

The Law of the Fringe (Tzitzit)

(We are including a very large drawing of a fringe [Tzitzit] for you to examine carefully by using the scroll at the side of the screen.) Please note that we cannot type beside the drawing, but will try to explain what you are looking at starting at the top with the hole in the fabric that the fringe hooks into. This hole is called the 'aperture'. Then there is the first Knot, followed by 7 wrappings. Knot 2 followed by 8 wrappings. Knot 3 followed by 11 wrappings. Knot 4 followed by 13 wrappings, and then Knot 5. There are 8 Strands. the 8 strands were made by placing 4 separate thread through the aperture. One strand was always blue, signifying that before God, every man was a king.

Also please note that we are unable to present the actual letter of the Hebrew alphabet on this page, and are using the transliterated English word to represent the Hebrew words. ;

The law of the fringe is a Biblical concept that begins in Torah and weaves its way through the entire Old Testament and well into the New. It is for this reason that every Christian should take the time to understand not only the fringe (tzitzit) but the concept, as a whole, as well. It is not being suggested that Christians wear the tallit (prayer shawl). However, by understanding the fringes, we can gain a beautiful picture of the depth of relationship that the Lord desires to have with His people. Many think that the prayer shawl and the fringes contained therein were for Old Testament times, and since Jesus has fulfilled the law and the prophets, that there is no need for us to understand them.

However, there are several concepts revealed within the fringes that go far beyond just 'observing the law' and are relevant for us as believers today. If a person understands the law of the fringe it also makes many passages of New Testament Scripture come into clearer focus. Let us begin this conceptual discussion of the fringes beginning in the Torah. In Numbers 15: 37 we read, 'And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, speak unto the children of Israel, and bid them that they make them fringes in the borders of their garments throughout their generations, and that they put upon the fringe of the borders a ribband of blue: And it shall be unto you for a fringe, that ye may look upon it, and remember all the commandments of the Lord, and do them; seek not after your own heart and your own eyes, after which ye use to go whoring: That ye may remember, and do all my commandments, and be holy unto your God I am the Lord your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt, to be your God I am the Lord your God.'

When we are talking about the law, as given at Sinai, we have a tendency to think that there was nothing more than the Ten Commandments. In fact, there were 613 Torah laws given to Moses at Sinai. Of these 613 Torah laws, there are 365 negative laws (thou shalt nots) and 248 positive laws (thou shalt). The command was that each man was to wear the fringes in order to remember to do all the commands of God. It was not and is not possible to perform all 613 without failure. Any failure was sin. Sin must be atoned for. Is there a picture of grace in the prayer shawl (tallit) or in the fringes themselves? The fringes were gathered in the hand as the Shema was recited in the morning service or prayers. The Shema is found in Deuteronomy 6:4-5, 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord.- and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. ' It is interesting that the strands, knots, and wrappings not only spell out Shema but even total 613 making reference to the 613 Torah laws. See figure I for this discussion. The numerical value of the tassels tzitzit is 600. This is derived by understanding that each Hebrew letter has a numerical equivalent. Going from left to right, 'tav' has a numerical value of 400. The 'Yodh' has a numerical value of 10, the 'Tzade' has a numerical value of 90. The number 600 is then derived as follows:

Tzade--numerical value of 90

Yodh--numerical value of 10

Tzade ---numerical value of 90

Yodh--numerical value of 10

Tav--numerical value of 400

Total 600

There are five knots and 8 strands which total 13. Therefore the numerical value of the tzitzit, the knots and the strands is 613. This is the number of positive and negative Torah laws. Next, we must consider the wrappings numerically. Following knot 1 (figure 1) there are 7 wrappings and following knot 2 there are 8 wrappings. The total of these two wrappings is 15. The number 10 in Hebrew is designated by the letter or consonant (Yodh). The number 5 in Hebrew is designated by the letter or the consonant (yodh, hey). Thus represents the number 15 in Hebrew. Following the third knot (3) there are 11 wrappings- Six (6) wrappings plus five (5) wrappings equal eleven (11) wrappings. We must then designate the number 11 in Hebrew. The number six (6) in Hebrew is the letter or consonant (vav). The number five (5) is represented by the letter or consonant (hey) as previously demonstrated. Therefore, the seven (7) wrappings, the eight (8) wrappings, plus the eleven (11) wrappings represented by (6) plus five (5) spell out the following word: (yodh hey vav hey) (yehovah) God's Proper Name.

Following the knot (4) there are 13 wrappings. The numerical value of these wrappings is somewhat more complicated. One (1) wrapping plus eight (8) wrappings plus four (4) wrappings equals 13 wrappings. One (1) in Hebrew is designated by the letter or consonant (aleph). Eight (8) in Hebrew is the letter(cheth) while the number four (4) is designated by the letter (daleth). The Hebrew word formulated by the 13 wrappings of 1 plus 8 plus 4 is: echad.

