

What Are Tzitziyot – Part 2

Matthew Vander Els • 2016-05-18 • foundedintruth.com

MAIN VERSES

What Are Tzitziot?

So the last time we met, remember we were continuing the foundational series and we spoke about what are tzitziot? What are tzitziot? Did you guys learn something in that message? I did when I was studying for it. It's amazing how often you can study something and then finally think you've just learned everything about it until you realize there's a whole different realm beyond what you thought you knew—a deeper understanding, a different application.

Remember last week we went over the command that God gave to Israel to wear these tassels. Very simple command. Kind of weird in 2016 when we think about it. Tassels, we don't really understand. But we'll just go ahead and review that verse. Everyone's familiar with it. Initially it's in Numbers chapter 15 starting in verse 37. Again the Lord spoke to Moses saying, "Speak to the children of Israel. Tell them to make tassels at the corners of their garments throughout their generations and to put a blue thread in the tassels of the corners. And you shall have the tassel that you may look upon it and remember all the commandments of the Lord and do them and that you may not follow the harlotry to which your own heart and your own eyes are inclined and that you may remember and do all of my commandments and be holy for your God I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt. I am the Lord your God."

Now what's interesting there is that word, and I really want to emphasize this wholly. So when you engage this command, and the command is very simple. We talked about it last week. Little strings, little tassels. In the Near East it was a little bit different. They weren't tassels. They were actually tied onto the fringes of the garments, and the garments had fringes and so on and so forth, but all the same, very similar.

The Significance of the Tzitziot

Not only are they going to act as a visual reminder so that when you look at them you're going to remember the sovereign God and you're going to remember his commandments and what the standards of his kingdom are, it says that you will be holy for your God. And it's interesting because the root of the word that's used there is of course Kedosh, right? But it's actually the word Kedashim, same word this week, the holy ones. You will be the holy ones to your God, right? This will be a sign, this will be the team jersey that associates you with the kingdom of God.

And we spoke a little bit about how Israel was a slave race and they came out of Egypt and how such a decorative tassel with a thread of blue would have represented more than just a fashion statement. It represented an elevated status of nobility. So you went from slaves being nothing to being elevated to nobility, not just high class. I mean, nobility, royal family, royal household status.

When people see the blue. We spoke about the significance of the hem of the garment. How maybe the woman with the issue of blood, she was reaching for the tzitzit, but maybe she was actually reaching for the hem that the tzitzit was attached to, the significance of the hem. Everything you are, everything you represent, you would grab hold of the king's hem of the garment to represent submitting to his authority, giving all that you are to God. And then we also spoke about, of course, the visual reminder, the official WWJD bracelet that God gave to Israel. When you look upon it, what would Jesus do? That's what God commanded.

Dying to Be Holy

And so we learned a lot about some of the origins of the tzitzit, the tassels. We learned a little bit about the hem. We learned a little bit of archaeology and what we've discovered, how Israel wasn't the only ones that wore them and how that brought a whole other aspect to wearing them and what that represented because the whole world knew what it meant if you wore tassels, especially if you had colors in them, very expensive colors. This week I wanted to talk about some real history. And I want to talk a little bit about dying to be holy. Dying to be holy. I would practice saying that. Dying to be nothing. So I want to talk a little bit about the dye.

So last time we spoke about the function behind them, and I hope that was edifying. I hope that at least answered maybe some questions about the Tzitzit. Maybe stuff that you hadn't heard before. Maybe that makes at least the commandment more significant when you read it for Israel and the weight of what God was saying when he said, "I want all y'all to wear tassels. Not only that, but you've got to get a blue string—gotta be blue string and tied in there."

And so it's interesting because whenever we think of blue thread, I want you to go get some blue thread. Troy, I need you to get some blue thread. Where you gonna go? Where you gonna go? - Snails. - Not snail, no, right now, where you gonna go, blue thread? - One. - I gotta rip my blue jeans. Where we gonna go get some? Dollar General. It's easy to get blue string nowadays, right? I mean, you just go to the store, right? Michaels. Israel didn't have a Michaels. Mount Sinai—go around the corner, turn left—Michael's next to the Walmart? Pick up some blue string. I put them in my... No, I didn't have blue string.

Dyes and Colors

Today we have synthetic dyes. They're dyes that are not made from natural resources—they're from chemicals, synthetic. And we can easily create a variety of different colors. Everyone here is wearing a shirt of a different color, unless you're not. And that's okay too. You got black ink from somewhere. Everyone here is wearing colors that were most likely made synthetically in a factory somewhere very cheaply with a variety of chemicals. They were easily made and dyed and we can produce all kinds of rainbow colors and all that mess very easily.

In the ancient world, the only means of obtaining any type of dye was through nature. Crush a grape, you get a little red stain, right? Certain bugs you can crush up, get different colors of stuff. Want a green shirt? You gotta run and slide around in the grass for a little while. That's how you would get dyes from a variety of different sources.

It's interesting because Native Americans—Native American Indians, right? Like I was saying, when they prepared for war, different tribes typically—and I'm probably gonna get called out because I haven't studied it too much—there would be a ceremony, a ritual pre-battle that was done and they would get paint. They would get war paint and they would write, draw symbols and characters on their horses and on their faces and on their bodies. They didn't go to Michael's either, right?

Geode Rock and Red Paint

It's interesting. I got one here. One of the ways that Native American Indians got their dye is through a little geode rock, right? A little rock that has a hollow core. And inside this core, there is a red powder. Found these all over the states, right? I have one right here. And when my dad was doing construction, initially moving earth around, he'd bring home a bunch of them, crack one open, the powder—every one red powder. And you mix it with some water, put it on your face. It's paint.

You can actually feel and hear the powder shaking around inside this little geode in the hollow core. No, this is mine. That was one of the places they got red paint. Seems a little bit more meaningful now. I'm gonna paint the whole face red. Whoa, you're scavenging some rocks, man. Do what? Other colors, different areas, different sections. I don't know where Indians got blue. I think I know where Israel got blue, so we're just going to talk about that.

