

“The Hem of His Garment”

While in Israel, I bought a Tallit. The tallit (also pronounced tallis) is a prayer shawl, the most authentic Jewish garment. It is a rectangular-shaped piece of linen or wool (and sometimes, now, polyester or silk) with special fringes called Tzitzit on each of the four corners. The purpose of the garment is to hold the Tzitzit and acts as a head covering for prayer.

“Tallit” simply means gown or cloak, reflecting the fact that it was originally worn throughout the day. It probably resembled the *abbayah* (blanket) still worn by Bedouins. The word tallit isn’t originally Hebrew and does not appear in the Bible; rather, other words meaning robe or garment are paired with words meaning tassel or fringe to indicate the proper attire.

Many rabbinic authorities, however, favor a simple tallit of pure white wool as the classic biblical garment, basing themselves on the verse “let your garments always be white” (Ecclesiastes 9:8).⁵ The *tzitzit* (threads or fringes) attached to each corner are traditionally made of the same fabric as the tallit; however, wool fringes are always permissible.

These tassels in Hebrew is called “tzitzit” (singular) pronounced “seet-seet.” In the King James Version of the Bible they are translated as “fringe” or “fringes.” These fringes are attached to the “borders” or “corners” of their garments, or tallit.

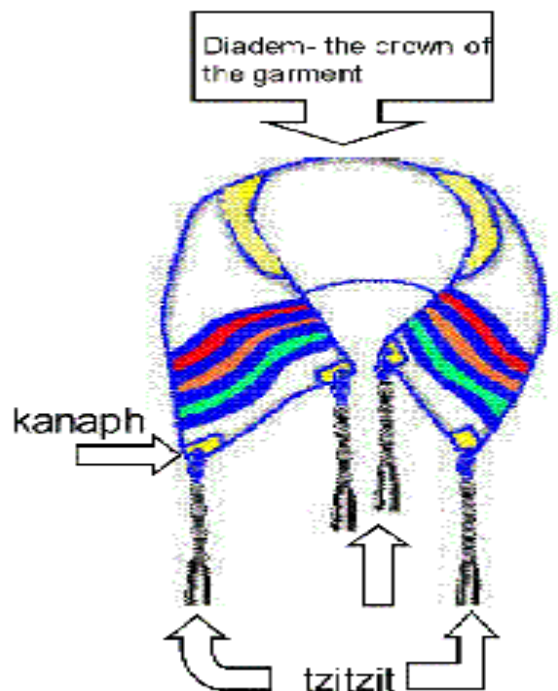
The KJV translates the Hebrew word “kanaph” as “borders” in Numbers 15:38. According to the Brown-Driver-Briggs’ Hebrew dictionary the Hebrew word “Kanaph” means:

- 1) wing, extremity, edge, winged, border, corner, shirt
- 1a) wing
- 1b) skirt, corner (of garment)



Hem: Greek: kraspedon (GSN-2899), a tassel of twisted wool (Matthew 9:20; Matthew 14:36; Matthew 23:5; Mark 6:56; Luke 8:44). This word in the Greek language means latterly fringes. The woman was reaching for the fringes of His Garment.

The Hebrew word is: “*tsiytsith*”. It was required to be on the four corners of the clothing of every Jewish male in accordance with God’s instructions.



The earliest mention of Kanaph is found in Exodus 19:4 : “Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles’ wings (*kanaph*), and brought you unto myself.”

Many Bible teachers have stated that the first use of a word sets the stage for the underlying meaning of the word throughout the remainder of the Scriptures. They call this the “law of first reference.” Here we can concur that through the “*kanaph*” there is deliverance. The children of Israel were delivered or set free from the Egyptians because God bare them on eagles’ *kanaph*, and brought them unto Himself.

The wearing of the “tallit” (pronounced tal-eet), also called the “tallis” or “prayer shawl,” was commanded by God.

