

Tallitot: The Corpus of Prayer in Just Four Corners

Happy Thursday, everyone! I hope that you have had a wonderful week and have stayed warm throughout the chilly temperature drops.

We are back again with another video in our series of "Torah How-to's," and this week we are talking about the proper way to put on a tallit, or prayer shawl. Please note that I am including a quick message at the beginning to respond to some of the questions and feedback I've been getting on these videos so far!

Before we dive into the video, a quick explanation on the "why" of putting on a tallis...

When we say the Shema, the third portion, beginning with the word *vayomer*, discusses the mitzvah of carrying the words of the shema with us wherever we go, teaching them to our children, putting them on the doors of our homes (*mezzuzot*), and on our heads and our arms (*tefillin*).

But this paragraph also tells us that we are supposed to put something called *tzitzit* on the corners of our clothing. Throughout Jewish history, this has been interpreted to mean ritual fringes that are to be tied into every garment that has four corners.

Now, since the majority of our clothes are no longer made as squared edges but are hemmed as a round, how are we supposed to honor this mitzvah? Our ancestors decided that even though the way we make clothes might have changed, the *chiyuv*, or obligation of this commandment is binding throughout time. Therefore, if our daily clothes don't match this criteria, then why not add a ritual garment that does?!

Enter the *tallit* or *tallis*, a ritualized substitution for an ancient style of dress. But the Rabbis of the Talmud went even further, making the *tallis* more than just a piece of clothing and using it as a central physical element of daily prayer. Our Sages kept the intention but lifted the sanctity of that intention to a new height.

And so today, we treat our *tallitot* with reverence and care, understanding their application in helping to inspire and motivate our prayer and to surround us with a symbolic reminder of HaShem's love for the Jewish people. When we wrap ourselves in *tallis*, we are wrapping ourselves in prayer, in tradition, and in comfort.

I hope that this video will help us keep the profundity and wonder of this beautiful ritual alive in our conversations and in our prayer, and, as always, if you have any questions, thoughts, or suggestions, please send them my way, and I will address them as soon as I can.

Meredith, Elior Lev, and I wish you, your families, and your friends a Shabbat of peace and warmth, of song and prayer, and one where we may all be wrapped in the splendor of our incredible tradition. Hope to see everyone in their *tallitot* on Shabbat!

Shabbat shalom u'mevurach!

Rabbi Yonatan Dahlen
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