



# The Tallit Katan

## Remembering God's Commandments

*“Speak to the people of Israel, and tell them to make tassels on the corners of their garments throughout their generations, and to put a cord of blue on the tassel of each corner. And it shall be a tassel for you to look at and remember all the commandments of the LORD, to do them, and not “spy after” your own heart and your own eyes. – Num. 15:38-39*

The sages say that in ancient Egypt the priests wore fringes on the bottom of their robes to indicate their chosen status, and when God delivered the Jewish people from their oppression, he commanded them to wear similar “fringes” to show *their* status before Him as “a kingdom of priests” (Exod. 19:6).



A better explanation from the Torah is that *tzitzit* (צִיצִית) were commanded to be worn to remind the people of the *sin of unbelief* that marked the spies: “It shall be a tassel for you to look at ... not to “spy” after your own heart and your own eyes” (Num. 15:39). Notice that the verb translated “spy” (חָתַר) in this verse is the same word used to describe “spying” the land of Canaan.

The law of tzitzit required that the tassels were to be placed on the “four corners” of garments, but since most modern Jew’s do not wear robes around, a special piece of clothing called the Tallit Katan (the little tallit) was developed. The Tallit Katan is a piece of rectangular cloth (with a hole large enough for your head to go through) that has tzitzit (hanging threads) on each of the four corners. Traditional Jews wear it like a T-shirt under their clothing. Highly observant Jews will not take four steps without wearing the tzitzit because it is a mitzvah to wear it all the time.

## The Tzitzit Blessings

Before putting on the tallit katan, examine the tzitzit and recite:

בָּרוּךְ	אַתָּה	יְהוָה	אֱלֹהֵינוּ	מֶלֶךְ	הָעוֹלָם,	אֲשֶׁר	קִדְּשָׁנוּ
ba-ruk	at-tah	Adonai	e-lo-hei-nu	me-lekh	ha-'o-lam	'a-she	kid-de-sha-nu
Blessed	You	LORD	our God	King of the universe		who	sanctifies us



בְּמִצְוֹתָיו	וְצִוָּנוּ	עַל	מִצְוַת	צִיצִית.
be-mits-vo-tav	ve-tsi-va-nu	al	mits-vat	tst-tsit
with his mitzvot	and	regarding	the commandment of the	tzitzit
	commanded	us		

*Barukh attah Adonai, eloheinu melekh ha-olam, asher kiddeshanu bemitzvotav, al mitzvot tzitzit.*



Next, put the tallit katan on and recite:

בְּרוּךְ	אַתָּה	יְהוָה	אֱלֹהֵינוּ	מֶלֶךְ	הָעוֹלָם,	אֲשֶׁר	קִדְּשָׁנוּ
barukh	at-tah	Adonai	elo-hei-nu	me-lekh	ha-'o-lam	'a-sher	kid-de-sha-nu
Blessed	You	LORD	our God	King of the universe		who	sanctifies us



בְּמִצְוֹתָיו	וְצִוָּנוּ	לְהִתְעַטֵּף	בְּצִיצִית.
be-mits-votav	vetsiva-nu	le-hit-at-tef	bats-tsi-tsit
with his mitzvot	and	to wrap ourselves	in tzitzit
	commanded		
	us		

*Barukh attah Adonai, eloheinu melekh ha-olam, asher kiddeshanu bemitzvotav, vetzivanu lehitatef batzitzit.*

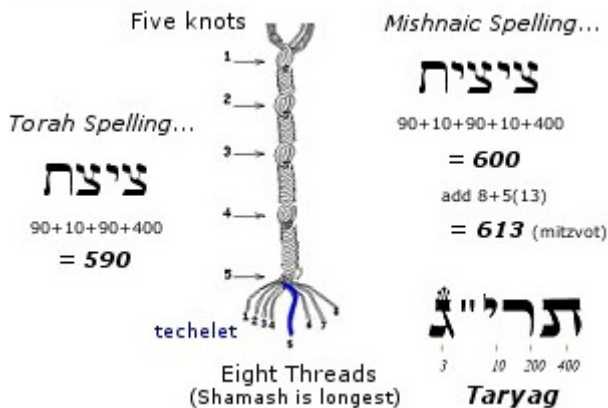
### Tzitzit Customs:

1. According to Jewish Halakhah (legal rules), the Tallit Katan must be at least twenty-four inches long and eighteen inches wide.
2. The Tallit Katan is also referred to as “arba kanfot” - four corners.
3. In some traditions, the Tallit Gadol (large tallit, or “prayer shawl”) is not worn until a man is married (though the tallit katan may be worn even by young boys).
4. Tallit Katan may be worn at all times, even under the Tallit Gadol. However, if you are going to wear the Tallit Gadol during the morning prayers (*shacharit*), you should not say the blessing for Tallit Katan but rather wait to say the blessing for the Tallit Gadol.
5. There are many customs about the proper method of tying the tzitzit (tying tzitzit is a Jewish art, a form of macrame that often has Kabbalistic associations).



## Tzitzit and 613 Commandments?

Rashi notes that the word tzitzit (צִיצִית) has the numerical value of 600 (in its *Mishnaic* spelling - which adds another Yod (י) to the Torah's spelling) which, when combined with the five knots of eight threads yields a total of 613, the supposed number of the commandments of (i.e., taryag mitzvot) discovered in the Torah as enumerated by some of the Jewish sages:



But what about the Hebrew value of the word (צִיצִית) that adds only to 590? Some of the sages have said that since the word לציצת appears once, and since Lamed (ל) equals 30, it “makes up for” the three times in the Torah when tzitzit is spelled without the Yod... The four corners (of the tallit) represent the four expressions of redemption from Egypt: “I will take you out; I will save you; I will redeem you; and I will take you as my own.”

## Jesus and the Tallit

Yeshua *perhaps* wore tzitzit. Matthew 9:20-22 states “A woman who had a hemorrhage for twelve years approached Him from behind and touched the tzitzit on his robe. For she said to herself, “If I can only touch his robe, I will be healed.” On the other hand, the tallit was sometimes used to indicate the “social status” of the wearer. For example, the Pharisees sometimes wore “extra long fringes” to affect a display of piety - a practice that Yeshua condemned (Matt. 23:5).