

**PARASHAH:** Shlach L'kha (Send on your behalf)  
**ADDRESS:** B'midbar (Numbers) 13:1-15:41  
**READING DATE:** Shabbat  
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(Note: all quotations are taken from the Complete Jewish Bible, translation by David H. Stern, Jewish New Testament Publications, Inc., unless otherwise noted)

Let's begin with the opening blessing for the Torah:

***“Baruch atah YHVH, Eloheynu, Melech ha-‘Olam,  
asher bachar banu m’kol ha-amim,  
v’natan lanu eht Torah-to.  
Baruch atah YHVH, noteyn ha-Torah.  
Ameyn.”***

(Blessed are you, O' LORD, our God, King of the Universe,  
you have selected us from among all the peoples,  
and have given us your Torah.  
Blessed are you, LORD, giver of the Torah.  
Ameyn.)

The story of the ten spies who had no faith and the two who did is a familiar sermon. So much so, that I needn't elaborate on it too much here in our commentary to **Parashat Shlach L'kha**. I will touch briefly on some highlights:

The section on the spies avidly demonstrates the awesome mercy and judgment of our Heavenly Abba. Opponents of the grace of the "Old Testament" are hard-pressed to explain away the merciful actions of ADONAI in chapter 14:5-20! Surely the disobedient, unfaithful bunch of them deserved HaShem's punishment. Yet, at Moshe's pleading, HaShem stayed his severe ruling and instead mercifully gave them an object lesson that they should NEVER forget. The rest of the Torah would draw from this event for the successive generations to witness—indeed that was HaShem's purpose for treating them thusly (read 14:20-34)! Even the B'rit Chadashah mentions this divine incident:

**"Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says: “Today, if you will hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, in the day of trial in the wilderness, where your fathers tested me, proved me, and saw my works forty years therefore I was angry with that generation and said: ‘They always go astray in their heart, and they have not known my ways.’ So I swore in my wrath, they shall not enter my rest.””**  
**(Heb. 3:7-11)**

The really sad part about this incident is that it is the very same adult generation that witnessed the wonders of Egypt, of which HaShem is speaking about here!

The very same individuals saw the fiery Law, which went forth at Mount Sinai!  
The very same crowd was familiar with the pillar of Cloud and pillar of Fire!  
Concerning obedience and disobedience, one contemporary rabbi has this to say about this incident:

“The ability to do something will be severely limited by the consequences of that action, if the consequences are known and believed. Every parent and teacher knows that discipline is in direct proportion to the believability of his or her threats. Do as you have threatened to do, and they will believe and listen to your instructions. Do not do as you threaten to do, and they will not believe and they will not listen.

“The angels have free will to either listen or not listen to G-d, but they also know the absolute truth of the doctrine of consequences. G-d does and will reward and punish. For the angels it is as willful as our not putting our hands in fire. We know there will be a consequence and therefore we will not do it. The angels also know there will be consequences, good or bad, and therefore they do G-d's will.

“Believing that our actions have consequences is the most powerful motivator possible. If every action had an immediate reward or punishment, our free will would cease to exist. We would only do as He commanded and we would never transgress His wishes. Because G-d does not immediately reward and punish we have the freedom to decide whether we will or will not believe in His consequences.”<sup>1</sup>

Despite the dire warning from HaShem, the people remorsefully feel that it is their duty to correct their wrongs, and foolishly attempt to instead take the land by force. They are met with disaster and disappointment (read 14:39-45).

Our lesson is painfully clear: “Father *really* does know best.” Sometimes our impatience falsely motivates us to “jump ahead of the program” when we are told to wait, or sometimes we get “cold feet” when the LORD is motivating us to action instead. ‘Am Yisra’el displayed both of these disappointing human qualities here for us in our current portion. As such, we have but yet to learn how to go when God says, “Go!” and stay put when God says “Stay put!”

### **Shabbat Violation**

In chapter 15, verses 32-36 we find the Torah’s first mention of a Sabbath violator and the capital punishment that goes along with such a contravention. Many a reader has pondered, “Why such a steep punishment for violating the Shabbat? Allow me to midrash.

