

יום כיפור THROUGHOUT טלית WEARING A

The practice of wearing a טלית throughout יום כיפור beginning with כל נדרי is not found in סדר רב עמרם גאון nor in the סידור of רב סעדיה גאון. Some interpret the following as the first reference to the practice:

מחזור ויטרי סימן שנא'—ליל יום הכיפורים למעריב: יתעטף בטליתו בלא ברכה ויאמר בקול נמוך נדרי נדרנא.

Translation: On Yom Kippur eve, the prayer leader dons a Talis without reciting a Bracha and then begins reciting Kol Nidre in a low voice.

The editor of the most recent edition of the מחזור ויטרי, Rabbi Aryeh Goldschmidt, Machon Otzar Ha'Poskim, 2009, provides the following footnote:

משמעות עקיפה למנהג עטיפת הטלית בזמנו של רש"י.

Translation: This is indirect evidence of the custom of donning a Talis at the start of Yom Kippur in the era of Rashi.

He then points to a Geonic source and suggests that during the period of the Geonim some donned a טלית just before יום כיפור:

ספר ליקוטי הפרדס מרש"י ענין יום הכפורים—ובליל יו"ה רבינו הגדול ר' יצחק בר' יהוד' בכניסתו לא ה' מתעטף כל הליל' בטלית אבל בשחרית בעמוד השחר היה מתעטף כל היום ובמעריב למוצאי יו"ה עד צאתו מבית הכנסת.

Translation: On Yom Kippur eve, our great R. Yitzchok son of Yebudah when he entered synagogue did not don a Talis to wear all night but before Tefilas Shacharis, as light would first appear, he would don his Talis and would continue wearing it all day including during Tefilas Arvis after the conclusion of Yom Kippur until he would leave for home.

Rabbi Goldschmidt suggests that the source goes out of its way to report that Rabbi Yitzchok did not don a טלית on the eve of יום כיפור to emphasize that others did don a טלית on the eve of יום כיפור. The evidence produced by Rabbi Goldschmidt is not convincing. Each of the sources appears to be referring to the שליח ציבור donning a טלית for תפלת ערבית on יום כיפור, an act that was unusual in and itself. Because there is no מצוה of ציצית at night, a שליח ציבור would not generally wear a טלית to lead תפלת ערבית. That is how the practice is described in other early Ashkenazic sources:

ספר הרוקח הלכות יום הכיפורים סימן ריח'—ליל יום הכיפורים ערבית באים לבית הכנסת ושליח ציבור מתעטף ואומר כל נדרי ג' פעמים ואומר שהחינו.

Translation: On Yom Kippur eve, everyone comes to synagogue. The prayer leader dons a Talis and begins to recite Kol Nidre and does so three times and then recites the Bracha of Shebechyanu.

ספר המנהגים (טירנא) יום כיפור-ערבית ש"צ מתעטף (קנג) בציצית מבעוד יום ויברך עליו.
Translation: On Yom Kippur eve, the prayer leader dons a Talis while it is still day and recites a Bracha upon doing so.

A footnote to the above source does provide that those congregated donned a טלית. The author of the footnote, Rabbi Moshe Chazzan, lived in the 1600's.

ספר המנהגים (טירנא) הגהות המנהגים יום כיפור אות (קנג) גם-(קנג) גם הקהל נהגו להתעטף.

Translation: The congregation also followed the custom of donning a Talis.

מחזור ליום כיפור, Professor Daniel Goldschmidt in the introduction to his edition of the מחזור ליום כיפור, page 28, provides as follows:

נוהגים בקהילות האשכנזים להתעטף בטלית לתפלת ערבית ולברך עליה מבעוד יום, ואין זה אלא מנהג עממי. בספרי הראשונים מזכירים לפעמים שבליל כיפור שליה ציבור צריך להתעטף בטלית, ונהגו כך כיוצא מן הכלל, שהרי בכל השנה לא התעטף החזן בערבית, וכך מנהג הספרדים עד היום. הטעם ליוצא מן הכלל זה הוא שבהתאם לאגדה הזכרת לעיל לא נהגו לומר י"ג מידות אלא בעטיפת השליה ציבור. נדמה שמאחר ששליה ציבור התעטף ראו בני הקהל צורך להתעטף גם הם בטליתותיהם. מנהג זה נזכר לראשונה בחיבור מהמאה י"ד, ומן המאה ט"ז נתקבל כנראה כמעט בכל קהילות האשכנזים.

