

Talmud Bavli, Arachin 15b

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[There is a natural progression from *lashon hara* to heresy]: This is the sequence [of events] about the sessions of flippant scoundrels: In the beginning, they speak profusely of pointless matters . . . from this they proceed to speak of the flaws of righteous persons . . . because of this, they will be driven by habit to speak of the Prophets and to find fault with their statements . . . from this they proceed to speak about G!d & they deny the fundamental tenet.

Rashi

⁵¹A DEGENERATIVE

TZARA'AT. The word *mameret* is related to *mamir* in, "a piercing thorn." [Ezekiel 28:24]. Its aggadic interpretation is "put a curse on it," that you should not enjoy any benefit from it. [According to the simple interpretation, *mameret* connotes pain. The *tzara'at*, like a thorn, causes pain to the owner of the garment by making his garment unfit for use. According to the aggadic interpretation, *mameret* is related to the word for curse or malediction.]

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This is [the verse's] simple meaning. And its midrashic interpretation is as follows: One might be able to think that he should bring shearings of wool and bundles of flax stalks and burn them with [the afflicted garment]. [One might think that the *bet* prefix means "with" here: "He shall burn the garment, or wrap or the woof, with the wool or with the linen."].

Leviticus 13:47-59

וְהַבְּגָד כִּי־יִהְיֶה בוֹ נֹגַע צִרְעַת בְּבִגְד
צֵמֶר אוֹ בְּבִגְד פִּשְׁתִּים: ⁴⁸ אוֹ בִּשְׁתִּי אוֹ
בְּעֶרֶב לִפְשָׁתִים וְלִצְמֶר אוֹ בְּעוֹר אוֹ
בְּכָל־מְלֹאכֶת עוֹר: ⁴⁹ וְהָיָה הַנֹּגַע יִרְקַק
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Rashi (cntd)

To teach us otherwise, the Torah says, "it shall be burned in fire." It does not require anything else to be burned with it. If so, why does the verse say, "in the wool or in the linen"? To exclude the borders on [the afflicted garment] which are of a different variety of textile [Torat Kohanim, perek 15:1-3: if the afflicted woolen or linen garment had a border of some other variety of textile, the border may be removed before the rest of the garment is burned.]

Reb Ed asked: In the lobby of my *shul*, we have a basket for *tallitot* that may be borrowed by those in need. In the basket, I discovered several Messianic *tallitot*. They look like other *tallitot*, but have inscriptions on patches sewn onto the 4 corners either from the NT or from Prophets that reference or purport to predict the coming of Jesus. The *tzitzit* are black and white threads mixed (black, not *techelet*). I have removed them, but I now don't know what to do with them. I feel odd about tossing them in the garbage, and the patches with the Christian references cannot easily be removed.

Reb Rachel says: Look for the nearest Messianic congregation, and send the *tallitot* to them. Whatever we might think about their theology and their practices, the *tallitot* might as well go to people who will use them. More *tallitot* are purchased each year by evangelical Christians who want to emulate Jesus than by Jews. Of course, there are far more of "them" than there are of "us!" It is interesting to explore our emotional reactions to this information.

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54. THAT WHICH CONTAINS THE AFFLICTION. One might be able to think that they must wash the place of the affliction alone. To teach us otherwise, the verse says, "that which contains the affliction." [Had the Torah simply said, "and they shall wash the affliction," we would have thought that the affliction alone must be washed.] On the basis of this phrase, one might be able to think that the entire garment requires washing. To teach us otherwise, the verse says, "the affliction." [Had the Torah meant that the entire garment be washed, it would have said, "and they shall wash the garment." "And they shall wash that which contains the affliction" implies that less than the entire garment need be washed.] How is this to be fulfilled? He shall wash part of the garment along with [the affliction].

⁵⁶HE SHALL RIP IT.

⁵⁷IT IS AN ERUPTION.

YOU SHALL BURN [IT] IN FIRE. The entire garment.

וַיִּבְרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ
לֹא-פֶשַׁה טֶמֶא הוּא בְּאֵשׁ תִּשְׂרָפוּ
פָּחַתָּהּ הוּא בִקְרַחְתּוֹ אוֹ בַגְּבַחְתּוֹ: ⁵⁶ וְאִם
רָאָה הַכֹּהֵן וְהִנֵּה כָהָה הַנֶּגַע אַחֲרֵי הַכֶּבֶס
אֹתוֹ וְקָרַע אֹתוֹ מִן-הַבִּגְד אוֹ מִן-הָעוֹר
אוֹ מִן-הַשִּׁטִּי אוֹ מִן-הָעֵרֶב: ⁵⁷ וְאִם-
תִּרְאָה עוֹד בַּבֶּגֶד אוֹ-בַשִּׁטִּי אוֹ-בָעֵרֶב אוֹ
בְּכֹל-כְּלִי-עוֹר פָּרַחַת הוּא בְּאֵשׁ תִּשְׂרָפוּ
אֶת אֲשֶׁר-בּוֹ הַנֶּגַע: ⁵⁸ וְהַבֶּגֶד אוֹ-הַשִּׁטִּי
אוֹ-הָעֵרֶב אוֹ-כֹל-כְּלִי הָעוֹר אֲשֶׁר תִּכְבֵּס
וְסָר מֵהֶם הַנֶּגַע וְכִבֵּס שְׁנִית וְטָהַר:
⁵⁹ זֹאת תוֹרַת נֹגַע-צֹרְעַת בִּגְד הַצֹּמֵר | אוֹ
הַפְּשֻׁטִּים אוֹ הַשִּׁטִּי אוֹ הָעֵרֶב אוֹ כֹּל-
כְּלִי-עוֹר לְטָהָרוֹ אוֹ לְטַמְּאוֹ: פ

cause physical harm to the people inside, but from my perspective, their goal was no less than to cause spiritual harm. The rabbi is the parallel to the bomb zappers. Therefore, without any regret, these *talitot* should be destroyed, preferably burned and/or made totally unusable. Burying them would imply that we recognize some *keddusha* to them. They have no *Keddusha* element to them. Giving them to a Messianic congregation, given the very real possibility that someone from that congregation was the culprit who put the messianic *tallitot* into the *shul* in the first place, would almost be tantamount to handing a terrorist an Kalashnikov rifle simply because our bullets are not compatible with the rifle.

Reb Pam says: I agree with R. Fred's overall sentiment. I do not think that the *tallitot* should be used in any way that involves *kedushah*. However, I completely disagree about burning the *tallitot*. I don't think that we should ever burn anything that belongs to another religious tradition, even something that is sent our way as a kind of contraband. In this case, the message could be misinterpreted as being anti-Christian. I suggest that the *tallitot* be buried because a *tallit* that is *pasul* is buried and these *tallitot* are *pasul* because of their intention - not the intention of one who chooses to be a Jew for Jesus, but the intention of placing such *tallitot* in a synagogue. I think Fred's analogy about the bomb is very apt.

Ramban

⁵¹**A MALIGNANT ERUPTION.** Rashi understands the word translated “malignant” to mean instead “prickly,” and Onkelos has also translated it this way. But the truth is that the word is related to the root that means “to curse.” Which is to say that the eruption is a divine curse on the cloth or the house. The rabbinic interpretation that one is forbidden to use or profit from such a garment in any way arises from the apparent redundancy of the same expression in v. 52. The same rule applies to houses, where it is stated explicitly: “The house shall be torn down” (14:45).

The Palestinian Talmud explains that in some opinions even burning the affected stones of such a house to turn them into lime does not suffice, for this does not remove their “affected” status: “You are to consider them malignant and not use them.” R. Abbahu says in the name of R. Johanan, “The ash of anything that is burned is permissible except for the ash remaining when an idol is burned.”

R. Hiyya b. Yose responds, “What about the ashes of an affected house? That has nothing to do with idolatry, but it is nonetheless forbidden.” R. Johanan replies, “The reason that differs from the regular rule is that the house being torn down shows that it is treated like something connected with idolatry, of which the text says, ‘you must *tear down* their altars, smash their pillars, and cut down their sacred posts [Exod. 34:13].’”

Or Hachayim

⁵⁰**AND THE PRIEST WILL OBSERVE AND QUARANTINE IT, ETC.**

We need to understand why the Torah changed its legal approach when speaking of the afflicted garment as compared to the legal approach used in connection with afflictions of the skin. The reason may be that an affliction of the skin may exist without quarantine, *i.e.* the priest will declare the afflicted person impure without a waiting period upon his first inspection (13:3). In the case of a parallel affliction appearing on the clothing of the afflicted person, the priest will first decree quarantine of seven days even though the symptoms are quite clear that we are dealing with *tza'arat* a form of “leprosy.” The Torah therefore wished to distinguish between a person himself and his clothing. On the other hand, once the garment has been declared as definitely “leprous,” it has to be utterly destroyed; unlike a person who may be cured of his “leprosy” if certain symptoms disappear, this is not true of his garments. If the Torah had legislated that the garments have to be declared as irrevocably impure at the first inspection by the priest, the impression would have been

