

Why Blue?

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Opening Text: **Numbers 15:37-40**

37 Yahweh said to Moses,

38 "Speak to the Israelites and tell them that throughout their generations they are to make tassels for the corners of their garments, and put a blue cord on the tassel at [each] corner.

39 These will serve as tassels for you to look at, so that you may remember all Yahweh's commands and obey them and not become unfaithful by following your own heart and your own eyes.

40 This way you will remember and obey all My commands and be holy to your Elohim.

I love Yahweh's commandments. I really do. He put that love in me. Not only do I love them... I love to love them. It's enjoyable. It's certainly not a burden. I find delight in obeying the commandments, and I also get excited when I learn how to obey them more perfectly. I'm like David in Psalm 119:97 - "Oh how I love your law, it is my meditation all day long." It's a perfect law from a perfect Creator so I want to honor Him the best that I can.

I will never forget when I first learned about the text that we just opened up today's lesson with. I was sitting in Brother Arnold and Sister Hazel's (my in-laws) living room one evening, I'd only been married for around a year or so to Tisha, and there was man sitting in that living room with all of us, and his name was Orlando Smith. Brother Orlando was an elderly man with a long white beard and long locks of white hair growing off of his temples on the sides of his head. (He believed that Leviticus 19:27 forbid the cutting of the hair on the side of the head at all, as do some other Torah keepers.) Brother Orlando also wore a bonnet on top of his head and he always seemed to have his pants pulled up a little higher than I'm used to.

The most peculiar thing though for me was when I saw these tassel like things hanging off of Brother Orlando. He had four of them tied to certain of his belt loops, and then he had some around his wrists as well as one around his neck. It seems weird to me, because I've obeyed this commandment for so long now, but I remember asking him "Brother, why are you wearing those tassels?" That question seems so strange coming out of my mouth now, but I asked him the same question then that so many people have now asked me over the years.

He took me to the Scriptures, specifically Numbers 15:37-41. I'll talk about it for a few minutes here, and give you some background.

In Numbers 15:32-36 we have an account of a man who was stoned to death for breaking the Sabbath. Some Israelites spotted a man gathering wood on the Sabbath day. I've taught more extensively about this in another sermon, but let me just say that this must

have been a despising of the commandment here. Yahweh would not have had the entire community stone this man to death unless his Sabbath violation was intentional and without care. Well, after this Yahweh spoke to Moses.

Numbers 15:38

38 Speak to the Israelites and tell them that throughout their generations they are to make tassels for the corners of their garments, and put a blue cord on the tassel at [each] corner.

We don't specifically read of FOUR corners anywhere in this text, but the additional text that speaks of the commandment is Deuteronomy 22:12. There we read that the tassels are to be placed on the four corners of the garments of the children of Israel. We read here in Numbers that a blue thread must be placed on the tassel at each corner. So really we've got two commandments to obey here. The first is to make the tassels and the second is while making the tassels, put in the tassels, a blue thread.

If you've been around the Messianic or Hebrew Roots movement for any amount of time, you've probably heard these tassels called "tzitzit." Well, the word "tassels" or "fringes" in Numbers 15 is taken from that very Hebrew word:

H6734 - תִּצִיִּית tsiytsith tsee-tseeth'

feminine of 6731; a floral or wing-like projection, i.e. a forelock of hair, a tassel:—fringe, lock.

This particular Hebrew word is only used 4x in the entire Tanak, 3x here in Numbers 15 and once in Ezekiel 8:3 where we read (KJV), "And he put forth the form of an hand, and took me (Ezekiel) by a lock of mine head; and the spirit lifted me up between the earth and the heaven, and brought me in the visions of Elohim to Jerusalem..." The word "lock" which refers to a lock of hair is the Hebrew word "tzitzit." We see the correlation here, the lock of hair resembles a fringe or a tassel.

Let's keep reading now in Numbers 15.

39 These will serve as tassels for you to look at, so that you may remember all Yahweh's commands and obey them and not become unfaithful by following your own heart and your own eyes.

