



The Hem of His Garment

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THE COMMANDMENT

The Biblical commandment requiring the people of YAHWEH to wear tassels on their clothing is found in Deuteronomy 22:12 and earlier in greater detail in Numbers 15:37-41. Together we may know from these passages the following mandates which must be kept by everyone who worships YAHWEH:

1. We must wear tassels on our clothing.
2. There must be a "blue" cord in each.
3. They must be visible, at least to us, as we must look upon them.
4. They serve as reminders of all the commandments and of the NAME and nature of YAHWEH.
5. We are to use them as personal ways to remember the NAME of YAHWEH, to remember to obey His commandments, to remember not to follow the lusts of our hearts, and to remember that we are set apart, consecrated to YAHWEH for this purpose.

THE TRADITION

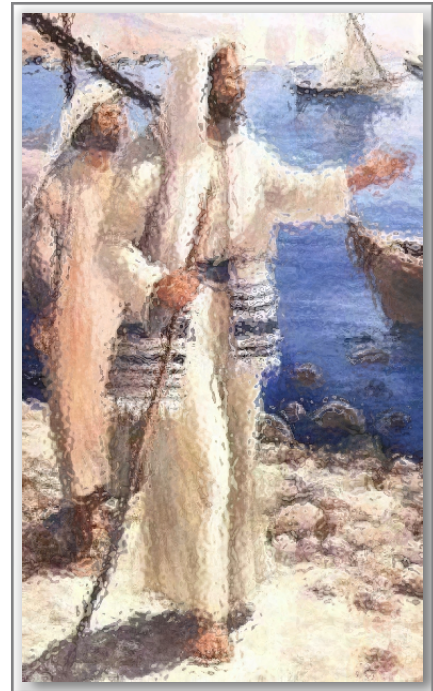
According to Jewish tradition, since the command said to put tassels on the "corners" of our garments, a four-cornered garment is required for wearing the tassels. This four-cornered garment called a tallit-katan, is usually worn under the clothing with the tassels hanging out. Because the purpose however was the tassels and not the "four-corners"; In our modern age of cornerless clothing, adaptation is

therefore afforded to us. The Jews also claim that because the shellfish from which the blue dye was made, the creature called, Tekeleth, could not until quite recently be identified, that tassels should not contain any color. Once again, the purpose of the command is the color and not the source of the dye. We find in our time the ability to adapt to the use of other dyes for similar results. The Tallit or Prayer Shawl was created to serve the purpose of this commandment as well and it represents both the commandments of YAHWEH and HIS Sacred NAME. Jews therefore wrap themselves about the head and shoulders with the Tallit for their entire time of worship: However, if utilized for the people of YAHWEH, it should be wrapped about us more sparingly. For example: when reciting the "Messiah's Prayer", the Sh'ma, or the blessing of the Kiddish (bread and wine).

THE OBLIGATION

Due in large part to the wording of this commandment in the Torah and to the changes in custom and conditions and inventions of the centuries, this command to wear tassels comes with much baggage and sundry and diverse opinions surrounding it. For starters, the actual verbiage of the original order is ambiguous because it is given to "Bene Yisrael" or the "Sons of Israel". In general, this would be a commandment directed exclusively to the adult males of the people, but at times it can also serve as a reference to the general assembly of Israel as a whole. Given the nature of the directive as well, to put tassels on clothing for the express purpose of deterring disobedience, it seems unlikely that this command should exclude females, who also like men are subject to temptations. Traditionally among Jews, it is interpreted as a requirement only for men to observe, but since the wording positively commands the "sons of Israel" to do this, yet does not forbid the "daughters of Israel" from following the same or similar praxis, halachic tradition allows for women to dawn tassels and prayer shawls aswell. Leaving only the question whether it is an order for Men and an opportunity for women, or a commandment for both. Further complicating the conundrum, is the commandment that women are not to wear men's clothing, and men are not to wear women's clothing. This raises the question of whether or not tassels are a form of clothing or an accessory to our attire, like a bracelet might be considered. The rabbinic solution to this possible conflict for those women who want to keep this command, whether it is required of them or simply available to them, is the invention of a feminine form of the tassel and the tallit (prayer shawl). And though we who follow Yahshua and worship YAHWEH are by no means beholden to the mandates of the Jewish rabbis, in all matters which do not violate the express orders of Torah, it is wise to take our cues from the Jews, both because we were not naturally born into Israel but have entered in by adoption and because we wish not to cause offense unnecessarily.