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<sup>1</sup> Rabbi Aron Tendler, *Rabbi’s Notebook: Shlach* (Torah.org and Project Genesis, 2000) <http://www.torah.org/learning/rabbis-notebook/5760/shlach.html>

The Torah helps to paint a picture of work and rest, slavery and freedom, which spiritually amounts to life and death. How so? In the Renewed Covenant book of Galatians, Rabbi Sha'ul tell us:

**"Don't delude yourselves: no one makes a fool of God! A person reaps what he sows. Those who keep sowing in the field of their old nature, in order to meet its demands, will eventually reap ruin; but those who keep sowing in the field of the Spirit will reap from the Spirit everlasting life. So let us not grow weary of doing what is good; for if we don't give up, we will in due time reap the harvest. Therefore, as the opportunity arises, let us do what is good to everyone, and especially to the family of those who are trustingly faithful." (6:7-10)**

The better first half of Leviticus chapter 25 uses harvest language, sowing and reaping, working and resting according to faith. To leave the ground unplowed for an entire year requires faith indeed—especially living in an agricultural land such as Isra'el! The guilty man was found gathering wood on the “day meant for resting”. Today, our faith lies in the fact that we have rested from our labors of self-righteousness. Before our faith in Messiah, we worked year after year to meet our own needs. Our harvest was the product of our own hands. Consequently, it was a harvest of death. Our “working” to be accepted by God, outside of genuine, Biblical trust in Messiah, could only result in death.

But to place one's trusting faithfulness in the atoning work of the Messiah Yeshua is to rest from one's own labors! To be sure, without the faith of Messiah at work in our lives, we truly do not have a proper concept of Shabbat! To rest (the Sabbath) is to cease working in our own fields, and to begin "resting" in the fields of the Master! When we were in the world, we were "slaves" to sin! But now in Messiah Yeshua, we have experienced our spiritual Jubilee—our year of release from debt! We are no longer slaves to sin, and our wages are no longer death! We have been set free by the power of his Sabbath rest!

What does the Torah say?

**"What the Messiah has freed us for is freedom! Therefore, stand firm, and don't let yourselves be tied up again to a yoke of slavery."  
(Galatians 5:1)**

And again in another place,

**"So there remains a Shabbat-keeping for God's people. For the one who has entered God's rest has also rested from his own works, as God did from his.**

**Therefore, let us do our best to enter that rest; so that no one will fall short because of the same kind of disobedience." (Hebrews 4:9-11)**

And finally,

**"Keep my Shabbats, and revere my sanctuary; I am ADONAI."  
(Leviticus 26:20)**

### **Garment of Praise**

The portion this week contains Judaism's first mitzvah (commandment) concerning the tzitzit, that is, the tassel that adorns a modern observant Jewish person's clothing. Chapter 15:37-41 clearly teaches the offspring of Avraham to attach a "ribbon of blue" to the extremity or "wing" (Heb: kanaf) of their garments.

It is easy to assume that these p'sukim (verses) are meant to be actualized by the males of the community, but a difference of opinion has arisen concerning whether or not women can also wear the tassel of blue (Heb: techelet). While the literal text reads "sons" in verse 38, I believe the following paragraph may shed some light on the subject. I must state up front that traditionally women have not worn the fringes. And reasons as to why are varied. But in my line of work many readers frequently ask me about this unique and exciting mitzvah. Here is some of what I have had to say:

(Borrowing material from my short series called "Shomer Mitzvot")

*"Rabbi Ariel [sic], can a woman wear a tallit?"* Let us first define what a tallit is, and its function. A tallit (say "tall-eat"), also known as a "prayer shawl", is a four-cornered, rectangular-shaped garment, containing ritual fringes on each of its four corners, worn for the express purpose of fulfilling the following mitzvah (command). These tassels are called tzitzit (say "seat-seat"). The prayer shawl is usually adorned with colorful stripes and a special Hebrew-lettered neckband to identify the top edge. Before I provide a possibly controversial answer, I want to draw your attention to the specific Torah passage that addresses the topic of the fringes.