Leviticus 13:47-59 (cntd)

affected article washed, and he shall isolate it for another seven days. ⁵⁵And if, after the affected article has been washed, the priest sees that the affection has not changed color and that it has not spread, it is unclean. It shall be consumed in fire; it is a fret, whether on its inner side or on its outer side. ⁵⁶But if the priest sees that the affected part, after it has been washed, is faded, he shall tear it out from the cloth or skin, whether in the warp or in the woof; ⁵⁷and if it occurs again in the cloth—whether in warp or in woof—or in any article of skin, it is a wild growth; the affected article shall be consumed in fire. ⁵⁸If, however, the affection disappears from the cloth—warp or woof—or from any article of skin that has been washed, it shall be washed again, and it shall be clean. ⁵⁹This is the procedure for eruptive affections of cloth, woolen or linen, in warp or in woof, or of any article of skin, for pronouncing it clean or unclean.

Reb Avivah says: There's no reason to assume evil intent. The most likely reason there are Messianic *tallitot* in a synagogue's basket is that someone came into possession of them, had no way to understand that they were different from Jewish *tallitot*, and made what they thought was a helpful donation to the local synagogue.

I'd say giving them to a Messianic congregation would make the most sense, but if it is uncomfortable for the finder to acknowledge and put oneself on equal footing with such a community, other options would be to give them to Goodwill, or just throw them away. It's not like anyone would miss them.

Objects only have power if you give it to them. These are not bombs. They are strips of fabric with images and strings on them. They may have meaning to someone else, but to us, they are not holy objects, and they are not profaned holy objects. Rather, they are silly: imitation Jewish prayer objects. Think of them like a Halloween (or Purim) costume.

Or Hachayim (cntd)

created that the wearer of those clothes cannot rehabilitate himself by means of repentance.

We know from other parts of our commentaries that G'd does not desire the loss or destruction of man's money. *Torat Kohanim* explained Leviticus 14:36: "and the priest shall command that they empty the house before the priest will go in to see the plague" that the declaration that the afflicted house is to be demolished is delayed until as much as possible of the owner's possessions have been "saved" by having first been removed from it. G'd therefore is on record that He is mindful of the possessions of even the lowest of the sinners. This then is the reason that the garments of the afflicted person are not declared as irrevocably impure during the first inspection by the priest. Seeing that man is given the opportunity to repent even after he has been ostracized and declared impure, no harm is done if he is declared impure, suffering from "leprosy" even at the first inspection by the priest.

Mishna Negaim 11:1

All garments [of wool or linen] are *susceptive to uncleanness* from leprosy symptoms, save those of the gentiles. If one takes garments from (the) gentiles [any old leprosy symptoms in them] must be inspected [also, as though they had developed] just then.

Mishna Negaim 11:3

Dyed skins and garments are *insusceptive to uncleanness* from leprosy symptoms. Houses, whether coloured or not coloured, are *susceptive to uncleanness* from leprosy symptoms, [according to] the view of R. Meir. R. Judah says, (The) hides are like houses [in this respect]. R. Simon says, [Garments] naturally coloured are *susceptive to uncleanness*, but if artificially coloured they are *insusceptive to uncleanness*.

Mishna Negaim 11:4

If in a garment its warp were coloured and its weft white, or if its weft were coloured and its warp white, the ruling depends on which colour shows up more. Garments are *susceptive to uncleanness* if [coloured] intensely green or intensely red. If [the leprosy symptom of a bean's space] were green and [the material having been isolated for seven days] the red spread out [next to] the green, or [if] it were green and [the colour] spread out [next to] the red, it is *susceptive to uncleanness*. If [by the end of seven days' isolation the colour] had changed and spread, or had changed but did not spread, it is deemed as if no change had occurred. R. Judah says, [It is accounted a new leprosy sign because of the change] and must be inspected afresh.

Reb Greg says: These items are like a cancer and must be excised from our congregations. Using or thinking of them as Halloween costumes does give them power. We don't need them & we have absolutely no obligation whatsoever to support any messianic congregation or to give them away where they might be used by someone thinking they have a genuinely Jewish item. It's not like a baseball *kippah* - these are mockeries of our holy garments.

