

## tuft of hair ציצית

<http://www.morfix.co.il/en/%D7%A6%D7%99%D7%A6%D7%99%D7%AA>

Translations of ציצית  
noun

tassel	ציצית, גְּדִיל, גֶּרֶד, צִיצָה, מָלֵל
frill	ציצית
fringe	ציצית, עֵיט, גֶּרֶד, אִמְרָה, גְּדִיל, צִיצָה
forelock	בְּלוֹרִית, צִיצִית, צִיצַת שֵׁעַר, צִיצִית הַרְאֵשׁ

<https://translate.google.com/#auto/en/%D7%A6%D6%B4%D7%99%D7%A6%D6%B4%D7%99%D7%AA>

### Angels Of The Hours

from *Ars Paulina* - Book III of *The Lemegeton (Lesser Key Of Solomon)*

6 pm	Thaasoron	Zaazenach
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Zeziel

# Tzitzit

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The Hebrew noun **tzitzit** [tsiˈt͡sit] (Hebrew: **צִיצִית**, Modern *tzitzit* Tiberian *sʿisʿit*) (Biblical and Middle Eastern (Mizrachi) pronunciation: **ṣīṣit**, Spanish and Mediterranean (Sephardic) pronunciation: **tzitzit**; European and Yiddish (Ashkenazi) pronunciation: **tzitzis**; Yemenite pronunciation (Temani): **ṣīṣith**; Samaritan pronunciation **ṣaṣat**) is the name for specially knotted ritual fringes worn in antiquity by Israelites and today by observant Jews and Samaritans. Tzitzit are attached to the four corners of the *tallit* (prayer shawl) and *tallit katan* (everyday undergarment).

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## Etymology

The word may derive from the semitic root

N-TZ-H.<sup>[1]</sup> The ending *-it* is the feminine adjectival

suffix, used here to form a feminine singular noun. N-TZ-H comes from the root word for "flower" and originally meant a "tassel" or "lock," as in the Book of Ezekiel where Ezekiel is picked up by an angel and carried by a "lock" (Hebrew *tzitzit*) of hair. In English-language academic texts on Judaica the term is

sometimes rendered "show-fringes."<sup>[2]</sup> In the Hebrew Bible the use is singular, but the feminine plural *tzitziyot*

**Tzitzit**



Tzitzis

### Halakhic texts relating to this article:

Torah:	Numbers 15:38 ( <a href="http://tools.wmflabs.org/bibleversefinder/?book=Numbers&amp;verse=15:38&amp;src=HE">http://tools.wmflabs.org/bibleversefinder/?book=Numbers&amp;verse=15:38&amp;src=HE</a> ) and Deuteronomy 22:12 ( <a href="http://tools.wmflabs.org/bibleversefinder/?book=Deuteronomy&amp;verse=22:12&amp;src=HE">http://tools.wmflabs.org/bibleversefinder/?book=Deuteronomy&amp;verse=22:12&amp;src=HE</a> )
Babylonian Talmud:	Menachos 39-42
Mishneh Torah:	<i>Ahavah (Love): Tzitzit</i> ( <a href="http://www.mechon-mamre.org/i/2400.htm">http://www.mechon-mamre.org/i/2400.htm</a> )
Shulchan Aruch:	Orach Chayim 8-25 ( <a href="http://www.torah.org/advanced/shulchan-aruch/classes/orachchayim/chapter2.html">http://www.torah.org/advanced/shulchan-aruch/classes/orachchayim/chapter2.html</a> )

\* Not meant as a definitive ruling. Some observances may be rabbinical, custom or Torah-based.

is found in later texts. The Septuagint translation is "tassels" (Greek plural *kraspeda* κράσπεδα, from *kraspedon* κράσπεδον singular).