The Mishnah and Tekelet

The Mishnah. Everybody know what the Mishnah is? We're going to talk about the Mishnah a little bit. The Mishnah is a compilation of oral traditions and understandings that were passed down repeatedly throughout history and they were recorded in the early 2nd century by sages, authors, and priests. Many of them were orally transmitted from historians, sages, and priests that worked at the temple. Now the Mishnah initially was more or less a book of standards in Judaism that described the requirements, the functionality, the mechanics of the temple and the holiness of Israel during the first century. Okay?

So if you're ever serious about studying the temple, the Mishnah will be a document, a series of books that you will read a lot to understand these eyewitnesses and what they write about the temple and how it functioned and the layout of the gates. Maybe you know the eastern gate was not the gate that was on the outside of the city. We'll get to that in another lesson. So the Mishnah is an extremely important document historically because it gives us an insight to the first century. Why is the first century important? Well, it describes the generation that our Messiah lived and walked. It describes the generation and the understanding of Judaism that the disciples were raised in. It describes the understanding of what Paul was so learned in. What did he know? The Mishnah gives us an insight into that.

And then the Mishnah gives us a very interesting insight into tekelet, the blue that was worn in the tzitzit. You see in the Mishnah they tell us that the blue came from a specific type of sea creature, okay? Found it in the ocean. And it was used to produce the blue tekelet. There was a certain gland inside this sea creature that you would pull out. And it was clear at first, but then after you dyed the threads, it would turn blue, a bright blue, like the ocean, like the sky, the bluest of blue, heavenly blue.

It did not, though, tell us how to process the dye and exactly where the dye came from. It just described this little sea creature. You see, after the two Jewish wars that took place in the first and early second century, Judeans were poor. There was no such thing as a wealthy Judean in Judea anymore. They were kicked out of Jerusalem. They were kicked to the hills. You had the

Bar Kokhba revolt where most of them were slaughtered, rebelling against Rome. You no longer could buy the expensive blue dye that was supposed to be made with the tekelet. And if you could, that was awesome. You only needed a little bit, four strings. But there were other complications because now the Romans were killing Jews on sight. And now if they saw you wearing blue clothes, Tzitzit, then now they know who you are, so you would be scared for your life to follow a commandment of God. What do you do? Do you wear your Tzitzit openly and risk dying, or do you just tuck 'em in, or do you just not wear the blue thread and tuck 'em in because maybe it's difficult to get the blue thread now?

Many different things and aspects came together and affected the Judean community after these two wars. And for the next several hundred years, the blue disappeared from the tzitzit, the blue that every Jew wore in the first century, the blue that Yeshua, Jesus, would have worn in the first century, the blue the disciples, the blue Paul would have worn. This blue disappeared by around 500 AD. It was no longer available. The people who knew how to process the dye had been killed and the information stopped going from one generation to another and the Mishnah doesn't even record where this blue dye is that they had. Remember, no Walmart or Michaels. What do we do? We found this plant that could make a similar blue dye, but we wanted what they used in the second temple.

Searching for the Snail

It's interesting because Jewish scholars have searched and searched for the mysterious sea creature described in the Mishnah and they could not find it until the late 1800s. There was a man named Rabbi Herzog who spent basically his life and his work searching for this sea creature and in 1913, 1913, he found a snail, the Murex trunculus. He found that this snail was probably the most likely candidate based on what the Mishnah said and how it described it and how often it comes up on shore and he got some of it and it's just perfect. It dies exactly like the Mishnah says and everything about it is perfect. Except there was one issue. Everything about this snail was perfect, a perfect candidate. Could we really after fifteen to seventeen hundred years did we find the snail that had been lost for almost two thousand years? The issue came is whenever he dyed a piece of garment it didn't turn blue, it turned purple. Sometimes it would turn blue! They found a cave that dates back to the late, the early second century that has articles of clothing from the first century that have this blue dye in it. We know it was blue. We know what it looks like. He can't get it to dye it blue. Life work is gone. Am I a failure? Everything about this snail is perfect. Rabbi Herzog died thinking that perhaps he was on to

something, but he never fulfilled the goal of truly 100% finding out if this really was the right snail.

The Discovery of UV Light

In the 1980s, Otto Elsner a chemist from Shanker College of Engineering and Fibers in Israel, discovered something amazing. He was reviewing the same type of work because if we want to find this dye for the Orthodox community, this would be like a big deal. Most folks today in Messianic Hebrews, we was going, "Michael, let's get a blue string." For the Orthodox community, they understand the weight of history and they understand the weight of tradition. They understand that if the blue that the priests wore in the second temple was available, this is what we want to use today. Man, this could change Judaism. And so he's studying these things and he found something very, very, very, very, very interesting. He found that this dye solution that Rabbi Herzog had concocted from the snail, when it was exposed to ultraviolet light, like the sun, for an extended amount of time, it would turn blue consistently, not purple. And in 1988, this man dyed the very first tzitzit with the authentic blue that existed 2,000 years ago. It's been, what, 1,500 years? 1,500 years this blue has been missing. This was an incredible feat. Absolutely incredible feat that happened.

Now, it's still taking a while for this blue to get on to the Orthodox community. If you've ever seen someone in the Orthodox Jewish community, you'll see most of the time they wear white tzitzit. This is because of the tradition of losing the blue and we don't know where the blue is. And at the time, you couldn't just go to Walmart and buy a blue string. Well, when the time came to buy a blue string, they just kind of bent on wearing white tzitzit. But slowly but surely, the Orthodox community is starting to wear blue in their tzitzit. A blue that they believe is kosher back to the first century. This blue, you can buy it today. This is it. It's very exciting. It's about \$20 for four strings, but it's very exciting. Oh, I already clicked it. There you go. That's a snail right there. So it takes about 12 snails to dye one string. And so the dye used was extracted from a specific snail that was prominent on the coast of the Mediterranean, just as we just discussed. The Greeks as well as the Babylonians actually used this very same snail to make expensive dye.