Furthering the ambiguity of this order to wear tassels, is the specific point to put them on the "corners" of our garments. The word used in the commandment in Hebrew is "kanaph" which means "corner, edge, border, extremity, end" and most commonly "wing". And "arba" also accompanies this term in Deuteronomy, meaning "four". Therefore, as previously mentioned this commandment which is required to be observed "throughout your generation" (including the present) since our modern society does not generally incorporate the wearing of robes and tunics like the ancient world, the



question arises – Are we to wear a garment with four corners on it to which we affix our tzitzits? Or do we simply attach the tassels to the “edges” or “borders” of our clothing?

There are many people on both sides of this debate each with valid arguments for their particular practice. To even add to the enigma, some even believe that because the commandment says to wear the tassels on a four-cornered garment but never mentions the duration for which one must do this, some have utilized the Tallit as a means of keeping this commandment without wearing them at all times of day, donning the prayer shawl for morning and evening prayers and when attending the assembly. Not a bad habit to be sure, but in the author’s opinion, not the original intent of the instructions.

So was the bit about “corners” to be eternally enforced, or was this order simply given to a people who already wore garments that had four corners? With respect to those on the other side of this, it seems the implication of the instruction was that in the society that had four-cornered garments, the “Sons of Israel” were to put tassels on each of the four corners. However, it seems incompatible with our behavior toward the rest of the commandments as adapted for modernity. By the linear logic of those who say we must wear four-cornered clothing today to be in complete compliance with this command, we should also all be required to have gates on our property because of the commandment to write the Torah upon our doorposts and gates. If we don’t have gates, we can’t write the commands upon them, and therefore cannot obey this order. Most often, however, this commandment is understood to be conditional rather than universal. In other words, if we have gates and doors on our property, we must write the Torah upon them. What of those nomadic peoples who dwell in tents? They have no doors. How then can they pen the Pentateuch upon them? They cannot. The same is so of the commandment to build a fence or railing around the roof of our houses to prevent someone from falling off. In our modern western world, we have peaked shingled roofs and most often do not walk upon them; should we still fence off the roof anyway to keep this commandment? Of course not. That would be absurd. But we should apply the principle to pools and precipices on our properties for the protection of people from falling. And there are many such orders as these that must be adapted to our time without altering the actual order itself. By implication, the prohibition against moving our neighbor’s boundary stone implies that the borders of the land be marked with stones instead of any other method. Or the Sabbath command to work six days and rest the seventh. Is it then a prohibition to rest any additional day or take a vacation? Or are those days simply set apart for when work can be done? There is a myriad of arguments about these instructions, but the best method, whatever our belief and practice, is to do the best we can in obedience and offer as much grace as possible for those who, like us, are trying to adhere to them, though not as we believe is proper.

THE OPTIONS

Scripture is vague on the details regarding these tassels. Their color is not mentioned other than the required blue cord. The length is not spoken of or their number. Neither is it said as to how they should be worn upon the body other than the corners of the clothes. How they should be tied is likewise not mentioned, as well as why a tassel could or should remind us of a command. Therefore, we are free to use our imagination and intellect to adapt this command so it may best serve our memory and moral application. Traditionally, these tassels in Hebrew are called Tzitzit or tzitziot, but are also in Greek called Kraspeida or Kraspeidon. They also may simply be called Tassels or Fringes. Ordinarily tassels hang from the belt (if one does not wear the four-cornered garment under their clothes) hung from the hip to the knee. There is no set number of tassels to be worn or the manner of tying them but usually four tassels are used and tied in either the “Ashkenazi” or the “Sephardic” form. Sephardic being the author’s preference: three strings of white and one blue are bound in five descending knots (5 is the number of human senses kept under control by the commandments, and the number of fingers and toes on each hand and foot which we actively use to keep the commandments).