### **Version: NAS Numbers 15:37-40**

37. The LORD also spoke to Moses, saying, 38. "Speak to the sons of Israel, and tell them that they shall make for themselves tassels on the corners of their garments throughout their generations, and that they shall put on the tassel of each corner a cord of blue. 39. "And it shall be a tassel **for you to look at and remember** all the commandments of the LORD, so as to do them and not follow after your own heart and your own eyes,

after which you played the harlot, 40. in order that you may remember to do all My commandments, and be holy to your God (emphasis mine).

The Hebrew reads:

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר

דַּבֵּר אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם וְעָשׂוּ  
לָהֶם צִיצִית עַל-כַּנְּפֵי בְּגָדֵיהֶם לְדֹרֹתָם  
וְנָתַנּוּ עַל-צִיצִית הַכַּנָּף פְּתִיל תְּכֵלֶת

וְהָיָה לָכֶם לְצִיצִית וּרְאִיתֶם אֹתוֹ וְזָכַרְתֶּם  
אֶת-כָּל-מִצְוֹת יְהוָה וְעָשִׂיתֶם אֹתָם וְלֹא-תִתְּרוּ  
אֲחֵרֵי לְבַבְכֶם וְאַחֲרֵי עֵינֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר-אַתֶּם  
זָנִים אַחֲרֵיהֶם

לְמַעַן תִּזְכְּרוּ וְעָשִׂיתֶם אֶת-כָּל-מִצְוֹתַי  
וְהָיִיתֶם קְדוֹשִׁים לֵאלֹהֵיכֶם

אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתִי אֶתְכֶם  
מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם לִהְיוֹת לָכֶם לֵאלֹהִים אֲנִי  
יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם

*(Vayomer ADONAI el-Moshe leymor.*

*Daber el-b'ney Yisra'el ve'amarta aleihem v'asu lahem tzitzit al-kan'fey  
vig'deyhem l'dorotam v'nat'nu al-tzitzit ha-kanaf p'til t'cheilet.*

*V'hayah lachem l'tzitzit ur'item oto uz'chartem et-kol-mitzvot ADONAI  
va'asitem otam v'lo-taturu acharei l'vav'chem v'acharei eyneychem asher-  
atem zonim achareihem.*

*L'ma'an tiz'k'ru va'asitem et-kol-mitzvotai vi-hyitem k'doshim le-  
Eloheichem.*

*Ani ADONAI Eloheichem asher hotzeiti etchem mey'erets Mitzrayim li'hyot  
lachem le-Elohim ani ADONAI Eloheichem.)*

Here in Numbers 15:37-41, we find a series of verses specifically aimed at teaching 'Am Yisra'el (the people of Isra'el) how to revere HaShem and his Torah. According to the Talmudic rabbis, one of the possible incidents that "sparked" the giving of the tallit mitzvah in the first place was the violation of the Shabbat (see 15:32-36); another might be the upcoming rebellion involving Korach and his bunch of rebels (see next parashah). These are inferred by the

immediate context of the chapters. However, the mitzvah of wearing the fringes spans the entire context of Torah observance, in that, placing ritual fringes on the corners of the garment (see 15:39-39) was to serve as a visual reminder that HaShem was serious when he told them to "keep the commandments", not just the Shabbat.

In ancient Isra'el, these fringes adorned the corners of the actual garment that was worn as part of everyday dress. To be sure, ancient garments functioned similar to a sheet with cutouts for the head and arms, or perhaps they may have resembled what we would call a dress today. As time went on, styles changed, but the mitzvah remained. So Judaism created the tallit to contain the four corners in which to attach the tassels. From this passage we learn that the actual mitzvah is directed towards the tassels themselves and not the tallit, although according to some rabbinic sources, the "fringes" and the "tallit" are tandem objects and cannot be separated in discussion.