In Deuteronomy 22 :12 and Num.15:37-40; **"Speak unto the children of Israel, and bid them that they make them fringes in the borders of their garments throughout their generations...and it shall be unto you for a fringe, that ye may look upon it, and remember all the commandments of the Lord."**

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In Numbers 15:38 the word translated border or corner is a Hebrew word which can also be translated wings as it is some seventy-six times in the biblical text.

For this reason, the corners of the prayer shawl are often called wings. Each tzitzit consists of five double knots and eight threads, a total of thirteen elements. This number added to six hundred, the Hebraic numerical value of the word tzitzit points to the six hundred and thirteen commandments of the Torah.

As the Atarah was placed over the head, it formed his own tent. WINGS of the garment were formed when the arms were held out. For this reason, the corners of the prayer shawl are often called "wings."

During the first century there were several traditions associated with the tzitzit concerning Messiah. One was thwhich would explain why she sought to touch the hem (the wings) of Jesus' prayer garment. The same word used in Numbers 15:38 for corner is used in Malachi 4:2 for wings.

In Jesus' day, Jewish men wore a simple tunic both at home and at work. When appearing in public, they would cover their tunic with a large rectangular cloth which draped over the shoulder and fell to the ankles. This cloth was called a tallit and served as protection from cold and rain. Hanging from the end of each of its four corners (wings) was a tzitzit in obedience to the biblical command. In biblical times the Jewish men wore the prayer shawl all the time -- not just at prayer.

TAL-ITH contains two Hebrew words; **TAL meaning tent and ITH meaning little. Thus, you have LITTLE TENT.** Each man had his own little tent. Six million Jews could not fit into the tent of meeting that was set up in the Old Testament. Therefore, what

was given to them was their own private sanctuary where they could meet with God. Each man had one! His Prayer Shawl or Talith. They would pull it up over their head, forming a tent, where they would begin to chant and sing their Hebrew songs, and call upon God. It was intimate, private, and set apart from anyone else -- enabling them to totally focus upon God. This was their prayer closet!

A Status Symbol

The hem of a Jew's garment was not, as in modern clothes, a simple fold of the cloth, sewn down to prevent the edge from fraying. It was a decorative feature that made a statement about the status and importance of the wearer.

The people of other nearby nations also had this custom. In texts found in Mesopotamia, references indicate that the removal of the fringe of a man's garment was the equivalent of removing part of his personality. To cut off the hem of a wife's garment was regarded as divorcing her. Tablets have been found with the impression of a fringe as the mark of the individual, a personal seal or signature.

In New Testament times, ordinary people wore a tallit as an article of clothing. It was the Pharisees who seem to have worn it for show. There is a sarcastic Hebrew idiom that refers to "a completely blue tallit" (תכלת שכולה טלית) which is used to refer to something that is ostensibly, but not really, absolutely pure, immaculate and virtuous. **Jesus expresses no disapproval of the custom itself but he does condemn the extra long fringes that they affected to display their piety [Matthew 23:5].**

Saul Samuel and David

"And Samuel said unto Saul, I will not return with thee: for thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord hath rejected thee from being king over Israel. And as Samuel turned about to go away, he laid hold upon the **skirt (kanaph) of his mantle (tallit)**, and it rent. And Samuel said unto him, The Lord hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbour of thine, that is better than thou." **1 Sam 15:26-28**

Saul, after disobeying God, was told by Samuel that his kingship was over. Pleading with Samuel, Saul rips the tzitzit out of Samuel's tallit, which becomes a symbolic picture of Saul's

kingdom being ripped from him. The reason Saul lost his authority was because he no longer placed his trust in the kanaph of the Lord God.

"And he came to the sheepcotes 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 (kanaph) of Saul's robe (tallit) privily." 1 Sam 24:3-4

Saul, who out of jealousy had been trying to kill David, stopped off at a cave to "relieve" himself. Little did he know that David and his men were in that same cave. They told David, here's your chance to kill your enemy. But David, being a man after God's own heart, knew that it was wrong for him to kill Saul and opted to cut off the tzitzit of Saul's kanaph. (Remember: the tzitzit was attached to the kanaph) In that way, David showed Saul that he very well could have killed him if he so desired.

