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## On Line Class On Tefila

Lesson 16- Kissing One's **ציצית** During The Recital Of **קריאת שמע**

From A Sephardic Siddur

וְתַחֲמִידָה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ נִתְחַדְדֵךְ הַרְבִּים אֵל יְעֹבֹבוּנוּ נֶצַח  
סֵלָה נְעַד. מִהַר וְהֵבֵא עֲלֵינוּ בְרָכָה וְשָׁלוֹם כִּסּוּן יִסְמַח נָדָר  
עֲלֵינוּ וְיִסְרוּ מַקְוֵנוּסִים נִיד הַשְׁמַחֲלִים עַל לִבּוֹ עַד שֶׁמִּנִּיעַ לִדְגֵנוּ סִיּוֹס וְכִי  
מִתְהַדָּה מֵאַרְבַּע כְּנַפּוֹת כָּל הָאָרֶץ וְשָׁבוֹר עַל הַגּוֹיִם מֵעַל  
צִוְאַרְנוּ וְהוֹלִיכֵנוּ מִתְהַדָּה קוֹסְמִיּוֹת לְאַרְצֵנוּ: כִּי אֵל

From An Ashkenazic Siddur

וְהַגִּים לֵאחֹח אַרְבַּע הַצִּיצִיּוֹת בֵּין הַזֵּרוֹת הַקְּמִיצָה, וְלִהְיוֹתִין נֶגֶד הַלֵּב; וּבַעַת אֲמִירַת  
סֵרֶשֶׁת צִיצִית מֵעֲבִירִים אוֹתָן לִיד יִסָּךְ וּמִסְתַּכְלִים בְּהֵן כְּשֶׁאֲמִירִים "וְרֵאיתֶם אוֹתוֹ".  
וְכַשְׁמִנִּיעִים לְמַלִּים "תַּחֲמִידִים לְעַד" שֶׁכְּבִרְכַת גְּאוּלָּה, מְנִיחִים אוֹתָן.

## קריאת שמע During The Recital Of ציצית Kissing One's

### Source 1

ספר האשכול הלכות תפילה דף לח' עמ' ב' – ואמר רב נטרונאי האוחז ציציותיו כשהוא קורא קרית שמע יהירותא היא.

*Translation: Rav Notrani held: One who holds his Tzitzis while reciting Kriyas Shema is displaying haughtiness.*

### Source 2

ספר כלבו סימן כב' ד"ה וכן נשים – ואמר רב נטרונאי גאון ז"ל האוחז ציציותיו בידו כשהוא קורא את שמע יהירותא הוא. ולפי שמצות ציצית שקולה כנגד כל המצות צריך אדם להיות זהיר בה שנאמר וראיתם אותו וזכרתם את כל מצותי.

*Translation: Rav Notrani Gaon said: One who holds his Tzitzis while reciting Kriyas Shema is displaying haughtiness. Because the Mitzvah of Tzitzis is considered equal to all the other Mitzvos, a person should be careful while fulfilling it as it is written: Oo'R'Eesem Oso Oo'Zichartem Es Kol Mitzvos.*

### Source 3

מרדכי – מסכת סוכה תשסג – קטן היודע לנענע הייב בלולב – תני בירושלמי דפירקין: יודע לנענע הייב בלולב; לא סוף דבר לנענע אלא מוליך ומביא מעלה ומוריד כשורה ומנענע. יודע להתעטף בציצית, אביו לוקח לו טלית; לא סוף דבר להתעטף אלא להשליך שתי כנפות לאחוריו ושתי כנפות לפניו ואוחז בציצית כשורה בשעת קריאת שמע.