Between each knot the blue thread is wrapped according to the alphabetical numbers of the NAME of YAHWEH (10-Y, 5-H, 6-W, 5-H). Thus, the fringe part of the tassel should appear to be composed of 8 strings (2 blue and 6 white ; one of the blue should hang longer than the rest of the strings). 8 is sometimes said to stand for the eight virtues of the Temple - "faith, love, truth, justice, innocence, patience, sincerity, and humility." It also is said to be twice four, four being the number of solidity and doubled becomes universality. 8 would thus imply that the laws of YAHWEH apply equally to all the world and to us wherever we go within it. When taken altogether, 5 knots plus 8 strings add to 13, the number of perpetual striving, for we are ever and always striving in faith to please YAHWEH. The number 13 is the number of the attributes YAHWEH has revealed about HIMSELF. It is the collective value of the letters of the Hebrew word "echad" (1-Aleph, 8-Chet, 4-Dalet) meaning "one". Thus, the tassels remind us of two things in one, two truths in one law - The Sh'ma. Yahshua taught us that the first, greatest, and most important commandment is the Sh'ma, because not only does it tell us that YAHWEH, our Elohim is One, but because all the commands are contained within the order of the Sh'ma. Thus, though there are many commands, our concern should be only one, for if we focus on this one, we will desire and do the rest.



MEANING & METHOD OF WEARING TZITZIOT

Though Scripture does not specify what the tassels should mean to outsiders, it is beyond doubt that they will have some significance in the minds of all who see us wearing them, and there rightly ought to be a level of expectation that everyone has for us when seeing what we are wearing. Therefore, we can affirm the following:

1. Tassels are the emblem of innocence.
2. They are the Badge of an Israelite.
3. They serve as our banner.
4. They show everyone that we are sacred people and that they should expect only good from us.
5. They act as the Flag and Colors of the Kingdom of YAHWEH.

We must be ever mindful when wearing our tassels that someone is always watching and judging. If the tassels are visible to us, then they are so also to others. By wearing them, we are making a bold statement about our lives and a brave proclamation about the quality of our Heavenly FATHER and about His people and His Way. For good or bad, tassels are our identity. Because of the wording of the commandment to put the tassels on the four corners of the clothes we wear (which was spoken to a people who dressed in long woven robes that had corners) many who follow YAHWEH today believe that we should wear the tassels "front and back", "left and right" in a square shape around the waist. Since the shirts and pants of our society have no square corners, it seems unnecessary that our bodies must substitute for the corners of ancient clothing (though this is an acceptable method of wearing tassels). When worn in four directions after this fashion the tassels can be said to allude to the four cardinal points of the compass - north, south, east, and west. They could also denote the four "corners" of the earth, the four winds of the world, signifying once again the universality of the Laws of YAHWEH and our sworn duty to bring them to all living things. The four placement may also allude to the four walls of the New Jerusalem, the four emblems of Israel - Man, Lion, Bull, Eagle - the four Gospels of Yahshua, and the FOUR LETTERS of the Tetragrammaton (The Divine NAME). This

combination reminds us of our nature as the Holy City and the Sacred Nation as well as our precious obligation to carry the Testimony of Messiah and to bear the NAME of the MOST HIGH. Since the nearest thing to a "corner" that can be found on modern clothes is simply the "edge". The other method of wearing tassels is binding them together on one side of the body or the other or two to the left and two to the right. The left side is considered to be the weakest part of man, so wearing tassels to the left represents the strength of the Law and the NAME fortifying our weaknesses. The left side is the hand that steadies and controls. Left is the side representing wisdom and the contemplative life, expressing peace and silence. The left is always striving for more; This is a good thing when considering the purpose of our tassels. When worn on the right side, tassels make much of the symbolism of fidelity, which is embodied by the right. In wearing them this way, we testify to our intention to be faithful to YAHWEH and His commandments. The right side symbolizes the side of honor, the side on which the protector stands. The right embodies order, stability, authority, and structure - all the qualities that are embedded in the Law and the NAME. The right hand wields and works with strength and skill. Right is the side of the day and of the future. It is the side to which the just shall stand in Judgment. Right is the side of success and of knowledge gained through reason and exercised in works. it is the active side, the beneficent side. To wear our tassels in this manner means understanding that the Law and the NAME mean these things to us. If, however, we wear them both on the left and the right, we are acquiring the balance of two sides which is what the Law does. Yet in another respect, we are declaring a duality of ourselves and our chosen way against the world and all it offers. It signifies movement and progress in the commandments as well as the struggle against all else. How we wear them is up to us. That we do wear them and mean it is all that matters.