Why did David do this, and why did his conscience smite him for having done it? Was there some special significance in what he had done? In fact the act of cutting off the skirt (fringe) of Saul's robe was of very great significance, which Saul was not slow to recognize.

When the shouting began next day Saul said: "And now, behold, I know well that thou shalt surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in thine hand" (1 Sam. 24:20). David had robbed Saul of his status symbol, the fringe of his robe that identified him as king.

In the Psalms David often refers to the safety of God's wings.

"Keep me as the apple of the eye, hide me under the shadow of thy wings (kanaph)" Psalms 17:8

"Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me: for my soul trusts in thee: yea, in the shadow of thy wings (kanaph) will I make my refuge, until these calamities be past." Psalm 57:1

In Ezekiel 16:8, the Lord speaks to Jerusalem and likewise says, "and I spread my wing over thee, and covered thy nakedness," and in Psalm 91 we are able to "abide under the shadow of the Almighty" and "under His wings."

Ruth And Boaz

Jewish weddings are sometimes performed under a prayer shawl held up during the ceremony by four poles called a chupa or huppah. In Mid East culture they cast a garment over one being claimed for marriage.

Ruth is a foreigner and through loving kindness to her mother in law Naomi catches the attention of a wealthy landowner Boaz. He makes the comment to her

May the LORD repay you for what you have done. May you be richly rewarded by the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge." Ruth 2 v 12

Later Ruth approaches him at the threshing floor

In Ruth 3:9 Ruth found herself at the feet of Boaz, and as he awakened, he was moved with her vulnerability. Women were not to do things of this nature in those days, but in complete honesty and openness she said to him, spread thy skirt over thine handmaid; for thou art a near kinsman Ruth was saying, **Take me under your WING. Cover me**, is a term of intimacy.

Boaz was an honorable man and did the honorable thing. They were married, and she became his bride. Here she was, a Moabite woman from a foreign country, grafted into the nation of Israel. She had the right to be covered by her Jewish spouses Talis. This is a symbolic expression of marriage.

It is interesting to note that a similar custom still prevails at an orthodox Jewish wedding, when the bridegroom covers his bride with his tallit, his prayer shawl, with its tassels at each corner, signifying that he is taking her into his care.

The skirt of Boaz would doubtless be edged with the fringe and tassels that indicated his status. This request by Ruth was for his protection and his care as symbolized by his personal fringe - his status symbol.

With this understanding in mind, an ancient Jew under the prayer shawl could be said to be dwelling in the secret place of the Most High and under His wings (Ps. 91:1-4).

Elijah and Elisha

The Prophet Eli-jah passed his "mantle" on to Elisha in (II Kings 2) Many believe that this "mantle" was actually his "Talis" (prayer

shawl) and was symbolic of the power of prayer that Eli-jah had sat-u-rated that "mantle" with. This "mantle" that Elijah left behind as he was taken up by a whirl-wind into Heaven was what Elisha struck and parted the waters of the River of Jordan with!

2 Kings 2 v 8 Now Elijah took his mantle, rolled it up, and struck the water; and it was divided this way and that, so that the two of them crossed over on dry ground. 9 And so it was, when they had crossed over, that Eli-jah said to Elisha, "Ask! What may I do for you, before I am taken away from you?" Elisha said, "Please let a dou-ble por-tion of your spirit be upon me." 10 So he said, "You have asked a hard thing. Nevertheless, if you see me when I am taken from you, it shall be so for you; but if not, it shall not be so." 11 Then it happened, as they continued on and talked, that suddenly ha chariot of fire appeared with horses of fire, and separated the two of them; and Eli-jah went up by a whirl-wind into heaven. 12 And Elisha saw it, and he cried out, j"My father, my father, the char-iot of Israel and its horse-men!" So he saw him no more. And he took hold of his own clothes and tore them into two pieces. 13 He also took up the mantle of Eli-jah that had fallen from him, and went back and stood by the bank of the Jor-dan. 14 Then he took the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from him, and struck the water, and said, "Where is the Lord God of Eli-jah?" And when he also had struck the water, it was divided this way and that; and Elisha crossed over. 15 Now when the sons of the prophets who were from 2Jericho saw him, they said, "The spirit of Eli-jah rests on Elisha." And they came to meet him, and bowed to the ground before him.