## Biblical origin

The Torah states in Numbers 15:38 (<http://tools.wmflabs.org/bibleversefinder/?book=%20Numbers&verse=15%3A38&src=HE>): "Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them, that they shall make themselves fringes on the corners of their garments throughout their generations, and they shall put on the corner fringe a blue (*tekhelet*) thread." Wearing the tzitzit is also commanded in Deuteronomy 22:12 (<http://tools.wmflabs.org/bibleversefinder/?book=%20Deuteronomy&verse=22%3A12&src=HE>): "You shall make yourself twisted threads, on the four corners of your garment with which you cover yourself."

Fringes, *tzitziyot*, today are attached to the *tallit* and *tallit katan*. The *tallit katan* itself is commonly referred to as *tzitzit*. According to the Torah, the purpose of wearing tzitzit is to remind Jews of their religious obligations. In addition, it serves as a reminder of the Exodus from Egypt (Numbers 15:40). The Talmud equates its observance with that of all the mitzvot. Maimonides (Commentary on Pirkei Avot 2:1) includes it as a major commandment along with circumcision and the Passover offering.

The blue thread is omitted by some Jews due to controversy over the dye-making process (see tchelet).

## Klayim permissive

Torah law forbids klayim (shatnez) - "intertying" wool and linen together. Rabbinic Judaism, but not Karaite Judaism or Samaritanism, makes an exemption to this law, the two exceptions being garments of kohanim and tzitit. Concerning tzitzit, chazal permit using wool and linen strings in tandem only when genuine tchelet is available, whereas kabbalist sources take it a step further by encouraging its practice.<sup>[3]</sup>

## Threads and knots

The *tassel* (*tzitzit*) on each corner is made of four strands, which must be made with intent. These strands are then threaded and hang down, appearing to be eight. (It is customary that each of the four strands is made of eight fine threads, known as *kaful shemoneh*). The four strands are passed through a hole (or according to some: two holes) 1-2 inches (25 to 50 mm) away from the corner of the cloth. There are numerous customs as to how to tie the tassels. The Talmud explains that the Bible requires an upper knot (*keshet elyon*) and one wrapping of three winds (*hulya*). The Talmud enjoined that between 7 to 13 *hulyot* be tied, and that "one must start and end with the color of the garment." As for the making of knots in between the *hulyot*, the Talmud is inconclusive, and as such poskim ("decisors of Jewish law") have interpreted this requirement in various ways.<sup>[4]</sup> The Talmud described tying assuming the use of *tekhelet* dye, however, following the loss of the source of the dye, various customs of tying were introduced to compensate for the lack of this primary element.

Though many methods exist, the one that gained the widest acceptance can be described as follows:

The four strands of the tzitzit are passed through holes near the four corners of the garment (Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 11:9-11:15) that are farthest apart (10:1). Four tzitziyot are passed through each hole (11:12-13), and the two groups of four ends are double-knotted to each other at the edge of the garment near the hole (11:14,15). One of the four tzitzit is made longer than the others (11:4); the long end of that one is wound around the other seven ends and double-knotted; this is done repeatedly so as to make a total of five double knots separated by four sections of winding, with a total length of at least four inches, leaving free-hanging ends

that are twice that long (11:14).<sup>[5]</sup>

Before tying begins, declaration of intent is recited: *L'Shem Mitzvat Tzitzit* ("for the sake of the commandment of tzitzit").



Blue and white tzitzit knotted in the Sephardi style, the all white is Ashkenazi. Note the difference between the 7-8-11-13 scheme and uninterrupted windings (between the knots) on the Ashkenazi, vs. the 10-5-6-5 scheme and ridged winding on the Sfaradi tzitzit.

The two sets of strands are knotted together twice, and then the *shamash* (a longer strand) is wound around the remaining seven strands a number of times (see below). The two sets are then knotted again twice. This procedure is repeated three times, such that there are a total of five knots, the four intervening spaces being taken up by windings numbering 7-8-11-13, respectively. The total number of winds comes to 39, which is the same number of winds if one were to tie according to the Talmud's instruction of 13 hulyot of 3 winds each. Furthermore, the number 39 is found to be significant in that it is the gematria (numerical equivalent) of the words: "The Lord is One" Deuteronomy 6:4). Others, especially Sephardi Jews, use 10-5-6-5 as the number of windings, a combination that represents directly the spelling of the Tetragrammaton (one of God's names).