Traditions play an important part of our daily walk as new creations in Messiah Yeshua. In my opinion, some traditions enhance that walk, while other traditions hinder it. Logic dictates that if a tradition comes directly from the Torah, then HaShem designed it to enhance our walk. According to Jewish tradition, men wear a tallit to signify obedience to the above-mentioned mitzvah, to signify the desire to engage in public prayer and Torah exposition, or in special cases, depending on the length of the tallit, it can signify a position of leadership (rabbi, deacon, prayer-chanter, etc). We know from the Torah itself, the New Covenant part, that Rabbi Yeshua ben-Yosef, as a Torah observant Jewish man, wore the fringes on his garment (see Matthew 9:20).

Now to address the question head on: "*Can a woman wear a tallit?*" According to the Biblical injunction to perform the mitzvah of the tzitzit, a woman these days should wear some sort of prayer shawl, adorned with fringes. The above-mentioned passage is addressed to the "Children of Isra'el", which translates the Hebrew phrase "B'ney Yisra'el". This familiar phrase, used throughout the TaNaKH quite frequently, normally includes all of Isra'el, and not just the men or (literally) "sons". What this means is that historically, we should have seen the women joining in on this mitzvah. After all, doesn't it stand to reason, therefore, that HaShem wants the females to be Torah-observant also?

What do the Chazal (the Sages of Antiquity) have to say about this topic? Let's sneak a peek at their notes, preserved for us in the discussions of the **Talmud**.

In the Talmudic tractate Menachot 43a we read that everyone is obligated to perform the mitzvah of tzitzit, however the comment that follows exempts women: "Rabbi Simon exempted women because this was a positive mitzvah limited by time and from all positive, time bound mitzvot women are exempt". Being exempt from something does not mean one is not allowed to; just because you don't have to fulfill an obligation, doesn't exclude you from participating.

Commentators, such as Moses Isserles argued that women shouldn't try and fulfill this mitzvah, as it would constitute an excessive demonstration of pride in their own piety. However nearly all other commentators, with the exception of Maimonides and Epstein, permit women to wear a tallit, and to recite the blessings over it. We Jews do just love to debate!

The Jewish Code of Law, referred to by its more familiar name **Shulchan Aruch** (literally, the 'Set Table') gives us an inside look as to how the Chazal interpreted these p'sukim of instruction. I do not own a copy of the Shulchan Aruch so I will give you a quote from a trusted web source by the name of Torah.org. Here, however, is their disclaimer on this translation:

Halacha-Yomi, by Rabbi Ari Lobel, is a translation of the "Kitzur Shulchan Aruch", Rabbi Shlomo Ganzfried's classic compendium of Jewish Law from the late 19th Century CE. Our translation is primarily derived from that of Rabbi Eliyahu Touger, recently published by Moznaim Publishing Corporation. Readers are encouraged to purchase the book from their local bookstore or by calling Moznaim, (718) 438-7680.

It is important to note that the application of the principles of Jewish Law frequently depends upon the unique context to which they are applied; consequently, a specific ruling of 150 years ago will not necessarily be the accepted practice today. Furthermore, not all the rulings of Rabbi Shlomo Ganzfried in his "Kitzur Shulchan Aruch" are accepted as definitive.<sup>2</sup>

That being stated let us read the commentary on the tzitzit and the tallit. Because of their pertinence to our discussion, I will make the quotes at length (the addresses, per insertion by Torah.org, have been included with the commentary):

A garment that has four or more square corners on opposite sides (10:1-3,5-9,12) requires fringes (TZITZIS), provided it is big enough to cover most of the body (see 16:1), is primarily used for that purpose (10:10-11;19:1-2), and is owned by Jews (see 14:3,5). TZITZIS are required when the garment is worn during the day, or when it is worn at night if it is normally worn during the day; see 18:1-2. The requirement of TZITZIS applies only to garments made of cloth (see 10:4), and is only rabbinical unless they are made of linen or sheep's wool (9:1); according to some opinions, the garment or the TZITZIS should not be of linen (9:2,6). The TZITZIS may be made either of wool or of the same material as the garment (9:2-4); they may be white or of the same color as the garment (9:5).