Reb Kevin says: As a *sofer*, my work world is filled with "Sacred Trash" and so am fascinated by the question of what gets disposed of and how. I inherited from my teacher numerous bags of tiny scraps of parchment, *giddin*, and damaged *tefillin* straps *tallitot*, and other material containing *shemot*. Some small amount of the parchment I boil down into glue for repairing torah, but most of it, including what I have accumulated in a dozen years of scribing, is in the *genizah* of my attic, waiting to be buried when my synagogue opens a grave for this purpose. Beyond *genizah*, respectful burial and sacred repurposing, there is a special service Erev Tish b'Av for burning the little scraps of *klaf* that have *Amalek* crossed out, but only those scraps. All of it was made for a sacred purpose, and so must be disposed of respectfully. On our history so much of our people's sacred physical presence has been destroyed by others, and we are very careful when faced with the task of disposing of some of it ourselves.

As for the messianic *tallitot*, I think I would bury them as *pasul* if I knew they had once been kosher *tallitot*, and only later "converted" and so made *pasul*. But if the presumption is that they never were kosher, that is, never intended by Jews to be made as kosher *tallitot*, then I really would consider them trash. I would *like* to imagine the reason the "*tsitsiot*" were made black and white was actually out of twisted sense of respect for us, lest an knowledgeable Jew take up a non kosher *tallit*. But in any case placing them in a Jewish synagogue is at best clueless (I think of this as just extremely annoying) and at worst, spiritual sabotage.

Reb Jeff says: Messianic Jews are not Jews and some do prosthelytize but I don't think most do at this point and most are ignorant of what is proper Jewish views and worship. So, be nice but not overtly helpful.

Sforno

47 AND WHEN AN AFFLICTION OF LEPROSY IS IN A GARMENT.

There is no doubt that this [phenomenon] cannot possibly be a natural one, for these strange colors [appearances] cannot occur in a garment except through (1) the work (of the dyer) using various colors, by some error which happened with the color dyes intentionally or unintentionally; or (2) the dyer's performance; or (3) the [chemical] reaction in the garment being colored. Now we have a tradition that these laws of *afflictions of garments*, do not apply except to white, uncolored garments. In truth, the Torah is attesting that at times this wonder [phenomenon] will occur in garments and in houses so as to awaken [open] the ear of the owners to their transgressions, as [our Sages] tell us regarding *the Sabbatical year*, as they say, "Come and see the far-reaching results of violating the laws of the seventh year. A man who trades in seventh-year produce must eventually sell his movables . . . if he disregards this, he eventually sells his estates" (*Kiddushin* 20a). All this is because of G!d's compassion for His people. . .

Commentary to Sforno

(1) Since the discolorations mentioned in verse 49, namely green and red, can only appear in a garment for one of the three reasons listed by *Sforno*, and since the laws regarding the affliction of garments only apply to a white neutral garment, then it is impossible for this discoloration to happen naturally.

(2) it therefore follows that this phenomenon is heaven sent for the purpose of alerting the owner of the garment or house to take stock and repent for his sins, as the *Rambam* states (*Mishneh Torah*), "These changes stated (in the Torah) regarding garments and houses . . . are not according to the natural order of the world, but they are a sign and wonder for Israel, cautioning them to abstain from the evil tongue."

(3) The fact that these laws do not apply to gentiles serves as a springboard for the *Sforno* to stress that man is indeed the crown of creation chosen to imitate G!d through his power of reason and freedom of choice. However, the bulk of mankind did not realize this awesome responsibility except for the people of Israel. Even among them only a relatively small number attained the level of excellence which G!d had ordained for them, and even they must be reminded, when they falter and deviate, to mend their ways and return to G!d. One of the methods used by G!d to awaken them from their periodic slumber is that of *n'gaim*, *afflictions*. It therefore is

Rabbi Dan says: Let's not assume motivations when nobody knows who put the *tallitot* there. We do not want others to paint all of us with the same brush, so we should be careful not to do the same. "Jews for Jesus" has a stated mission to convert Jews - they have made their motives clear. Many other groups are Christians who do some Jewish things. A local group in Texas calls themselves "Hebraic Christians." While I am certainly not comfortable with everything about them, we share a geography. They sometimes worship at my synagogue and make no attempts to be disrespectful or bring Christianity into the synagogue. They collaborate with other Christian churches on an annual observance to remember the Holocaust. If their personal worship includes some Jewish customs, and they are doing it with respect out of a personal desire to connect with G!D, without trying to influence Jewish people to "switch teams," that is their business. I do not want another religious group telling me how to worship, and so I try to avoid telling others how to make their own connections with G!D.

Reb Zev says: I cannot consider religious items of other faiths to be "trash," any more than I would want those of other faiths to consider my religious/ritual items as "trash." I'd like to share two tales, one from the Hassidic tradition and one from my personal history.