*Translation: We learned in the Jerusalem Talmud: If a minor knows how to shake a Lulav, he is required to shake a Lulav. The purpose is not only to shake the Lulav but it is that he should move the Lulav in all the correct directions and then shake it. If a minor knows how to put on a Talis, his father should buy him a Talis; the purpose is not to fulfill the Mitzvah of Tzitzis but instead it is so that the boy can throw two Kanfos to his back and keep two Kanfos in front of him and hold the Tzitzit in the proper way while reciting Kriyat Shema.*

### Source 4

רמב"ם הלכות ציצית פר' ג' הלכה יא' – אע"פ שאין אדם מחוייב לקנות לו טלית ולהתעטף בה כדי שיעשה בה ציצית אין ראוי לאדם חסיד שיפטור עצמו ממצוה זו. אלא לעולם ישתדל להיות עטוף בכסות המחוייבת כציצית כדי שיקיים מצוה זו. ובשעת התפלה צריך להזהר ביותר. גנאי גדול הוא לתלמידי חכמים שיתפללו והם אינם עטופים.

*Translation: Although a person has no obligation to buy a garment that requires Tzitzis and to wear it in order to fulfill the Mitzvah of Tzitzis, it is not proper for a pious person to avoid fulfilling the Mitzvah of Tzitzis. Instead, a pious person should try to be covered by a garment that requires Tzitzis so that he can fulfill this Mitzvah. It is especially important to do so while praying. It is a great dishonor for a learned person to pray without wearing a garment that requires Tzitzis.*

### Source 5

הגהות מימוניות – במדרש שוחר טוב כל עצמותי תאמרנה – אמר דוד לפני הקב"ה: אני אשבחך כל איברי ומקיים בהם מצוה. עד בחזה אני משים הציצית כנגד הלב כל זמן שאני

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## קריאת שמע וברכותיה - *The Most Difficult Section Of Tefila To Appreciate*

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קורא ק"ש שנאמר והיו הדברים האלה אשר אנכי מצוך היום על לבבך. על יד שמאלית בה אני קושר תפילין של יד ובה אני אוהז ציצית בזמן ק"ש. הרי שהמצוה לאהוז הציצית בידו השמאלית כנגד לבו בזמן ק"ש.

*Translation: In the Midrash Schochar Tov on the words: Kol Atzmosi To'Marna: King David said to G-d: I will praise you with all my bones and I will use my body to help me fulfill a Mitzvah. I will put my Tzitzit on my chest opposite my heart while reciting Kriyas Shema as the verse says: V'Hayu Ha'Divarim H'Ailah Asher Anochi Mitzvcha Al Livavecha. On my left hand, I tie my Tephilin and in that hand I hold my Tzitzis while reciting Kriyat Shema. This demonstrates that the Mitzvah is fulfilled by holding the Tzitzis in one's left hand opposite one's heart while reciting Kriyas Shema.*

Source 6

בית יוסף אורה היים סימן כד – כתב ה"ר דוד אבודרהם בדיני קריאת שמע בשם רב נטרונאי גאון שהאוחז בציציותיו בידו כשהוא קורא את שמע יהירותא הוא שכל דבר שאין האדם מחוייב בו ועושה אותו ברבים במדת הסידות וכל העם אינם עושים אותו הוא מתחזי כיוהרא עכ"ל ועכשיו שנהגו בהם קצת בני אדם תו לא מיחזי כיוהרא וזה לשון ספר ארחות היים (הל' ציצית סי' לב) אמר רב נטרונאי גאון האוחז בציציותיו בידו כשקורא את שמע יהירותא היא וכן כתב נמי רב משה גאון וביאר עוד וכי מאחר שהתבונן בציציותיו בשעת עטיפתו ובירך עליהן לאחר כך למה אוהז בידו אלא מעתה כשמגיע לוקשרתם צריך נמי לאהוז תפילין ואם תאמר יאחוז וכשמגיע לוכתבתם צריך לבא ולהניח ידו על מזוזתו הילכך העושה כך צריך ללמדו ולהשביעו שלא יעשה כן עד כאן. וה"ר יונה החסיד (ספר היראה דפוס אשכול עמ' קסה) כתב צריך לעיין בהם כשמגיע לוראתם אותו עכ"ל וכיון שאחר דברי הגאונים האלה הביא דברי ה"ר יונה נראה שכדבריו הוא תופס עיקר ומה שהקשה הגאון א"כ כשמגיע לוכתבתם צריך לבא ולהניח ידו על מזוזתו יש לומר שמצות שבגופו שאני שהם מזומנות לפניו.

