

Tallit

In ancient days the *tzitzit* contained the prescribed thread of blue. However, in time, the exact formula for the special blue dye was lost, so today most *tzitzit* are all white. As the Jews left their own land and came into increasing contact with the non-Jewish world the wearing of the *tallit* was gradually limited to the time of morning prayer. Since the essential feature of the *tallit* is the *tzitzit*, the blessing which is recited before the tallit is put on reads:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
 אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו
 וְצִוָּנוּ לְהַתְּעִיף בְּצִיצִית.

“Blessed are You, *Adonai*, Ruler of the universe,
 who has made us holy with Your commandments
 and commanded us to wear *tzitzit*.”

The *tzitzit* are tied in a special way. Four threads are used, doubled over, making eight. One thread, the *shamash*, longer than the others, is wound around them seven times, then eight, then eleven, then thirteen times. These windings are separated by double knots. The numerical value of the word *tzitzit*, that is, the sum you get when you count *aleph* as 1, *bet* as 2, *gimel* as 3, etc., plus the numerical value of the windings and the knots is equal to the number 613. This figure, 613, represents the total of the 248 positive and the 365 negative commandments in the Torah. This great preoccupation of our sages with devices and symbols arranged to help the Jew recall one's responsibilities to God indicates the seriousness with which they looked upon these responsibilities.

In obedience to an ancient commandment, a Jew wraps oneself in a

Tefillin

Jews are commanded in Deuteronomy 6:8 and 11:18 to put on *tefillin*. They are worn during the *Shacharit* service each day except the Sabbaths and Festivals. Those days are themselves symbols and reminders of God's presence and *tefillin* are, therefore, unnecessary.

The Jew rises in the morning, washes and dresses to the accompaniment of the appropriate *berachot* (blessings). One then puts on the *tallit* pronouncing the benediction and ties the *bayit shel yad* to the left arm (or the right arm if the person is left handed), saying:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו
וְצִוָּנוּ לְהַנִּיחַ תְּפִלִּין.

“Blessed are You, *Adonai*, Ruler of the universe, who has hallowed us by Your commandments, and has commanded us to put on the Tefillin.”

One then puts on the *bayit shel rosh* saying:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו
וְצִוָּנוּ עַל מִצְוֹת תְּפִלִּין.

“Blessed are You, *Adonai*, Ruler of the universe, who has hallowed us by Your commandments, and has commanded us with mitzvot of the Tefillin.”