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.torah.org/learning/halacha/>

The threads used for TZITZIS should be spun and twisted for that purpose by a Jew (11:1-2), and the TZITZIS themselves should be made by a (preferably male) Jew (see 20:1), preferably for that purpose (14:1-2). They should be made of material that is permitted and of good quality; see 11:5-8. They should be at least 12 inches long (11:4, and see the next paragraph). If they become untwisted they remain valid provided they remain partly twisted (see 11:3), but they should be knotted at the ends so they do not become untwisted (11:14). On what to do if some of them break see 12:1-3.

The TZITZIS are passed through holes near the four corners of the garment (see 11:9-11,15) that are farthest apart (10:1). Four TZITZIS are passed through each hole (11:12-13), and the two groups of four ends are double-knotted to each other at the edge of the garment near the hole (11:14,15). One of the TZITZIS is made longer than the others (11:4); the long end of that one is wound around the other seven ends and double-knotted; this is done repeatedly so as to make a total of five double knots separated by four sections of winding, with a total length of at least four inches, leaving free-hanging ends that are twice that long (11:14).

TZITZIS should not be removed from a garment that is used by a person except to insert them in another garment; see 15:1. If a piece of a garment that has TZITZIS in it is attached to another garment, the TZITZIS are not valid (15:2); but if the piece is big enough to wear, TZITZIS may be inserted into its other corners (15:3). On cases where a garment is torn, or a piece is added to it, near a corner see 15:4-6. TZITZIS should be treated with respect even if they are no longer in a garment (see 21:1,4), and so should a garment that has (had) TZITZIS in it (see 21:2-3), but it is permitted to sleep in such a garment or to wear it in the toilet (21:3) or in a cemetery (see 23:1-3).

It is not mandatory to wear a garment that requires TZITZIS, but if a person wears such a garment, he is required to put TZITZIS in it (see 8:17), and it is proper to wear such a garment every day, preferably all day, but especially at prayer times (24:1,6). On borrowing such a garment (or other religious objects) without permission see 14:4. It is proper to wear the garment on top of one's other clothes (8:11;24:1) and to hold the TZITZIS and look at them while reciting SHEMA (see 24:2,4-5 and Ch.6). A blind man should wear TZITZIS even though he cannot see them (17:1), but it is not proper for a woman to wear them (see 17:2). A child should start wearing them when he is old enough to do it properly (17:3), as described in the next paragraph. On giving a garment with TZITZIS to a non-Jew see 20:2.

A garment that has TZITZIS should be put on while standing (8:1). It should be put on the upper body, and preferably (at least briefly) over the

head (see 8:2-3); the TZITZIS should hang down in front and back (8:4). Each time such a garment is put on (see 8:12-15), the blessing "...Who commanded us about TZITZIS" is recited (if the garment is big enough: "...to cover ourselves with TZITZIS"); see 8:5-6. [This blessing is not recited when making TZITZIS (19:2), but the blessing "...Who kept us alive..." is recited then or when putting them on for the first time (22:1).] The blessing may be recited after dawn, but preferably when it is light enough to distinguish light from dark threads (18:3). It is recited in the morning even if the TZITZIS were worn all night or put on before dawn (8:16). Before reciting the blessing, a person should look at the TZITZIS (24:3), separate them (8:7), examine them closely to ensure they are intact (8:9), and remember that he is wearing them to be reminded of all the Commandments (8:8).<sup>3</sup>

A lengthier quote from Tractate Menachot will reveal more on this controversial topic. \*FYI: a "Baraitha" refers to an additional Talmudic comment not found in the **Mishna**, usually added by the Torah scholars called Tannaim:

