

The MANTLE of Elijah

Many people wonder, “Just what was this thing that Scripture referred to as a MANTLE that belonged to Elijah?” We see in scripture that he threw it back to Elisha. As he, Elijah, was being taken up into Heaven. To understand this better we need to first understand one of the Biblical Obligations, which God set forth for the Children of Israel. The one which requires each man to have (and wear) a Garment with Tassels, they were also to have a cord of blue in each Tassel. These Garments were to have one of these Tassels on each of the Garment’s four-corners. These Tassels in Hebrew are called תציצת - Tzitzit or Tsitsit.

Numbers 15:37-40 (NASB)

(37) The Lord also spoke to Moses, saying,

(38) "Speak to the sons of Israel, and tell them that **they shall make for themselves tassels on the corners of their garments throughout their generations, and that they shall put on the tassel of each corner a cord of blue.**"

(39) "It shall be a **tassel** for you to look at and remember all the commandments of the Lord, so as to do them and not follow after your own heart and your own eyes, after which you played the harlot,

(40) so that you may remember to do all My commandments and be holy to your God."

Notice that this obligation is being placed on all of the tribes of Israel **not** just Judah. And this obligation was to be "**throughout their generations**". That would mean that this obligation would still be in effect, even today. And it would still include all of their descendents who are alive today.

Deuteronomy 22:12 (NASB)

(12) "You shall make yourself **tassels** on the Four Corners of your garment with which you cover yourself."

This Garment was referred to in some places in the Old Testament as a MANTLE.

The English word MANTLE means an outer covering. As in the case when today geologist refer to the outer crust of the earth that floats on the molten magma of the earth interior, they call it the Earth’s MANTLE (meaning the earth outer covering). The term MANTLE can likewise be used for the outer covering over a fireplace, which most people also refer to as a MANTLE. So, in the Bible, we see that in First and Second Kings that scripture uses the term

MANTLE as a reference to an outer Garment with Tassels on its Four Corners worn by Elijah and other observant Israelites.

1 Kings 19:13 (NASB)

(13) And it came about when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his **MANTLE**, and went out and stood in the entrance of the cave. And behold, a voice came to him and said, “What are you doing here, Elijah?”

1 Kings 19:19 (NASB)

(19) So he departed from there and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, while he was plowing with twelve pairs of oxen before him, and he with the twelfth. And Elijah passed over to him and threw his **MANTLE** on him.

2 Kings 2:8 (NASB)

(8) And Elijah took his **MANTLE** and folded it together and struck the waters, and they were divided here and there, so the two of them crossed over on dry ground.

2 Kings 2:13-14 (NASB)

(13) He also took up the **MANTLE** of Elijah that fell from him, and returned and stood by the bank of the Jordan.

(14) And he took the **MANTLE** of Elijah that fell from him, and struck the waters and said, “Where is the Lord, the God of Elijah?” And when he also had struck the waters, they were divided here and there; and Elisha crossed over.

There were several different words used in the Hebrew Tanach (Old Testament) for this outer Garment. During the Second Temple Era an additional Hebrew word was also being used to refer to this outer Garment with Tzitzit or Tassels on each of the four-corners. That word is transliterated into English as Tallit, Talist or Talith.

Some have tried to discount this and say that this is only a modern term not used in the Old Testament. They say that it can not be referring to the biblical **MANTLE** because it was never called a Tallit (Talist or Talith) in the Old Testament! Hebrew was and is a living language and like all living languages it ebbs and flows as all other living languages do. It has been documented that at the time of the Second Temple there were two places where Hebrew had been revived as a living language and was being used as the everyday language for many. One of these two places was in the region of the Galilee and the other was in the area of Jerusalem and its surrounding towns and villages. So it is no surprise that Jesus uses this New Hebrew term for this Garment in Mark 5:41 when Jesus heals a young girl that is thought to be dead.

Jesus tells them that she is not dead but only asleep (perhaps in a coma?). You may be wondering what difference would this make when we are talking about the outer Garment with Tassels, also known as MANTLE? It has to do with the common practice of the time. When someone died they were covered with a Tallit (Talist or Talith) or MANTLE, until they were able to complete the traditional practice of preparing the dead for burial. They thought that she was dead and had covered her body with a Tallit (Talist or Talith). So, in Mark 5:41, for Jesus to properly use this Hebrew word, Jesus would need to add an (a) to the end of the word in order to make it feminine, because of its connection to the young girl, which He does. And Jesus also uses the Hebrew word for rise or arise, which is Kum. You can check this in the Hebrew Dictionary in the back of Strong's Exhaustive Concordance Of The Bible, under the numbers of 6965 and 6966.