The two words formed by the knots and the wrappings are: yehovah echad. This phrase in Hebrew is translated Jehovah is one. This statement is called the Shema from Deuteronomy 6:4-5, 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord. And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.' Therefore, it can be clearly seen that the knots and the wrappings of the tallit not only represent the 613 Torah laws, but bring into reminder that the Lord thy God is one. Interesting that this word one (echad) means, 'to unite, to join oneself together.' It also carries with it the meaning of first or preeminent. Not only was the tallit (prayer shawl) important for the fastening of the tzitzit but it was also a symbol of authority. This is clearly seen in I Samuel 24 where we read, 'And he came to the sheep cotes by the way, where was a cave; and Saul went in to cover his feet: and David and his men remained in the sides of the cave. And the men of David said unto him, Behold the day of which the Lord said unto thee, Behold, I will deliver thine enemy into thine hand, that thou mayest do to him as it shall seem good unto thee. Then David arose, and cut off the skirt of Saul's robe privily ... David also arose afterward, and went out of the cave, and cried after Saul, saying, My lord the king. And when Saul looked behind him, David stooped with his face to the earth, and bowed himself. And David said to Saul, Wherefore hearest thou men's words, saying, behold, David seeketh thy hurt? Behold this day thine eyes have seen how that the Lord had delivered thee to day into mine hand in the cave: and some bade me kill thee: but mine eye spared thee; and I said, I will not put forth mine hand against my lord, - for he is the Lord's anointed.' The moment that David cut off that tzitzit, it demonstrated that David had stripped away Saul's authority. Therefore, the tzitzit became a symbol of a person's authority. When the woman with the issue of blood reached out and touched the hem of Jesus' garment, she was instantly healed. She touched his authority. The hem of his garment was the tzitzit that was attached to the prayer shawl. This story will be considered in greater detail shortly. We must now evaluate how the tzitzit was constructed.

Again, the tallit consisted of two parts, the prayer shawl and the tzitzit (fringes). It was the command that every man have a large tallit with the fringes in which to wrap himself while praying. Every religious act, including prayer, must be performed in the grandest of manner to satisfy Exodus 15:2, 'The Lord is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation: he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt him.' The way that the Jews interpreted this verse was that it was their duty to glorify God in all that they did. It also meant that they were to be glorious before Him even in the performing of the commands (613). The tallit was to be made of lamb's wool. Even the fringes were to be made from lamb's wool except for the single strand of blue and that was to be made of linen. According to law, one could not perform an act of shatnez or mixing of linen and wool. The only exception to this was the single strand of blue which was allowed to be made of linen. The blue dye for this strand was very expensive. It was made from the hillazon snail found near the coast of Phoenicia. According to tradition, it took 3,387,000 of these snails to produce one (1) pound of the blue dye. One was forbidden to wear this royal blue unless he was of royal blood. There is, in essence, two violations of the law here; one was the wearing of the blue, and the other was the mixing of the linen and wool (shatnez). What is the meaning of this? It was and is believed today that because God allowed these two apparent violations that He was saying symbolically that every man was a king and a priest before Him. We find this same statement in Revelation 1:6, 'He has made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever.'

The construction of the fringes was completed by taking four strands of thread and weaving them into a string. Four strands were made after this manner. According to the code of Jewish Law, 'If one does not take four separate strings, but takes one long string, folds it into four, puts it through the aperture, makes a knot, and thereafter cuts the strings, it is invalid.' Said another way, four strands must be put through the aperture thus doubling them to make eight. It was not permitted to take a single strand and cut it into four and then put those four through the aperture creating the eight strands. Once the four strands are put through the aperture, two knots are made. Then the longest strand, called the shamesh, or helper strand, is used to make the wrappings. Again, according to the Code of Jewish Law, 'the strands of the tzitzit are to be twisted, and if any strand becomes untwisted, it is considered as cut off and nonexistent.'

Why was so much detail given to the construction of the tzitzit? The answer can be found in the second half of the command found in Numbers 15: 39, 'And it shall be unto you a tinge, that ye may look upon it, and remember all the commandments of the Lord, and do them, and that ye seek not after your own heart and your own eyes...' The fringes were there not only to remind them to perform the commands, but to remind them not to live their lives after their own heart and after their own eyes. To understand this concept, we must consider a few other passages of Scripture. In Psalm 25:1-3 we read, 'Unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul. O my God, I trust in thee: let me not be ashamed, let not mine enemies triumph over me. Yea, let none that wait on thee be ashamed, let them be ashamed that transgress without cause.' The word translated 'wait' in this passage is the Hebrew word (qavah) and it means to twist, to bind, hence a rope. To be strong, robust, for the notion of binding fast, tying fast, is applied to strength. What is the writer saying here? Is he saying that if you twist, tie, and bind your life with the life of the Lord you will not be ashamed? If we look at Isaiah 40:3 1, we can see this idea somewhat clearer. Isaiah says, 'But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary, -and they shall walk and not faint.' Again, we see the word wait. It has the same meaning as it did in the previous verse. If you want to mount up with the wings of eagles, run and not be weary, and walk and not faint, you must bind, wrap and tie your life with the life of the Lord.