Rashi, a prominent Jewish commentator, bases the number of knots on a gematria: the word *tzitzit* (in its Mishnaic spelling) has the value 600. Each tassel has eight threads (when doubled over) and five sets of knots, totalling 13. The sum of all numbers is 613, traditionally the number of mitzvot (commandments) in the Torah. This reflects the concept that donning a garment with *tzitziyot* reminds its wearer of all Torah commandments. (Rashi knots are worn by the majority of Ashkenazic-Eastern European- Jews)

Nachmanides disagrees with Rashi, pointing out that the Biblical spelling of the word *tzitzit* has only one *yod* rather than two (giving it a gematria of 590 plus 13), thus adding up to the total number of 603 rather than 613. He points out that in the Biblical quote "you shall see *it* and remember them", the singular form "*it*" can refer only to the "*p'til*" ("thread") of *tekhelet*. The *tekhelet* strand serves this purpose, explains the Talmud, for the blue color of *tekhelet* resembles the ocean, which in turn resembles the sky, which in turn is said to resemble God's holy throne - thus reminding all of the divine mission to fulfill His commandments. (Ramban(Nachmanides) knots are worn by the majority of Sephardic (Western European) Jews and Teimani (Yemenite) Jews)

## Color of the strings

### *Tekhelet*

Tekhelet (תכלת) is color dye which the Hebrew Bible commands the Jews to use for one, two, or four of the eight half-strings hanging down. At some point in Jewish history, the source of the dye was lost and since then, most Jews have worn plain white tzitziot without any dyes.<sup>[6]</sup> Tekhelet, which appears 48 times in the Tanakh - translated by the Septuagint as *iakinthinos* (Greek: ὑακίνθινος, blue) - is a specific blue dye produced from a creature referred to as a hillazon, other blue dyes being unacceptable. Interestingly, some explain the black stripes found on many traditional prayer shawls as representing the loss of this dye.

Now, while there is no prohibition on wearing blue dye from another source, one does not fulfill the mitzvah of *tekhelet*, and thus all the strings have been traditionally kept un-dyed (i.e., white). Interestingly, in recent times, with the re-discovery of the hillazon in the *Murex trunculus* mollusk,<sup>[7]</sup> some have noted that one cannot fulfill the mitzvah of tzitzit without the *tekhelet* strand.<sup>[8]</sup> This position, however, has been strongly disputed.<sup>[9]</sup>

When tekhelet is used, there are varying opinions as to how many of the strands are to be dyed: one of eight (Rambam), two of eight (Raavad), four of eight (Tosafot). While the white threads are to be made of the material of the garment, the tekhelet-dyed thread must be made of wool.

The actual colour has to be "Turquoise Blue." Turquoise was mined in Serabit el-Khadim from 1,500 years before Moses and the Hebrews in South Sinai produced the tekhelet circa 1400 to 1260 bce. The Hebrews in Egypt, and especially Moses who grew up in one of the "Royal" courts, were very familiar with the colour. Many Hebrew workers also were involved in mining of turquoise as precious stone at Serabit el-Khadim. The Sinai Peninsula was actually known in ancient times as "The Land of Turquoise". The correct colour for the tzitit thus cannot be navy, dark or light blue. Turquoise is a specific hue of blue. All 49 references to the blue colour in the Tanach mention "Turquoise Wool". The colour is also very close to the actual hue of the Gulf of Aqaba at certain times of the month, and certainly like the morning and afternoon sky in that part of the world.