**Menachot 42b** And for what purpose do the Rabbis use the expression 'That ye may look upon it'? — They require it for the following teaching: 'That ye may look upon it, and remember', that is, look upon this precept and remember another precept that is dependent upon it, namely, the reading of the Shema'. As we have learnt: From what time in the morning may the Shema' be read? From the time that one can distinguish between blue and white. Another [Baraitha] taught: 'That ye may look upon it, and remember', that is, look upon this precept, and remember another precept that is next to it, namely, 'the law concerning mingled stuffs, for it is written, Thou shalt not wear a mingled stuff, wool and linen together'. Thou shalt make thee twisted cords. And another [Baraitha] taught: That ye may look upon it, and remember all the commandments of the Lord: as soon as a person is bound to observe this precept he must observe all the precepts. This is in accordance with R. Simeon's view that [the tzitzith] is a precept dependent on time. And another [Baraitha] taught: 'That ye may look upon it and remember all the commandments of the Lord': this precept is equal to all the precepts together. And another [Baraitha] taught: 'That ye may look upon it and remember . . . and do them': looking [upon it] leads to remembering [the commandments], and remembering leads to doing them. R. Simeon b. Yohai says, Whosoever is scrupulous in the observance of this precept is worthy to receive the Divine presence, for it is written here, 'That ye may look upon it', and there it is written, Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and Him shalt thou serve.

The **Midrash** echoes this connection of the tzitzit and the commandments:

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.torah.org/advanced/shulchan-aruch/classes/orachchayim/chapter2.html>

**Midrash Rabbah - Numbers XVII:6** THAT YE GO NOT ABOUT AFTER YOUR OWNHEART AND YOUR OWN EYES (XV, 39). The heart and the eyes are the touts of the body, for they lead the body astray. THAT YE MAY REMEMBER, AND DO ALL MY COMMANDMENTS (ib. 40). This may be illustrated by the case of one who has been thrown into the water. The captain stretches out a rope and says to him: 'Take hold of this rope with your hand and do not let-go, for if you do you will lose your life!' In the same way the Holy One, blessed be He, said to Israel: 'As long as you adhere to the commandments, then, Ye that did cleave unto the Lord your God are alive every one of you this day' (Deut. IV, 4). In the same strain it says, Take fast hold of instruction, let her not go; keep her, for she is thy life (Prov. IV, 13). AND BE HOLY UNTO YOUR GOD (XV, 40). When you perform the commandments you are sanctified and the fear of you lies upon the idolaters. But if you part from the commandments you become profaned. The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Israel: 'In this world, owing to the influence of the Evil Inclination, you keep away from the commandments, but in the time to come I shall eradicate it from you'; as it says, I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh... and I will put My spirit within you, etc. (Ezek. XXXVI, 26 f.).

According to Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook (1865-1935) - first Chief Rabbi of the modern State of Isra'el, the accompanying tassels do not even need to be white! Observe his comments preserved for us primarily from his commentaries on Talmudic **Midrashim** (Ein Aya) and the prayer book (Olat Riyyah):

We are accustomed to the tassels being white, but the actual legal requirement is that they be the same color as the garment. This common color indicates that actions derive their power and direction from the 'garment', i.e., the character traits.

However, we add an additional thread, of sky-blue ("*techelet*"). This color reminds us of hidden, sublime matters: the sea, the sky, the sapphire stone, and the Holy Throne. Sky-blue is the background color of the universe. The *techelet* thread connects us to the very Source of life, from Whom all forces flow. Together with the other threads, which match the color of the garment and represent the diverse range of activity, the sky-blue thread complements and completes the function of the tassels.

The Sages taught that the mitzvah of wearing *tzitzit* corresponds to all of the other 612 mitzvot. "*When you see (the tassels), you will remember all of God's commandments*". [15:39] Wearing this special garment and its

tassels reflects the splendor of attributes and deeds by which the Torah envelops and clothes the Jewish soul.<sup>4</sup>

Although the requirement to place the blue thread has existed from antiquity, quite literally because the Torah requires it even at the p'shat level (literal interpretation), this mitzvah was not without its problems when it came to the fulfillment. You see, the blue dye was extracted from a very small snail (Heb: chilazon), which lived off of the northern coast of Israel, near modern day Lebanon. This dye alone was deemed "authentic" by Chazal for dying the woolen threads of the tzitzit. We shall find out that history actually worked against the average Jew when it came to acquiring the blue dye used in these fringes.