Do you see this idea in the tzitzit? Four threads twisted together to make a strand. Four strands inserted through the aperture which makes 8 strands. After the two knots are made, the longest strand, the shamesh (helper strand) is used to do the wrappings.

The number four is important. This number represents the Godhead. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. The remaining fourth member in this wrapping is you, the Christian. We all must wrap our lives with the life of the Lord. It is not possible for us to do that alone, it takes the Holy Spirit to help us. The Holy Spirit is indeed the shamesh. If we, as Christians, are not wrapping, binding our life with the life of the Lord's then we have diminished value in the kingdom. Strength comes from wrapping our lives tightly in His.

It is fascinating to learn that even with the minutest instructions on the construction of both the tallit and the fringes that one instruction has been left out. The Jews were not told how tightly they had to intertwine the threads of the strands. They were told that if the strands became unwound, they were of no use and had to be cut off as though they were nonexistent. We are told to wrap our lives with the Lord, to bind our lives with his. He does not tell us, however, how tightly we are to bind to him. That is an individual choice. It is my opinion that the prayer shawl is a picture of Jesus. Paul tells us that if we do not want to make provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof, we must put on Christ. Can you see that it is through the wrapping and binding of our life to that of the Lord that keeps us from fulfilling the lusts of the flesh? This is how we can live our lives in cooperation with him and not seek after our own heart and after our own eyes. We have not been freed from the law but Jesus said, 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and all your mind and love your neighbor as you love yourself for if you do this you have fulfilled all the law and all of the prophets..' Now it is the role of the Holy Spirit, the shamesh, to help us perform the new law.

This idea of not living our lives seeking after our own heart and our own eyes can also be found in Proverbs 3: 5-6, 'Trust in the Lord with all thine heart,- and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy path. ' There are a few words that need to be considered in the light of the Hebrew language in order to clearly understand this verse and how it relates to the idea of twisting the strands of the tzitzit. The word translated 'understanding' in this verse is the Hebrew word 'bin' and it means to distinguish, to separate, to discern and to perceive. This verse is telling us to trust in the Lord with all of our heart and lean not on our own ability to discern and perceive. It is telling us not to rely on our own ability to make judgments. The verse also says to acknowledge Him in all of your ways and He will direct your paths. The word that has been translated 'acknowledge' is the Hebrew word 'yadn' and it means to acquire knowledge, to become acquainted with, to become intimate with, to touch with the hand. This word talks about intimacy. Simply put, this word means to handle with the hands and become intimate with. There is a secondary idea to this word that brings the idea of assumption of responsibility. In other words, if you are going to become intimate with the Lord, you must allow Him to assume the responsibility for your life. We see this in the natural world all of the time in the marriage relationship. When I got married, I assumed the responsibility for meeting the needs of my wife.

There are two things that have to take place before the assumption of responsibility can take place. First, I have to be willing to assume that kind of responsibility for my wife's needs. It is more than just needs, it is also assuming the responsibility for helping her achieve her individual goals. The second thing that has to take place is that she must be willing and allow me to assume this responsibility. The same is true for the Lord. He desires us to be intimate with him. He wants to assume the responsibility for our lives. However, we must allow Him to do so. Is this not the same idea that is contained in the command given in Numbers 15? These people were to wear the tzitzit not just to remind them of the law, but to remind them that they should live their lives seeking after Him and not after their own hearts and their own eyes. God wanted them to let Him assume the responsibility for their lives. He does not want them, or us, to rely only on our own minds and our own ability to think and reason. This is why it is so vitally important for us to wrap our lives in His. We need to (quvah) wrap our life with His. Even as the tzitzit had to be twisted and was cut off if it wasn't, so our life must be twisted and tied with the Lord. The only command that they were not given was how tightly that twisting had to be. So even in our lives, the tightness with which we twist and bind our life with the Lord's is really up to us. With this understanding, we can now consider the story of the woman with the issue of blood in more detail. The story of the woman with the issue of blood is found in Mark 5. This story must not be considered alone because by so doing, you will only see part of the picture. This story must be combined with the story of Jairus (Yair). Yair was one of the rulers of the synagogue, whose daughter was ill, almost to the point of death. Yair saw Jesus and fell at his feet and virtually begged him to come and lay hands on his daughter so that she might be healed. Yair indeed felt as though she was about to die. Jesus agreed to go with him, and a great crowd was following them. There was in that crowd a woman who had suffered with an issue of blood for twelve (12) years. She had been to many doctors and spent virtually everything she had trying to find a cure. Rather than getting better, she grew worse. She was at the point of desperation. She reasoned in herself that if she could get to Jesus and touch the hem of his garment (the tzitzit on his tallit) she would be made whole. She wanted to touch the symbol of his authority.

