and secretly *cut off a corner of Saul's robe*. Now it happened afterward that David's heart troubled him because he had *cut Saul's robe*. And he said, "The Lord forbid that I should do this thing to my master, the LORD's anointed, to stretch out my hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the LORD.' So David restrained his servants with these words, and did not allow them to rise against Saul" (I Samuel 24:1-7).

David's heart smote him because he knew that to cut off a king's tassels was tantamount to stealing his authority, emasculating his spiritual connection with God, depriving him of his virility and nobility. At En Gedi, David had literally taken Saul's "authority" and at that point he could probably have seized the kingship over Israel and taken the throne from Saul. But he chose not to do it, but to leave the decision and timing in God's hands. After David prostrated himself before Saul, showing him the tassel he had cut off his robe, explaining he had not killed Saul despite the urging of his men to do so, Saul was impressed with his charity and having his own life spared, and said:

"You are more righteous than I; for you have rewarded me with good, whereas I have rewarded you with evil. And you have shown this day how you have dealt well with me; for when the LORD delivered me into your hand, you did not kill me. For if a man finds his enemy, will he let him get away safely? Therefore may the LORD reward you with good for what you have done to me this day. And now I know indeed that you shall surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in your hand" (I Samuel 24:17-20).

Another example of the "authority" represented by a man's tassels of his robe is illustrated by the story of Ruth. In chapter three of the book of Ruth, she goes to Boaz, her near kinsman, in the middle of the night, at the threshingfloor, and lays down near him, sleeping at his feet. He awoke with a start, and asked, "Who are you?" Ruth replied:

"I am Ruth thine handmaid: *spread therefore thy skirt* [Hebrew, "corner of thy garment"] over thine handmaid; for thou art a near kinsman" (Ruth 3:9).

The Hebrew word translated "skirt" here is *kanaph* and means "an edge or extremity," "of a garment or bed-clothing." Thus this passage, obscured in most English translations, refers to the tassels or fringes -- the *tzitzit* of Boaz's robe -- being cast over Ruth, symbolizing his taking her under his "authority," as in becoming her husband.

When the woman with the hemorrhage of blood therefore touched the "tassels" of Jesus' garment, she was touching the symbol of His power and authority. He detected it when "power" went out of Him. She was healed by this power, activated by her faith and trust.

The Wrong Use of Tzitziyot

The tassels were commanded by God to be worn by men, to remind them of their connection to Him and of all of His commandments. However, by the time of the end of the second Temple period, and the time of Jesus Christ, the Jews had perverted them into signs of social status. The wealthier you were, the longer your tassels. During the time of Yeshua, the tassels of some of the Pharisees were so long that they dragged on the ground! Yeshua rebuked this ostentatious display of vanity, saying,

"They [the Pharisees] tie heavy loads onto people's shoulders but won't lift a finger to help carry them. Everything they do is done to be *seen by others*; for they make their *t'fillin* [phylacteries] broad and their *tzitziyot* long, they love the place of honor at banquets and the best seats in the synagogues, and they love being greeted differentially in the marketplaces and being called 'Rabbi'" (Matt.23:4-7, JNT).

Some of the Pharisees, like Nicodemus, were good men (John 3). They were not all hypocrites. But those in charge, in Jerusalem, had proven themselves to be vain peacocks, strutting in pride and insolence, refusing to listen to the words of the Messiah, or to accept Him despite all the evidence presented to them. Some of the Pharisees were good and godly men, but others were hypocrites and charlatans, as Jesus noted in Matthew 23.

This passage in Matthew, therefore, should teach us that it is not wrong to wear "tassels" or "fringes" in our garments, like Jesus and the Pharisees did. However, we should not exaggerate them, making them "long," to draw attention to our supposed "holiness." God hates hypocrisy and spiritual vanity!

The lesson for us is that it is most important, in God's sight, that we perform God's commandments and to keep His laws -- including the wearing of prayer shawls at the appropriate times, and the *tzitziyot* -- and to do so from inner conviction and sincerity of heart, in humility and loving obedience to God. We should follow the example of Christ, and the apostles, who did so, "walking in His steps" (I Pet.2:21). We should not be overly concerned with outward "appearances," however, or wear "tassels" to impress others with our religiousness. God looks upon the heart (I Samuel 16:7).

When Joseph Tkach, Jr., ridicules and derides the concept of wearing "tassels" on one's clothing, as God commanded, he may think he is smart and clever and really "sticking it to" those who seek to obey God and follow His laws with their whole heart. But he is in reality only condemning himself, and those who follow him, to spiritual poverty, being cut off from God, having lost all their own supposed vaunted "authority" in His eyes. They reject His Law -- He rejects them! It is that simple. No amount of explaining or "spiritualizing" will negate this fact.

