

THE TALLIT

A tallit is the prayer shawl worn by individuals past the age of B-Mitzvah. It consists of two main parts, the garment itself and the tzitzit (the four elaborately tied fringes in the corners). It is the tzitzit that we are commanded to wear and that transform the garment from a piece of cloth to a tallit.

Tallitot were a status symbol in ancient times and emphasized the priesthood and importance of each Jewish person. They also serve as a reminder that we should keep God's commandments. The tallit is worn for the Shacharit and Musaf services on weekdays, Shabbat, and holidays.

The tallit is put on after the kippah (and before tefillin on weekdays). Before putting it on, hold the tallit spread open before you, with the atarah (a piece of embroidery or other decoration, often with the blessing or other Hebrew inscription on it) facing you and its ends held by your thumbs.

Recite this blessing:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו, וְצִוָּנוּ לְהִתְעַטֵּף בְּצִיצִית.

Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech Haolam, Asher Kideshanu B'mitzvotav, V'tzivanu L'hitateif B'tzitzit.

Praised are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the universe, who instills in us the holiness of mitzvot by commanding us to wrap ourselves in tzitzit.

Kiss the ends of the atarah, then bring the tallit around you (like a cape) and let it rest on your shoulders.

Obtaining A Tallit

If you don't have a family tallit that you would like to pass on to your child, there are several excellent options for obtaining a new tallit.

Consider making a tallit with your child in Beth El's Sisterhood Tallit Workshop. It's so much more special if the tallit comes from the heart and includes the loving touches of family members. B-Mitzvah students enjoy being able to choose their own fabric and help with the design. Taking turns tying the tzitzit around the four corners is the ultimate family bonding experience. Many of the beautiful and original tallitot worn at Beth El were designed and handmade in this workshop. No sewing experience is necessary. Look for registration information in the September and October issues of *The Scroll*. Note that this is a very popular program that has been extremely successful for many years. Space is limited and the workshop tends to fill quickly.

The Beth El Judaica and Gift Shop has a variety of tallitot from which to choose. All proceeds go to Women of Beth El (a combination of Sisterhood and Zhava) and used to support programming, which in turn support Beth El by creating opportunities for engagement. Email wbe@bethelmc.org for store hours or to make an appointment.

Israeli Accents (4838 Boiling Brook Parkway, Rockville) offers a large selection of beautiful tallitot. There are also a number of local tallit makers who welcome visits to their workshops. They will be glad to work with you to incorporate the ideas of the B-Mitzvah into the design of the tallit.