The Price of Nobility

I say all this for a reason, not just going off on history because I love history. So during the reign of Nabonidus, the last king of Babylon in the 6th century BCE, the violet blue wool was 40 times more expensive than any other color. So even until this time from Mount Sinai when the

Jews and the Israelites were walking around with blue in their tzitzit, it made a statement of nobility. Everybody's high class, highfalutin, people of this God of Israel, you're darn right. My God is the king and I am his son, I am his daughter. This is what he gave me to show his sovereignty. In the third century BC, one gram of the dye cost about \$84. It's about \$36,000 a pound. 300 years before Yeshua. Roman emperors at the time retained for themselves exclusive privilege of wearing purple mantles with this similar dye. This is actually where we get the term royal blue, royal purple. That's where we get these color names. It's because they came down from royalty, nobility. They were the only ones allowed to wear these things.

Mocking the King

As we just talked about, the last generation has actually successfully discovered it. And it's actually very exciting because like we're alive for that. That's amazing. Can you imagine how expensive that would have cost? An emperor, only one who can wear something like that, right? You're not just a high society member wearing a toga like that, big old mantle like that. Maybe this is why, remember when Yeshua, they were beating him and they were mocking him? And what were they mocking him for? They were mocking him for declaring that he was the king of the Jews right and so they made a crown right because kings wear crowns right and they pressed it around his scalp and down his skull and Mark says that they put a purple robe on him as they did this. They put a purple robe on them to increase the mockery because only a king, only the Emperor can wear this robe, man, the irony of that scene. They did it as a mockery and incredible. They then removed it and put his own clothes back on him and made him carry the cross up.

See, Western Christianity has maintained this scene and understanding through tradition for the past 2,000 years. Have you ever seen Jesus depicted like that? Anybody? Just me. I'm the only one who's ever seen a picture yet. That's why. Because the early believers, as we spoke about when he did the revolution teaching, when Paul, the language that Paul was using about how the kingdom of God was a threat to the entire Roman Empire, the empire of the world, and what Paul was doing is he was telling people, listen, The emperor is not your kurios. He is not your king. He is not the son of God. No, Yeshua is the son of God. He is the kurios. And if you proclaim him as your kurios with your mouth, Lord with your mouth, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. They understood that Caesar was not their king. Despite how powerful he was, they understood that Yeshua was their king. And so we see images of this begin to pop up all over the place throughout tradition and we have no idea what the meaning of it behind it is. He's wearing the most powerful man in the world, the

most powerful man in the world. He's wearing his coat because he's no longer the most powerful man in the world, right? I love that.

The Weight of One Thread

Thus, one violet thread, one blue thread would require fewer than 15 snails. Per thread. Byzantine emperors were born in purple rooms. So you hear the saying, born of the purple? Purple. Purple and blue, right? The Bible also affirms that violet cloth was worn by nobility in [Ezekiel 23.6](#) and of course [Esther 1.6](#). Thus, weaving a violet thread or a blue thread into tzitzit enhances its symbolism and the weight behind the nobility behind it. Thus, one little thread can make all the difference. For a quote here from Jacob Milgram, "Further, since all Israelites are required to wear it, it is a sign that Israelites are a people of nobility. Their sovereign, however, is not mortal. Israelites are princes of God." I'm hammering that point because that's really the biggest thing I want you guys to walk away from, with. What'd you learn about Tzitzit?

Symbols of Royal Identity

That means I'm part of a family of royalty, and my King will never die because he is immortal. He is the God of Israel, the God of creation. And I am his daughter. I am his son. Heirs to his kingdom in every aspect. And I wear this as a symbol of what that represents and the weight of that.

Now comes the big question. Remember I was talking about this earlier—what does the tzitzit make you today, with this week's Torah portion? Kedeshim. Holy. It makes you a holy one. Makes you holy. What about the tzitzit would remind its wearer of holiness? Or the blue, maybe. I mean, the sky's blue and heaven's in the sky, right? So there we go, the holy...

Let's read a few scriptures. We know in Numbers chapter 15 verse 37, we've read this before: "It shall be a tassel for you to look on and be holy to your God. I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt to be your God."

So we're going to take kind of a left-hand turn down from the interstate and we're going to get off an exit. And while we're off on this exit—you don't have to enjoy the exit. And if you disagree with the exit, that's fine. We're going to hop back on the interstate here in just a minute. I want to show you a few things off this exit. And you don't have to agree with these few things. You don't have to like the scenery. You can just lock your door, roll up your window, and put your headphones on and enjoy the trip back to the highway. Okay?

Understanding Shatnaz

I want to talk about Shatnaz. Everybody repeat after me. Shatnaz. Okay? It's not a bad word. Shatnaz—Hebrew word. Shatnaz is the biblical requirement to not wear clothing mixed with wool and linen. Everybody's heard of this? A few people? Wool and linen.

In Orthodox Judaism today, when they buy a new suit, they take great strides. It's supposed to be wool. They go over it with a magnifying glass. Any linen get in there? Even a single thread of fiber. Just make sure it's all off. I'm not wearing anything that's a mixed garment. It's a very serious thing.

We're going to talk about the history of that. And I might make some controversial claims. So where is Shatnaz addressed in the scripture? [Deuteronomy 22:9](#). You can join me there in your Bible. You can mark it. We're going to talk about some cool things that I didn't know about up until the beginning of this year. Here we go.

"You shall not sow your vineyard with two kinds of seed, lest the whole year be forfeited, right? The crop that you have sown and the yield of your vineyard, you shall not plow with an ox and a donkey together. You shall not wear cloth." That word for cloth is shatnaz. The intermingled cloth that's mixed together with wool and linen. And notice verse 12. Is verse 12 up there? Verse 12. "You shall make yourselves tassels at the four corners of your garment with which you cover yourself." Hmm.

The Mystery of the Exception

Now, a lot of teachings out there—and I used to teach the same thing—talk about shatnaz and try to explain this weird commandment. Why does God care whether you wear wool and linen? Well, I used to teach, and I've heard a lot of teachings like this: that God wants to make a separation between the holy and the profane. And so he's teaching us to make a division between that which is holy and that which is profane. And that's a great teaching. I completely agree with that concept.

The issue is: wool and linen are not profane. They're actually quite nice. Two nice things don't make a wrong. I mean, what's the deal with that?

