

# The Tallit

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In these last days there has been a resurgence in an effort to understand the biblical roots of the faith that confesses that Jesus is the Christ (Messiah). With this point in mind we delve into situations in the scriptures where we don't quite understand the scenario and teaching point because we are not familiar with the Hebraic background.

One of these is an item that is called a TALLIT (TALLIOT-plural) TALIT, TALIS, TALITH or PRAYER SHAWL. PRAYER SHAWL is actually a misnomer because an observant Jew wears one all the time and not just in prayer. The history of the tallit is best understood in its biblical context.

## **Numbers 15: 37-41**

Again the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the children of Israel: Tell them to make tassels (tzitziot) 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 (tzitziot), that you may look upon it and remember all the commandments of the LORD and 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." (NKJ)

Tzitzit (singular. Tzitziot - plural) is Strong's # 6734 tsiytsith (tsee-tseeth'); feminine of 6731; a floral or wing-like projection, i.e. a forelock of hair, a tassel: KJV-- fringe, lock.

## **Deut 22:12**

"You shall make tassels (gadilim) on the four corners of the clothing with which you cover yourself".

Gadilim is Strong's # 1434 gedil (ghed-eel'); from 1431 (in the sense of twisting); thread, i.e. a tassel or festoon: KJV-- fringe, wreath

In Numbers 15:37-41 and Duet. 22:12, the Israelites were commanded to wear fringes (tassels, or twisted coils) on the corner of their garments to remind them of the commandments of the Lord and to do them.

The commandment was not to wear the Tallit. By itself, the tallit has no value other than a cloak in biblical times. Its purpose today was simply to carry the tzitzits. Today it has other symbolism as you will see. Outside of being a sign of the commandments, the tzitzits actually say something!

In Hebrew there are no numbers but each letter has a numerical value. This is called gematria (Jewish numerology). Therefore each word has a numerical value. For example, on each tzitzit (tassel) there were 39 windings (7+8+11+13 separated by double knots). 26 is the numerical value of YHWH. 13 is the numerical value of Echad (one). Therefore these windings on each tzitzit equals the numerical value of the Hebrew words "YHWH Echad" Jehovah (God) is one. This is the fundamental axiom of the Jewish faith known as the "Shema". In addition we also realize that Jesus suffered the same number of stripes for our healing. (**Isaiah 53:5 and I Pet. 2:24**)

They were also commanded to "give to them" (the fringes) a blue strand called the "Shamash" or servant. This is the same word as the center candle in the Menorah. Each tzitzit have seven white strands, the number of perfection, surrounded by the blue "servant" depicting royalty. It now adds up to eight, the number of new beginnings. In addition, if you add 600 which is the value of tzitzit and the 5 knots and 8 strands, they equal 613 that are the number of mitzvahs (commandments or instructions) in the Tanakh (Old Testament). All 613 do not apply to everyone but to the nation, Israel, as a whole. This represents the Word of God.

Today when we see a tallit we rarely see the blue "shamash" in the tzitzit. Most modern tallit have eight white strands. This has to do with tradition and the ancient source of the blue dye. In ancient times the only permanent blue dye was available from a the glands of a snail called the hillazon (spelled a variety of ways.) Vegetable dyes would eventually fade. The dye was extracted from the snail through a process that was known by only one family from the time of the Exodus to the destruction of the Second Temple. The cost of obtaining enough dye to create four strands would today cost thousands of dollars. It may be one of the reasons that the tzitzit with the "techelet" (blue dye) were removed from the tallit before it was used to wrap the head of the dead. At the death of Yeshua, we are told that the snail disappeared and was thought to be extinct. In addition, the Romans, in order to stamp out the knowledge of Temple service, separated father and sons so that the knowledge of the blue dye would be lost. Later the Muslims killed all who had this knowledge in order to eradicate its use.

Many men have sought to restore the use of the techelet and have used many items from the ocean, including the ink from a squid, to recreate the dye. About ten years ago the hillazon snail reappeared and the process to obtain the blue dye has been re-established. It's use has not been widespread since the cost of a set of tzitziot cost as much as the tallit itself. Think of the implications! The snail disappears at the death of our Lord and reappears today with the rest of the signs of His imminent return.