There was a major problem here. She had an issue of blood. This meant that she was unclean. Consider the law on this matter. In Leviticus 15: 19-28 we read, 'And if a woman have an issue, and her issue in her flesh be blood, she shall be put apart seven days: and whosoever toucheth her shall be unclean until the even. And everything that she lieth upon in her separation shall be unclean. everything also that she sitteth upon shall be unclean. And whosoever toucheth her bed shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the even. And whosoever toucheth any thing that she sat upon shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water; and be unclean until even. And if it be on her bed, or on anything whereon she sitteth, when he toucheth it, he shall be unclean until the even ... And if a woman have an issue other blood many days out of the time other separation, or if it run beyond the time of her separation; all the days of the issue of her uncleanness shall be as the days of her separation: she shall

be unclean But if she be cleansed of her issue, then she shall number to herself seven days, and after that she shall be clean. And on the eighth day she shall take unto her two turtles, or two young pigeons, and bring them unto the priest, to the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. And the priest shall offer the one for a sin offering, and the other for a burnt offering; and the priest shall make an atonement for her before the Lord for the issue of her uncleanness. '

What was really going on here was more than just a woman making a decision to be healed. This woman had an issue of blood that rendered her ceremonially unclean. She was to be separated from people and if anyone touched her or if she touched anyone she made them unclean as well. Simply put, if she made someone unclean due to her touch, she committed sin. In Jewish tradition there are three classes of uncleanness. An issue of blood was a class one uncleanness and very serious. Once she touched someone and made them unclean, that person would have to bathe, wash his clothes, and wait until the evening before he was again clean. If he was unclean due to her touch, it limited what he was allowed by law to do or who he could touch. This was a very serious act that this woman performed. So here the stage is set. Yair has convinced Jesus to go with him to heal his daughter who is sick to the point of death. Yair was a ruler of the synagogue and certainly knows the law. He knows that at the moment that this woman touches Jesus, he is rendered unclean. How his heart must have sank. Now Jesus would be unable to go to his daughter. Please do not make the mistake of that these people would have ignored this law. There is no telling what all was going through his mind. As far as the woman was concerned, even though she received her healing, she tried to disappear. Why? Was it because she knew what she had done was an act of sin? She certainly knew that she had rendered Jesus unclean.

Jesus knew that something had happened at the moment that she touched him. The Scripture says that he perceived that 'virtue' had gone out of him. We should consider this word 'virtue' for just a moment. In Greek the word for virtue (*dunamis*) and it is defined as 'power.' We get our word dynamite from this Greek word. In Hebrew, the word for virtue brings us a clearer definition or idea. This word 'virtue' in Hebrew is 'gevurah' and it is from the root 'gabar' and it means 'strength, due to binding, twisting, hence a rope.' When the woman with the issue touched Jesus, he immediately felt strength go out of him. Jesus asked the question, 'Who touched me?' The passage further states that he looked around about to see her that had done this thing. 'But the woman fearing and trembling, knowing what was done in her, came and fell down before him, and told him all the truth.' Again, why was she so fearful? She was so fearful that she was trembling. Could it be that she knew that what she had done had broken the law of God? Did she know that she had made him unclean? Jesus responds to her by saying, 'Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole, go in peace, and be whole of thy plague. ' He did not condemn her, but did he suffer the consequences of being made unclean? The remainder of the story will provide the answer for us.

After Jesus declaration to the woman, certain people from the home of Yair came to tell him to not trouble the master any longer because his daughter had just died. To these statements, Jesus responds by telling Yair to not be afraid, only believe. At this point it would be wise to point out a tradition among the Jewish people that could have possibly been happening in this story. Although it may only be speculation, it must nonetheless be mentioned, if not considered. This tradition is called the Law of the Fringe and it had to do with the wearing of the fringes (*tzitzit*). According to The Code of Jewish Law, 'Severe is the punishment of the one who neglects the performance of the Divine Command in putting on the *tzitzit*.' What is this 'severe punishment?' We must look to the Talmud for the answer. The Talmud, even though not written until 200 A. D., comprises the teachings of the Mishna. The Mishna was the oral traditions and this was certainly prominent during the time of Jesus. Talmud makes this statement concerning the wearing of the fringes: 'The purpose of the fringe is described in the verse,' That ye may look upon it and remember all the commandments of the Lord and do them' (Numbers 15:39), on which the Talmud remarks, 'This ordinance is equal to all the precepts, because seeing leads to remembering and remembering to performing!' (Men.43b). An instance is quoted in the context of a man who was saved from acting immorally by the reminder he received from the fringe on his garment (*ibid*.44a). Hence it was taught: 'Whoever is particular with this ordinance is worthy of receiving the presence of the Shechinah' (*ibid*. 43b). 'The text does not read 'Ye may look upon them,' but 'look upon Him.' thus declaring that whoever fulfills the law of the fringe is accounted as though he had received the presence of the Shechinah, since the color of the blue thread resembled the color of the sea which is like that of the firmament and in turn is like that of the Throne of Glory' (Sifre Num. 15; 34b). The meaning is that the understanding of the use of the fringe kept a person's life pure, and so brought him into closer communion with God. Here, too, we find a superstitious value attached to the religious rite as a protective force. The neglect of wearing of the fringe, as well as the omission to fasten the Mezuzah to the door post, caused death among one's children. (Shab.32b); and versely, 'Whoever scrupulously observed the law of the fringe was worthy that two thousand eight hundred servants should attend upon him; as it is written 'Thus saith the Lord of hosts, In those days shall ten men of all the languages of the nations take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you for we have heard that God is with you.' (Zech. 8: 23).