Mark 5:41 (NASB)

(41) And taking the child by the hand, He said to her, **“Talitha Kum!”** (which translated means, **“little girl, I say to you, arise!”**)

To reiterate, in the statement “Talitha Kum!” the ‘a’ as a suffix on the word ‘Talith’ indicates its relationship to a female, so this would be more accurately translated as; girl (or young girl) under the Talith arise!

So, in the book of Mark, in the New Testament, Jesus is using the Second Temple Era, Rabbinic Hebrew word, which transliterates into English as Tallit, Talist or Talith, which is the same thing as the Old Testament MANTLE.

Jesus supported the proper use of the Tzitzit or Tassels on a Tallit, (MANTLE or outer Garment) by condemning their manipulation and/or perversion, of the Tzitzit or Tassels for the purpose of making oneself appear more pious.

Matthew 23:5 (NASB)

(5) **But they do all their deeds to be noticed by men; for they broaden their phylacteries and lengthen the tassels of their garments.**

They should be of normal size, not excessively large (or excessively small as some have recently done, in order to try and appear to everyone as though they are humble and pious). Making them excessively small is just as wrong as making them excessively large. They should be within the bounds of what is considered normal: **NOT** excessively large and **NOT** excessively small.

When the translators of most English Bibles translated the Hebrew word **תצ"צ**– Tzitzit (Tsitsit) Strong's #6734 from Numbers 15:38 & 39 as well as from Deuteronomy 22:12 into English; the KJV translators translated this word as **fringe or fringes**; whereas the NASB translators translated it as **Tassel or Tassels**. Before the birth of Jesus, when the Jewish translators of the Hebrew Scriptures from Hebrew into Greek (in the Greek Septuagint), they

translated the Hebrew word **צִיצִית** – Tzitzit (Tsitsit) into Greek, used the Greek word **κρασπέδου - Kraspedon** Strong's #2899. Later, when the New Testament authors wrote the books of Matthew, Mark and Luke they used this same Greek word when speaking of the Garment worn by Jesus. When the New Testament was later translated into English, the translator of the KJV translated **κρασπέδου – Kraspedon**, three times as **border or borders** and two times as **hem**. Whereas the translators of the NASB translated it as **fringe or fringes** four times and once as **tassels**. As we have just seen in the previous scripture quote from Matthew 23:5 the NASB translated this word as **tassels**. The others four times when it uses **fringe or fringes** are as follows.

Matthew 9:20-22 (NASB)

- (20) And a woman who had been suffering from a hemorrhage for twelve years, came up behind Him **and touched the fringe (tassel) of His cloak;**
 (21) for she was saying to herself, "If I only touch His garment, I will get well."
 (22) But Jesus turning and seeing her said, **"Daughter, take courage; your faith has made you well."** At once the woman was made well.

This same account, or at least one similar to it, was recounted in both the book of Mark and in the book of Luke. However in Mark chapter five, it does not specify what part of the Garment is being touched.

Mark 5:25-34 (NASB)

- (25) And a woman who had had a hemorrhage for twelve years,
 (26) and had endured much at the hands of many physicians, and had spent all that she had and was not helped at all, but rather had grown worse,
 (27) after hearing about Jesus, came up in the crowd behind Him, and touched His cloak.
 (28) For she thought, "If I just touch His garment, I shall get well."
 (29) And immediately the flow of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her affliction.
 (30) And immediately Jesus, perceiving in Himself that the power proceeding from Him had gone forth, turned around in the crowd and said, **"Who touched My garment?"**
 (31) And His disciples said to Him, "You see the multitude pressing in on You, and You say, **'Who touched Me?'**"
 (32) And He looked around to see the woman who had done this.
 (33) But the woman fearing and trembling, aware of what had happened to her, came and fell down before Him, and told Him the whole truth.
 (34) And He said to her, **"Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your affliction."**

Luke 8:43-48 (NASB)

- (43) And a woman who had a hemorrhage for twelve years, and could not be healed by anyone,
(44) came up behind Him, **and touched the fringe (tassel) of His cloak;** and immediately her hemorrhage stopped.
(45) And Jesus said, “Who is the one who touched Me?” And while they were all denying it, Peter said, “Master, the multitudes are crowding and pressing upon You.”
(46) But Jesus said, “Someone did touch Me, for I was aware that power had gone out of Me.”
(47) And when the woman saw that she had not escaped notice, she came trembling and fell down before Him, and declared in the presence of all the people the reason why she had touched Him, and how she had been immediately healed.
(48) And He said to her, “Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace.”

This was **not** just a single occurrence! It happened frequently, throughout the travels of Jesus, in various places.