Rebbe Levi Yitzhak of Berdichev taught that there was an individual in his town who despised the Hassidic way and who one day took several small stones to throw at the rebbe when he passed by. When he actually saw Rebbe Levi Yitzhak, however, he was so overcome by the rebbe's holiness that he broke down in tears, confessed his intent, and threw the stones to the ground. Rebbe Levi Yitzhak gently picked up the stones and handed them back to his former antagonist, saying, "You gathered these stones for a holy purpose; always treat them with the sanctity they deserve."

I studied at a very conservative institution. On the last day of class, one of the professors went around the room to pray on behalf of each student. For each of the other students, her prayer centered on issues which the student had raised during the semester. When she came to me, she prayed that G*d would lead me to see the Truth. I had four feelings:

1. I knew this school was conservative when I went in; I have no right to complain when it is.
2. She meant it out of love; it was the greatest gift she could imagine G*d giving me.
3. I trusted G*d to make an appropriate translation.
4. We don't get upset with zebras for eating grass nor with lions for eating zebras; that's what they do.

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Talmud Bavli, Arachin 15b

R. Yochanan said in the name of R. Yose ben Zimra: Whoever speaks *lashon hara* is regarded as though he has denied the fundamental tenet of the existence of G!d. As it says: *Those who have said, "Because of our tongues, we shall prevail, our lips are with us, who is master over us?"* [Psalms 12:5]. And R. Yochanan said in the name of R. Yose ben Zimra: Whoever speaks *lashon hara* is visited with *tzaraat* afflictions as it says [in Psalm 101:5]. *He who slanders his neighbor in secret him will I cut down (atzmit).* . . . Reish Lakish said: What is the meaning of that which is written [in Lev. 14:2]: *This shall be the law of the metzora?* It means: This shall be the law of the *motzi shem ra* (defamer).

Rambam, Mishneh Torah

[*There is a natural progression from lashon hara to heresy*]: This is the sequence [of events] about the sessions of flippant scoundrels: In the beginning, they speak profusely of pointless matters . . . from this they proceed to speak of the flaws of righteous persons . . . because of this, they will be driven by habit to speak of the Prophets and to find fault with their statements . . . from this they proceed to speak about G!d & they deny the fundamental tenet.

Rashi

⁵¹A DEGENERATIVE

TZARA'AT. The word *mameret* is related to *mamir* in, "a piercing thorn." [Ezekiel 28:24]. Its aggadic interpretation is "put a curse on it," that you should not enjoy any benefit from it. [According to the simple interpretation, *mameret* connotes pain. The *tzara'at*, like a thorn, causes pain to the owner of the garment by making his garment unfit for use. According to the aggadic interpretation, *mameret* is related to the word for curse or malediction.]

⁵²OF WOOL OR OF LINEN.

This is [the verse's] simple meaning. And its midrashic interpretation is as follows: One might be able to think that he should bring shearings of wool and bundles of flax stalks and burn them with [the afflicted garment]. [One might think that the *bet* prefix means "with" here: "He shall burn the garment, or wrap or the woof, with the wool or with the linen."].

Leviticus 13:47-59

וְהַבְּגָד כִּי־יִהְיֶה בוֹ נֹגַע צִרְעָת בְּבָגֶד
צֹמֶר אוֹ בְּבָגֶד פִּשְׁתִּים: ⁴⁸אוֹ בִּשְׂתֵי אוֹ
בְּעָרֵב לִפְשָׁתִים וּלְצֹמֶר אוֹ בְּעוֹר אוֹ
בְּכָל־מְלֹאכֶת עוֹר: ⁴⁹וְהָיָה הַנֹּגַע יִרְקַק
אוֹ אֲדָמָוּם בְּבָגֶד אוֹ בְּעוֹר אוֹ־בִשְׂתֵי
אוֹ־בְעָרֵב אוֹ בְּכָל־כְּלִי־עוֹר נֹגַע צִרְעָת
הוּא וְהָרָאָה אֶת־הַכֹּהֵן: ⁵⁰וְרָאָה הַכֹּהֵן
אֶת־הַנֹּגַע וְהִסְגִּיר אֶת־הַנֹּגַע שִׁבְעַת
יָמִים: ⁵¹וְרָאָה אֶת־הַנֹּגַע בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי
כִּי־פָשָׁה הַנֹּגַע בְּבָגֶד אוֹ־בִשְׂתֵי אוֹ־בְעָרֵב
אוֹ בְּעוֹר לְכָל אֲשֶׁר־יַעֲשֶׂה הָעוֹר
לְמַלְאכָה צִרְעָת מִמָּאֶרֶת הַנֹּגַע טָמֵא
הוּא: ⁵²וְשָׂרַף אֶת־הַבָּגֶד אוֹ אֶת־הַשְּׂתִי
אוֹ אֶת־הָעָרֵב בְּצֹמֶר אוֹ בִּפְשָׁתִים אוֹ
אֶת־כָּל־כְּלִי הָעוֹר אֲשֶׁר־יִהְיֶה בוֹ הַנֹּגַע
כִּי־צִרְעָת מִמָּאֶרֶת הוּא בְּאֵשׁ תִּשְׂרָף:
⁵³וְאִם יִרְאָה הַכֹּהֵן וְהָנָה לֹא־פָשָׁה הַנֹּגַע
בְּבָגֶד אוֹ בִּשְׂתֵי אוֹ בְּעָרֵב אוֹ בְּכָל־כְּלִי־
עוֹר: ⁵⁴וְצִוָּה הַכֹּהֵן וְכִבְּסוּ אֶת אֲשֶׁר־בוֹ
הַנֹּגַע וְהִסְגִּירוּ שִׁבְעַת־יָמִים שְׁנִית:
⁵⁵וְרָאָה הַכֹּהֵן אַחֲרָיִם הִכָּבֵס אֶת־הַנֹּגַע