*Translation: R. Dovid Avudrohbm wrote in his section on the laws of Kriyas Shema in the name of Rav Natroni Gaon that one who holds his Tzitzis in his hand while reciting Kriyas Shema is acting haughtily because when one undertakes a religious act publicly that is not required and as a sign of righteousness and the act is not practiced by the majority, he is guilty of haughtiness; end of quote. However, now that some people do follow this practice, the practice should not be viewed as an act of haughtiness. This is what the Orchos Chayim wrote (Hilchos Tzitzis Siman 32): Rav Natroni Gaon held that one who holds his Tzitzis in his hand while reciting Kriyas Shema is acting haughtily. So too wrote R. Moshe Gaon who further explained that if a person is required to look at his Tzitzis when he recites the Bracha after donning his Tzitzis; and if he is required to touch his Tephilin when he says the word: Oo'Kishartem in Kriyas Shema, then you should also require that he run home and touch the Mezuzah on his doorpost when he says the word: Oo'Chisavtem in Kriyas Shema. Therefore it is better to teach everyone not to hold their Tzitzis during the recital of Kriyas Shema. Rav Yonah Ha'Chasid (Sefer Yirah) wrote that it is necessary to look at one's Tzitzis when saying the words: Oo'Ri'Isem Oso. Since the Tur (Orach Chaim Siman 61) includes the practice of looking at one's Tzitzis when reciting the words: Oo'Ri'Isem Oso, it appears that he approves of the practice. I will now answer the question that was asked as to why we do not require a person to run home and touch the Mezuzah on his doorpost when he says the word:*

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## The Most Difficult Section Of Tefila To Appreciate - קריאת שמע וברכותיה

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*Oo'Chisavtem in Kriyas Shema. We must distinguish between a Mitzvah that one does with one's body and other Mitzvos. Since the practice concerns the Talis and Tefilin that he is wearing and in close reach, it is easy for him to touch them out of love for those Mitzvos while reciting the words of Kriyas Shema.*

Source 7

שולחן ערוך אורח חיים סימן כד' סעיף ב'—מצוה לאחוז הציצית ביד שמאלית כנגד לבו בשעת קריאת שמע, רמז לדבר: והיו הדברים האלה וגו' על לבבך. סעיף ד'—יש נוהגין להסתכל בציצית כשמגיעים לוראיתם אותו וליתן אותם על העינים, ומנהג יפה הוא וחבובי מצוה. הגה: גם נוהגים קצת, לנשק הציצית בשעה שרואה בם, והכל הוא חיבוב מצוה (ב"י).

*Translation: It is a Mitzvah to hold one's Tzitzis in one's left hand and on top of one's heart while reciting Kriyas Shema. We find a hint for this practice in the words of the verse: V'Hayu Ha'Divanim H'Ailah etc. Al Livavecha (on your heart). There are those who follow the practice of looking at one's Tzitzis when they recite the words: Oo'Rieesem Oso and to then pass the Tzitzis over one's eyes. This is a nice custom and a demonstration of a love for Mitzvos. **Ramah:** Some have the custom to kiss their Tzitzis after looking at them. All these practices are demonstrations of a love for the Mitzvos.*

Source 8

מגן אברהם אורח חיים סימן כד' ס"ק א'—לאחוז הציצית – בין קמיצה לזרת (ברכות רמ"מ). כשיגיע לפ' ציצית יקחם גם ביד ימין ויביט בהם ויהיו בידו עד שיגיע לנאמנים ונחמדים לעד' ואז ינשק הציצית ויסירם מידו (כתבי האר"י):

*Translation: Hold the Tzitzis between the fourth finger and the pinky. When one reaches the Parsha of Tzitzis one should take the Tzitzis in one's right hand, look at them, hold them until one reaches the words: Ne'Emanim V'Nechmadim La'Ad. Then one should kiss the Tzitzis and let go of them.*

Source 9

מעשה רב הלכות פסוקי דזמרה וקריאת שמע ותפלה אות לט—בק"ש אחוז ב' ציצית שלפניו ואינו מנשק כלל:

*Translation: While reciting Kriyas Shema, he should hold onto the two Tzitzis that are in front of him but he does not kiss them while reciting any part of Kriyas Shema.*

Source 10

בן איש חי שנה ראשונה פרשת שמות—ח. כשיאמר ודבריו חיים וקיימים ונאמנים ונחמדים לעד, אז בתיבת "לעד" ינשק הציציות שהיה אחוז בהם, ויעבירם ע"ג עיניו, ויסירם מידו שישתלשלו למטה, ולא יאחזם עוד בידו וכנז' בס' הכונות.