God thunders in the book of Hosea,

"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have *rejected knowledge, I also will REJECT YOU from being priest for Me; because you have FORGOTTEN THE LAW OF YOUR GOD, I also will forget your children*" (Hosea 4:6).

God thunders through the prophet Malachi:

"'And now, O priests, this commandment is for you. If you will not hear, and if you will not take it to heart, to give glory to My name,' says the LORD of hosts, I will send a CURSE upon you, and I will curse your blessings. Yes, I have cursed them already, because you do not take it to heart. Behold, I will rebuke your descendants, and spread refuse on your faces, the refuse of *your* solemn feasts . . . 'For the lips of a priest *should keep knowledge*, and people should seek the LAW at his mouth; for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts. *But you have departed from the way; you have caused MANY to STUMBLE AT THE LAW.* You have CORRUPTED THE COVENANT [teaching a false "New Covenant" which God never

made!] of Levi,' says the LORD of hosts. Therefore, I also have made you *contemptible and base* before all the people. Because you have not kept My ways, but have *SHOWN PARTIALITY IN THE LAW*" (Malachi 2:1-9, NKJV).

What about you? Where do you stand regarding the Laws of God? Will you follow those false teachers, those pseudo-priests, who have forsaken the truth of God, and plunged madly into a course of wickedness which will not be abated until the full wrath of God is poured out upon them? Black oblivion awaits those who forsake the laws and commandments of God -- including the commandments concerning the "tassels" or "fringes." Make no mistake. God will NOT be mocked. They have sown the wind of false doctrine; they will reap the whirlwind.

Before saying this prayer, and before studying any type of Torah lesson, one must say the blessing on Torah. If you have already said it today, one does not need to repeat it unless he is being called up to the Torah in shul.

ברוך אתה ה' אלהינו ברוך הכולל.
אשר קדשנו מצוותיו ואמרו
טל סצנת ציצה

Baruch ata Adonoy Elohenu Melech haolam, asher kidishanu bamitzvatov vitzivanu al mitzvot tzitzit.

Blessed are You Hashem our G-d, King of the univers, Who has santified us with His commandments, and has commanded us regarding the commandment of tzitzit.

The Tallit is a shawl which we cover ourselves with (men), when we pray. There are different customs. Mostly, in Saphardic (Jews which come from the arab countries and spain) Jewish communities, all men and boys wear tallit. In Ashkenazi (Jews from northern Europe) communities, it is the norm to only wear the tallit when one is married. However, the Tzitzit are not tallit, they are the fringes which are attached to the tallit.

There is a Tallit Katan (small), and a Tallit Gadol (large). The Tallit Katan may be, and should be, worn by all males. Because it allows us to complete the mitvah from the Torah... *The Lord said to Moses as follows: Speak to the Iraelite people and instruct them to make for themselves fringes on the corners of their garments through out the ages; let them attach a cord of blue tot he fringe at each corner. That shall be your fringe; look at it and recall all the commandments of the L-rd and observe them, so that you do not follow your heart and eyes in your lustful urge. Thus you shall be reminded to observe all My commandments and to be holy to your G-d. I the L-rd am your G-d. I the L-rd am your g-d, who brought you out of the land of Egypt to be your G-d: I, the L-rd your G-d. (Numbers 15:37-41)*