There is no question that Yair, as a ruler of the synagogue, was aware of this law of the fringe. Does this mean that we should assume that he believed his daughter died because he did not wear the fringe or that he wore them incorrectly? There is no way for us to know for sure. There certainly is that possibility. We know that at the moment that he was told of the death of his daughter, Jesus told him to not be afraid. It seems that the time for fear is before the death, not after it. However, the story gets deeper. After telling Yair to not be afraid, only believe, Jesus did not allow anyone to follow beyond that point except for Peter, James, and John, the brother of James. When they arrived at the house of Yair, Jesus saw the people that had gathered around weeping and wailing greatly. He asked them, ' Why make ye this ado, and weep? The damsel is not dead, but sleepeth. ' The passage then tells us that

they laughed him to scorn. Then it says, 'But when he had put them all out, he taketh the father and the mother of the damsel, and them that were with him, and entereth in where the damsel was lying. Why was he able to go into the room with a dead girl? The dead are considered to be unclean.

Jesus was already unclean due to the touch of the woman with the issue of blood. Then the passage tells us that, 'He took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, Talitha cumi; which is, being interpreted, Damsel, I say unto thee, arise. Let's propose a question here. If the statement 'talitha cumi' really meant, Damsel, I say unto thee, arise, why was it left in the passage untranslated? Better stated, does 'talitha cumi' really mean damsel, I say unto thee, arise? It is my belief that it goes much deeper than that. Something was said in that room that caused Jesus to instruct them to tell no man what was said or done. This needs to be examined in light of Hebrew language. Let's consider all of verse 41 in Hebrew (transliterated English): Hu achaz eth yadah shel hayahda veamar eleyha talitha qumi shetargunno maarah qumi ani omer lach

The interpretation of this verse is: 'He grasp hand belonging to the girl and said, eleyha, talitha arise, is interpreted, young girl get up, I say to you.' You will notice that two words have been left untranslated in this verse. This is because it is difficult to translate them into English. Yet, without a firm understanding of these two words, it is impossible to clearly see what was happening here. It is because of the presence of these two words that Jesus told them not to tell anyone what had happened. Once again, let us consider the feasibility of that statement. We have already seen that the people gathered around knew that the girl was dead. When he told them that the girl was not dead but only sleeping, they laughed him to scorn. THEY KNEW SHE WAS DEAD. Obviously, when she came outside, people would know what happened in that room. There would be no need for them to keep quiet because the sheer presence of the girl would reveal all. Therefore, we must conclude that this is not what Jesus was referring to. He must have instructed them to keep quiet about something else. Once again, the answer can be found in the proper understanding of the two words (eleyah tallitah).

Let's state the verse again so that we may understand what has happened with these two words. 'He grasp hand belonging to the girl and said, strange interpretation of this word. The normal way to express 'to her' in Hebrew would be, (shelah) and not (eleyah). Even if one chooses not to use the Hebrew word '(shelah) to indicate 'to her' (othah) could be used. (Eleyah) could in very rare situations be used to mean 'to her.' However, it was considered to be a holy word. (Eleyah) is a compound word. (El) is a name for God. We see this in such compound words as El-Shaddai (God the source, provider, breast) or Bethel (house of God). Therefore, (eleyah) is the abbreviated form of 'yodh, hey, vav, hey ' the proper name of God (Yaweh). Therefore, (eleyah) is a combination of two of the names of God. In fact, these same four letters with different vowel markings means God is Jehovah. Considering the belief that the Jews held concerning the use of the name of God (eleyah) would hardly be used to indicate 'to her.' Conclusions will be drawn shortly.

The next word to be considered is (tallita). We know by the interpretation that tallita can not mean girl, young girl, or maiden (see Hebrew above). What is being said here? It can not be as simple as Damsel, I say unto thee arise. Let's put these two words in the proper context. In other words, we will restate the verse with the direct translation. 'He grasp hand belonging to the girl and said 'God speaking to (female under) tallit, get up.' Jesus was speaking as God. He was not speaking to the tallit but to the girl under the tallit. This is understood by the feminine ending on the word tallit. Could it be possible that Jesus was proclaiming himself to be God? That is precisely the point. Jesus was also making the statement that He had perfectly performed the Law of the Fringe and was the person spoken of in Zechariah 8: 23, ' Thus saith the Lord of hosts; In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for- we have heard that God is with you. ' This was a messianic passage of Scripture. Jesus was in fact, declaring himself to be the Messiah. This is what he did not want those gathered to reveal. We have another indication of this very idea when he told them to give the little girl something to eat. In Deuteronomy 8:2-3, ' And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no. And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live. ' Was Jesus making reference to this verse when he gave the instruction for the little girl to be fed? She had already been provided with spiritual food, (raised from the dead), and now it was time to give her physical food.