All right, well, here we go. The earliest rabbinic sources, perhaps dating back to biblical days, taught specific practices about the tzitzit. Why would they do that? Because the Bible says you're not supposed to mix wool and linen together. You can't mix, but then the rabbinic

tradition—I mean, the Orthodox—found ways to address this. So we have a lot of different sources.

If you want to go back and read them, the Targum and Jonathan—when it references [Deuteronomy 22:12](#), which we're going to read in a moment—the Septuagint, the way it's worded in the Greek, [Deuteronomy 22:12](#). We have in the Mishnah, Menechot 39b, 40a, and 43a—all talk about the tzitzit in these chapters and make comments about this very thing. The Midrash of Leviticus, Leviticus Rabbah, [Deuteronomy 22:10](#), and then Rashi's commentary—the 11th-century commentary, which we'll read in a moment. Even up to the 11th century we have rabbinic commentaries stating these things, as well as Abraham ibn Ezra discussing this same chapter and verse.

What the Targum Teaches

So let's read the Targum. Anybody ever heard of the Targum? All right, this is a great resource. During the first century, the Targum of Jonathan was written around 40 BC, about 50 years or so before Yeshua was born. And you guys know what language Yeshua most likely spoke? Aramaic. Thank you.

Hebrew roots—we think it's Hebrew. Not really, it was Aramaic. It's okay, it's okay. Aramaic was the typical language of the Judeans in the first century. And so what they did is take the Hebrew scriptures and translate them to Aramaic. But they also—anyone ever have a study Bible where your commentary is at the bottom? What they did is kind of intermingle the commentary, the midrash if you will, with the actual scriptures. It's very, very cool, very, very interesting.

So when you read it, you see the commentary and the actual scripture intermingled in the same verses. One example: in the first century, when God walked with Adam in the cool of the day—well, the idea, at least in the first century, was that God was not like a physical being. He's everywhere. He's above everyone. He exists everywhere. And so how is God walking in the cool of the day? Maybe this is metaphorical, or maybe God literally walked. And if that's the case, then who was walking with Adam?

And so every single time this takes place—God's walking with Adam—they write "the word of the Lord" walked with Adam in the cool of the day. Which is a very, very interesting take if you've ever studied [John 1:1](#), but I digress.

And so the Targum gives us an insight of what was believed in the first century. Okay?

The Practical Solution

Starting here, this is the Targum going over [Deuteronomy 22:12](#). "You shall not sow your vineyard with seeds of different kinds, lest you be charged with burning the mixed seed that you have sown and the produce of the vine. You shall not plow with an ox or an ass, nor any with animals of two species bound together. You shall not clothe nor warm yourself with garment combed or netted or interwoven with woolen and linen mixed together. Nevertheless, on a robe of linen thread you may be permitted to make fringes of wool upon the four extremities of your vestments with which you dress in the day."

So they kind of addressed the realities of the time within the verse—basically, most of the time you wouldn't really want to wear a wool coat in the middle of summer. Linen is much nicer, right?

But there's an issue with linen that we're going to talk about in a minute. With synthetic dye, linen's pretty easy to dye. With natural dye, specifically tekeltel, linen would not hold the dye. Right? So we have a problem. What do we do here? I want to wear my linen vesture. Well, you can tie a single thread of wool into the fringe at the corners of the linen garment, according to the Targum.

Now, whether you agree or disagree, that's fine. I'm just showing history. Everybody say: this is history. Matt, your teaching was wrong—I'm just showing history. Fifty BC, all the way up to the 11th century with Rashi's commentary, all right—prominent rabbi.

So as I was saying, linen is much more difficult to dye than wool. In antiquity, linen would not hold the dye at all.

So I've pretty much presented the case that it was understood, at least in the first century, that shatnez was acceptable as long as it was only the tzitzit and only a single wool thread in linen strings. Okay? Everybody with that?

And I've tried to show you sources from 50 BC. I have a lot of rabbinic commentary, and I even showed you up to the 11th century. But here's the thing: the Bible says in [Deuteronomy 22:9-12](#) that God does not permit wool mixed with linen.

How Traditions Adapt Laws

So that's cool historical references, but someone might say, "Matt, that's all fine. You're doing all this rabbinic stuff—man-made tradition, all the tukkanot." Actually, I should clarify: tukkanot isn't exactly man-made tradition in the way we think of it. But I'll get into that another day.

If you ever hear the term "tukkanot," there are three or four different divisions of traditions attached to the Torah. And tukkanot are commandments that are meant to edify the culture, the new culture coming in. So if there's a commandment that doesn't quite fit in today's culture and there's a way to adapt it so the commandment can be lived out in today's culture, then that's called a tukkanah, or a traditional principle in rabbinic Judaism.

One of the tukkanot of rabbinic Judaism is reading the Torah on Shabbat. Because nowhere in the Bible does it say you've got to read Torah on Shabbat. It's not there. But Shabbat's supposed to be a delight and we're supposed to be holy. Maybe we should make a tradition that we read the Torah on Shabbat. That seems like a pretty good man-made tradition, right?

And that's one example. I don't agree with all tukkanot, but there are different divisions. And of course, I don't agree with all of them because a lot of them are pushed for very strange reasons. And we're going to see in the Mishnah how this particular tradition got us into trouble when it comes to women.

But Matt, you can show all this historical stuff you want, but the Bible says you can't mix wool and linen. How about you show me somewhere in the Bible where someone wore wool and linen? Would you guys like to see that? I'll show you something better. I'll show you where God commanded them to. Oh, wait, we got to talk about this first. This is great. I've built it all up. This is perfect.

The Bar Kokhba Discovery

So the Bar Kokhba discovery. In the second Jewish war, the Bar Kokhba war, where it was just a horrible, horrible mess in around 130 A.D., in the 1950s and 60s a cave was found. It's called the Cave of Letters, and it was found in the Judean desert and they found all these letters dating back—they were correspondence from Bar Kokhba back to the refugees. It was talking about how they used to make shoddy weapons, right, because the Judeans would make weapons for the Romans and they purposely make them kind of shoddy so they would be rejected so they could give them back to the rebels. It was a beautiful scheme. And so we have all this correspondence going back like history unveiled all within our lifetime. And as they dug deeper, they started to find some bodies in the cave. They found several adult bodies and they found a body of a child in this cave. But the most significant discovery was they were all wearing clothes from the first century. And we found linen tunics with tekeltel wool thread on their clothes and around their clothes. It's confirmed with archaeology and history and historical writings. In the first century, Judeans pretty much wore Shatnezitiot.