THE COLORS

As previously stated, the traditional colors of tassels are white and blue. Each color has its own symbolism which is enhanced when combined. The imagery acts as the Colors of the Kingdom of Heaven and as the inner being of all Yahshua's people. By itself, white is absolute, being the totality or void of all colors depending on its end of the spectrum. It represents resurrection as well as birth and death. White is the color of ice and snow, the color of the morning and of the moon. White denotes a rite of passage, a dedication, confirmation, marriage, or condemnation. It signifies surrender, peace, and silence of a kind with potential for sound. It is pure, innocent, and true. The color blue, when it stands alone, embodies infinity and "emptiness-that-is-filled." It is the deepest color and the coldest. Blue is the most otherworldly color, seldom occurring in nature throughout the earth, except by translucency, and accumulation of emptiness, such as crystal or diamond. It is thus the color of the ocean and the sky, the floor of the throne room of YAHWEH and is thus the color of Heaven. Blue means meditation, thought, and spirit. Blue is frosty and austere, lofty, superhuman, and even inhuman, awakening the yearning to surpass nature. Blue is all that is not of this world. Together in the tassels, blue and white remind us of the sky and clouds and thus that we should be always setting our minds, as Yahshua says, "on things above, not on earthly things." These colors remind us of the moon and the seas, each moving each other, thus moving the earth. As they rule over us so the Law rules over them and all things. As we may measure time by the moon so too for all time we may measure life by the Law. They teach us that we are agents of daylight, that we are voids filled only by the commandments, that birth to death we are earning a better resurrection by obedience to those commands, and that we ought to be yearning and longing for the Law and the innocence that comes from prolonged surrender to the blue. They tell of how this is done too, like the Messiah said would be the Way, in spirit (blue), and in truth (white). The coldness, sternness, and absolute nature of the Law would seem to be unfeeling and cruel, yet in its dread silence, there exists the potential of the spoken Word, the Word to be made Flesh and to bring peace. Finally, we find in these colors of the Kingdom, the King Himself, Yahshua the Messiah, embodied by the blue. He came to us once, submitting to

condemnation, born, dying, and resurrecting. He was infinity, lofty, inhuman, and not of this world (blue). Who surrendered all that to await in silence for the time to preach innocence and the true, pure Law of YAHWEH (white). His first appearance is represented for us by the blue thread that is the length of the rest, but the second blue thread is longer since we long for His return, His second appearing; Then He will purify or purge all reality unto infinity.

THE PRACTICE

Whatever method we believe we are to utilize to observe this commandment, it is most important of all that we do it. And that we do so with the utmost of caution and care. As with the commandments of YAHWEH, the wearing of tassels is not easy. Both are bothersome in this broken world. They get in the way of the things we are trying to do in life. They get caught on all manner of things as we go about our day. And we constantly have to keep pondering them so they do not get tangled up with each other or anything else, so they don't get damaged, stained, or dragged in the dirt. Just as the tassels and the tallit are emblematic of the commandments, so also our treatment of our tassels and of the tallit is a reflection of our approach to the commandments. If we purchase the tzitzits or the tallit, it is our responsibility to pronounce the blessing over them once they are in our possession. If we purchase the tassels unwoven and set about tying them ourselves, it is proper for us to recite the blessing as we do so. Our tassels and our tallis are to be stored in a set apart place. They are to be inspected before dawning everyday to ensure they are not stained, torn, worn, or otherwise altered or damaged. Both tzitzits and tallitot are to be washed often and always by hand and air-dried in a set apart place. If and when either tallit or tzitziot become worn-out, damaged, stained, or tarnished beyond repair, it is proper to burn them in a dignified and set apart manner. They are never to be recycled, or repurposed for any other lesser use once unworthy to be worn as holy garments. When both donning and doffing the tzitzit or the tallit, it is expected to recite the appropriate blessing.

Blessing for tying tzitzits: Le'shem mitzvah tzitzit. (for the purpose of the commandment of tzitzit).

Blessing for donning tzitzit: Baruch ata YAHWEH, Eloheinu Melech Ha Olam, asher kidshanu bemitzvotav vetzivanu al mitzvah tzitzit.

(Blessed are You, YAHWEH, Eloheinu, KING of the Universe, WHO, has sanctified us with YOUR commandments and commanded us on the commandment of tzitzit).

