

All Wrapped Up: Tallis and Grommet

BTTY, the TYG of Congregation Beth Torah, Overland Park, KS

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Touchstone Text:

"Make tassels for yourself on the four comers of your garment which you use for protection."
Deuteronomy 22.12

"... The tzi-tzit will be for you, that when you see them, you will remember all of the Lord's mitzvot and do them... " *Numbers 15.38-40*

Goals: To Inform Jewish teens of the heritage of tallitot as well as provide them with a tallit of their own. Even bigger than that is the goal of reconnecting Jewish teens with the ritual. By providing them with the opportunity to create an artifact that will bring them closer to the tradition, participants do in fact take the reform Jewish journey. Innovation is found in their manufacturing of the tallit; the tradition comes in the tallit itself.

Objectives: Participants will achieve these goals by tie dyeing their own fabric, wrapping their own tzi tzi, and learning about the history behind both the garment and practice of wearing the tallit.

Materials: 20ish pieces of rectangular fabric, tie dye, tzi-tzit string, permanent markers, fabric paint, puff paint, texts, English/Hebrew dictionary, stencils for prayers, grommets, and grommet attacher.

People: Advisors, participants

Space Needed: Dye Your Duds, large clean workspace

Time Table:

Participants arrive at Dye Your Duds

Tie dye pre-sewn tallit fabric

Transport to the Bolter's house

Discuss the place of the tallit in Jewish culture and how it evolved (all the while, fabrics are being dried in the drier)

Wrap tzi-tzit and decorate tallitot

Wrap up (no pun intended)

Detailed Procedure:

00:00-00:10

Participants arrive at Dye Your Duds. Due to the fact that it's important to the rest of the program that all participants begin at the same time, I'm going to allow a little more than usual congregation time for this program. Not only will it allow for the Dye Your Duds staff to explain things only once, it will give to mix 'n mingle before the program starts.

00:10-01:55

Tie dye pre-sewn tallit. Because the creation of the tallit is on a larger scale than normally would be undertaken, each participant will receive an identical pre-washed and pre-hemmed piece of fabric. Each piece of fabric will also have grommets place at each of the four comers in order to accommodate for tzi tzi. During this time, participants can choose their own color scheme and design for their tallit. The main purpose of this process is putting personal investment in the artifact. The hope is that people will be more willing to wear/implement tallitot if it better represents who they are as Jews.

01:55-02:10

Transport back to the Bolter house. The wheels on the car/van go round and round.

02:10-02:40

Discuss the place of the tallit in Jewish culture and how it evolved: (before anything begins, the still wet tallitot-in-the-making will be put into a clothes drier and dried) This part of the program will take place in a quiz like format entitled, "The Truth of the Tallit." The group will be split up into two teams, and alternating (multiple choice) questions will be asked about the roots of the tradition, what's required in order for a tallit to be a tallit, and etc. The whole game will test how much people actually know about Tallitot. ::KEY NOTE:: Many of these details will be revealed before the initial tie dye begins, so the people who were paying attention will know more.! have the opportunity to answer questions

All Wrapped Up:

Rules: Each team will have the opportunity to answer questions. It's the usual game rhetoric. No yelling out. No psyche out attempts. No earpieces relaying information from a van parked outside the house.

Questions:

What makes a tallit?

1. How big does a tallit have to be?
 - a. Big enough for an adolescent to wrap around themselves.
 - b. Big enough to clothe an infant who is old enough to walk.
 - c. Big enough to drape over a school bus.
2. Shatnez is the rule stating that tallitot cannot be made of. . .
 - a. Wool
 - b. Linen
 - c. Wool and Linen (violates the law of shatnez)
3. Tzi-tziot must be made of. .
 - a. Wool
 - b. Cotton.
 - c. Twine
 - d. Either wool, or whatever fabric the taBit is made of
4. True or False, there are two types of tallitot; tallit katan and tallit gadol.
 (True)

