

WOVEN TALLIT

CH #44

A. WEAVING

SHE MAKES FOR HERSELF; HER CLOTHING IS LINEN AND PURPLE. *PROVERBS 31:22*

SHE MAKES CLOTH AND SELLS IT. *PROVERBS 31:24*

EXTOL HER FOR THE FRUIT OF HER HAND AND LET HER WORKS PRAISE HER IN THE GATES. *PROVERBS 31:31*

The Bible is replete with passages that sing the praises of the spinner of thread and the weaver of cloth. Other passages describe the weaving of fine fabrics for the robes of Aaron and the other priests as well as for the hangings of the Tabernacle. Instructions are given even as to color and kind of thread. Weavers, both men and women, were highly respected and important artisans of the community.

THEY MADE THE CURTAIN OF BLUE, PURPLE AND CRIMSON YARNS, AND THE FINE TWISTED LINEN, WORKING IN TO IT A DESIGN OF CHERUBIM. *EXODUS 36:35*

But the story of textiles goes back much farther than Biblical times; perhaps as much as ten or twelve thousand years earlier. Weaving is a record of our aptitudes and of our struggle to take care of the necessities of clothing, of vessels to carry and hold food, and of shelter. Beautiful examples of ancient weaving are found in many places. In ancient Peru and ancient Egypt, such magnificent fabrics were produced that, even with today's technology, we are unable to reproduce many of them.

Today, as in ancient times, the same steps are taken in the production of textiles. First, the sheep and goats (or other animals) have to be tended and sheared; then the wool cleaned, carded and spun. It is no wonder that clothing, household linens and coverlets were treasured, handed down in families and used as long as the threads hung together. Each yard of cloth represented untold hours of patient labor. The final disposition of a threadbare suit or of bed curtains was to cut them into strips, which were sorted, dyed and woven into rag rugs.

There is, at present, an extraordinary interest in hand weaving. Due to the impersonalization of machine-made textiles, we have experienced a deep need to surround ourselves with individually inspired and executed belongings. Weaving has become an aesthetic experience instead of a domestic chore. Our imaginations can soar as we create things that are decorative as well as useful.

Hopefully, having read thus far, you have become interested in trying your hand at weaving. I assure you, you will find it a most rewarding experience. To begin with, find a weaving class. A call to the local "Y" will usually get you started locating the class.

Don't make the mistake of thinking you will have to buy a large loom. Nothing is further from the facts (though a floor loom is always the eventual goal!). There is:

card weaving	tapestry loom
finger weaving	board loom
rigid heddle weaving	Hungarian loom
back strap weaving	Turkish knot loom
frame weaving	box loom
inkle loom weaving	bag loom
cardboard loom	tubular loom
circle loom	

Fibers used are usually specially prepared for weaving. They come in many weights and plies. One becomes quite compulsive about collecting weaving yarns for the colors. Textures are both numerous and beautiful.

As for me, I have just completed two *tallitot*, *kippot* and *tallit* bags to hold them. I am so very proud of them and look forward to the time when they will be worn by my grandsons when they become *Bar Mitzvah*. And after that? Why their sons will use them, of course!

B. HOW TO MAKE THE TALLIT

The *tallitot* I made using the floor loom were of cream wool with blue stripes of varied widths at each end. There is no hard and fast rule about either the kind of thread or the color or size of the garment. The only necessity for a *kosher tallit* is four corners and properly knotted *tzitzit*. Certain mixing of yarns is questionable: i.e., wool combined with linen. If you wish to be careful, check with your Rabbi or use only one type of thread, or mix with silk. (See also the CH paper **Ruling of Shaatnez.**)

The size of the *tallit* again gives you the opportunity to choose. Traditionally, it measures six feet by three feet, but this is by no means standard. Keep in mind that it should feel like a garment and not a scarf. It may be interesting to note at this point that women as well as men may wear a *tallit*.

In each of the four corners of the *tallit*, I placed a small square of self-fabric for reinforcement, though this too is not mandatory. With an awl, I punched a hole in each corner and then finished it with buttonhole stitches (with the same self-yarn). These holes are about three fingers' width from the edge. In these holes are placed the *tzitzit* which I bought from a Judaica Shop. In a very special and meaningful way, these threads are twisted and knotted. This must be done exactly the right way, so be careful to check this out. I found the Jewish Catalog most helpful. (Check with your Rabbi, or see CH #140).

The neckband or *atarah*, which is optional, may be embroidered in any suitable fashion; there is no special design. The ones I used were purchased at the same shop; they were very beautifully hand-worked with a twisted silver thread.

The *kipot* were made from my original sample (as were the corners) which were made before the *tallitot* were started. Instructions for making a *kippah* may be found on the CH order form.

The bag in which are kept the *tallit*, *kippah* and prayer book was also made from the original sample weaving. The can be made with a zipper closing or with an envelope flap. Appropriate embroidery will enhance the bag immeasurably. Another very interesting way of fashioning the *tallit* bag is to weave it separately from the rest in what is known as double weave. When it is made the desired size (about 14" x 12"), it is removed from the loom and is in the shape of a tube. This needs but a seam at the bottom and a zipper on top to finish. See the CH order form for suggestions of various kinds of *tallit* bags.

Do line the bag with china silk, no matter how it is made.

It is interesting to note that, usually, the only place the craftsman may place his name or mark is on the inside of the *tallit* bag, not on the *tallit* or the *kippah*.

Make these for yourself or for someone you love; it will be a beautiful experience for both of you.

Mildred Weiner
Connecticut Branch

C. BIBLIOGRAPHY

Weaving is for Everyone – Jean Wilson, Van Nostrand & Reinhold.

New Key to Weaving – Mary Black, Bruce.

Embroidery 7 Tapestry Weaving – A.H. Christie, John Hogg. London

The Jewish Catalog – R. Siegel, M. Strassfeld & S. Strassfeld, Jewish Publication Society.