Blessing for donning a tallit:

[before donning] Baruch nafshi et YAHWEH, YAHWEH Elohay gadalta me'od hod vehadar lavashta. Oteh or kasalma, noteh shamayim kayeri'a.

(Bless my soul, YAHWEH, YAHWEH Elohay. YOU are very great, splendor and glory YOU wear. YOU wrap YOURSELF in light like a garment. YOU spread Heaven like a robe.

[when wrapping about the shoulders] Baruch ata YAHWEH, Eloheinu Melech Ha Olam, asher kidshanu bemitzvotav vetzivanu lehitatef betzitzit.



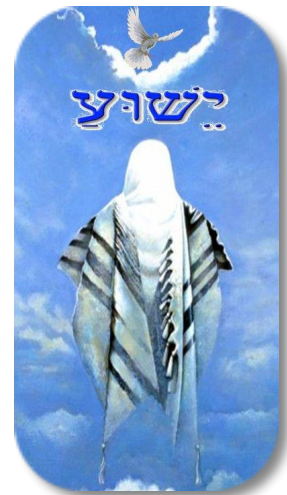
(Blessed are You, YAHWEH, Eloheinu, KING of the Universe, WHO, has sanctified us with YOUR commandments and commanded us to wrap ourselves in tzitzit).

[when covering the head] Ma yakar chasdecha Elohim uvney adam betzel knafeycha yechesayun yirveyun mideshen beytecha, venachal adaneycha tashkem. Ki lmcha mekor Chayim, be'Orcha nir'eh or. M'shoch chasdecha leyod'eycha, vetzidkat'cha le'ishrey lev.

(How dear is your kindness, Elohim. The children of men find protection in the shade of your wings and are satiated from the rich food of your house. The stream of your pleasures you give them to drink. For with you lies the origin of life, and in your light we see light. Spread your kindness to those who know you, and to all those who are honest of heart).

LEADING BY EXAMPLE

By far, the best reasons for wearing these tassels come from the habits of Messiah Himself. Many Bible teachers today would have us believe we should not wear such physical expressions of the Law, because they would have us believe it to be "legalism" and following the "way of the Pharisees," which Yahshua adamantly condemned in His infamous Seven Woes speech, charging the hypocrites in Matthew 23:5 with, "making their phylacteries wide and the tassels on their garments long." However, if we set this passage in its grammatical/historical/cultural setting and context, we will begin to see condemnation from the Messiah, not of the wearing of tassels and phylacteries but on the Pharisees' purpose for putting them on their clothes. In that day, long tassels and large phylacteries were expensive, demonstrating a person's power and prosperity when both are naturally intended by the commandment to denote worship and piety. Moreover, Yahshua's point was that the hypocrites not only were showing off their vanity and money but were wearing tassels and phylacteries so people would see them wearing them and "know" they were "holy" and above it all. Thus, it was Yahshua's intention to lambast these men for "misusing" and "abusing" holy clothing, not to insinuate our need to avoid such clothing/accessories. Besides, any such order from our Saviour would have been hypocritical as it is established that, as an Israelite, Yahshua would have worn these according to the commandment. As the Gospel accounts assure us also that in fact, He did just that. Of the five references to the wearing of tassels in all the writings of the Apostles, four of them are speaking of Yahshua, Himself. The word used in the New Testament to indicate these tassels that Yahshua chastised the Pharisees for wearing is "kraspeidon", literally meaning "tassels". Yet the four other times it is used in the New Testament, it is written as applying to Messiah, not to His murderers. We are all familiar, no doubt, with the story in Matthew 9:20 and Luke 8:44 when Yahshua is making his way through a crowd on his way to raise a girl from the dead when He feels power go out of Him, turns to the crowd and asks, "who touched me?" The Apostle goes on to tell of a woman suffering 12 years with menorrhagia who was healed in that very moment by grabbing the hem of his garment...is that what he said? Not exactly. Most translators say she grabbed the "hem of His garment" or the "edge of His garment". But nearly all the scribes bowdlerize and bastardize what is happening here and downplay its importance and impact on gospel and prophecy. In pursuit of raising a girl from the dead, the King Messiah happens upon a woman in the nightmare scenario of a living death, and He raises her to life again. Torah requires that anyone bleeding be separated from the community in a state of what is called "tamai" horrendously translated as "unclean" and erroneously thought of as a condition of sin. Every month women separate from the community for the duration of menstruation and then rejoin the assembly. Like most instruction in Torah, this is intended for