Matthew 14:35-36 (NASB)

- (35) And when the men of the place recognized Him, they sent into all that surrounding district and brought to Him all who were sick?
(36) and they began to entreat Him that they might **just touch the fringe (tassel) of His cloak;** and as many as touched it were cured.

This account, or a similar one, is also recounted in the book of Mark in the sixth chapter and the fifty-sixth verse.

Mark 6:56 (NASB)

- (56) And wherever He entered villages, or cities, or country side, they were laying the sick in the market place, and entreating Him that they might **just touch the fringe (tassel) of His cloak;** and as many as touched it were being cured.

There are even more examples where this Garment plays a role in the story line of the New Testament. One such example is where we see that Paul, Priscilla and Aquila were of the same profession (Acts 18:2-3). The Greek word used for Tent Maker is σκηνοποιός - skemopoioi this word is not found anywhere else in the Greek of New Testament. This word is not found in Classical or secular Greek. Many students of scripture as well as scholars have wondered why?

This is due, in part, to a very basic lack of understanding and knowledge concerning the differences, which occur in Judaeo-dialects of other languages. For example, currently today the two most well known Judaeo-dialects are **Judaeo-German** (Yiddish) and **Judaeo-Spanish** (Ladino). Both of these languages have similar words in their respective German or Spanish tongues, which take on different meanings often quite **unique** to their own Judaeo-dialect and culture. These unique Judaic meanings usually cannot be found or understood by only studying the original German or Spanish language alone. Such is also the case we have with much of the **Judaeo-Greek** in the New Testament!

It appears that the word is σκηνοποιός - skemopoioi is only used in Judaeo-Greek (not Gentile-Greek) to refer to the one who's profession was the making of the biblically mandated outer Garment or outer covering (somewhat like a tent) with Tzitzit on its four corners.

The Tallit, outer Garment or Mantle was considered to be each mans own personal Tabernacle or Tent of meeting, for praying to Almighty God. Hence the reason that the one making them would, in the Judaeo-Greek language of the New Testament, would be considered to be a tent-maker. And when the outer Garment was pulled up and over the head and face it was considered to be their own private space or room (closet) for worshipping Almighty God.

At that time as well as today there were two types of these Garments having Tassels on their four-corners, up to this point we have focused on the larger outer one. However there is also a smaller one worn underneath the other clothing. The larger one today is called the Tallit Gadole (Large Tallit) and the smaller one is called the Tallit Katan (Small Tallit) this smaller one has a whole in the middle, so that it can be worn much like a poncho or apron, only they are worn underneath other articles of clothing. This appears to be what is being referred to in Acts 19:12 where Paul is sending out "Prayer-Cloths" which in most English translations of the New Testament are called "Handkerchiefs" or "Aprons". Once again the word translated as "Handkerchiefs" σουδάριου is not to be found anywhere else in scripture, as is also the case with the word translated as "Apron" σμικίνθιου.

Acts 19:11-12 (NASB)

- (11) And God was performing extraordinary miracles by the hand of Paul,
 (12) so that handkerchiefs or aprons were even carried from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out.

As a righteous Jew who was a Pharisee of Pharisees, Paul would have had no trouble in sending a Biblically mandated Garment, with tassels on its four-corners, to others; especially if he and those with him (Priscilla and Aquila) made these Garments for a living. Whether these Garments were brought to him or made by him (or those with him) he would have been glad to use them in prayer and worship, and then send them to others, who were in need of healing.

Most Gentiles today prefer to call this outer Garment with tassels (tzitzit) a Prayer-Shawl; rather than a Tallit, Mantle or Prayer-Cloth; however most Jewish individuals will refer to this Garment as a Tallit.

Today there is a movement among some in various parts of the Church to expound on the Prayer-Shawl or Tallit; and even to offer Prayer-Shawls or Tallits to their supporters as well as

encouraging them to use them, from time to time, in their private times of devotion and prayer. One cannot help but wonder whether or not this may or may not be a prelude to the fulfillment of what was prophesied in the book of Zechariah?

Zechariah 8:23 (NASB)

(23) “Thus says the Lord of host, ‘In those days ten men from all the nations will grasp **the garment of a Jew** saying, “Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.””

The obvious question is: “In what manner are these Gentiles (who are seeking God) grasping the Garment of a Jew?” Are they, or are they not, grasping this Garment (a Tallit, or Prayer-Shawl) just to tag along and follow them? Or are they grasping hold of a Tallit (Prayer-Shawl, Prayer-Cloth or Mantle) for the purpose of learning to use it in the same manner as observant Jews have for thousands of years, and still do today?