

Now what about those fringes?

An essay by Rav Ya'akov ben Yisrael
Restoration Ministries, February 23, 2010

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This essay is written for anyone seeking information on the scriptures in the book of Numbers which speak of the command from Yahweh to add fringes to the corners of our garments. I do not follow the traditions of our spiritual brother Judah, a.k.a The Jews. Neither do I intend to deliberately or knowingly, insult Judah by my writing. We are each endowed by our Creator with a mind and intelligence and therefore can form opinions. And using intelligence we have the ability to form points of view which may or may not differ from one another. With that said, let us begin.

What fringes? That is a very common question heard almost every time the Book of Numbers is studied. In chapter 15 of the Book of Numbers at verse 37 and continuing through verse 40 the Torah says this:

15:37 And YHVH spoke to Mosheh, saying, 38 "Speak to the children of Yisra'el, and you shall say to them to make *tzitziyot* on the corners of their garments throughout their generations, and to put a blue cord in the *tzitzit* of the corners. 39 "And it shall be to you for a *tzitzit*, and you shall see it, and shall remember all the commands of YHVH and shall do them, and not search after your own heart and your own eyes after which you went whoring, 40 so that you remember, and shall do all My commands, and be set-apart unto your Elohim.

In verse 38 the word *tzitziyot* is Hebrew for fringes or tassels. The word *tzitzit* is the singular form. So in verse 38 Yahweh has specifically commanded the children of Yisrael to add *tzitzit* to the corners of their garments, and to add a blue thread to the fringes or tassels. In verse 39 Yahweh tells them that it is to be a tangible fringe which they will see and be reminded of all the commands of Yahweh, and in verse 40 that they are His chosen people set apart to Him alone.

Before I continue with the rest of this essay I wish to point out that all of Yahweh's commands apply equally to His chosen people, the tribe of Yisrael, and to the sojourner who chooses to live by the commands of Yahweh. Those believers today who choose to believe in Yahshua the Messiah and to follow all the commands of Yahweh are those sojourners.

Why in this modern age would Yahweh desire us to wear the *tzitzit*? I believe the answer to be quite simple. If we choose to wear the *tzitzit* then we are wearing a tangible sign that we are His set apart people. The *tzitzit* are a constant reminder of His presence, His covering, and His protection. To most believers that would be reason enough to wear them. However we are a questioning creation. We even question our Creator. Fortunately Yahweh does not mind us asking questions. So I asked.

Why do you want us to wear the *tzitzit*? The answer is much more than the standard parental "Because I said so". On January 22, 2010 I was given this answer from Yahweh: "If you can not be faithful in the smallest of things, how can you be relied on to be faithful in larger things"? I was ecstatic! First, because Yahweh answered me; and secondly because the answer, though simple in words was overwhelming in His truth. In honoring the most simple of commands the doorway to a

person being used by Yahweh in a much greater way could be opened. What a wonderful thought. And there is more.

In verse 38 Yahweh has spoken to Mosheh saying, “Speak to the children of Yisra’el, and you shall say to them to make *tzitzit* on the corners of their garments throughout their generations”. The statement “the children of Yisra’el” includes all the peoples of the tribes of Yisra’el: all the men, women, and children as well as the sojourner and his families living with the tribes and following Torah. This also indicates, by absence of words the contrary, that the command is not gender specific. Both men and women are commanded to wear the *tzitzit*. And the command is forever, as quoted from verse 38: “throughout their generations”.

As we continue to look deeper into remaining verses the second part of verse 38 says “and to put a blue cord in the *tzitzit* of the corners”. As we follow the commandment and add *tzitzit* to the corners of our garments we are to also add a blue thread. This is another of those instances where Yahweh has commanded to do something without revealing why. And honestly, there is no answer that we can determine or understand. Yahweh has simply said to add a blue thread. Our questioning minds ask what shade of blue. There is no answer. Our learned brother Judah has made quite a furor over the exact shade of blue, even stating that the blue is derived from the carcass of a mythical sea creature. I have to weigh that belief against Yahweh not using an unclean creature as a part of His commands. It simply defies Torah logic. The underlying precept throughout Torah for Yahweh’s people is purity and cleanliness. Verse 39 proves this when it says “and shall remember all the commands of YHVH and shall do them, and not search after your own heart and your own eyes after which you went whoring. With verse 40 being the full reason for wearing *tzitzit* when it states “so that you remember, and shall do all My commands, and be set-apart unto your Elohim”. What a wonderful thought, to be set apart to my Elohim.

All the verses in Numbers chapter 15 verses 37 through 40 are written to us so that we will be reminded of Yahweh’s commandments, His love, His protection and His covering. Could we as His faithful chosen people ask for anything more.

After reading the preceding information perhaps you have now considered wearing *tzitzit*. The first thought is going to be how can you follow this command of Yahweh. Most modern garments do have corners but the corners are mostly hidden when fully dressed. We have corners on the hems of our button front shirts, and the waist ban of pants. We have corners on shirts meant to be worn outside the pants, and corners on some short pants. Do we add *tzitzit* to the hem and waist ban corners? Do we wear only clothing with a defined corner? If that is how Yahweh has impressed you to obey His command then the answer is yes. However you could also tie *tzitzit* on the belt loops of pants. Or make the *tzitzit* so that they can be slipped on a belt, or even pinned to the garment. Traditionally 4 *tzitzit* are tied. I believe that because Yahweh has not commanded a specific number of *tzitzit* for each type of garment, that you may tie what is appropriate for the garment you are wearing. If you have 4 corners then tie 4 *tzitzit*, if you have 2 corners then tie 2 *tzitzit*.

The common place for Messianic, or Natzarene believers to wear *tzitzit* is to make the *tzitzit* with a loop large enough to accommodate a belt, and simply slip the belt through the loop, positioning the *tzitzit* at about the hips. Some use a pin to attach the *tzitzit* in place. Still others actually sew *tzitzit* on the exposed corners.

In the scriptures Numbers chapter 15, verses 37 through 40 we are commanded to add *tzitzit* to the corners of our garments. We now have an understanding of what *tzitzit* are and where and how we may wear them. However we haven’t talked about what *tzitzit* really are or how to tie them.

Tzitzit are commonly tied using white and blue wool crochet thread. Cotton thread is also commonly used within some Messianic congregations. I personally use a 6 strand cotton crochet thread in size number 8, cut into approximately 10" lengths. I cut 12 white pieces, and 4 blue pieces. The knots for tying tzitzit are very numerous in both their methods of tying and in their finished style. Most practicing Jews use one of the standard knots handed down from generation to generation. Rather than go into a lengthy dissertation of knot tying I refer the reader to the Internet. Just about any of the search engines can bring you thousands of references on tying tzitzit. Just type in "tying tzitzit" in the text search box, and hit enter. You will be overwhelmed by the number of responses. For a start I suggest these sites; Judaism 101, and My Jewish Learning. Both are good places for basic information.

My own preference, and what I would encourage readers to use first, is the basic four plait craft knot such. Since Yahweh has not specified exactly which knot to use logic dictates that we use a knot we like. I chose the simple tie method mentioned previously. One could also use the square knot as used in macreme' to strengthen runs. Bottom line; tie a knot you are comfortable tying.

There is a large selection of knots to choose from, as there are a vast number of yarns. With patience and some study anyone can learn to tie tzitzit. Once you have acquired the knowledge an skill to tie tzitzit you have begun the trek of obedience to Yahweh's commands: an exciting, challenging, and life changing trek of monumental proportions.

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