

Tzitzit and Tallit within Ohev

The biblical commandment for wearing tzitzit, the four tassels often seen emerging from an observant man's shirt, is just that—a biblical commandment. The text reads:

³⁷ ADONAI spoke to Moses saying, ³⁸ "Speak to *Bnei-Yisrael*. Say to them that they are to make for themselves *tzitzit* on the corners of their garments throughout their generations, and they are to put a blue cord on each *tzitzit*. ³⁹ It will be your own *tzitzit*—so whenever you look at them, you will remember all the *mitzvot* of ADONAI and do them and not go spying out after your own hearts and your own eyes, prostituting yourselves. ⁴⁰ This way you will remember and obey all My *mitzvot* and you will be holy to your God. ⁴¹ I am ADONAI your God. I brought you out of the land of Egypt to be your God. I am ADONAI your God." (Num 15:37-41)

This text tells us that this commandment is for Jewish people. Jewish tradition specifies this is for Jewish men, though there have been exceptions to this in post-biblical history. The text also makes clear that such tassels are to be attached to the corners of a four-cornered garment. Historically, Jewish men wore such garments as their daily attire. Post-2nd Temple Jewish history eventually created the *tallit katan*, a four-cornered garment worn under the shirt. The tassels are typically placed so they are visible on the outside given the commandment is for one to see the tassels and thus remember to observe the commandments of God.

Modern Jewish tradition informs us that one wearing tzitzit for all to see should also cover one's head. While there isn't a biblical requirement for covering one's head, it is respectful to Jewish tradition and culture, and it is certainly not against Scripture.

Therefore, we at Ohev Yisrael would like to lay out a few guidelines for those seeking to wear tzitzit:

- 1) One should be Jewish (see "On Being Jewish")
- 2) One should wear a *tallit katan*
- 3) One should cover one's head if the tzitzit are visible

Likewise, those who choose to wear a tallit during Ohev Yisrael's worship services should cover their head as it is appropriate and respectful within the context of Jewish worship. The tallit is an invention of tradition, albeit with biblical origins, as is the kippah. Therefore, if one chooses to wear one, one should honor the tradition that also says that men should cover their heads while worshipping God.