Which is very interesting. I'm going to get stoned, but Yeshua may have worn Shadnazidzit. I know, right? Heresy. That would mean he sinned. Maybe.

How Does This Make It Holy?

Guys, we go on to how does this make it holy? You shall not wear cloth and wool lined and linen mixed together. How does this make this holy? What does that have to do with holiness? So if you go back up to verse 9, you see something very, very interesting. You see, you shall not sow your vineyard with two kinds of seed lest the whole yield be forfeited. Right? Some of your Bibles, you can go ahead and look it up. What word do you guys have? You might have forbidden. You may have forfeited. You may have, I don't know, demonized, unclean. I don't know. Most scriptures say forbidden or forfeited which is very interesting. The crop that you have sown and the yield in the vineyard. This is why in the Targum it says you've got to burn everything if you accidentally sow it. Like if you mix seed, you've got to burn all the yield of it. Just burn the whole crop because it's forbidden at this point.

How many of you guys have forbidden in your Bibles? How many of you brought your Bibles? Defiled. Defiled. So if you mix these two things together, your field will become defiled. The yield, all your vineyards will be defiled, forfeited, or forbidden. You know what that word is for forfeit? Tikadosh. Let that sink in. What was this week's Torah portion about? Kedoshim, the holy ones, right? Zitzit will make you holy. Kedoshim. Ti Kedosh, to become Kedosh.

If you mix the seeds in a vineyard, the yield of the vineyard will become—I don't want to say holy, but that is the best translation we have of Kedosh. That's why it's forbidden. Holiest of holies? It's forbidden, right? Holy. Very possible. There's two explanations for how it becomes holy. I'll talk about that in a minute. If you look it up in Strong's, Strong's will say forbidden or defiled, but it's the word kadosh. And what Strong's defining, it's defining the location of the word holy in a negative context. That's why Strong's and Cornish says it's defiled, but it's the same word. Don't believe me. In the ESV Bible, I got a little note here from Logos Bible. So you get a little footnote right here. Hebrew, become holy. Okay. You no longer have the authority to, 'cause you've mixed it. Interesting, interesting.

Do not sow your vineyard with two kinds of seed, lest the whole field become kadosh, the crop that you have sown and the yield of the vineyard. You shall not plow with an ox and a donkey together. You shall not wear cloth of wool and linen mixed together. And so what the scholars did, what the rabbis did is they took verse nine and they didn't really know what to do with verse 10, and they went to verse 11 and they said, if mixing things is forbidden because it

makes them holy, that means that mixing wool and linen together makes them holy if we're following the same pattern of verse 9. I'll mention the animals here in a second. Seat, seat, become holy. Or the wool and linen become holy. And then notice the very next verse.

See, last time I just said this verse and I didn't show you all the verses around it. You shall make yourself tassels of four corners of your garment, which you shall cover yourself. What does that have to do with verse 11? Why is that verse next to verse 11? Some sages would suggest that there should be like a but in between them. But you shall make tassels of... We're still off the exit. That's fine. You guys lock the doors, put your headphones on. You don't even have to agree. It's okay. It's just interesting. Hmm. Very interesting. Interesting.

God Commanded It

So as I said, Matt, this is fascinating. It really is. Rabbis think [Deuteronomy 22](#) states that we can mix wool and linen in our tzitzit. But the Bible says clearly that we're not supposed to do it. So why don't you show us someone who wears tzitzit in the Bible? As I said before, I can do you one better. I can show you where God commanded someone to do it.

High priestly garments. As I said before, linen is really not... diable in antiquity. I mean, you can try. This is going to look a little tie-dyed afterwards. It's not going to be, you know, woo, party. No, it's not going to be a good color. So anytime you see colored yarns, that's anything but linen. So the high priest's garment, they shall make the aphid of gold and of blue and of purple and scarlet yarns and of fine twined linen skillfully worked. So the ephod of the high priest wasn't a small piece of garment. I mean, this wasn't just four little threads. This was like the whole outer skirt and it came up around his shoulders and his back. Hold the 12 stones in play. Injury to insert. It was his helmet too, his turban.

The priest's turban, when they tied it, his whole turban was made of linen. And it says that you shall take tekellet ribbons, big blue ribbons, and attach it to the gold insignia that says holy unto Yahweh and like wrap it around the linen and tie it together. Whole high priest was covered in shot and defiled. Defiled. All right, Matt. Well, that's one guy. Oh, no, we got the priest, too.

The Priests Are Decked Out

So they also made coats woven in fine linen. So what were they made of? Linen for Aaron and his sons and the turban of fine linen and the caps of fine linen and the linen undergarments with fine twined linen. You know, you got to keep cool. It gets hot in the desert, you know. And

the sash of fine linen and of blue, purple, scarlet yarns embroidered with needlework as the Lord had commanded Moses. So the high priest decked out. The priests, not so much. They had a big ol' sash though. And it wasn't just a cut, it was embroidered all over. So they actually took the wool dye, dyed thread, yarn, and embroidered it into the linen sash.

Shadnaz Is Forbidden Because It's Holy

Interesting. Shadnaz is forbidden because it's holy. Because it's holy. So we're gonna talk about gradation of holiness real quick. Is that okay? We're gonna talk about Kedusha. Kedusha holiness, if you will. Another message we'll talk all about Kedusha.

A Holy Nation

So when Israel was inaugurated as a nation, right? And when an outsider came into Israel or when someone got grafted in, hint, hint, right? Israel was known to be a what nation? Holy nation. Okay? Israel, just being a member of Israel, gained you a position that had weight of Kedusha and had a weight of holiness. Okay? As Jonathan pointed out earlier, if you noticed it, no one person is called Kedusha or holy in the whole Bible. Okay? Your position is what maintains holiness. Okay? You get that? When you enter in and become a part of Israel, you have a level of holiness. Okay? And if you have a level of holiness, you can interact with other holy things. When I say that, the Sabbath is a holy day. It's the only time in the book of Genesis that holy is used, Sabbath. Because you are holy, you get to engage with the holy Sabbath. A bunch of pagans don't get that gift. They don't get that gift. Only the ones of Israel, only the ones who have cried out to God and are in the covenant get to partake of that gift, right?