sanitation as well as sanctification, but also serves as a mini vacation of sorts for women to escape, from husbands, children, and chores. This condition also acted as a bonding time with other women in the same state...but this poor woman found herself in the unique position of being stuck in that state of isolation for 12 years straight. Alive but unable to approach anyone but those also in a state of tamai. If a wife and mother, separated from them by no fault of her own. If unwed, kept from marrying and mothering children. An impossible situation. But she knew the Scriptures well enough to know if Yahshua is the Messiah then He would be able to heal her, not by a word or a command or a touch. Not even with His foreknowledge. For the prophet Malachi foretold of the coming Messiah, "The sun of righteousness will rise with healing in His wings." Wings. Kanaph. The corners, edges, hem, of the garment. Where the tassels were commanded to be hung. She had such radically impressive faith that she simply reached out and grabbed, not the hem or the edge, but the kraspeidon, the tassel hanging off the hem, edge, wing of his tallit. And like the prophet said would be, she found healing there. But she was not the only one to experience healing this way. And in both Mathew 14:36 and Mark 6:56, the Apostles tell us that everywhere the Messiah went, people would come to Him for healing, always trying to touch Him and if they grabbed His "kraspeidon", that was enough to make them well.

More than all this however, is the most overlooked aspect of the resurrection. While Christendom looks for shrouds and rolling stones for validation of the risen Savior, we do not ponder these. The stone rolling away while the enemies of the Messiah were not present only served to prove the truth to the disciples present and solidify in the minds of the unbelieving masses the lie they wanted to believe. And the grave clothes were tossed aside like refuse because they were. But oddly the Messiah, after rising from the dead and tossing aside the grave clothes, did a very curious thing. He stopped to fold a "napkin" of all things. What a weird thing to bother with at all let alone after coming back from the dead. It is indeed extremely peculiar...unless of course we are taking into account the grammatical, historical and cultural context of the situation. In the Greek, we are told that what the scribes call a napkin is referred to as a "soudarion", a handkerchief or sweat cloth. But that's even more odd that the disciples who loved Yahshua so much, who took care to bury Him in a rich tomb and to anoint His corpse with expensive oils etc., would wrap His face in a sweat rag. Stranger still that the Master's first act after returning to life again would be to fold a random rag. And even if He did for some bazaar purpose, why would He fold the face rag while discarding the rest of the rags that bound Him in the tomb? Not a bit of it makes any sense unless we take into account Taharah, Jewish burial ritual. Granted it has evolved much over the centuries, but it was being practiced in the era the Messiah walked this world, died, and rose again. The practice is that of wrapping the man's tallit around his head when burying him! Changes the narrative a bit huh?! Romans could have desecrated the grave. Robbers breaking in and stealing the body. Dozens of possibilities that could have explained a missing body of a dead Jewish rabbi. But who would have bothered to stop and fold the tallit in the proper manner and set it aside by itself? Only Yahshua Himself! And the veneration the Master Himself showed for His prayer shawl should be properly reflected by all His disciples in every age.

Even though the KingMessiah is indeed the prime example, word must still be mentioned of His emissary, Sha'ul, whom the church calls a "tent maker" but who was highly likely a maker of tallitot, "tallit" after all meaning "little tent". And as we read in Acts 19:12, that YAHWEH had so blessed Sha'ul with HIS power to proclaim the truth of Yahshua and to perform miracles of healing and driving out demons, simply by touching them with a "soudarion" that had touched him. Much like Messiah had healing in His "wings", it appears He also allowed His emissary a similar blessing to bestow on others.

From these records, we may note three important factors.

First, our Messiah Yabshua, wore these tassels just as the Law requires all Hebrews.

Second, if we follow Him, we should be doing likewise.

And last, we find in this example yet another meaning which we may relate to our own tassels. Yabshua as prophesied, "took up our infirmities and carried our afflictions," and most of these miracles happened when the sick people reached out and touched the symbols of the Torah that hung about Him. Therefore, these tassels also embody the healing power of faith in Yabshua Messiah, Who is the Living and Enduring Word of YAHWEH, and the Torah made flesh.