According to several rabbinic sages, blue is the color of God's Glory.[4] Staring at this color aids in meditation, bringing us a glimpse of the "pavement of sapphire, like the very sky for purity," which is a likeness of the Throne of God.[5] Many items in the Mishkan, the portable sanctuary in the wilderness, such as the menorah, many of the vessels, and the Ark of the Covenant, were covered with blue cloth when transported from place to place.[6] Many of the great Jewish sages, such as the Chazon Ish and M.M.Schneerson, throughout history have maintained that the colour will only be found and produced in the "kosher" manner when Moshiach himself is on the scene. That is why today very few "Rabbis" recognize the claims of such groups as Ptil Tekhelet. Rav Chaim Kanievsky in Bnei Brak is one example of a posek who has not made a psak on the subject up to this time, but he may soon...

## The other threads

The other threads in the tzitzit (all the threads, where tekhelet is not used) are described as "white". This may be interpreted either literally (by Rama) or as meaning the same colour as the main garment (Rambam). Normally, the garment itself is white so that the divergence does not arise.

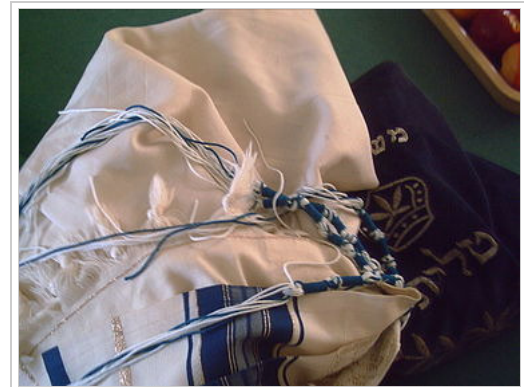
Similarly the threads may be made either of wool or of the same fabric as the garment; again many authorities recommend using a woollen garment so that all views are satisfied.

## Karaite tzitzit

Karaites wear tzitziyot with blue threads in them. In contrast to Rabbinic Judaism, they believe that the tekhelet (the "blue"), does not refer to a specific dye.<sup>[10]</sup> The traditions of Rabbinic Judaism used in the knotting of the tzitzit are not followed, so the appearance of Karaite tzitzit can be quite different from that of Rabbanite tzitzit.<sup>[10]</sup> Contrary to some claims, Karaites do not hang tzitzit on their walls.<sup>[11]</sup>

## Samaritan tzitzit

The Samaritans are an Israelite group descendant from the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh of the northern



A set of tzitziyot with blue tekhelet thread



A karaite pair of tzitziyot

Kingdom of Samaria. They are a community of about 700 who are divided between Holon, Israel and mount Gerizim outside of Nablus in Samaria. They retain the Torah in a variation of Paleo Hebrew and maintain their own traditions. Their numbers fell to only 146 Samaritans in the beginning of the 20th century and over time some Samaritan traditions were lost. The tradition for making tzitzit were lost and Samaritans have used Jewish tzitzit since that time. Samaritan tzitzit are often white since they use Rabbinic tzitzit. Samaritans are not opposed to using blue in their tzitzit and do not interpret the tekhelet as a specific dye but as a general blue, the color of the sky. Samaritans prefer to use blue in their tzitzit and some Samaritans use tzitzit tied with the Rabbinic tekhelet dyed threads and possibly Karaite tziziyot.<sup>[12]</sup>

## In archaeology and secular scholarship

Some archaeologists and Biblical scholars speculate as to the source of the tradition. According to the modern documentary hypothesis, the reference to tzitzit in Numbers comes from the Priestly Code, while that from Deuteronomy comes from the Deuteronomistic Code and hence they date to around the late 8th century BCE and late 7th century BCE respectively, some time after the practice began to be in use.<sup>[13]</sup> The custom however, clearly predates these codes, and was not limited to Israel; images of the custom have been found on several ancient Near East inscriptions in contexts suggesting that it was practiced across the Near East.<sup>[14]</sup> Some scholars believe that the practice among ancients originated due to the wearing of animal skins, which have legs at each corner, and that later fabrics symbolized the presence of such legs, first by the use of amulets, and later by tzitzit.<sup>[14]</sup>