*Translation: While saying the words: oo'Dirava . . . V'Nechamadim La'Ad, when he reaches the word; La'Ad he should kiss his Tzitzis that he was holding. He should pass them over his eyes and he should let go of them so that they fall down and he should not continue to hold them.*

Source 11

ערוך השולחן אורח חיים סימן כד—ומצוה לאחוז הציצית בין קמיצה לזרת ביד שמאלית כנגד לבו בשעת ק"ש וכשיגיע לפ' ציצת יקחם גם ביד ימין ויביט בהם ויאחזם בידו עד שיגיע

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1. Perhaps it is because we say: ודבריו חיים וקיימים, נאמנים ונחמדים לעד.

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## The Most Difficult Section Of Tefila To Appreciate - קריאת שמע וברכותיה

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לנאמנים ונחמדים לעד ואז ינשקם ויסירם מידו וכן יזהר לעשות טלית נאה משום זה א-לי ואנוהו וטוב להסתכל בשעת עטיפה כשמברך ויש נוהגים להסתכל בהציצת בעת שמגייע לוראתם אותו וליתן אותם על העינים וחיבוב מצוה הוא וגם נוהגים לנשק הציצת באיזה פעמים בשעת אמירת פרשת ציצת והכל הוא חיבוב מצוה:

*Translation: It is a Mitzvah to hold one's Tzitzis between the ring finger and the pinky in his left hand and to place the Tzitzis over his heart while reciting Kriyas Shema. When he reaches the third Parsha of Kriyas Shema he switches them to his right hand. He should look at them and hold them until he reaches the words: V'Nechamadim La'Ad and then he should kiss them and then let go of them. He should also prepare for himself a beautiful Talis because of the rule of Zeh Kali V'Anveihu. It is further a good practice to look at his Tzitzis before donning his Talis and reciting the Bracha. Others follow the custom of looking at the Tzitzis while reciting the word Oo'R'Isim Oso and to place them over their eyes. All of this is done in order to show one's love for these Mitzvos. Others follow the practice of kissing their Tzitzis several times while reciting the third Parsha of Tzitzis. The purpose of all these practices is to demonstrate love for these Mitzvos.*

Source 12

משנה ברורה סימן כד' ס"ק ה'- על לבבך - והלב הוא בשמאל. ומצוה זו מציל האדם מן החטא דכתיב ולא תתורו וגו' למען תזכרו וגו' והייתם קדושים. ואף דכל שאר המצות אין בהם זאת הסגולה להצילו מיצר הרע, ציצית עדיף וכדאיתא בעובדא דמנחות (מ"ד ע"א) מעשה באדם אחד וכו'. סימן כד' ס"ק ז' - על העינים - נמצא בשם הקדמונים שכל המעביר ציצית על עיניו כשקורא פרשת ציצית יהא מובטח שלא יבא לידי סמוי עינים.

*Translation: Al Li'Vavecha-The heart is on the left side. The Mitzvah of Tzitzis saves a person from committing sin as the verse states: V'Lo Sa'Sooroo etc., LI'Maan Tizkeiroo etc., V'Hiyeesem Kidoshim. None of the other Mitzvot have the same power to save a person from the Evil Inclination but the Mitzvah of Tzitzis is unique as we studied in Maseches Minachos concerning a story about one man. Al Ha'Ainayim-We find in early writings that anyone who places his Tzitzis over his eyes while reciting the Parsha of Tzitzis is certain to not be inflicted with blindness.*

Source 13

ילקוט יוסף ציצית ותפילין סימן כד - שכר מצות ציצית-ו. מצוה לאחוז הציציות בידו השמאלית כנגד לבו בשעת קריאת שמע, רמז לדבר: והיו הדברים האלה אשר אנכי מצוך היום על לבבך. ויש האוחזים בידיהם את כל ד' הכנפות, ויש האוחזים בשתי הציציות שלפניהם בלבד.