Jacob Milgrom, in his excellent Torah commentary to the Book of Numbers, draws our attention to the exaggerated expenses of the blue dye and how it impacted its would be purchasers:

Though the snails are plentiful, the amount of dye each yields is infinitesimal. In 1909, tests by the Austrian chemist Paul Friedlander demonstrated that 12, 000 snails were needed to provide 1.4 grams of pure dye. No wonder that during the reign of Nabonidus, the last king of Babylon (555-539 B.C.E.), purple wool was forty times more expensive than wool dyed with other colors. In 200 B.C.E. one gram of the dye cost \$84, or \$36, 000 per pound. Diocletian paid the equivalent of \$8, 460 for 328 grams of purple silk from Sidon, or \$11, 724 per pound. In 300 C.E. the demand raised the price of this Sidonian silk to \$98, 700 per pound (all figures are in 1984 dollars.)<sup>5</sup>

So we seem to have plenty of justification, both from Torah and Talmud for wearing the tallit and the fringes, but can a woman wear one? A recent invention called a Gitah Zahav Tallit was created to allow the women to fulfill the mitzvah of wrapping herself in tzitzit. Again, it is recognized that traditionally women were not obligated to fulfill this mitzvah. This was due to the fact that tzitzit are worn during daylight hours (with the exception of the High Holidays) when women were occupied with many other duties. Throughout time women have taken on this mitzvah and it is interesting to note that Rabbi Judah the Prince, who was the editor of the Mishna tied tzitzit onto his wife's apron!

If this special garment cannot be found then what I am suggesting is that women might purchase a nice, feminine-looking prayer shawl (perhaps adorned with lace), get a rabbi to attach some Biblical fringes--that means INCLUDING

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<sup>4</sup> Adapted from *Olat Re'iyah* vol. I, pp. 4-5  
([http://www.geocities.com/m\\_yericho/ravkook/SHLACH59.htm](http://www.geocities.com/m_yericho/ravkook/SHLACH59.htm))

<sup>5</sup> Jacob Milgrom, *JPS Commentary to Numbers* (Jewish Publication Society, 1990) p.412.

authentic blue fringes--and start changing the religious norm. After all, women are not second-class citizens in the eyes of HaShem, so why should we relegate them to that status in our Messianic Congregations? What I am suggesting here has been done in the congregation where I was a rabbi, and no one had a problem with it. I must warn, however, that most non-messianic congregations probably won't be as receptive to the idea of challenging centuries of tradition. To be sure, most non-messianic congregations won't even allow the blue thread to be woven into the tassels, even though the Torah specifically commands it to be placed there!

Can a woman wear a tallit? As long as it doesn't send the wrong signal to the other male members, I don't see why not. As previously mentioned, my first choice would be a feminine (versus the traditional male-oriented) styled one. If you cannot purchase a feminine shawl (and there's really no reason why a standard, lady's shawl cannot be found somewhere for purchase), then why not make your own. Purchase a traditional small tallit, and sew laces onto it, tailoring it to look like a female version of the male one. All of these suggestions need to take into account the various sensitivities that many congregations (or churches for that matter) currently have. You married women, consult the opinion of your husband; you single women, ask your rabbi or pastor. Approach the concept with a sensible amount of caution, and by all means, bathe it in prayer! If HaShem doesn't want you to cause unnecessary strife in the public gatherings, then I suggest that you practice your tzitzit-mitzvah keeping in the privacy of your own home. We should not seek to intentionally offend the conscience of another believer, for the sake of our own personal interpretation of the Torah, especially if the other believer might be weaker. This does not please the Holy One! Much more can be said concerning the blue threads, the mixtures of the threads, and whether or not one should wear them outwardly or tucked into one's "pants" but those discussions are reserved for the men. My commentary called "*Kippah and Tallit Pt. 2*" will take up that midrash so read it there.