## See also

- Christianity and fringed garments

## References

- ↑ Brown Driver Briggs Hebrew Lexicon
- ↑ A Theological Commentary to the Midrash: Song of Songs Rabbah - Page 243 Jacob Neusner - 2001 "The religious duties beautify Israel, now with reference to not shaving, circumcision, and show-fringes. ... The religious duties embody God's love for Israel: show-fringes, phylacteries, Shema', Prayer; then tabernacle, "
- ↑ http://kehuna.org/tzitzit-made-of-shatnez/
- ↑ Diagrams, Videos, & Explanations of Tying Methods (http://www.tekhelet.com/diagrams/TyingDiagramSeriesHomePage.htm)
- ↑ Rav's Beautiful Ratio: An Excursion into Aesthetics (http://www.divreinavon.com/pdf/GoldenRatioTzitzit.pdf), Mois Navon, B'Or Ha'Torah, Vol. 19, 2009
- ↑ On Histroy, Mesora and Nignaz (http://www.divreinavon.com/pdf/HistoryMesorahNignaz.pdf), Mois Navon, Threads Of Reason, 2013
- ↑ Threads of Reason (http://www.divreinavon.com/pdf/ThreadsOfReason.pdf), Mois Navon, Threads Of Reason, 2013
- ↑ Tekhelet in Tzitzit: A Choice Mitzvah or an Absolute Obligation (http://tekhelet.com/pdf/muvchar.pdf) R. Shmuel Ariel, Techumin 21 (5761)
- ↑ The Definition of Nullifying a Mitzvah (http://tekhelet.com/pdf/bitulasei.pdf) R. Yehuda Rock, Techumin 24

(5764)

10. <sup>a</sup> <sup>b</sup> "Tzitzit" (<http://www.karaite-korner.org/tzitzit.shtml>). Karaite Korner. May 22, 2008.
11. <sup>a</sup> Freeman, Joshua (July 5, 2012). "Laying down the (Oral) law" (<http://www.jpost.com/LandedPages/PrintArticle.aspx?id=62229>). *Jerusalem Post*.
12. <sup>a</sup> Samaritan Exegesis: A Compilation Of Writings From The Samaritans, Yesaahq ben 'Aamraam, ISBN 1482770814, 2013
13. <sup>a</sup> Richard Elliott Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?*
14. <sup>a</sup> <sup>b</sup> *Peake's Commentary on the Bible*

## External links

### General

- AskMoses.com explains tzitzit ([http://www.askmoses.com/qa\\_detail.html?h=150&o=140](http://www.askmoses.com/qa_detail.html?h=150&o=140))
- Tzitzith - The Laws of Fringes. Explores the significance of the ritually fringed four-cornered garment. Complete with basic laws, blessings and diagrams. (<http://www.chabad.org/library/article.asp?AID=110306>) chabad.org
- How to tie tzitzit (<http://www.tallit-shop.com/tallit-tefillin-blog/tzitzit-2/319-tying-tzitzit/>)
- JewFAQ.org on tzitzit (<http://www.jewfaq.org/signs.htm#Tzitzit>)
- Instructions how to make Karaite Tzitziyot (<http://www.karaitetzitzit.estranky.cz/>)
- The Laws of Tzitzit according to mainstream Ashkenazic and Sephardic opinions (<http://halachipedia.com/index.php?title=Tzitzit>)

### Pro-cuttlefish

- Begeg Ivri (<http://www.begedivri.com/techelet/misnagid.htm>)- A society which studies ancient Israeli customs takes on Ptil Tekhelet.

### Pro-Murex

- Ptil Tekhelet (<http://www.tekhelet.com/>) - A group that promotes the view that the lost chilazon (the animal required to make tekhelet) to be the snail *Murex trunculus*.
- Explanation of how tekhelet was discovered and made from the *Murex trunculus* (<http://pubs.acs.org/cen/80th/bromine.html>)

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Categories: Jewish ritual objects | Hebrew words and phrases in the Hebrew Bible | Jewish religious clothing | Non-clerical religious clothing

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