The Origins of Tallit

1. The original commandments to wear tallitot come from the hope that they would protect the wearer from. . .
 - a. Lust (tell the midrash of the rabbinical student who visits a woman of repute only to be thwarted by his tzi-tzit smacking him in the face on the way to temptation)
 - b. Pain
 - c. Evil spirits
2. Another main purpose of the tallit is to remind the wearer to. . .
 - a. Remember the commandments
 - b. Help beautify ourselves for God
 - c. Both of the above

02:40-03:40

Wrap tzi-tzit and decorate tallitot. Before any artistic inspirations get under way, it is time to fascine grommets and wrap the tzi-tzit. Participants will be instructed as to the manner of wrapping and tying of knots, as well as the gammatria involved. 8 (strings) + 5 (double knots) + 400 (adding the worths of Tet {400}, 2 yuds {10 each}, and two Tzadik {90 each} = 613). Now, the creative juices get to flow! Each participant will have the opportunity to decorate their tallitot with sharpies, puff paint, and fabric paint. We had the prayer for the wearing of the tallit as well as a Hebrew dictionary on hand in case people wanted to write a message of

their own. As long as everything remained appropriate, the point is to allow participants to express their individuality and spirituality through their tallit.

03:40-03:50

Wrap up (no pun intended). While tallitot dry, everyone will gather round again and will be asked on their final thoughts and reflections. It may sound cheesy in theory, but hearing people's thoughts and what they've learned will tie the whole process nicely together. Closure is the name of the game.

Appendix:

The *Tallit* is a four cornered garment with fringes on each of the four comers. Each of these fringes is called a *tzi-tzit* and must consist of an exact formula of 5 knots and 39 wrappings. MAKING YOUR OWN TAL LIT is easy. UNDERSTANDING its meaning isn't so easy.

Here are the basic rules for a tallit:

- 1 The tallit can be made out of any fabric (except one which mixes wool and linen together--that violates a biblical law called *shatnez*. If you are interested, you can look up this prohibition in Deuteronomy 22.11).
- 2 The tallit must be a rectangle and have four corners. It must be "big enough to clothe an infant who is old enough to walk." Usually a tallit is made big enough to really wrap around yourself.
- 3 The *tzi-tziot* (fringes) must be made either of wool or out of the exact same fabric as the rest of the tallit. Stripes, decorations, a band with the "prayer," and even short fringes all around the borders are optional. The only thing which needs to be exact is the way the knots and wraps are done on the *tzi-tziot*. To help you master the skill of tying your own *tzi-tziot* we've included both some practice twine and a work space in this Instant Lesson.

DIRECTIONS FOR TYING A TZI-TZIT

- 1 Each *tzi-tzit* is made up of four strings. Three of these are the same length and the fourth, called the *shamash* is much longer. *Shamash* is the same word we use for the candle in the Chanukiah which is used to light the other eight candles, and it is the same word we use for the person who "takes care" of the synagogue. The *shamash* is the string we will use to wrap around and bind the others.
- 2 Place all four strings through the hole (in the tallit or in this Instant Lesson) and even up the ends. Seven should be the same length with the *shamash* longer.
- 3 Tie a double knot with four strings on each side. (You can make it either a square knot or a granny.) When you are making a Tallit (and not just practicing), it is a *minhag* (custom) to say: "L'Shem Mitzvat Tzi-Tzit (This I am doing to fulfill the mitzvah of tzi-tzit)."
- 4 Take the *shamash* and wrap it 7 times around the other 7 strings. Then tie another double knot.. Count your wraps carefully. The 7 wraps should consist of 6 full wrappings and a half on each side. Make sure you have 7, not 6 and a half or 7 and half.
- 5 Take the *shamash* and wrap it 8 times. Tie another double knot. Count your wraps.
- 6 Take the *shamash* and wrap it 11 times. Tie another double knot. Count your wraps.
- 7 Take the *shamash* and wrap It 13 times Tie another double knot. Count your wraps.
- 8 Tradition suggests that you bite off the ends or leave them uneven. They are never cut. However, when you get good at this, you will be able to keep the seven even strands the same length and will need to trim only the *shamash* with your teeth.