This is a positive mitzvah

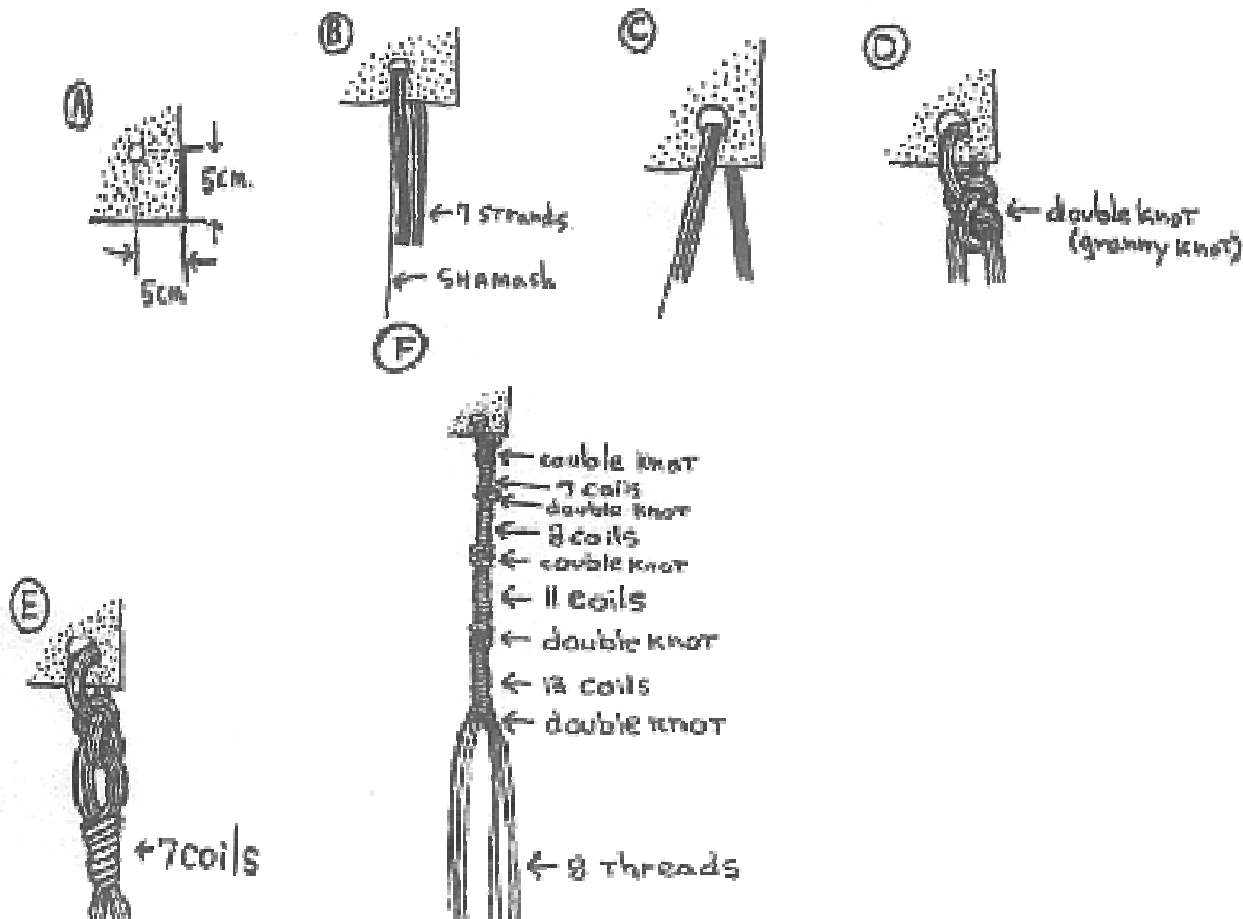
If one is going to wear his Tallit Gadol during the morning prayers (shachrit), he should not say the above prayer when he puts on the tallit katan in the morning, but rather he should keep in mind that he will later say the blessing over the Tallit Gadol, and there by, in thought, he will include both.

The Tzitzit are eight strands, one longer than the other 7, this one is called the *shamish*, it is the one that makes the coils. They equal all of the mitzvot together. How do they do this? There are 613 mitzvahs in the Torah. The numerical value of the word Tzitzit is equal to 600, plus the 8 strands, plus the 5 coils. This is a total of 613. The 5 coils also represent the name of Hashem (Yud / Key / Vav / Key). The coils are wrapped 7, 8, 11, 13. The seven and eight equals fifteen, which is equal to the two letters, yud and hey. The first two letters of the Name of G-d. Eleven is the equivalent of vav and heh, the last two letters of the Name of G-d. Together they make the complete 4 letter numerical value of the Holy Name of G-d. The thirteen is equal to the word "echad" which means "one". So when we look at the tzitzit, we see the Name of G-d, He is One, and His 613 mitzvot. And in this we enwrap ourselves.

A small kabbalistic thought for those of you who are still wondering about spiritual contamination (*Tuma*), If you remember from the lesson on **washing**, the tuma sticks to the finger tips. Well that's the way of tuma, it likes to stick on the edges of things. Onto the husks of things. This is where it does the most good, clinging to the outer shell of things within this world. By placing the tzitzit on the **corners** of our material garments, we are protecting them, and ourselves, by way of G-d's Holy Name, and His 613 mitzvot.

When one is wrapped within the Tallit, it is as if he is resembling Hashem and the angels. He is wrapping himself in garments of majesty and light. The splendor of G-d's commandments.

Remember this: You should never say a prayer with Hashem's name in it, like the one above, in a toilet or washroom, or in garbage yard, or any other place where there is something that is not clean. Even in a place that only smells bad you should not say these prayers. **HOW TO TIE TZITZIT**



Make sure that your hands are clean before tying the tzitzit. And make sure that your mind is aware and at one with what you are doing. It is not proper to do something else at the same time. You may even **wash** ritually before tying them if this will help you achieve the proper mood. One should also say:

Le shem kadusha tzitzit (for the sake of the holiness of tzitzit) before tying.

The tzitzit must only be strands made for this purpose, not regular pieces of string. You can get these at any judaic shop, our check our **Shopping** page for information.

Even though you can buy tzitzit ready made, it is always nice to preform the mitzva of tying them ones self.

There is a slight difference in how the Saphardic and the Ashkenazi tie them. You may consult your Rabbi, or drop us an **email** if you need specifics.