## Conclusions

In closing, I want to restate that the purpose behind the placing of tassels on the garment served as a reminder to keep the commandments. This idea of commandment keeping is a state of mind, as well as a daily function! We should never fall for the age-old, compulsory reasons for keeping the commands of HaShem! Legalism, that is, keeping the Torah for the sake of salvation or behavioral preference with HaShem, is simply NOT Scriptural! To be sure, it is a misuse of the Torah itself! Torah observance is a matter of the heart!

**It is a natural action of ours, urged on and empowered by the Ruach HaKodesh (Holy Spirit) within us! It is the result from having the Torah placed on our inward parts, as new creations in Messiah Yeshua! It is not something we do to BECOME saved; it is something we do BECAUSE we are saved!**

If you are still not sure you understand the true intent behind Torah observance (which includes the command to wear fringes), I suggest reading my introductory teachings in this series. They are available at this web site, or you may write to me personally. As you seek to become more obedient to HaShem's Torah, by adding the mitzvah of the tzitzit, here is the traditional blessing by which Jews adorn themselves with the tallit:

***“Baruch atah YHVH, Eloheynu, Melech ha-‘Olam,  
asher kid-shanu b'mitzvotav, v'tzivanu  
I'hit-ateyf ba-tzitzit”***

(Blessed are you, O' LORD, our God, King of the Universe,  
for you have sanctified us through thy commandments, and have commanded us  
to sew [wear] the fringes)

It is also customary to recite Psalms 36:5-9. The reason for this choice of passages is that verse seven contains the Hebrew word "kanaf", usually translated "wing", or "extremity". A tallit contains four "wings" or "extremities", upon which the tzitzit are attached. To strengthen the connection between this use of the word kanaf, the prophet Malachi 4:2 predicted that when the Sun of Righteousness (another name for the expected Messiah) would arise, he would have "healing in his wings"! When the woman with the issue of blood reached out to touch Yeshua (Matt. 9:20-21), she was placing her trust in the miraculous healing contained within the extremity of his garment! She reached for the tassels of the long-awaited Savior! I encourage you to continue to study the Torah to discover the rich traditions that HaShem has lovingly placed there. To be sure, HaShem had us in mind when he created them.

The portion ends with the promising phrase,

**“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.”**

We've seen this phrase/title before. The Torah seems to want us not to forget it! Why was this title important? HaShem has revealed an aspect of his character that would later play a very important role in the identity of the Jewish People as a Nation. This title would also serve as a reminder to the surrounding nations that "with a great out-stretched arm, ADONAI Almighty delivered his beloved people!" (see Moshe's argument to HaShem in 14:13-16) To be sure, the reference of HaShem as the "God who delivered [them] from the bondage of Egypt" would become a "household" name of sorts. Looking back in the book of Sh'mot to the "Ten Commandments" (Sh'mot 20:1, 2) you can also find this phrase used to identify HaShem. Thumb through the rest of your **TaNakh** (Old Testament) and you will find that this phrase is also used numerous times.

As believers in Messiah Yeshua, we know that this is one of the primary character traits of HaShem, which unifies the Messiah and the Godhead as an

"echad", that is as "one". The name of the Messiah comes from the Hebrew name "Y'hoshua", which itself stems from the Hebrew name "Hoshea". Both of these names are composites of the two Hebrew words for "God" and "will save", respectively. When we combine this knowledge with the fact that it is "YHVH" who offers us salvation from sin THROUGH Yeshua the Messiah, then we can begin to understand the significance of the type and shadow that the Torah teaches using the Exodus from Egypt and how it personally impacts our lives as new creations.

The closing blessing is as follows:

***“Baruch atah YHVH, Eloheynu, Melech ha-‘Olam,  
asher natan lanu Toraht-emet,  
v’chay-yeh o’lam nata-b’tochenu.  
Baruch atah YHVH, noteyn ha-Torah.  
Ameyn.”***

(Blessed are you O' LORD, our God, King of the Universe,  
you have given us your Torah of truth,  
and have planted everlasting life within our midst.  
Blessed are you, LORD, giver of the Torah.  
Ameyn.)

“Shabbat Shalom!”

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