

The following commentary is a word for word analysis of both Numbers 15:38 and Dueteronomy 22:12 which reference the command to attach tzitziyot to our clothing.

Numbers 15:38

דָּבַר אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם וַעֲשׂוּ לָהֶם צִיצֵת עַל
כַּנְפֵי בְגָדֵיהֶם לְדֹרֹתָם וְנָתַנּוּ עַל-צִיצֵת הַכֶּנֶף פְּתִיל תְּכֵלֶת.

The following is a word for word analysis and commentary on each word in this verse.

דָּבַר Literally ‘word,’ thus the verse begins literally “(a) word to sons (children) of Israel”

The use of dabar (‘word’) versus omer (‘say’) indicates more directly a command or legislative regulation rather than simply a discursive or narrative statement.

אֶל to

בְּנֵי “my sons and daughters”

יִשְׂרָאֵל Israel

וְאָמַרְתָּ And you ‘said’ (masculine singular)

אֲלֵהֶם to them

וַעֲשׂוּ And they are to make

לָהֶם for them

צִיצֵת tzitzit, Root is צ.ו.צ and means to bloom, burst out. Movement characterized by ‘breaking through,’ a forward push to emerge, the parts of a plant that have sprouted forth or broken through. Tzitz on the body of an animal is it’s wings. Tzitz on a human head is a lock of hair. It is also used metaphorically to mean looking through a lattice, and a rabbinic term for the engraved plate that ‘stands out’ upon the forehead of the high priest. Thus, when it says make yourselves tzitzit on your garments, according to Rabbi Hirsch this means: *“Place branches and blossoming sprouts, as it were, upon your garments; cause ‘sprouts’ to emerge from your garments. And what else would these sprouts say to us than: Do not wear a garment without reflecting on it; let your garment bear “blossoms” and “sprouts,” let it bear the fruit, let it yeild the result that is expected from it? They shall not be mere symbolic “sprouts” upon your garments. They shall be real, genuine “sprouts” and “blossoms” for you. They are to help you yourself “sprout” and “blossom forth;” they are to assist you in your personal development and completion. The sight of them should guide your spirit to an understanding and your will to the fulfillment of your purpose, whose essence is evidenced by your garment.”*

עַל on

כַּנְפֵי covering, protective garment (not specifically corners with this ending as it is in Deut 22:12)

בְּגֵדֵיהֶם garments of them, Root ב.ג.ד means cover; present outer appearance.

לְדֹרֹתָם to generations of them, Root ד.ו.ד meaning to live contemporaneously, link together.

וְנָתְנוּ and they put, Root נ.ת.ן meaning to give over, giving.

עַל-צִיצִית on-tzitzit, the bloom of the garment

הַכַּנֵּף the edge, corner, wing, fold, or hem

פְּתִיל cord, string, strand

תְּכֵלֶת blue-violet color, Techelet is only mentioned in connection with the Sanctuary in God's Law. (1) The High Priest wore a mantle all techelet (blue). (2) The Ark of the Covenant traveled in all wanderings with Israel in the wilderness covered with an outer covering of techelet. (3) Other accessories in the Sanctuary like the menorah, table, altar of incense and all utensils were covered directly with an inner cover of techelet. (4) Thus both the High Priest and the Tabernacle appeared 'draped' in techelet. (5) We also note that whenever there was a need to bind separate objects within the Tabernacle they were bound with threads or loops of techelet.

There are three Hebrew terms used to describe the colors of the spectrum: (1) אָדוּם for red,

(2) יָרֵק for yellow and green, (3) תְּכֵלֶת blue and violet.

Rabbi Hirsch explains: *"Within the spectrum which is shown by the rainbow through the refraction of light and which is present wherever a prism breaks up a ray of light, the Hebrew language combines the colors into three groups, in the following order: red, yellow-green, blue-violet. Red is the least refracted ray; it is the closest to the unbroken ray of light that is directly absorbed by matter. Red is light in its first fusion with the terrestrial element. Is this not again man, the image of God as reflected in physical, earthly matter...the next part of the spectrum is yellow-green...and, blue-violet is the end of the spectrum. The spectrum visible to our eye ends with the violet ray, techelet, but additional magnitudes of light radiate unseen beyond the visible spectrum. Likewise, the blue expanse of the sky forms the end only of the earth that is visible to us. And so techelet is simply the bridge that leads thinking man from the visible, physical sphere of the terrestrial world into the unseen sphere of heaven beyond. The basic color of the Sanctuary was blue-violet. For the Law of God originated neither from the light that is contained in earthly matter, nor the Divine spark that is innate in man. It was handed to us from beyond the limits of physically visible matter...Techelet is the basic color of the Sanctuary and of the High Priest's vestments; the color of blue-violet representing heaven and the things of heaven that were revealed to Israel."*

Deuteronomy 22:12

גְּדָלִים תַּעֲשֶׂה לָּךְ עַל-אַרְבַּע כַּנְפוֹת כְּסוּתֶךָ אֲשֶׁר תִּכְסֶּה בָּהּ

Below is a word for word breakdown and commentary on the verse above.