How about the Passover meal, the actual peace offering, the meat of the Passover? The meat, the actual meat is Kedosh. It's holy, right? So our scripture says only those in covenant who have been circumcised, gotta be circumcised, can eat of it. If you're gonna eat of the specific offering, you have to be a part of Israel. No outsiders allowed. Feast days? Because you are holy, as a member of the nation of Israel, as a member of the kingdom of God, you get to partake of the holy things of God. You get to go and present your offering before God at the temple. Pagans can't do that. And then you get to go into the holy place and you get to mess with all the holy objects, right? Like you can go in there and play with the menorah, right? And you can go in there and eat the showbread and offer it. You can't do that, can you? Why can't you do that? Because you're holy, right? Who can go into the holy place? Just the altar of incense, menorah, Priests. So the holy place has a higher level of holiness, a higher level of Kedusha, right?

You don't have that level. You're not allowed to do that. You have a little bit of Kedusha, not a lot of Kedusha. The priests have a higher level of Kedusha, so they are able to engage the holy place, handle the holy objects, go in there and offer incense. And can they go into the holiest of holies, beyond the veil? No. Why? Why not? Why not? It's the holiest of holies, right? It's a big holy place, right? That's the throne of God. The priests don't have the authority to go in there. Only one position had the level of holiness to go beyond the veil, and that was the high priest.

Levels of Kedusha, defined by restriction. The one man who had the highest position of holiness in Israel had the authority to wear the most Shatnas. The man who had the highest authority in Israel, the holiness level, was allowed to wear and commanded to wear the most, the whole outfit. Priests, not as holy, right? They get to wear a big old sash. A little bit less. I mean, it's still covered. You can make it thick, embroider a lot. But it wasn't the hat. It wasn't all the way down the legs. It was just less than the high priest. But still, it was the Shatnas garment. And then here we are, the laity of Israel, the lay person, still has a level of holiness, but not as much as the priest. Can't wear a big old sash. Not as much as the high priest, for sure. Don't ever think, that's pure encroachment. It was deemed, at least and fully understood in the first century, that the level of shodness that you could wear was four little strings. You could still do it. Why? Because you had an aspect of holiness, allegedly. You just couldn't do any more than that. No full clothing, no cloaks, no hats, no ephod, no nothing because you're holy. But your level of Kedusha and the role that you are in Israel is not a temple priest and surely it's not a high priest.

So that's my exit ramp. And I'm almost done. We can see the interstate coming up here. We're going to go ahead and put our blinker on and get in the turn lane. But before we do, we're going to further the point.

Levels of Kedusha

The spices for the anointing oil. If you turn with me to Exodus chapter 30, we're going to read something very interesting, and I hope this will drive the point home of why in the first century this was the understanding. Okay? I'm not making a legal halakai here. It says you can wear wool and linen if they're all—today's tzitziot are all wool. I mean, it's not a big deal. It doesn't matter. No one even does that today. But in the first century, I'm just trying to explain what their mindset was. So, the spices for the anointing oil. Moreover, the Lord spoke to Moses, who spoke? Two people listening. Great. And also take for yourself quality spices. 500 shekels of liquid myrrh. So you got myrrh and half as much sweet smelling cinnamon. So you got cinnamon and 250 shekels of sweet smelling canes. You got cane over here, right? And 500

shekels of cassia. And you got cassia right here. And take them into the sanctuary. And now you got to add a whole hand of oil, right?

And you shall make from these things holy anointing oil and ointment compounded according to the art of the perfume. What's that word compound? What does it mean to compound? So the priests are supposed to get all these ingredients and they're supposed to mix it together, right? Mixing, right? Just what [Deuteronomy 22](#) said, don't mix, don't mix, don't mix, Israel. But he's a priest. According to the art of the perfume, after they mix it, what's it become? Whatever touches them must be holy. Whatever touches this is going to be holy. This is why certain people were forbidden to approach the altar. Don't touch it. You're not allowed to touch it. And you shall anoint Aaron and his sons and consecrate them that they may minister to me as priest.

Now we go to the spices for the incense. And you shall say to the people of Israel, this shall be my holy anointing all throughout your generation. It shall not be poured on the body of an ordinary person. Why? Because it's holy. And you shall make no other like it in composition. It is holy. And it shall be holy to you. Whoever mixes, compounds anything like it, or whoever puts any of it on an outsider, someone who is not a priest, will be cut off from his people.

The Authority to Mix

My point here is the understanding that I'm trying to push, historical understanding, is that priests were the only ones authorized to mix. There is something about mixtures here that if you don't have the authority to do it, you're forbidden from doing it. Don't mix your vines and everything. Now, I don't think the priests were out there mixing vines and everything. That's one aspect. I was speaking to Ryan about this the other day, and I'm like, what do we do with the stupid goat and the ox? Like, a priest can mix a goat and an ox together, and yeah, plow, boy, plow, totally.

And so he came up with a very interesting hypothesis and that was the idea of chaos and order, which is painted all throughout scripture. I mean, that's what creation was all about, how great our God is by taking chaos and making order out of it. And the idea that the priests were the only ones who had the authority and the power and the strength from God to handle chaos. And when people saw the priests, they knew that they were the ones in position to minister between God and them, and they were the ones who could handle chaos and make order out of chaos.

So possibly by them wearing shatnas, right? Everyone's scared of a tiger that's going around villages eating people, and then you got one guy who's strong enough to kill the tiger, and what's he do with the skin? Wear the shatnas, because I tame chaos. That's a hypothesis. I don't lean either way. It's just an explanation. The fact is, the mixture for some reason was holy. We don't exactly know all the details to it, but we can see the gradation of holiness throughout the priests and Israel to further this point.