40 This way you will remember and obey all My commands and be holy to your God.

Yahweh says that these tassels, with the thread of blue in them, will be for the Israelites to look at and remember Yahweh's commandments. So what Yahweh is doing is giving the children of Israel an additional commandment (the tassel commandment) in order to help them remember His commandments that pertain to how their life is to be lived. We know that even Yeshua the Messiah obeyed this commandment because in the Gospels when it is said that the woman touched the "hem" of his garment, the Greek word for "hem" (*kraspedon*) is the same word used in the Septuagint text of Numbers 15:37-41. So

what the woman with the issue of blood actually touched was the "tzitzit" that was upon the corner of Yeshua's garment. The HCSB actually translates this as tassel in Matthew 9:20. The tzitzit represented the commandments which in turn represented healing. As Proverbs 3:1-2, 8 says "My son, don't forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commands; for they will bring you many days, a full life, and well-being."

Now, what I want to consider today is this: why did Yahweh choose the color blue for the tassel? Did he just randomly pick a color? Did He lay all the colors He's created out before Himself, close His eyes, and place his finger down on a table, and it just landed on blue? Was it really a random choice, or is there more to it?

Now, I want you to remember something that I've talked about before. Yahweh doesn't always reveal to us the "why" of His commandments. Sometimes we obey a commandment and we do not understand *why* necessarily. We still obey the commandment, because we know Yahweh is a loving father and he is looking out for our best interest. Even if we don't understand why He's given us a particular law, we still obey.

Oftentimes when we do obey, years down the road, He gives us the understanding. Sometimes though, He does not. When He does not cause us to understand the reason for a commandment, we should still continue to faithfully obey Him because... Father knows best.

I've recently run into some information that is new to me. After studying about this for a week now I've found that other people have already uncovered this understanding. It is actually a very ancient understanding, and I believe I now know *why* Yahweh commanded that a **BLUE** thread be placed in the tassel, and it is important. I'd like to share it with everyone here for you to consider.

The first place I want to go to is Exodus 24. Exodus 24 records for us the Covenant Ceremony between Yahweh and the people of Israel. Remember that Exodus 20 is the giving of the 10 commandments by the mouth of Yahweh, and then Exodus 21-23 contains various additional sub-laws that fall under the categories of the 10 commandments. I'd like to begin in Exodus 24 verse 1 to get some context.

Exodus 24:1-8

1 Then He said to Moses, "Go up to Yahweh, you and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and 70 of Israel's elders, and bow in worship at a distance.

2 Moses alone is to approach Yahweh, but the others are not to approach, and the people are not to go up with him."

3 Moses came and told the people all the commands of Yahweh and all the ordinances. Then all the people responded with a single voice, "We will do everything that Yahweh has commanded."

4 And Moses wrote down all the words of Yahweh. He rose early the next morning and set up an altar and 12 pillars for the 12 tribes of Israel at the base of the mountain.

5 Then he sent out young Israelite men, and they offered burnt offerings and sacrificed bulls as fellowship offerings to Yahweh.

6 Moses took half the blood and set it in basins; the [other] half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar.

7 He then took the covenant scroll and read [it] aloud to the people. They responded, "We will do and obey everything that Yahweh has commanded."

8 Moses took the blood, sprinkled it on the people, and said, "This is the blood of the covenant that Yahweh has made with you concerning all these words."

So we see what's going on here. Yahweh is making a covenant with the people concerning his Torah. The word Torah means the teachings and the instructions of Yahweh. Now, let's keep reading.

Exodus 24:9-10

9 Then Moses went up with Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and 70 of Israel's elders,
10 and they saw the Elohim of Israel. Beneath His feet was something like a pavement made of sapphire stone, as clear as the sky itself.

Moses and those with him are said to have seen the Elohim of Israel (obviously not in His fullness, but in some sense as the word "see" [ra'ah] can mean to "perceive." Some Targums [interpretations] on this text say that they saw the glory of Yahweh).

