

## The Reminders: Tzitzit & Tallit

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“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.

And it shall be a tassel for you to look at and remember all the commandments of Yahweh, so as to do them and not follow after you own heart and your own eyes, after which you played the harlot,

in order that you may remember to do all My commandments, and be holy to your God.

I am Yahweh your God who brought you out from the land of Egypt to be your God; I am Yahweh your God.”

– Numbers 15:38-41<sup>1</sup>

### What are Tzitzit (tzitziot)?

The word *tzitzit* literally means tassel.

tassel– 6734. **tsitsith**; *a tassel, lock* - Nu 15:38,39

tassel– 1434. **gedil**; *twisted threads* - Dt 22:12

tassel/fringe– 2899. **kraspedon**; *a border, tassel* - Mt 23:5, Mt 9:20, Mt 14:36, Mt 6:56, Lk 8:44<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> All Scriptures are taken from the *New American Standard Bible*, Copyright © 1995 by the Lockman Foundation unless stated otherwise

<sup>2</sup> Zondervan NASB Exhaustive Concordance, Copyright © 1998 The Lockman Foundation

“The mezuzah reminds us of faith in God every time that we enter or leave our homes. The tzitzit remind us always of all the commandments of God; there being no better reminder for one than to carry the seal of his master on the garment which he wears constantly.

The tzitzit also remind us that a man’s body and soul belong to God. The white signifies the body, while the blue thread is symbolic of the soul.”<sup>3</sup>

*“The blue resembles the sea, the sea resembles the heavens, and the heavens resemble the Throne of Glory.”*

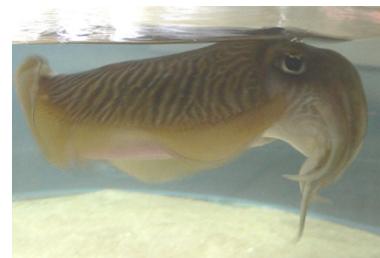
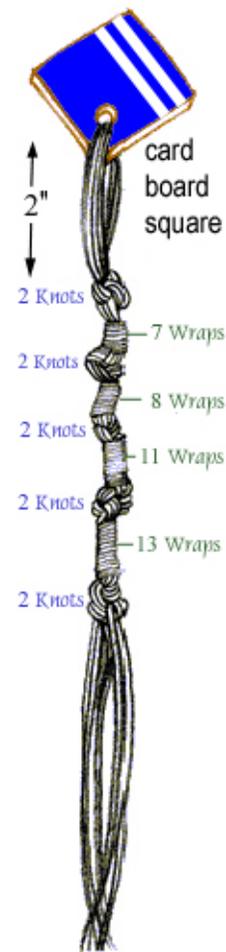
**Two basic symbolic aspects in tying tzitziot**

1. The numerical value of the word tzitzit is 600, which, together with the 8 strings and 5 knots adds up to 613, the total number of mitzvot, or commandments, in the Torah.
2. The first three groups of windings 7,8,and 11 add up to 26, which is the numerical value of the name of God, Yahweh (YHVH or 7 = yod, 8 = hey, 11 = vav, hey), while the remaining group, 13, is equal to the numerical value of the word echad – one. The tzitzit thus symbolize the words “Yahweh Echad” or “Yahweh is one”.

Also the five knots represent the first 5 books of the Bible, the Torah. And the blue thread, sometimes called the Shamesh, represents Yehsua who encircles and intertwines us with Himself.

The blue dye (techelet) is made from small snails (Hillazon) found in waters of the Eastern Mediterranean. 8,000 snails make one centimeter of dye.

“In 1887 Rabbi Gershon Henoah Leiner (the Radzyner Rebbe) embarked on an extensive research program and found the *Sepia officinalis* (Common Cuttlefish) to meet many of the Talmudic criteria as the source of the hillazon. This new tekhelet produced from this animal quickly caught on amongst the Rebbe's followers and within a year, 10,000 Radziner hassidim wore the colored tzitzit. The dye also became popular amongst Breslov Hasidim (followers of Rabbi Nachman of Breslov). The vast majority of Orthodox Jewry, however, did not accept the Rebbe's findings.



<sup>3</sup> A *Philosophy of Mizvot* by Gersion Appel Copyright © 1975 by Gersion Appel, Ktav Publishing House, Inc. New York

The *Murex trunculus*, a sea snail, has currently advanced as the source of the coveted dye. Rabbi Yitzhak HaLevi Herzog (1889-1959), the first Chief Rabbi of Israel, wrote his doctoral thesis in 1913 on the subject and named the Murex snail as the most likely candidate for the dye's source. Though the Murex fulfilled many of the Talmudic criteria, his inability to consistently obtain blue dye from the snail precluded him from proclaiming decisively that dye source had been found.



However, in the 1980's a chemist from the Shenkar College of Fibers by the name of Otto Elsner discovered that if a solution of the dye was exposed to sunlight, blue instead of purple was consistently produced. Eventually, in 1993, the Ptil Tekhelet Foundation was formed for mass production of this tekhelet, as well as to continue further research.”  
(From <http://www.search.com/reference/Tzitzit?redir=1>)

## The Four-Cornered Garment?

The *tallit* (*pl. tallitot, talliot*), or prayer shawl, has no particular religious significance other than the fact that it holds the tzitzit on its corners. The tallit is a memorial to the four-cornered garments worn in Biblical times and are worn today as “garments of praise” or “garments of prayer” (Isa 61:10-11).

Although the Scriptures say the literal word “corners”, the focus is not on a “four-cornered garment” but rather on the placement of the tzitzit; they are to be seen from all sides of the body, from a 360° view.

They are to be seen by everybody – Tzitzit are also identifiers.

Zechariah 8:23

garment– 3671. **kanaph**; *wing, extremity – corner, edge, fold, garment*<sup>4</sup>

Malachi 4:2 – Matthew 9:20

wings– 3671. **kanaph**; *wing, extremity – corner, edge, fold, garment*<sup>5</sup>



<sup>4</sup> Ibid. 2

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. 2