*Translation: It is a Mitzvah to hold his Tzitzis in his left hand and to place them over his heart while reciting Kriyas Shema. It is based on the verse: These matters that I command you today, you should take to heart. Some hold onto to all four Tzitzis while others hold onto the two Tzitzis that are in front of him.*

Source 14

ילקוט יוסף ציצית ותפילין הערות סימן כד - שכר מצות ציצית-וכתב במקור חיים בשם גורי האר"י ז"ל, וכשיגיע ל"והביאנו לשלום" יאסוף הציציות ביחד ויאחזם עד אחר ונחמדים לעד. ובזמנינו אחר מעיר ושנים ממשפחה נזהרים בזה, ולא ידעתי למה. ע"כ.

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## קריאת שמע וברכותיה - *The Most Difficult Section Of Tefila To Appreciate*

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*Translation: It is written in the Mekor Chayim in the name of the Gur Ha'Ari, ז"ל, that when a person reaches the words: V'Haveinu L'Shalom in Ahava Rabbah he should gather his four Tzitzis together and hold them until after he recites the words: V'Nechamadim La'Ad. In our day, only one in a city and maybe two in each family are careful to follow this rule and I do not know why, end of quote.*

Source 15

In his book: **כל עצמותי תאמרנה, השפה הלא מילולת של התפילה**, Professor Uri Ehrlich devotes a section of the chapter on clothing (pages 138-143) to describe the evolution of the practice of wearing a **טלית**:

Mantling<sup>2</sup>

### 1. Description Of The Activity

Talmudic literature refers to a garment donned for prayer that must be viewed as having been a custom that some individuals followed. This type of clothing is identified as the "mantle" (Talis) and the associated act of "mantling." We alluded to the practice in our previous discussion when we referred to the customs of Rav Kahana but in that context the act of mantling belonged to the general preparations for reciting the Prayer and was not presented as an autonomous act. Similarly, in the following description of the prayer customs of Rebbe, we learn indirectly that he conducted his prayer while mantled:

R. Chanina also said: I saw Rebbe, while saying the Tefila, belch and yawn and sneeze and spit and adjust his garment, but he did not envelope himself with it and when he belched, he would put his hand to his chin. (Berachos 24a-24b).

All of the activities described in the above excerpt are bodily needs that tend to interfere with a person's recital of prayer. Thus, Rashi's explanation (ibid. the words beginning: but) that the incident involved a garment that either opened or fell down after Rebbe was enveloped in it makes sense. Nevertheless, Rebbe did not interrupt his prayers in order to put the garment back on. Therefore we can indirectly conclude from this Babylonian source, that Rebbe had been enveloped with a Talis at first.

The following three sources present examples of prayers that were undertaken while the person was mantled:

Why was he known as Nakdimon son of Gurion? Because the sun broke through the clouds on his behalf. Once, when the Jews started to travel to Yerushalayim for a holiday, there was no water to drink. He went to one leader . . . The leader went to a bathhouse happy and Nakdimon went to the study hall. Nakdimon enveloped himself in a Talis and started to pray: G-d . . . He then returned to the study hall, enveloped himself in a Talis and prayed (Avos D'Rabbi Natan Nusach 1, chapter 1, 15; Taanis 19b-20a).

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2. Approximately half of the translation I am providing was taken from the English translation of the book written by Mohr Sieback. Selected pages of the translation are available at Google Books.

R. Levi taught: . . . we are told that when Mordecai saw Haman come towards him leading a horse . . . what did Mordecai do? He wrapped himself in his shawl and stood up to pray. (Pesik. Rab. Kah., Mitzvat Ha'Omer 3, pp. 143-144).