Now, I want you to focus in on the description of what they saw under His feet. The text says that it was like a pavement of sapphire stone that was as clear as the sky itself. The Septuagint renders Exodus 24:10 as "And they saw the place where the Elohim of Israel stood; and under his feet was as it were a work of sapphire slabs, and as it were the appearance of the firmament of heaven in its purity." So, the Septuagint speaks more to them seeing the *throne* of Elohim rather than actually seeing Yahweh Elohim in raw, Spirit form, which we know is impossible from other Scriptures.

Next I have a picture of a sapphire ring that I pulled off of the internet from a jewelry producer. You will notice that it is a beautiful blue color, similar to a deep blue sky or a beautiful blue ocean.

If we can look now to a couple of texts in the book of Ezekiel, we will see that Yahweh's throne is actually made out of this sapphire stone. This is where it gets very neat.

Ezekiel 1:25-28

25 A voice came from above the expanse over their heads; when they stood still, they lowered their wings.

26 The shape of a throne with the appearance of sapphire stone was above the expanse. There was a form with the appearance of a human on the throne high above.

27 From what seemed to be His waist up, I saw a gleam like amber, with what looked like fire enclosing it all around. From what seemed to be His waist down, I also saw what looked like fire. There was a brilliant light all around Him.

28 The appearance of the brilliant light all around was like that of a rainbow in a cloud on a rainy day. This was the appearance of the form of Yahweh's glory. When I saw [it], I fell facedown and heard a voice speaking.

So here in Ezekiel's vision he sees some type of glimpse of the glory of Yahweh and he sees a throne with the appearance of the sapphire stone, exactly what Moses and Aaron saw back in Exodus 24:10. Keep this in mind, for Moses and Aaron to see this throne of Yahweh made of sapphire, Yahweh had to have brought the stone with Him from the heavens in which he dwells. He brought this particular sapphire from heaven. What we are seeing is that Yahweh's throne is made of beautiful, heavenly sapphire stone.

We see this again in Ezekiel 10:1 where we read, "Then I looked, and there above the expanse over the heads of the cherubim was something like sapphire stone resembling the shape of a throne that appeared above them."

Now, let's go back to Exodus 24 where we read about the pavement of sapphire beneath Yahweh's feet and let's read that verse (10) with verses 11-12.

10 and they saw the Elohim of Israel. Beneath His feet was something like a pavement made of sapphire stone, as clear as the sky itself.
11 God did not harm the Israelite nobles; they saw Him, and they ate and drank.
12 Yahweh said to Moses, "Come up to Me on the mountain and stay there so that I may give you the stone tablets with the law and commands I have written for their instruction."

Notice that right after we read of the sapphire stone beneath Yahweh's feet, Yahweh speaks to Moses concerning the stone tablets upon which the commandments are written. He wants to give these tablets to Moses, and he eventually does at the end of the first 40 day fast of Moses in Exodus 31:18.

I need to point out here that when we read "that I may give you the tablets of stone," (KJV) this is literally from the Hebrew (and I pulled this from JP Green's Interlinear) "And I will give you the tablets of THE stone." The Hebrew word for "stone" is "eben," but the Hebrew word here is "ha eben" meaning THE stone. The point is that THE stone is the stone that they just saw underneath the feet of Yahweh! The HCSB puts this correctly into the English translation here.

We generally have an image in our minds of what these stone tablets looked like. And I think it stems more from seeing Charlton Heston walk down the mountain in the movie "The 10 Commandments." We picture these huge stones made of granite or some old rock on top of the mountain, but what if Yahweh wrote His commandments upon precious sapphire stones, the same stone that His heavenly throne was made out of? What if Yahweh cut the tables of stone from his very throne? I have found that a much more ancient view of the stones was that they were smaller cubes of stone made from the sapphire of the throne of Yahweh.

In studying this I found something very interesting in an Aramaic Targum that dates back to around 1,500 years ago. The word Targum means "interpretation or translation." See, when the Judahites came back to Jerusalem after the Babylonian captivity, many of them had adopted the language of the Aramaic and no longer spoke Hebrew. So what the priests would do is read the Torah in Hebrew and then give a translation or explanation in Aramaic. It would be like me reading a portion of the Torah in Hebrew, and then translating and explaining it to you in English.