Rashi (cntd)

To teach us otherwise, the Torah says, "it shall be burned in fire." It does not require anything else to be burned with it. If so, why does the verse say, "in the wool or in the linen"? To exclude the borders on [the afflicted garment] which are of a different variety of textile [Torat Kohanim, perek 15:1-3: if the afflicted woolen or linen garment had a border of some other variety of textile, the border may be removed before the rest of the garment is burned.]

Reb Ed asked: In the lobby of my *shul*, we have a basket for *tallitot* that may be borrowed by those in need. In the basket, I discovered several Messianic *tallitot*. They look like other *tallitot*, but have inscriptions on patches sewn onto the 4 corners either from the NT or from Prophets that reference or purport to predict the coming of Jesus. The *tzitzit* are black and white threads mixed (black, not *techelet*). I have removed them, but I now don't know what to do with them. I feel odd about tossing them in the garbage, and the patches with the Christian references cannot easily be removed.

Reb Rachel says: Look for the nearest Messianic congregation, and send the *tallitot* to them. Whatever we might think about their theology and their practices, the *tallitot* might as well go to people who will use them. More *tallitot* are purchased each year by evangelical Christians who want to emulate Jesus than by Jews. Of course, there are far more of "them" than there are of "us!" It is interesting to explore our emotional reactions to this information.

Reb Fred says: What if a bomb was found in a *shul*. The bomb zappers are called. The bomb is safely removed and destroyed. The motivation of the person who placed the bomb is to harm the people inside, i.e., Jews.

The motivation of the people who placed these Messianic *Tallitot* in the *shul* might not have been to

Rashi

⁵⁴**THAT WHICH CONTAINS THE AFFLICTION.** One might be able to think that they must wash the place of the affliction alone. To teach us otherwise, the verse says, "that which contains the affliction." [Had the Torah simply said, "and they shall wash the affliction," we would have thought that the affliction alone must be washed.] On the basis of this phrase, one might be able to think that the entire garment requires washing. To teach us otherwise, the verse says, "the affliction." [Had the Torah meant that the entire garment be washed, it would have said, "and they shall wash the garment." "And they shall wash that which contains the affliction" implies that less than the entire garment need be washed.] How is this to be fulfilled? He shall wash part of the garment along with [the affliction].

⁵⁵**IT IS A PENETRATING AFFLICTION.** The word *p'techet* means an indentation "in one of the ditches." That is to say, it is something low, an affliction whose appearance is sunken.

⁵⁶**HE SHALL RIP IT.** He shall rip the place of the affliction from the garment *and* burn it.

⁵⁷**IT IS AN ERUPTION.** This means something that grows recurringly.
YOU SHALL BURN [IT] IN FIRE. The entire garment.

Leviticus 13:47-59 (cntd)

