

Torah Observant "SHOMER MITZVOT"

שומר מצות

A Series on Practical Messianic Living and Apologetics (halakhah)
By Torah Teacher Ariel ben-Lyman HaNaviy

Kippah and Tallit (pt. 2)

(Note: all quotations are taken from the Complete Jewish Bible, translation by David H. Stern, Jewish New Testament Publications, Inc., unless otherwise noted)

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"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 a specified Torah 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 (the atarah) 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.

*If you are reading this from our website, the word tzitzit has been underlined in the original Hebrew with the word [techeilet](#) showing in [blue](#).

Version: NAS
Numbers 15:37-41

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. 41. "I am the LORD your God who brought you out from the land of Egypt to be your God; I am the LORD 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 הַכֶּנֶף פְּתִיל תְּכֵלֶת

וְהָיָה לָכֶם לְצִיצִית וּרְאִיתֶם אֹתוֹ וְזָכַרְתֶּם
אֶת-כָּל-מִצְוֹת יְהוָה וְעָשִׂיתֶם אֹתָם וְלֹא-תִתְּרוּ
אֲחֵרֵי לְבַבְכֶם וְאַחֲרֵי עֵינֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר-אַתֶּם
זֹנִים 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 techeilet.*

*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. The incident that "sparked" the giving of the tallit mitzvah in the first place was the violation of the Shabbat (see 15:32-36). This is inferred by the immediate context of the chapter. 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 15:38-39) was to serve as a visual reminder that HaShem was serious when he told them to "keep the commandments".

On the Belt Loops?

Before I get into an application of this mitzvah for women, allow me to say a brief word about a somewhat “questionable” interpretation. Can a man attach his tzitzit to his belt loops and still be in fulfillment of the mitzvah? Many traditional Jewish males would answer in the strong “negative”, arguing that the belt loops do not constitute the “corners of one’s garment”. Nevertheless, observant males, Jewish and Gentile, can be seen wearing the tassels on their belt loops in submission to what they believe is a valid expression of the mitzvah. How shall we address this issue?

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.

I am of the personal persuasion that the Torah has built within its precepts the “letter of the Law” and the “spirit of the Law”. To wit, these two are not designed to work against each other. On the contrary, since these concepts originate with HaShem, they are designed to work in tandem, completing and complementing one another. If one is seen to be “canceling out” the other then it can be properly attributed to man’s misunderstanding and/or misapplication of Torah. That being said, the spirit of the mitzvah is to attach the fringes to the garment that is worn during everyday activities.

I’m quite certain that ancient Isra'elites did not wear pants (or what can be defined as modern day pants, complete with belt loops). Are we to assume that the mitzvah is historically tied (pun intended) to the participants of that age only? Are we to assume that God’s “timeless Torah” has been outwitted by history itself? The answers to both questions should be a resounding “no”. Just what then did Moshe allow for when he penned the words of our text in question?

I think it is safe to say that the first and best application of the passage assumes the wearer is in possession of a garment with four corners. But if the person lacks such a garment then as can be expected, one can either be constructed or purchased. But may a person “adapt” the passage to fit the garment he already possesses? In the spirit of the commandment I don’t see why not. After all, the heart of the passage is to walk into God’s commandment by any means necessary. A willing heart will read the passage and say to himself, “How can I fulfill this mitzvah”? Far from appearing disobedient or rebellious to the command, a person with tzitzit on his belt loops surely is attempting to ally himself with the command. Surely God sees his heart.

Personally I prefer purchasing a tallit katan (a small, shirt-sized tallit with “slits” up the sides, made to “approximate” corners on a garment). It is so easy to simply slip the tallit

katan on before putting on my regular shirt. I do not, however, have a problem with my brothers and sisters who prefer the belt loop technique. HaShem sees the heart of the individual and I have no more right to judge them for not wearing a “non-biblically prescribed” tallit katan than do they have to judge me for not wearing the tassels on my belt loops. Both must be accepted as valid expressions of the same mitzvah.

I'm sure others will disagree with my conclusions on the belt loop issue. I am not easily put off by other's opinions, especially when the Torah is silent on any specific prohibition against actually placing tzitzit on the belt loops. The Torah is specific on these facts: that we actually have the tassels and that they contain the blue thread. The mention of the location of the threads (corners) may amount to “prescriptive narrative” of the passage and not to the actual injunction itself. That the narrative mentions the corners is evidence of its immediate recognition to the applicants at hand, viz, the historical Isra'elites, of which “squared-off garments” made sense. To be sure, if the location of the threads were so important for a proper understanding of the passage, then once again, God seems to have “tied his hands” by allowing historical trends to dictate his truths. Today, corners (squared-off garments) strike the average reader as antiquated and impractical. The Torah must indeed have a built-in “contextualization” feature, in order that its readers may make practical application from its historical precepts.

Summary

I have no qualms with those who put the tzitzit on their belt loops; I have no qualms with those who do not. In ancient Isra'el, the 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. 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, not the tallit, katan or otherwise. That many males are attaching the tassels to their belt loops can and must be seen as an attempt to walk into this ancient commandment the best they know how or can afford to do.

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). According to additional, perhaps non-Jewish tradition, many males can also be found with tzitzit on their belt loops. If such a tradition leads them closer to walking into Torah then I am prepared to admit that Jewish tradition must give way to Gentile adaptation.

Can a Woman Wear a Tallit?

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 should wear some sort of garment (prayer shawl, tallit, etc.) adorned with fringes. The above mentioned passage is addressed to the "Children of Isra'el", which translates the Hebrew phrase "B'ney Yisra'el" בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל. This familiar phrase, used throughout the TaNaKH quite frequently, normally includes all of Isra'el, and not just the men or (literally) "sons." For instance, notice that the well-known commandment given to בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל in Exodus 31:16, 17 is historically (and correctly) applied to all of Isra'el and not just the males as the p'shat of the verse might suggest. What this means is that based on this hermeneutic, historically, we should have seen the women joining in on the mitzvah of the tzitzit also. After all, doesn't it stand to reason, therefore, that HaShem wants the females to be visibly 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 it's 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.¹

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).

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

¹ <http://www.torah.org/learning/halacha/>

(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).²

A lengthier quote from Tractate Menachot will reveal more on this controversial topic. *FYI: a "Baraita" 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 [Baraita] 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 [Baraita] taught: That ye may look upon it, and remember all the commandments of the Lord: as

² <http://www.torah.org/advanced/shulchan-aruch/classes/orachchayim/chapter2.html>

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 [Baraita] 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 [Baraita] 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:

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.³

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 dyeing 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.)⁴

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

³ Adapted from *Olat Re'iyah* vol. I, pp. 4-5

(http://www.geocities.com/m_yericho/ravkook/SHLACH59.htm)

⁴ Jacob Milgrom, *JPS Commentary to Numbers* (Jewish Publication Society, 1990) p.412.

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 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 have been reserved another commentary.

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”***

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.

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⁵ Image borrowed from <http://scheinerman.net/judaism/tallit/>