Over time these Aramaic Targums came to be written down, and they were sometimes read in the synagogues in Yeshua's day. What they do for us is give us insight into how certain texts in the Tanak (OT) were understood or interpreted by ancient Israelites.

The text I discovered in my studies was a Targum of the Song of Solomon. The author of this Targum interprets the Song as a description of Yahweh's relationship with His metaphorical bride - Israel - and he believes it chronicles for us the journey's of Israel through the wilderness.

Following the text in this Targum we read Song of Solomon 1:11 - "We will make the plaits of gold with studs of silver." The Targum then says:

"Where fore the word came unto Moses: Get thee up to the firmament, and I will give unto thee the two tablets of stone, hewn of sapphire of My glorious throne, bright as pure gold, arranged in lines, written by my finger, upon which are chased the Ten Words, refined more than silver purified seven times seven... and I will give them by thy hand unto the people of the House of Israel." *Wow...*

Here we have an Aramaic text, around 1,500 years old, that states that the 10 commandment stones were hewn from the sapphire of the throne of Yahweh. Amazing if you ask me.

Well, I also found a commentary on another portion of Exodus (34:1) that actually states that the commandments were written upon sapphire tablets. And this commentary dates back over 900 years ago, written by a man known as Rashi. "Rashi" is not the full name of this man, it is only a combination of the three Hebrew letters, Resh, Shin, Yud, which stand for Rabenu Shlomo Yitzchaki - our Rabbi Solomon, the son of Yitzchak. He is believed to be a descendant of King David, and thus a Yehudim or Judahite. He was born in the town of Troyes in France, and later in life was great scholar of the Torah/Tanak writing commentary on many texts of Holy Scripture.

Before we read what Rashi says about Exodus 34:1, let's read the text itself:

Exodus 34:1

Yahweh said to Moses, "Cut two stone tablets like the first ones, and I will write on them the words that were on the first tablets which you broke."

Of course this brings to mind the fact that when Moses came off of the mountain (Exodus 32) after receiving the first set of tablets, he was so angry that the people were worshipping a golden calf that he threw the stones down to the bottom of the mountain, smashing them to pieces. This is why Yahweh gives Moses the command to cut two more stone tablets like the first ones.

Rashi commentates on this text the following: *"He showed him a sapphire mine from within his tent, and he said to him, 'The sapphire chips shall be yours,' and from there Moses became very wealthy."* Evidently, Rashi believed that this second set of tablets were also made from sapphire stone. Not sapphire stone cut from the throne of Yah, but nonetheless still sapphire. If Rashi wrote of this, and he did, it means that in all likelihood this was a very common understanding of his time because he was considered to be one of the most prestigious Rabbi's of the Judahite faith. If these stones were "like the first set" then the first set were made from sapphire stone, and Exodus 24:10-12 comes to light in a beautiful way.

I believe that this explains why Yahweh had the Israelites place a BLUE thread (not green, red, etc.) in their tassels. The blue thread reminded them of the commandments because the commandments were literally written on blue sapphire stone. Keep in mind that the Israelites of that day would have seen the tablets of stone unlike us who have not seen them. They would have seen the sapphire, known the color of the tablets, and every time they looked at the blue thread in their tassels it would have reminded them of the blue color of the tablets on which the commandments were written. Something isn't it.

And there are other thoughts I've had in relation to this from studying. For instance, on a clear day when the sky is bluest, it makes you feel better. There are healing properties in the creation of Yahweh. This may align with the healing in His Torah which was written on blue sapphire stone and remembered by a blue thread.

Another thing. The name "blue laws" could possibly be a vestige of the original 10 commandments. In early America, certain laws that carried severe punishments were called "blue laws." This was especially true of doing things on the Sabbath (to them Sunday) that was prohibited. I'm not saying that the name had to have come from the 10 commandments stone, but it does make sense to me.

Here's something else to consider. Why is it that the sign of law for the police is "blue lights?" Could it be that the blue is a representation of the law in general, stemming from ancient Hebrew culture?

At any rate, I do not believe Yahweh just randomly picked the color blue for the tassels. I believe he purposefully picked it, because the 10 commandments were engraved by Him on the sapphire stone, the same stone His throne was made of.