וְהָיָה אִם יִשָּׁן וְהִנֵּה אֵת עֵינָיו וְהִנֵּה
לֹא-פֶשֶׁת טָמֵא הוּא בְּאֵשׁ תִּשְׂרֹפֶנּוּ
פִּתְחָתָהּ הוּא בְּקִרְחָתוֹ אוֹ בְּגִבְחָתוֹ: ⁵⁶ וְאִם
רָאָה הַכֹּהֵן וְהִנֵּה בִּהְיוֹת הַנֶּגַע אַחֲרֵי הַכֶּבֶס
אֹתוֹ וְקָרַע אֹתוֹ מִן-הַבִּגְד אוֹ מִן-הָעוֹר
אוֹ מִן-הַשִּׁטִּי אוֹ מִן-הָעֵרֶב: ⁵⁷ וְאִם-
תִּרְאֶה עוֹד בְּבִגְד אוֹ-בְשִׁטִּי אוֹ-בְעֵרֶב אוֹ
בְּכָל-כְּלִי-עוֹר פִּרְחָתָהּ הוּא בְּאֵשׁ תִּשְׂרֹפֶנּוּ
אֶת אֲשֶׁר-בּוֹ הַנֶּגַע: ⁵⁸ וְהַבִּגְד אוֹ-הַשִּׁטִּי
אוֹ-הָעֵרֶב אוֹ-כָל-כְּלִי הָעוֹר אֲשֶׁר תִּכְבֵּס
סָר מֵהֶם הַנֶּגַע וְכִבֵּס שֵׁנִית וְטָהַר:
⁵⁹ זֹאת תּוֹרַת נֶגַע-צִרְעָתָה בְּגֵד הַצֹּמֵר אוֹ
הַפְּשִׁטִּים אוֹ הַשִּׁטִּי אוֹ הָעֵרֶב אוֹ כָל-
כְּלִי-עוֹר לְטָהָרוֹ אוֹ לְטַמְּאוֹ: פ

⁴⁷When an eruptive affection occurs in a cloth of wool or linen fabric, ⁴⁸in the warp or in the woof of the linen or the wool, or in a skin or in anything made of skin; ⁴⁹if the affection in the cloth or the skin, in the warp or the woof, or in any article of skin, is streaky green or red, it is an eruptive affection. It shall be shown to the priest; ⁵⁰and the priest, after examining the affection, shall isolate the affected article for seven days. ⁵¹On the seventh day he shall examine the affection: if the affection has spread in the cloth—whether in the warp or the woof, or in the skin, for whatever purpose the skin may be used—the affection is a malignant eruption; it is unclean. ⁵²The cloth—whether warp or woof in wool or linen, or any article of skin—in which the affection is found, shall be burned, for it is a malignant eruption; it shall be consumed in fire. ⁵³But if the priest sees that the affection in the cloth—whether in warp or in woof, or in any article of skin—has not spread, ⁵⁴the priest shall order the

Reb Fred (cntd)

cause physical harm to the people inside, but from my perspective, their goal was no less than to cause spiritual harm. The rabbi is the parallel to the bomb zappers. Therefore, without any regret, these *talitot* should be destroyed, preferably burned and/or made totally unusable. Burying them would imply that we recognize some *keddusha* to them. They have no *Keddusha* element to them. Giving them to a Messianic congregation, given the very real possibility that someone from that congregation was the culprit who put the messianic *tallitot* into the *shul* in the first place, would almost be tantamount to handing a terrorist an Kalashnikov rifle simply because our bullets are not compatible with the rifle.

Reb Judy wrote: Use them to make shrouds for those who can't afford them.

Reb Pam says: I agree with R. Fred's overall sentiment. I do not think that the *tallitot* should be used in any way that involves *kedushah*. However, I completely disagree about burning the *tallitot*. I don't think that we should ever burn anything that belongs to another religious tradition, even something that is sent our way as a kind of contraband. In this case, the message could be misinterpreted as being anti-Christian. I suggest that the *tallitot* be buried because a *tallit* that is *pasul* is buried and these *tallitot* are *pasul* because of their intention - not the intention of one who chooses to be a Jew for Jesus, but the intention of placing such *tallitot* in a synagogue. I think Fred's analogy about the bomb is very apt.

Ramban

⁵¹**A MALIGNANT ERUPTION.** Rashi understands the word translated “malignant” to mean instead “prickly,” and Onkelos has also translated it this way. But the truth is that the word is related to the root that means “to curse.” Which is to say that the eruption is a divine curse on the cloth or the house. The rabbinic interpretation that one is forbidden to use or profit from such a garment in any way arises from the apparent redundancy of the same expression in v. 52. The same rule applies to houses, where it is stated explicitly: “The house shall be torn down” (14:45).

The Palestinian Talmud explains that in some opinions even burning the affected stones of such a house to turn them into lime does not suffice, for this does not remove their “affected” status: “You are to consider them malignant and not use them.” R. Abbahu says in the name of R. Johanan, “The ash of anything that is burned is permissible except for the ash remaining when an idol is burned.”

R. Hiyya b. Yose responds, “What about the ashes of an affected house? That has nothing to do with idolatry, but it is nonetheless forbidden.” R. Johanan replies, “The reason that differs from the regular rule is that the house being torn down shows that it is treated like something connected with idolatry, of which the text says, ‘you must *tear down* their altars, smash their pillars, and cut down their sacred posts [Exod. 34:13].”