I personally retie the tallits that I wear so that they have the blue strand. With modern technology we have many beautiful royal blue dyes that can be used to create the shamash and it is what I do (along with many modern Jews). I use white and royal blue heavy embroidery yarn and dispose of the original white tzitziot reverently.

In biblical times the Jewish men wore this garment all the time when they were outside their home. They wore it as a cloak over their regular garment called a halluq. Yeshua (Jesus) would have dressed like the other people of His time. Being a good Jew, He would have obeyed all the commandments, including this one. In addition as the Messiah without sin, He would also have not disobeyed this commandment.

TALITH contains two Hebrew words: TAL meaning tent and ITH meaning little. Thus, you have LITTLE TENT.

The apostle Paul was a Jewish Pharisee and a tentmaker. Since the tzitzits are usually tied under the supervision of a rabbi, many believe that he may have made tallit and not tents to live in.

In the wilderness Moses set up a tabernacle (tent) of meeting according to the command of God. When the two silver trumpets were blown the people assembled there. Obviously two and a half million Jewish men could not fit into it. Therefore, what they had were their own private sanctuaries where they could meet with God. Each man had his own little tent - his tallit. They would pull it up over their head, forming a tent, where they would begin to pray and sing. Here they would call upon the name of the Lord ( Adonai ). It was an intimate, private place set apart from everyone else. A time totally focused upon God. This was their prayer closet!

Even Balaam, in **Numbers 24:5**, who had come to curse Israel exclaimed as he looked down upon the camps and saw the assembly:

**"How lovely are your tents, O Jacob! Your dwellings, O Israel!"**

Even today the Jewish people say that the Tallit is a religious which envelops the Jew both physically and spiritually, in prayer and celebration, in joy and sorrow. It is used at all major Jewish occasions: circumcisions, barmitsvahs, weddings and burials. It protects the scrolls of the Torah when they are moved.

The dead are wrapped in it when they are buried.

In **John 11: 43-44**, the "napkin" that is wrapped around the head of the dead is mentioned twice. Once, when Yeshua (Jesus) calls Lazarus forth. He commanded that they "Loose him, and let him go".

The second time, in **John 20: 6-7**, when Kefa (Simon Peter) went into the sepulcher: "the napkin, that was about His head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself."

In a Jewish wedding the bride and bridegroom are covered with a "chupah" (a canopy) which is a large tallit. Some wrap themselves in it (or two), while others have the whole wedding party stand under it. The tallit is symbolic of the wedding canopy of Yeshua and His bride. It inspired the Jewish flag. Three separate people had the same inspiration. They simply unfurled the tallit and added the Shield of David to its center.

If there is Hebrew writing on the ATARAH or CROWN, it usually is the BLESSING:

**"Blessed art Thou, Lord our God, King of the universe, who has sanctified us with His commandments and commanded us to wrap ourselves in the tzitzit."**

The Blessing is recited as the tallit is placed over the head. The Atarah is on the outside, just like the tent walls of the Holy Tabernacle so that they would always hang the same way. As the tallit is placed over the head, it forms a tent with the four tzitzits on each corner. The word for corners in Hebrew (kanaph) is translated many times as "wings". It is the same word as the wings of the Seraphim as in **Isaiah 6:2**. Each Seraph had six wings and "Cried, Holy. Holy. Holy, is the Lord of hosts...". As the arms are held out under the garment, wings are formed and each corner is a kanaph or wing. Therefore "I dwell safely beneath the shadow of Your wings" takes on a more intimate meaning.

In **Revelation 4:8**, we see the four living creatures with six wings who cry "holy, holy, holy..." . They surround the throne of God in the temple. Are we not the "temple" of the Holy Spirit (God)?

How many kanaph (corners, wings) surround us as we put the Tallit over our head?

In **Ruth 3:9**, Ruth found herself at the feet of Boaz, and as he awakened, he was moved with her vulnerability. Women were not to do things of this nature in those days. In complete honesty and openness she said to him, "spread the corner (kanaph) of your garment over me for Thou art my kinsman redeemer" In the NKJ it says, "Take your maidservant under your wing, for you are a close relative."

Ruth said, "Take me under your wing (kanaph)." Cover me, is a term of intimacy. Boaz was an honorable man and did the honorable thing. They were married, and she became his bride. Here she was a Moabite woman from a foreign country, grafted into the nation of Israel, like us. Boaz and Ruth are listed in the genealogy of King David and therefore of Yeshua ben Yosef (Jesus son of Joseph). She had the right to be covered by her spouse's Tallit. This is a symbolic expression of marriage. (In some Mid Eastern cultures they cast a garment over one being claimed for marriage.)