There is trouble coming and the church needs the prayer soaked mantle of Elijah today, to explain to the Gentiles what the upcoming events mean. From Egypt to Babylon, from dreams to handwriting on the wall, the Gentiles need a Joseph or a Daniel to explain Gods coming judgment. The prayer soaked church, is that prophetic voice of God so needed today.

The Coming Messiah

The lady with the issue knew that if Jesus were the promised Messiah, there would be healing in His wings (fringes).

One important Jewish concept, which is often missed in English translations of the Bible, concerns the story of a woman with an issue of blood, recorded in Matthew 9:20-21. Having heard that the Messiah was near, the woman said within herself, "If I may

but touch His garment, I shall be whole." The text indicates that it was specifically the hem of His garment that she touched, an important detail from an Hebraic viewpoint.

Certainly the woman with the issue of blood knew of these traditions, which would explain why she sought to touch the corner (the wings) of Jesus' prayer garment. The same word used in **Numbers 15:38** for corner is used in **Malachi 4:2** for wings.

With this understanding in mind, an ancient Jew under the prayer shawl could be said to be dwelling in the secret place of the Most High and under His wings (Ps. 91:1-4). When one realized the significance of this concept to the first-century Hebraic mind, it becomes clear why this woman was instantly healed. She was expressing her faith in Jesus as the Son of Righteousness with

"But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings," Malachi 4:2

That this was the opinion of many other people is revealed by the crowd who sought his healing powers, "that they might only touch the hem of his garment: and as many as touched were made perfectly whole," Matthew 14:36.

"And, behold, a woman, which was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind him, and **touched the hem (tzitzit) of his garment (tallit)**: For she said within herself, If I may but touch his **garment (tallit)**, I shall be whole- Matt 9:20-21

A thought aside...Why her reluctance to admit her condition? Leviticus said that her unclean state would have made everyone around her who touched her also unclean also for a short time.

So the word got out that everywhere Jesus went people where healed by touching him.

"And besought him that they might only touch the **hem (tzitzit)** of his **garment (tallit)**: and as many as touched were made perfectly whole."

Matt 14:36

"And whithersoever he entered, into villages, or cities, or country, they laid the sick in the streets, and besought him that they might touch if it were but the **border (kanaph)** of his **garment (tallit)**: and as many as touched him were made whole."

Mark 6:56

And remember the lady at the well that Yeshua asked for a drink of water from; how did she know He was a Jew? "A woman of

Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give Me a drink." For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food. Then the woman of Samaria said to Him, "How is it that You, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?" For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans." John 4:7-9

She perceived Him being Jewish because Jesus, **like all Jews during that time, was wearing a tallit.**

He will also being **wearing a tallit when He returns as we can see from John's description in Revelation 19:11,16:**

"Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war.....And He has on His **robe (tallit)** and on His thigh a name **written (tzitzit): KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.**"

I recall reading the above passage and thinking to myself, 'what kind of wild designer jeans is Jesus coming back wearing?'

But he is a Jew – and wears a tallit , Rev 19:16 makes perfect sense; if Jesus is riding on a horse and He's wearing a **tallit the tzitzit** will naturally be lying on His thigh.

Zechariah prophesies concerning the millennial reign of Yeshua that people from all over the world will recognize those who belong to the Lord God by their tzitzit. "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 (kanaph)** of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you." Zech 8:23

Nearly all scholars agree that this passage of Scripture pertains to the millennial reign of Christ, so it's safe to say that in those days God's people will be wearing tzitzit in the borders of their garments.

In Conclusion - The church at Rome was admonished by Paul that the Christian faith was never intended to be a repudiation of its Jewish roots, but rather, the engrafted **Gentile Church was actually a branch that grew out of these roots (Rom. 11:18).** The essence of these teachings is that without Judaism there would be no Christianity.