And the Lord passed before him and proclaimed etc. (Shemos 34:6). R. Johanan said: Were it not written in the text, it would be impossible for us to say such a thing; this verse teaches that the Holy One Blessed Be He, drew His robe around Him like a prayer leader in the congregation and presented Moshe with the order of prayer. (B. Rosh Hash. 17b.)

The three incidents undoubtedly received their inspiration from the world of prayer as it was conducted at the time of the Talmud. The fact that sages in both Eretz Yisroel sources and Babylonian included references to mantling is indicative of the custom's widespread acceptance.

To which category of people who prayed, can we associate the custom of mantling? The sources do not portray examples of individuals mantling while praying in synagogue. From the Midrash cited in the name of Rabbi Yochanon it would appear, based on an omission, that those congregated did not customarily mantle. Furthermore, from the descriptions of the prayers of Nakmidon Ben Gurion and Mordecai, we can not reach any conclusions about the prayers of anyone other than of the elite, examples of righteous individuals who prayed for the welfare of the Jewish People in times of crisis. We can add by way of indirect evidence from the incident involving Rebbe and according to the description of the prayer of Rav Kahana, that other righteous people joined as participants. In addition, although in the Midrash cited in the name of R. Yochanon the mantling is associated with the prayer leader, we cannot conclude that this was a common practice among all prayer leaders. The Midrash concerns itself with an exceptional prayer service, the prayer of repentance that includes the recital of the Thirteen Attributes of G-d. It is possible to interpret the Midrash as providing that when a prayer service is unique, a special prayer leader is chosen (see for example b'Taanis 16a). We can therefore conclude that the custom of mantling was linked to the prayers of the elite. The practice then found a foothold in synagogues among prayer leaders during extraordinary circumstances.

Before clarifying the significance of mantling, let me establish three facts that provide the appropriate perspective for the custom:

A. The most important fact that needs to be recognized is that the mantle and clothing like it were part of the regular wardrobe worn by Jews living in Eretz Yisroel and in Babylonia during the period of the Mishna and Talmud. Still, this type of clothing, considered highly respectable dress, was more popular among the upper classes, although it could be found among other strata of society. That means that the mantle was not designed to be an article of clothing donned exclusively for prayer, which it became in later generations. However, that is not to say that the mantle did not begin to take on special

significance when the act of mantling was being performed in preparation for prayer or for some similar act. Along the same vein, references to mantling after the Talis had been placed aside or set on the shoulder (Shabbos 147a) or during routine activities (walking, while remaining at home or within the learning hall), or alternatively, references to adjusting the Talis or improving upon the Talis after mantling oneself routinely and freely, became activities that were performed in preparation for an important undertaking such as prayer.

As an article of clothing, the Talis could be worn in several fashions. The following describe some of the ways in which the Talis was worn: “two sides of the Talis resting on his shoulders (bShabbos 147a);” “R. Elazar placed the Talis on his back and went out (bSuccah 27b);” “the Talis was tied to his hips (bBerachos 24b)” and as in other sources. The many ways in which the Talis was worn mimicked the many ways in which the Roman toga was worn. Based on the similarities between the manner in which the two groups wore this item of clothing, we can suggest that mantling in advance of prayer was undertaken so that one covered the majority of one’s body. We can further put forth that for both groups a full and meticulous mantling consisted of covering one’s head as well since that too was often the custom among Roman priests who enveloped themselves in togas while performing ritual acts.

In the next citation we find an explicit description of what was done while mantling:

How do we define mantling? If his wrist is visible, he covers it and then recites a Bracha so that he performs the mitzvah while being overwhelmed by fear of G-d (Psikta Rabbasi 9, 31b).

This example of mantling includes a concern that a person’s wrist should be covered during the act of mantling itself and certainly while eating a meal when his wrist might be exposed. That concern must be kept in mind when examining the examples of mantling in the incident involving R. Yochanon ben Zakkai who was traveling in anticipation of being involved in a mystical activity (tChagiga 2a), the mantling by judges before sitting in judgement (bShabbos 10a) and other examples (see infra).