In **Ezk.16: 8** the Lord speaks to Jerusalem and likewise says, "so I spread my wing (kanaph) over you and covered your nakedness," and in **Psalms 91** we are able to "abide under the shadow of the Almighty" and "under His wings (kanaph)."

**1Samuel 24: 1-22** is the story of Saul's pursuit of David at the sheepfolds and caves of En Gedi.

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 (kanaph) of Saul's robe.**

Now it happened afterward that David's heart troubled him because he had cut Saul's robe. And he said to his men, "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. And Saul got up from the cave and went on his way. David also arose afterward, went out of the cave, and called out to Saul, saying, "My lord the king!" And when Saul looked behind him, David stooped with his face to the earth, and bowed down. And David said to Saul: "Why do you listen to the words of men who say, 'Indeed David seeks your harm? Look, this day your eyes have seen that the LORD delivered you today into my hand in the cave, and someone urged me to kill you. But my eye spared you, and I said, 'I will not stretch out my hand against my lord, for he is the LORD'S anointed. Moreover, my father, see! **Yes, see the corner (kanaph = wing) of your robe in my hand! For in that I cut off the corner of your robe, and did not kill you,** know and see that there is neither evil nor rebellion in my hand, and I have not sinned against you. Yet you hunt my life to take it.

Let the LORD judge between you and me, and let the LORD avenge me on you. But my hand shall not be against you. As the proverb of the ancients says, 'Wickedness proceeds from the wicked.' But my hand shall not be against you. After whom has the king of Israel come out? Whom do you pursue? A dead dog? A flea? Therefore let the LORD be judge, and judge between you and me, and see and plead my case, and deliver me out of your hand."

So it was, when David had finished speaking these words to Saul, that Saul said, "Is this your voice, my son David?" And Saul lifted up his voice and wept.

Then he said to David: "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. Therefore swear now to me by the LORD that you will not cut off my descendants after me, and that you will not destroy my name from my father's house." So David swore to Saul. And Saul went home, but David and his men went up to the stronghold.

(NKJ)

The corners of Saul's robe held the tzitziot and were one of the symbols of his authority. David repented of his action and returned it to Saul.

As you study the Hebrew and Greek, this covering with the garment is expressed as:

The hovering (or brooding) of the Spirit of God over the face of the waters.

**Genesis 1:2**

The hovering over and spreading out of the wings of the eagle.

**Deut.32: 11**

'The overshadowing of the Most High' when Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit.

**Luke 1:35**

The overshadowing that came upon Peter, John and James as they went with Jesus to the Mount of Transfiguration to pray. **Luke 9:28**

Peter's shadow became the overshadowing as people were healed when his shadow (filled with the overshadowing presence of the Lord) fell upon them. **Acts 5:14**

The Prophet Elijah passed his mantle or aderet on to Elisha in **II Kings 2.**

Aderet is Strong's word # 155 'addereth (ad-deh'-reth); something ample (as a large vine, a wide dress); also the same as 145: 145 'eder (eh'-der); from 142; amplitude, i.e. (concrete) a mantle; also (figuratively) splendor: KJV-- garment, glory, goodly, mantle, robe. 142 'adar (aw-dar'); a primitive root; to expand, i.e. be great or (figuratively) magnificent: KJV-- (become) glorious, honorable.

**8** Now Elijah took his mantle, rolled it up, and struck the water; and it was divided this way and that, so that the two of them crossed over on dry ground. (NKJ) **13-14** He also took up the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from him, and went back and stood by the bank of the Jordan. Then he took the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from him, and struck the water, and said, "Where is the LORD God of Elijah?" And when he also had struck the water, it was divided this way and that; and Elisha crossed over. (NKJ)