It is my hope and prayer that you have benefited from this study of the Tallit, the tzitzit, the woman with the issue of blood and Yair, the ruler of the synagogue. To me, the key question is: Are you wrapping your life with the Lord? If so, how tightly? The beautiful part about it is that we can wrap our life with His within the framework of our own personality. This twisting and binding will aid you in living your life not seeking after your own heart and your own eyes, but His. Peace be unto you!

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Q: How Important is the Wearing of Tzitzit?

A: The tzitzit (pronounced tsee-tseet, known in English as 'fringes' or 'tassels') are worn by Orthodox Jews and Torah-observant Messianic Jews today because G-d commanded the Israelites to do so forever: The Lord said to Moses, 'Speak to the Israelites and say to them: 'Throughout the generations to come you are to make tassels (tzitzit) on the corners of your garments, with a blue cord on each tassel. You will have these tassels to look at and so you will remember all the commands of the Lord, that you may obey them and not prostitute yourselves by going after the lusts of your own hearts and eyes. Then you will remember to obey all my commands and will be consecrated to your God. I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt to be your God. I am the Lord your God.'" (Numbers 15:37-41,NIV).

During Bible times, the Jews (and other peoples of the region) wore four-cornered garments. In the above Scripture (and Deuteronomy 22:12) G-d commands the Jewish people 'throughout the generations to come' to wear fringes on the corners of their garments so as to remember G-d's commands. Since this command was never rescinded, we believe that all Jewish men, including Messianic ones, should wear fringes. When people stopped wearing four-cornered garments, some Rabbis ruled that the law only applied to when one is wearing a four-cornered garment. Those who were not so interested in doing their best to fulfil this law were satisfied with only wearing a four-cornered garment with tassels during prayer, (especially in synagogue) as a prayer shawl, or tallit. Those who wished to do everything in their power to fulfil G-d's commands created a four-cornered garment to be worn under one's shirt, called a tallit katan ('katan' means small). Since in the western world we no longer wear four-cornered garments, Orthodox Jews wear a tallit katan.

Because it is normally worn as an undergarment, the fringes are made long enough to extend outside of one's trousers. This is important, since the tassels are meant to be seen so as to remind us of G-d's commands. Some more liberal 'branches' of Judaism have done away with the wearing of tzitzit and the tallit. The way in which the fringes are traditionally tied has ancient Rabbinic origins. Although various versions of 'mystical' significance has been placed on the traditional method of tying the fringes, it is unclear where this method originated. Since we have no reason to think that it is anti-Biblical, we continue as Messianic Jews to tie them the same way.

Another Rabbinic interpretation concerning fringes is that they should no longer contain the blue thread. The Torah commands that tzitzit contain a thread of tikhales (blue). According to tradition, the dye for this color came from a species of the snail family called Chilazone. According to the Talmud, the Chilazone appears only once in seventy years (Menachot 44a). Rabbinic literature indicates several locations for Chilazone, but the elusive snail is apparently no longer available.

Another tradition suggests that the blue thread was removed because in the time of the Roman occupation, the Romans would not allow anyone to wear royal blue. Many historical purists in Israel today are wearing the blue thread anyway. Others reject the idea that because the specific blue dye which was supposedly always used in Bible times is no longer available, that the tzitzit should be white! Obviously any blue is more blue than white! Many Messianic Jews and Messianic gerim (proselytes) wear the fringes simply because it is something that G-d commanded, and also for the purpose of identifying with the Jewish community. When worn by Messianics, the fringes normally do contain the blue cord so as to be Scripturally accurate, and are sometimes worn attached directly to belt loops or pinned inside the trousers rather than to a separate four-cornered undergarment. It is, after all, the fringes that are commanded, not the garment.

Yeshua himself, being perfect in his Jewishness as in all else, naturally wore fringes, as is described in Scripture in Matthew 9:20, concerning the woman who had had a hemorrhage for 12 years. She touched the tzitzit [Greek 'kraspedon,' fringe or tassel] on His robe. As always, traditions must be tested against Scripture before being accepted into Messianic Jewish practice. Here is something which on first glance seems to be a tradition, but which is Scripturally commanded and was followed by Yeshua and His disciples in the practice of their Judaism. It is incumbent upon us to walk in His footsteps by living as He and His disciples did.