Chaos and Order

The tzitzit then are an exception to the Torah's General injunction against wearing garments of mixed seed. This is a quote by Jacob Milgram, the conservative rabbi, undoubtedly the leading expert of the book of Leviticus and Near Eastern studies to the Bible. But in actuality, adhering in this paradox is its ultimate purpose. The resemblance to the high priest's turban and other priestly clothing can be no accident. It is a conscious attempt to encourage all of Israel to aspire to a degree of holiness comparable to that of the priests. Indeed, holiness itself is enjoined upon Israel when scripture says, you shall be holy for I, the Lord your God, is holy. In other words, when God made this command, people already understood the context because they already knew what the priest and high priest were given to wear. There was an understanding there. True, Israelites are not the seed of Aaron and may not serve as priests. You guys are not temple priests. You guys do not have the authority or the kedushah of temple priests.

There was a group of people who thought they did and it was an encroachment to God and God scattered them throughout all nations and their identity has been lost ever since 721 BCE and that is the northern tribes of Israel. But they must strive for a life of holiness by obeying God's commandments. Hence, they are to attach tassels to their garments containing one tekalic cord, a woolen thread among the threads of linen. That's what it represents, shodness, priesthood, and royalty. Therefore, epitomizing the divine imperative that Israel must become a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. The tzitzit are to epitomize the democratic thrust within Israel, which equalizes not by leveling, but by elevating. That all of Israel is enjoined by becoming a nation of priests. It's from Jacob Milgram's essay on this very topic called "Of Hymns and Tassels." Through the tzitzit all of Israel became a nation of priests, having a job to minister to the nations with the light of God, with the Torah of God, by keeping his commandments.

A Nation of Priests

Didn't have the authority to go in there, mess with the incense, burn incense. It's not their role, but their role was likened unto priests. In the Near East, only kings and priests were allowed to

approach their gods. This is what John Walton talks about in his book *Near Eastern Thought and Biblical Narrative*. And so only kings or nobility and priests could approach national deities. Most people did not even worship national deities because they felt that they would never even be noticed by them. They were so big. And as a lay person, I mean, that guy's never going to notice me. So they worship their city and family gods instead.

What's 1 Peter say? What does the ZZ represent? According to Jacob Milgram, we're almost off the exit, guys. Hold on. It represents royalty and priesthood. Priesthood, because of the one strand of shodness. And royalty because of the tekeltel dye. And here we see in [1 Peter 2, 9](#), that you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into wonderful light. You shall be as kings and priests in how you worship me. You shall approach me as the other nations, kings and priests, approach their national deities because you all are sons and daughters of my kingdom. Just as the priests are able to wear these mixed garments, you too have one single thread.

You are holy to me. Not too holy. You don't get a big old garb, but you get a little bit. And you are nobility because of the blue thread that wears within it.

We're getting off the exit. Turn the blinker off, merge, back on the highway. Was that a fun exit? Maybe you saw something you didn't normally see or didn't know about. Could just be nothing. That's fine, too. It's not halakha. No one here is wearing shatnazitziot, I don't think.

But in the first century, we know they did. If it was an understood standard in the first century, then one could say, with a little bit of evidence and certainty, that Yeshua and the disciples were shot in a tzitzit. Maybe. Can't make the claim 100%. We're just going off history and the standards of the first century.

The Controversial Exit

Now, we're going to hit another exit. This is going to be more controversial than the last one. He'll just wear wool and linen and go home. Matt, what about women?

The issue of women wearing tzitzit has been debated, long debated. In Hebrew roots, in the Messianic movement, for the most part, most fellowships agree that women are allowed or should wear them. Others say, absolutely not, it was just for men. And more Messianic Jewish fellowships say nah, women really shouldn't wear them, it's disrespectful, it's arrogant, you shouldn't do that.

And Orthodox Judaism? It is strictly forbidden. You try to wear some tzitzit in Israel, you will get called out on it verbally. Forbidden! Forbidden! You will get called out. You're not supposed to.

Or is that anywhere in Orthodox Jewish halakha? What I'm going to try to show you over the next few slides is if women wore a Zitio in the first century. That's really the time period I'm concerned about because that's the time period that Yeshua, the model that we follow after, lived in, right? We have three people excited.

If women were allowed to wear a Zitio in the first century, Yeshua never, he crawled out the Pharisees for making theirs long. You'd think he'd call out some ladies. Listen, you tuck those in. You're not supposed to be wearing these things. Not once.

What the Sources Tell Us

What I'm trying to push is maybe not necessarily the view is that women were obligated to wear a tzitzit, but that they were not forbidden. And I know that's a topic that's a weird thing in today's movement, even within the fellowship. Some ladies wear tzitziot. Some of them don't. Different people have different views. Some of them don't feel right about wearing them because of what we read in Jewish commentaries. Some of them just don't feel a passion to wear them. They don't fully understand the commandment, and that's fine too. I just want to give some information today. Is that okay?

All right. So we're going to go back to the number one resource for the first century, and this is the Mishnah. The entire Talmud—everyone heard of the Talmud? The entire Talmud is commentary after commentary after commentary built off the Mishnah, about the Mishnah. That's how important this series—this compilation of letters and articles and teachings of Oral Law are.

So here is an article, a tractate from tractate Menachot 43a. Our rabbis taught, all must observe the law of tzitzit: priests, Levites, Israelites, proselytes, women, and slaves. But Rabbi Simeon declares women exempt, since it is a positive precept dependent on a fixed time, and women are exempt from all positive precepts that are dependent on a fixed time. But Rabbi Judah attached fringes to the aprons of his women—his household. My women, all my daughters, my wife. Moreover, he used to say every morning the blessing, you know the blessing, for you have commanded us to wrap ourselves in fringes. Rabbi Judah, who was a contemporary of Rabbi Simeon at the time, not only put fringes on the women's aprons, but he pronounced the blessing that they were required to do it. Right? Right?

Rabbi Judah and Rabbi Simeon lived in the 200s. Now I want you to notice something. What's the very first line say? All rabbis taught everybody's supposed to wear these. Which means that before this was written, everybody wore them. But then it makes a stink about one guy who has a different opinion: Rabbi Simeon. Rabbi Simeon says you shouldn't because it's a time-based commandment.