Many believe that this mantle was actually his Tallit and was the symbol of his calling as a prophet of God. Elisha used this mantle to strike and part the waters as had Elijah had done and proclaimed the passing of Elijah's authority to him. In **Luke 8: 43-48** Now a woman, having a flow of blood for twelve years, who had spent all her livelihood on physicians and could not be healed by any, came from behind and touched the border (hem)of His garment. And immediately her flow of blood stopped. And Jesus said, "Who touched Me?" When all denied it, Peter and those with him said, "Master, the multitudes throng and press You, and You say, 'Who touched Me?'" But Jesus said, "Somebody touched Me, for I perceived power going out from Me." Now when the woman saw that she was not hidden, she came trembling; and falling down before Him, she declared to Him in the presence of all the people the reason she had touched Him and how she was healed immediately. And He said to her, "Daughter, be of good cheer; your faith has

made you well. Go in peace." (NKJ)

The word "border" comes from the Greek word "kraspedon"

Strong's # 2899: kraspedon (kras'-ped-on); of uncertain derivation; a margin, i.e. (specifically) a fringe or tassel: KJV-- border, hem.

It is the Hebrew word tzitzit meaning fringe or tassel. (Remember the commandment of the Lord from Deut. 22:12 to wear fringes?). The word "garment" is himation or cloak. When she came forward and touched His tzitzit she actually took the name of God in her hand.

(YHWH Echad). She was instantly healed.

Yeshua (Jesus) immediately asked, "Who touched **ME**?" (YHWH Echad) Later we read in the Gospels of both Matthew and Mark that Yeshua was asked to simply walk through the crowds so that the sick might have the opportunity to touch the tzitziot of His tallit.

**Matt 14:35-36** And when the men of that place recognized Him, they sent out into all that surrounding region, brought to Him all who were sick, and begged Him that they might only touch the hem of His garment. And as many as touched it were made perfectly well. (NKJ)

**Mark 6:56** 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 hem of His garment. And as many as touched Him were made well. (NKJ)

When we come to the scene of Yeshua's triumphal entry into Jerusalem we also notice that the same word for clothing (himation) used. The disciples put their tallit on the back of the colt for Yeshua to ride and others put fronds and tallit on the ground as a grand gesture of welcoming a king.

**Mark 11:7-8** Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their clothes on it, and He sat on it. And many spread their clothes on the road, and others cut down leafy branches from the trees and spread them on the road. (NKJ)

Jesus referred to the tzitziot of the tallit of certain Pharisees when He spoke of their hypocrisy in

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

In **Mark 5: 41** Then He took the child by the hand, and said to her, "Talitha, cumi," which is translated, "Little girl, I say to you, arise." (NKJ) Some scholars believe that word comes from the word "Talith" and that the literal translation of this is, "Little girl who is now in my tallit, arise!" and the power of the intimacy that Jesus had with God caused her to rise.

In **John 19: 23-24** Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took His garments and made four parts, to each soldier a part, and also the tunic. Now the tunic was without seam, woven from the top in one piece. They said therefore among themselves, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be," that the Scripture might be fulfilled which says: "They divided My garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots." Therefore the soldiers did these things. (NKJ)

A tallit is made of one piece woven without seams and is usually made of the finest material. In **Acts 12** we have the story of Herod's persecution of the saints. After having James killed he had Peter seized and thrown into prison. The night before Peter was to be slain an angel appears in the prison cell. Then the angel said to him, "Gird yourself and tie on your sandals"; and so he did. And he said to him, "Put on your garment (himation or tallit) and follow me." (NKJ)

Finally in **Revelation 19: 13-16** He was clothed with a robe (himation) dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written:

**KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.** (NKJ)

What kind of robe would the returning Yeshua wear? When sitting upon His throne with His tallit upon Him, where would the tzitzit land? Across His thigh would drape the tzitzit which proclaims "**YHWH Echad**" who is King of Kings! The restoration of the use and meaning of the tallit is symbolic of what God is doing on the earth. He is restoring our Hebraic roots and heritage through Yeshua haMasiach (Jesus the Christ).

Christianity made many mistakes when it distanced itself from its "Jewish roots". Do not allow the anti-Semitism that is built into many aspects of Christianity and the Greek interpretations of the Scriptures to rob you of your birthright, insights and knowledge of God's truth. Some Orthodox Rabbis say that it is mandatory for a man to wear a tallit, but it is optional for a women. Do not allow the tradition that only men wear the Tallit to stop you, as a women, from entering into its blessing by wearing it.

**Remember Galatians 3:28:** "There is neither Jew or Greek (Gentile), there is neither slave or free, there is neither male or female, for you are all one (new man) in Christ Jesus"

and **John 8:32:** "And you shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free."