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Rites and Rituals

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Jesus makes an interesting statement in Matthew 23:5, Everything they do is done for men to see: they make their phylacteries wide and the tassels of their prayer shawls long. We get the gist that somehow the people Jesus is talking about are less than upright in their actions. The details elude us, for this is unfamiliar activity. Deuteronomy 6:8 tells us, You shall bind them as a sign upon your hand, and they shall be for a reminder between your eyes. This scripture is referring to the phylacteries worn during morning prayers. Phylacteries is the Greek name, tefillin is the Hebrew, for leather boxes bound by a leather strap. The boxes contain four portions of the Torah: Exodus 13:1-10, Exodus 13:11-16, Deuteronomy 6:4-9 and Deuteronomy 11:13-21. These verses deal with the mitzvah (commandment) of tefillin. The hand (shel yad) tefillin has one compartment and contains all four portions of scripture on four pieces of parchment. The head (shel rosh) tefillin has four

compartments, each containing one parchment with one of the passages of scripture on it. The parchments are hand lettered and may be executed only by an approved scribe. The shel yad is placed on the left inside arm so as to allow the box to rest against the heart when the arms are folded. The shel rosh is worn on the forehead, between the eyes to rest on the cerebrum. Our attention is directed to our head, heart and hand; we are taught to dedicate ourselves to serving God in all we think, feel or do. Tefillin are worn on week days only; on the Sabbath or festivals, the tefillin are not to be put on. When worn, they are for both morning and evening prayers.

The other aspect mentioned above is the tassels of the prayer shawl. The prayer shawl is called tallit in Hebrew. The tassels are tzitzit or fringes. The tallit is comprised of two parts - the tzitzit and the garment. The lengths and colors will vary with individual tastes and custom. Tallit are worn by married men in Orthodox congregations and by all males past the age of Bar Mitzvah in Conservative and Reform Synagogues. Originally, women were not forbidden to wear the tallit, but were exempt due to the duties of managing the household and raising the children. Over time, it became understood they would not wear the tallit. Numbers 15:37-41 gives the instruction on the tallit. It is to be worn well and consciously. It is reasonable to interpret the references in Matthew 6:6 and Acts 18:3 as euphemisms for tallit. Wrapping yourself in a prayer shawl creates a barrier to outside distractions much like a closet. This also creates a tent of meeting between the individual and God.

Another common piece of apparel, not found in scripture, is the skull cap. The term yarmulke is Yiddish, a combination of German and Hebrew. The Hebrew name is kippa. This is seen as a sign of modesty before God, and acknowledgement of the kingship of God over man. Drawings from the third century do not show hats or caps being worn during worship. We do not know the exact time this practice began, but it was common during the Middle Ages. Some contemporary scholars believe the kippa was in use during the first century and project that Jesus wore one. Some sources say the cap was devised as a sign that the pious Jew recognized God as their head. Others noted that the Christians wore nothing on their heads when in worship and donned the caps to distinguish them from their detractors.

The trumpet mentioned in Leviticus 25:9, 23:24 and Numbers 29:1 refer to the shofar or rams horn. The rams horn is used to remind us of the sacrifice provided Abraham in the place of Isaac. The shofar is blown on Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year which also coincides with the Feast of Trumpets beginning the Days of Awe leading up to Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. There are other references as to other times when it is appropriate to blow the shofar. Some blow the shofar at weddings and some at funerals. According to some traditions, the shofar is blown to confuse Satan, believing he hates the sound because of all it represents.

When Messiah comes, the great shofar will be sounded heralding, among other things, Satan's ultimate defeat. The shofar is also seen as representative of man, a hollow instrument without meaning until breath enters it. Especially during Rosh Hashanah, man should see himself as a shofar - an empty vessel, worthless by itself, but potentially capable of divinity. Man is but an empty shell except for the 'breath of God' which brings us alive to serve and worship Him.

THE RITUAL OF STONING

This is one ritual most Christians have heard of and heard sermons about, but do not understand. It is not a Western practice and is not a familiar act or process. Stoning is mentioned at least 37 times in the Bible - 21 times in the Tanakh and 16 times in the New Testament. They have been divided into four groups for purposes of study:

1. Related as Law: Exodus 19:13, , 21:28-32, Leviticus 20:2, 20:27, 24:14-23, Deuteronomy 13:10, 17:5, 21:21, 22:21- 24
2. Feared or contemplated: Exodus 8:26, 17:4, I Samuel 30:6, Luke 20:6, Acts 14:5, 5:36, John 8:5, 20:31, Hebrews 12:20, Numbers 14:10
3. Actual stoning: Numbers 15:36, Joshua 7:25, I Kings 12:18, 21:13, II Chronicles 10:18, 24:21, Ezekiel 23:47, Acts 7:58, 14:19
4. Prophecy, figure of speech or retelling: Lamentations 3:53, Ezekiel 16:40, Matthew 23:37, Luke 13:34, John 11:18, Matthew 21:35, John 8:5, II Corinthians 11:25, Hebrews 11:37, 12:20

Out of the actual stonings we have one for breaking the Sabbath, one for breaking the covenant with God (theft of first fruits,) one for adultery, one at the hands of false witnesses (to obtain Naboth's vineyard,) three for prophesying or witnessing (Zechariah, Stephen, Paul,) and one by mob (rebellion), Ezekiel's prophesy. Paul is the only one to be stoned and tell of it himself afterwards.