גְּדָלִים Root word is gadol, meaning big or great. Used here to mean ‘**combined rope threads.**’ (Et. Dic. pg 121).

תַּעֲשֶׂה ‘**you (command) make**’ (f. or ms. ??, likely feminine indicating ‘you’ Israel which is reiterated in the next word below)

לָּךְ ‘**to you**’ (feminine singular) indicating specifically, ‘you’ (**Israel**) the one female nation, the bride of Messiah.

עַל-אַרְבַּע ‘**on-four**’

כַּנְפוֹת ‘**corners**’ (feminine plural) Rabbi Hirsch explains, “**כנפים** (confim) *Always denotes literally wings or the covering parts of wings, or metaphorically what it is that wings do for birds.* **כנפות** (confot) *is never used in Scripture to denote wings in the literal sense.*

*Apart from the passage under study (Deut 22:12) **כנפות** occurs only as **כנפות הארץ** (confot ha-aretz), where, much like **קרנות**, it connotes only ends, directions, the regions of the world. Thus, while **כנפי בגד** denotes the ‘wings’ of the garment that complete the ‘covering over’ of the body, the expressions **כנפות בגד** and **כנפות כסות** would not connote the effect of the **כנף** as such, but, as in **כנפות הארץ**, would denote only ‘ends’ or ‘directions.’”*

כְּסוּתֶךָ ‘**your coverings**’ (masculine singular) Root is **כ.ס.ה** means cover; withdraw from sight. (Et. Dic pg 121) The root here is changed to a noun form with the change of the **ה** to

וּתְ (and also indicates by the word picture it creates a ‘covering of Messiah.’ The vav = nail and tav = the sign (which in pre-Babylonian Hebrew was shaped like a cross). The use of these two letters provides a ‘specific’ word picture indication that the covering that is being specifically referred to here is the covering of Messiah by His shed blood, revealed to us through ‘the sign’ of the cross that he was ‘nailed’ to. In addition, the final letter of this word with its

particular vowel ending ך ultimately is a masculine singular ending. I believe this indicates the singular masculine Messiah. Saying in effect, through this portion of the sentence to the end of the sentence, “*the corners of ‘the coverings’ that Messiah covers her (Israel) with.*” It was God himself that provided the first garment to ‘cover’ over the iniquity of Adam and Eve. Garments themselves symbolize by their very nature the dual aspects of coverings; (1) to cover our shame and (2) to provide protection. Tzitzit are a natural extension of this covering made of the same substance, but referred to also as ‘sprouts’ as in the part of a plant twig, leaf or blossom that has sprouted or ‘broken through.’

The root ‘Tzitz’ is also used with regard to animals, referring to the animal’s ‘wings.’ The passage that states that Messiah came with healing in His ‘wings’ is a classic example of the animal/human connection of tzitzit which was the same symbol that offered healing to the woman with the issue of blood (Luke 8:43-48). That woman knew the passage in Malachi 4:2 and in her heart showed her faith that Yeshua was Messiah. She reach out in faith even though she would have ‘contaminated’ any other Rabbi causing him to become ‘unclean’ by touching him (Lev. 15:19, 25); however, she stepped out in faith knowing that if she could only touch His ‘wings,’ she could be healed.

In addition, the root ‘tzitz’ can refer to the human head with regard to a ‘lock of hair.’ We see the power and covering connection of this ‘sprout’ from the human body and all its implications in the life of Sampson.

In (Menachot 41, 42) the root of the word tzitzit and its variant related word roots reveal that tzitzit are not merely sprouts that blossom forth from your clothing, but that they symbolize the life, power, and covering of Messiah that enables and assists you in your own personal development and completion. The *practical* aspect of wearing tzitzit provides this function, but the ultimate power is provided through the protection offered to those who ‘bind’ themselves to God’s commandments and stay within the protection of His ‘covering,’ which is none other than His Torah, both the written and the Living.

אָשָׁר ‘that,’ but the root here means ‘progress, moving forward’ (Et. Dic pg 18)

תִּכְסֶה ‘you will cover’ (command) (Et. Dic pg 121 for root same as above)

בָּהּ in her/about her

Therefore, we could translate this verse (Duet. 22:12) literally as, “**Combined rope threads you (Israel) make for yourself (Israel) on four corners of the coverings (you) Messiah will cover her (Israel).**”

The sentence that directly follows the verse we are analyzing (vs. 13) begins with and can be literally translated word for word, "Because (he) man takes wife...etc." This further gives evidence that the translation presented above for verse 12 implies a connective reference to the specific act of Messiah covering or taking Israel, His bride. When she (Israel) wears tzitzit it should cause her to not only think of God's commands when she sees tzitzit, but she should realize that the ultimate covering they represent is rooted ultimately in Messiah's covering of her which both covers her shame and provides safety for her in both this life and the next.