B. The act of mantling is totally unrelated to the mitzvah of Tzitzit. The mantle that is being discussed is an article of clothing and not a “religious object.” It might have Tzitzit attached to its four corners or it might not. Whether it was adorned with Tzitzit depended on the religious observance of the one donning the Talis or on the shape of the Talis and on whether a Talis of that sort was required to have Tzitzit attached to it (see Sifre Devarim 234, 267-266). The discussions concerning whether a mantle required Tzitzit reveal a very important point: mantling, even in anticipation of praying, was not linked to the Mitzvah of Tzitzit.

C. As mentioned earlier, the act of mantling accompanied other activities of a formal and ritual nature. In addition to mantling being associated with the act of sitting in judgment (bShabb. 10a; cf. Sifre Deut., piska 13), benedictions after meals (yBer. 7:5, 11D),



and contemplating the divine chariot (tHag,2:1), we find mantling referred to in the following contexts: releasing vows (Lev. Rab. 37:3), visiting the sick (bShabb. 12b), Sabbath preparations (bShabb. 119a) and Torah study (Avot R. Nat. A, chap. 25). Concerning some of these activities, the act of mantling was viewed as having the status of a custom, while for other activities, the act of mantling was viewed as a Halachic requirement. Those activities, like the act of reciting the Amidah, shared a sacred dimension. Moreover, the person involved in the act of mantling was a sage or of like status. Indeed, some of this evidence demonstrates that mantling accompanied acts that involved sanctity and piety. Thus, the act of mantling in preparation for Prayer must be viewed in the broader context as being one of many acts that included the assumption of this attire.

## 2. The Significance Of The Act Of Mantling

Any consideration of the significance of mantling must take into account, first and foremost, its role as part of the dress etiquette for important ritual activity. We have already noted that some, in the course of their normal activities, were somewhat careless in how they wore their mantle. At the same time, no high ranking figure would either leave his house or participate in a formal occasion without being wrapped in this garment. Evidence of that fact can be found in the legend of Hillel's response to the man who tried to demean him by calling out, "Is Hillel here, Is Hillel here", "Thereupon Hillel robed and went out to him" (bShabb. 31a).

Other sources hint at additional significations beyond adherence to dress etiquette. Thus, for example, in the following Midrash regarding mantling oneself in preparation for the benedictions after meals, we find as follows:

A person should recite the Brachos after eating in a mood of fear and not jokingly. R. Abba in the name of R. Hiya and R. Chiya in the name of R. Yochanon: He may stand while eating but he must sit when reciting the Brachos after the meal. If he sits and eats, he should recline when reciting the Brachos after a meal. Reclines-first he dons his Talis and then recites the Brachos after the meal. What do you mean by saying that he must don a Talis? If his wrist was exposed, he must first cover it and then recite the Brachos after a meal so that he performs this Mitzvah overtaken by fear (Psikta Rabbasi, ibid.).

Full mantling, which includes covering all of one's limbs, appears to have been a religious expression of awe that must accompany the performance of the commandments. Thus, covering one's body represents the act of creating a barrier between the human and the divine in recognition of the boundaries between them. That can be compared to the curtain or screen which divided the human accessible area in the Temple from the Holy of Holies, or a subject from a sovereign. A similar idea is conveyed through the custom of covering one's head, a practice followed by individuals in Babylonia during the period in question. 'Cover your head so that the fear of heaven may be upon you, and pray [for mercy]'. (Shabbos 156b).

Being mantled while visiting the sick is shown here:

One who enters a house to visit the sick may sit neither upon the bed nor on a seat, but must mantle himself and sit in front of him, for the Divine Presence is above an invalid's pillow. (Shabbos 12b).

In the above source, mantling is explicitly linked to acknowledging that G-d's presence is near by. Similar wording is found in relation to the practice of covering one's head. R. Huna son of R. Yehoshua did not walk four amos without a head cover. The Talmud explains: He said: G-d's presence is above my head (Kiddushin 31a). An acknowledgement that G-d's presence is always close at hand, above a person's head, requires the person to create a barrier between G-d's presence and himself.