According to Josephus, none could be put to death but by the Sanhedrin, the supreme council at Jerusalem known as the 'Council of 71.' This was established after the kingdom of Israel came into being and was not in effect at the time of Moses or in pre-Temple times. The Talmud describes the process as becoming quite lengthy. The death penalty was not to be taken lightly considering its permanence. Stoning was considered the harshest form of execution meted out by the courts. Following stoning in descending order are, burning, strangulation and beheading. The actual process is quite deliberate and revealing.

Criminal cases may only be tried by priests, Levites and Israelites who can give their daughters in marriage into the priesthood. In other words, those of pure Israelitish descent. To help the cause of justice by acting as a witness was considered a sacred duty. The man who does not give evidence in connection with his fellow man when he may do so might be free from

the judgement of man, but is liable to the judgement of heaven. Judges and witnesses alike may be found to be disqualified if it is discovered that they are: dice-players (gamblers), lenders of money on interest, flyer of doves (one who wages on the race, gambler,) and those who traffic in produce of the Sabbatical Year. Others were added to the list from time to time. Women and minors were also excluded from acting as witnesses. Two witnesses were required to establish a case bearing the death penalty. Numbers 35:30 states One witness shall not testify against any person that he die. This created the general rule that whenever the scripture uses the word 'witness,' it is understood to mean 'two' unless the text specifies only one. A single witness who is uncorroborated is not believed. Circumstantial evidence, no matter how convincing, was not accepted in order to bring the death penalty. The witness must have actually seen the crime committed and done all possible to warn the perpetrator and stop him from his deed. Perjured witnesses often suffered the fate they sought for the individual on trial.

During a trial, the judges were under a strict injunction to treat both parties the same. Both litigants must stand during the trial; if, however, one must be seated, then both are to be seated. One cannot speak at length and the other be instructed to be brief. If one party is in tatters and the other in expensive robes in order to impress the judge, the latter is instructed to either dress like the other one or to dress him like you. A judge is forbidden to listen to one party before arrival of the other. The court required that someone testify in favor of the accused. Every possible way was explored to avoid capital punishment. It became popular saying that 'A Sanhedrin which executed a person once in seven years was called a 'killing court'.'

After the accused was found guilty, he was taken to the place of stoning. This was outside the court. A man was stationed at the entrance of the court with a flag. Another man was mounted on a horse, also with a flag, at a distance from the court, but within sight. Should one of the judges remember something in favor of the prisoner or should another witness appear with something in his favor, the man at the entrance would begin to wave his flag. The mounted rider, upon seeing this, would begin to wave his flag and ride to the side of stoning to stop the proceedings and bring the prisoner back to court to hear the new evidence.

The prisoner would be led to the place of stoning by a herald proclaiming, 'Moshe Ben Zvi' is going forth to be stoned for committing a 'murder,' the witnesses against him were 'David Ben Shmuel and Avi Ben Jacov,' let whoever knows anything in his favor come and declare it for him. 'When a distance of about 10 cubits (15-20 feet) from the place of stoning was reached, the procession would stop. The condemned was told to confess, for it is the way of all who are condemned to confess. 'Whoever confesses will have a part in the world to come. 'If he did not know how to confess, it was explained to him. He would be told to say, 'May my death be an atonement for all my sins. 'At a distance of about 4 cubits, they would stop again and remove the garments of the condemned. Men are left a covering in front, women were left a covering in front and behind. The place of stoning was to have a height of at least two men. The first witness pushed the condemned by the loins off the 'High Place. ' Should the condemned turn himself over on his face, the witness turned him over on his back. Should the condemned die from the fall, the sentence was considered to be carried out. If not, then the second witness would take a stone and hurl it upon his heart. The stone must be of such size and weight that it required two men to carry it. The stone was lifted overhead by the two witnesses, but one released it to the other so he could hurl it with greater force. If the condemned died from it, the law had been carried out; if not, then the Israelites in general must continue to repeat the act until death occurred. You may refer to Deuteronomy 17:7.

The lesson above may be applied to several stories in the Bible with some new insight. Jesus was confronted by a mob dragging a woman said to have been taken in adultery. The accusations brought were not legal by standards of the judicial system. Jesus rebuffed them by pointing out one legal flaw...the witnesses were not acceptable. He turned their trap back upon them, John 8:3-12. We can also see that the stoning of Paul in Lystra brings about a resurrection miracle, Acts 14:19- 20. Each time you read about stoning or false witnesses, you will have to sift your thoughts through the mesh of knowledge you now have about stoning and the judicial process. Mobs and quick tempered judges may have circumvented many of the niceties and safeguards, but the actual act would have followed custom.

One other custom that was followed was an act of mercy. Kind women from the city would often accompany the prisoner to the place of execution, providing a mixture of wine and myrrh. This had a numbing, narcotic effect and brought a stupor on the condemned, dulling the pain. In Matthew 27:34, Jesus is offered wine mingled with gall. The Greek for gall has an inference to 'poppy' which would be narcotic in effect. It may be possible that the Romans around Jerusalem had adopted this custom not so much out of pity, but in an attempt to prolong the crucifixion. It may have been that the soldier who declared Him to be the Son of God in verse 54 was the one offering Him the drink out of kindness.

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