Translation: It is customary in synagogues that follow the customs of the Ashkenazim to don a Talis for Tefilas Arvis while it is still day light on the eve of Yom Kippur and to recite a Bracha for that act. This is a custom that developed among the people. In early Ashkenazic sources you find some references to the practice of the prayer leader donning a Talis on Yom Kippur eve. Nevertheless it appears that the custom was not widespread because for every other occasion when Tefilas Arvis was recited, it was not expected that the prayer leader would don a Talis. Up to the present, those who follow the Sephardic customs do not don a Talis on Yom Kippur eve. Yom Kippur eve is viewed as being different than other nights because of the Midrash that I referred to earlier that became the basis for the prayer leader to wear a Talis for Selichos and the recital of the Thirteen Attributes of G-d. Apparently, once the prayer leader started wearing a Talis on Yom Kippur eve, those congregated began imitating his actions. This practice is referred to for the first time in a source that dates from the 1400's but it is only after the 1600's that the practice to wear a Talis all of Yom Kippur became the accepted Ashkenazic practice.

Later sources begin providing justifications for the practice:

ב"ה' אורה היים סימן יח' - ובתענית ציבור כשלובשין טלית במנחה כשמגיעים לברכו יסיר הטלית מעליו דכיון שאין לובשין טלית אלא לקיים מצות ציצית נראה כאילו סובר לילה זמן ציצית הוא אם לא יסירנו מעליו; מלבד ערב יום הכפורים שלובשין מבעוד יום לאחר מנחה ואין מסירין מעליהם בלילה לפי שדומין למלאכים לובשין לבנים ומתעטפים לבנים וכו'.

1. Rabbi Joel Sirkes was born in Poland in 1561 and died there in 1640. A leading halachic authority in the generation after Rema. (Bar Ilan Digital Library)

Translation: On a fast day when the prayer leader dons a Talis while leading Tefilas Mincha, he should remove it before he begins Tefilas Arvis. Since the reason to don a Talis is to fulfill the Mitzvah of Tzitzis, he should remove it once nightfall arrives. If not, he appears to be holding that the night is an appropriate time to wear Tzitzis. An exception is made for Yom Kippur eve when we don a Talis while it is still daylight after Mincha and we do not remove the Talis once night arrives. We follow that practice because we want to appear as if we are angels. We therefore wear white and envelope ourselves in a white Talis.

שו"ת רדב"ז² חלק ד' סימן רמד'—וראיתי לאחד מן הראשונים שהורה להתעטף בציצית ליל יום הכפורים ולברך עליה ואין אני מודה לו בברכה. וקרוב אני לומר שהיא ברכה לבטלה דלילה לאו זמן ציצית הוא. ואני רגיל להתעטף בלא ברכה כדי לעמוד באימה וביראה ולא מפני חיוב.

Translation: I saw that one of the early commentators held that it is necessary to don a Talis on Yom Kippur eve and to recite a Bracha before doing so. I do not agree that it is necessary to recite a Bracha. I am close to concluding that if a Bracha is recited, it is a Bracha made in vain. It is my custom to don a Talis on Yom Kippur eve without first reciting a Bracha. I don the Talis so that I am inspired to stand in fear and trepidation of G-d and not because wearing a Talis is mandatory.

Both reasons given for donning a Talis on ליל יום כיפור can be traced to the original basis upon which Jews began wearing טליתים. In his book; השפה הלא, כל עצמותי תאמרנה, 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:

Mantling³

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

2. Rabbi David ben Solomon ibn Avi Zimra was born in Spain in 1479 and died in Israel in 1573. He left Spain in 1492, as a result of the Spanish expulsion of the Jews. Like many other scholars, he emigrated to Safed, which had become an important center of Jewish life. (Bar Ilan Digital Library)

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

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; b'Taanis 19b-20a*).

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 and Babylonian sources 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 provided 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 also covering one’s head 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 Tzitzis. The mantle that is

being discussed is an article of clothing and not a “religious object.” It might have Tzitzis attached to its four corners or it might not. Whether it was adorned with Tzitzis 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 Tzitzis attached to it (see Sifre Devarim 234, 267-266). The discussions concerning whether a mantle required Tzitzis reveal a very important point: mantling, even in anticipation of praying, was not linked to the Mitzvah of Tzitzis.

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 be 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' (bShabbos 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. (bShabbos 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 (bKiddushin 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 while 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) (yBrachos 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 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.