In other sources we see this acknowledgement change from being an intangible feeling of religious closeness to having a more concrete expression. That occurs when the sources link human activity to the conduct of angels vis-a- viz G-d. **The perception is that the angels, while occupying the area surrounding G-d, do so mantled. Thus, those who mantle themselves in this world are imitating the angels that surround G-d.**

That view led the Jerusalem Talmud to provide a justification for mantling while reciting Birkat Hamazone that differs from the explanation found in a Midrash cited above: If he eats while seated, he then mantles and recites Birkat Hamazone. If he acts accordingly, he is imitating the ministering angels. In what way is he imitating the angels? So we learn from the following verse: With two wings, the angels cover their faces and with two wings they cover their legs (Yeshayahu 6,1) (Yeruslami Brachos 7: 6 11 4).

The comparison to the ministering angels is based on the vision described in Yeshayahu 6 (1-3) as follows: In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphim; each one had six wings; with two it covered its face, and with two it covered its feet, and with two it did fly. And one cried out to the others, and said, Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory.

**The comparison to the ministering angels is not limited to the physical act of mantling. It further includes the intent behind the act. For both humans and angels, the act of covering one's body, as we understand from the sources cited above, represents an acknowledgement of the need to experience "fear of heaven". That fear results from knowing that "G-d's presence is above my head."** That is why the angels cover themselves with their wings before G-d. I believe that is the plain meaning of the verses. And so we find in the following Midrash that appears in several versions. It explains the act of the angels covering themselves as follows:

It is written: the seraphim are standing above G-d with six wings etc. With two they fly (Yeshayahu 6,2)-as an expression of praise. With two they cover their faces (ibid) -so as not to peer at G-d's presence, as it is written: and their feet like the hoofs of calves

(Yechezkiel 1, 7). This is in accordance with the verse: And never again shall it be a memorial for the house of Israel, recalling their iniquity (Yechezkiel 29, 16). (Pesikta D'Rav Kahana, A Bull Or A Sheep, 3, 151).

Taking steps to avoid the possibility of peering at G-d's presence and the act of covering one's body are two clear expressions of fear. Similar expressions of fear of G-d are found in the following verses: I noticed that I am naked and so I hid (Bereishis 3, 10); And Moshe hid his face because he feared peering at G-d (Shemos 3, 6).

Even the conduct of R. Yochanon ben Zakkai as he prepared to engage in mystical acts must be explained as him attempting to imitate the conduct of the angels: Immediately R. Yochanon ben Zakkai alighted from his donkey and mantled himself and sat on a rock under an olive tree. He was asked: Rabbi, why did you come down from your donkey? He replied: is it possible to be involved in mystical acts within the presence of G-d and the presence of the ministering angels that accompany G-d while I am sitting on a donkey? (bChagiga 14b).

Similarly, the mantling that some sages practiced before welcoming the Shabbos is described by one Midrash as the sages mimicking the conduct of the angels: This was the practice of R. Yehudah son of Elai: on the eve of Shabbos, a basin filled with hot water was brought to him. He washed his face, hands, and feet, and he wrapped himself and sat in fringed linen robes, and appeared to be like an angel of the Lord of Hosts (bShabbos 25b).

In summary, the intent behind the act of mantling reveals itself clearly from these sources. Mantling is a symbolic act that represents two acknowledgements that exist side by side: the need to honor G-d and the need to fear G-d. Those two requirements emanate from the concept that the presence of G-d is always near. That concept further led to the maxim that man must imitate the acts of angels who are viewed as always being in the presence of G-d.

Mantling during prayer is meant to convey a similar idea. The act of prayer results in a spiritual elevation that draws the person closer to G-d. During that process, it is necessary to acknowledge the fear man feels as he approaches the presence of G-d. That closeness also reminds him of the heavenly world in which the angels are always within the presence of G-d. Man therefore must imitate the conduct of angels when experiencing closeness to G-d. Thus, a man mantles himself when he stands before G-d as the angels do in heaven.

We should add: R. Yochanon's directive that the prayer leader wear a special article of clothing while performing his duty demonstrates R. Yochanon's view that while leading the prayer service, the prayer leader himself moves closer to G-d's presence.