Time-Based Commandments

Now let me explain to you what that is. How many of you guys don't know what that is? I didn't either. I had to research. What is he talking about? So after the two wars, the two Jewish wars, things shifted in Judaism. And so in the first century, Jews would wear tefillin all day long. They'd wear a tzitzit all day long. After the Jewish wars, they became a little bit more discreet with their identity, and so they basically prescribed the wearing of tefillin and the tzitzit for certain times of the day, hence prayer. We still have the evolved tradition of putting a prayer shawl on when you pray, right? In Judaism. That's why.

So at this time, this evolution was taking place in Judaism and Rabbi Simeon's saying, well look, it's a time-based commandment and women aren't obliged to follow positive time-based commandments. That's why he said that. But Rabbi Judah used to go around tiling on the aprons. All the ladies in his house. What I'm trying to push is Rabbi Simeon is the rabbi who started this journey saying that women shouldn't be wearing tzitzit back in the 200s.

Women and the Commandment

Let's see here. Here's from the Seferi Badmidbar, Numbers. Basically a midrash of Numbers. It's a book that was written in the 200s, I believe the mid-200s. It's a commentary on the book of Numbers. And here's what it states: Antiquity writing. The verse, speak to the Israelite people and command them to make for themselves tzitzit. Women are included. So according to this commentary from the third century, women are included.

But here we got this Rabbi Simeon again, a completely different book. Rabbi Simeon exempts women from tzitzit because it is a positive time-based commandment. For this is Rabbi Simeon's general principle: Every positive time-based commandment applies to men but not to women, to fit people but not to unfit ones. Here we go again. There's Rabbi Simeon. He was pretty darn influential, right?

So we know that this applies to women too. Women shouldn't be exempt from wearing them. Wear a tzitzit. But Rabbi Simeon says it was a big deal. They actually wrote that.

But there's this guy named Rabbi Simeon, and this is what he states. I find this interesting because even in today's Orthodox Judaism, the halakha, as it is prescribed, is that women are exempt but are not forbidden of wearing tzitzit. If you ask most Orthodox Jews, they would tell you that is not the case. But that is the case.

Women Fighting for Rights

There are many women within Orthodox Judaism right now that are fighting for women's rights to partake in the fullness of the commandments of God. And they're wearing tzitzit all around Israel. Getting in trouble for it. It's crazy. Crazy. I read some blogs of this one girl. I think she started wearing tzitzit when she was 17. Abigail—I'll put her name in the video. And she writes a blog about it. About all the conflict. And people yell at her because she's wearing tzitzit all around.

And there's a great paper I have if anyone wants it. I got it from academia. It was written by an Orthodox author, and she wrote a big, long essay: "No One Should Interfere, Women in Tzitzit." And it goes through not just these two sources from rabbinic halakha, but 20 different examples of stating the case why if women want to wear a tzitzit, they should not be forbidden to do so because there's nothing in the Torah nor in Jewish halakha that does so.

So yeah, you always want to wear a tzitzit, ladies? Go for it. That was interesting to me. I didn't realize that history started that long ago. I think by the Middle Ages, early Middle Ages, that was the point where it was bent towards the understanding that women just shouldn't wear them anymore. It slowly started with Rabbi Simeon and slowly went on from there. But Rabbi Simeon, and I agree with Rabbi, but I don't, but I do.

And so then you have different segments of Judaism, both teaching different things. Women should or should not wear them, so on and so forth. And then there became a gender bias with the commandments and now you shouldn't wear them. And the biggest thing today in Orthodox Judaism, from what I've seen, the biggest rebuttal against a woman wearing tzitzit? Women should not wear the garment of a man. And so, well, if it's a talit katan that was made for a man's size, so you make one for a girl. Problem solved. There are websites that make kosher talit katans for women because of this. It's just hilarious.

How Things Have Changed

So I say all that to get to this place: Lots of things have changed in our world since the testimonies were written, since the commandment was given to the Israelites a long time ago,

since we have the historical writings of the first century, second, third century, all the way up to now. Lots of things have changed in culture. We know that when Israel was given the commandment to wear a tzitzit, they didn't wear four-cornered garments like we wear today. It was really something completely different. It was foreign to them. It was different four corners with a hemmed coat or where the seam lines were corners. But we wouldn't have considered them corners back then. Things change. Culture changes. We adapt. Take note, right?

The manner in which tzitzit changed into a tallit hagedal by around the 10th century AD—big tallits, all the way back down to the tallit katan that we wear today. There are many different ways to tie tzitziot.

I'm sure you guys have seen, if you've ever googled, Sephardic Ashkenazi, the Rambam, you got all these other ones that look really cool. And there's tons of different ways to tie them. We have access to a variety of dyes today. It no longer costs us \$36,000 a pound to get some blue dye. Simply go to Michael's or something.

Multicolored Variations

And so in the Messianic movement, we'll see multicolored tzitziot, right? Some people don't wear four-cornered garments, wear them suckers on their belt loops. Some people make four-cornered garments specific to them, all shapes and sizes, and wear them there. In Hebrew roots, you see women, a lot of them, wearing not only tzitzit, but multicolored tzitzit on their belt loops. And you just get the whole, right?

Lots of things have changed over the past several thousand years. But the one thing remains, I'm just excited to see people wearing them. That's what I'm excited about.

What Matters Most

I'm excited to see people wearing the sign of the nobility of the kingdom that they serve. Whether I'm like, eh, I wouldn't wear them like that or not, that's really irrelevant. That's my opinion. I'm just happy someone's wearing them. Even if they look kind of weird, I wouldn't have chosen all them colors, glitter. I'm just happy they're wearing them.

And so before we criticize others for the way they're wearing them or how we think they look or if they're inappropriate or whatnot, first recognize that it's a good thing that people are actually wearing them. And now that you know the weight behind what it means just to wear some string tassels, what it meant to Israel when God gave this commandment, what his intention

was with the commandment, maybe that will help you rejoice just a little bit more when you see a brother and sister wearing them and you know, hey, hey, We're in the kingdom together. I love that. And that's really what everything focuses around.

For More Information

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