Or Hachayim

⁵⁰**AND THE PRIEST WILL OBSERVE AND QUARANTINE IT, ETC.** We need to understand why the Torah changed its legal approach when speaking of the afflicted garment as compared to the legal approach used in connection with afflictions of the skin. The reason may be that an affliction of the skin may exist without quarantine, *i.e.* the priest will declare the afflicted person impure without a waiting period upon his first inspection (13:3). In the case of a parallel affliction appearing on the clothing of the afflicted person, the priest will first decree quarantine of seven days even though the symptoms are quite clear that we are dealing with *tza'arat* a form of “leprosy.” The Torah therefore wished to distinguish between a person himself and his clothing. On the other hand, once the garment has been declared as definitely “leprous,” it has to be utterly destroyed; unlike a person who may be cured of his “leprosy” if certain symptoms disappear, this is not true of his garments. If the Torah had legislated that the garments have to be declared as irrevocably impure at the first inspection by the priest, the impression would have been

Leviticus 13:47-59 (cntd)
affected article washed, and he shall isolate it for another seven days. ⁵⁵**And if, after the affected article has been washed, the priest sees that the affection has not changed color and that it has not spread, it is unclean. It shall be consumed in fire; it is a fret, whether on its inner side or on its outer side.** ⁵⁶**But if the priest sees that the affected part, after it has been washed, is faded, he shall tear it out from the cloth or skin, whether in the warp or in the woof;** ⁵⁷**and if it occurs again in the cloth—whether in warp or in woof—or in any article of skin, it is a wild growth; the affected article shall be consumed in fire.** ⁵⁸**If, however, the affection disappears from the cloth—warp or woof—or from any article of skin that has been washed, it shall be washed again, and it shall be clean.** ⁵⁹**This is the procedure for eruptive affections of cloth, woolen or linen, in warp or in woof, or of any article of skin, for pronouncing it clean or unclean.**

Reb Avivah says: There's no reason to assume evil intent. The most likely reason there are Messianic *tallitot* in a synagogue's basket is that someone came into possession of them, had no way to understand that they were different from Jewish *tallitot*, and made what they thought was a helpful donation to the local synagogue.

I'd say giving them to a Messianic congregation would make the most sense, but if it is uncomfortable for the finder to acknowledge and put oneself on equal footing with such a community, other options would be to give them to Goodwill, or just throw them away. It's not like anyone would miss them.

Objects only have power if you give it to them. These are not bombs. They are strips of fabric with images and strings on them. They may have meaning to someone else, but to us, they are not holy objects, and they are not profaned holy objects. Rather, they are silly: imitation Jewish prayer objects. Think of them like a Halloween (or Purim) costume.

Or Hachayim (cntd)

created that the wearer of those clothes cannot rehabilitate himself by means of repentance.

We know from other parts of our commentaries that G!d does not desire the loss or destruction of man's money. *Torat Kohanim* explained Leviticus 14:36: "and the priest shall command that they empty the house before the priest will go in to see the plague" that the declaration that the afflicted house is to be demolished is delayed until as much as possible of the owner's possessions have been "saved" by having first been removed from it. G!d therefore is on record that He is mindful of the possessions of even the lowest of the sinners. This then is the reason that the garments of the afflicted person are not declared as irrevocably impure during the first inspection by the priest. Seeing that man is given the opportunity to repent even after he has been ostracized and declared impure, no harm is done if he is declared impure, suffering from "leprosy" even at the first inspection by the priest.

Mishna Negaim 11:1

All garments [of wool or linen] are *susceptive to uncleanness* from leprosy symptoms, save those of the gentiles. If one takes garments from (the) gentiles [any old leprosy symptoms in them] must be inspected [also, as though they had developed] just then.

Mishna Negaim 11:3

Dyed skins and garments are *insusceptive to uncleanness* from leprosy symptoms. Houses, whether coloured or not coloured, are *susceptive to uncleanness* from leprosy symptoms, [according to] the view of R. Meir. R. Judah says, (The) hides are like houses [in this respect]. R. Simon says, [Garments] naturally coloured are *susceptive to uncleanness*, but if artificially coloured they are *insusceptive to uncleanness*.

Mishna Negaim 11:4

If in a garment its warp were coloured and its weft white, or if its weft were coloured and its warp white, the ruling depends on which colour shows up more. Garments are *susceptive to uncleanness* if [coloured] intensely green or intensely red. If [the leprosy symptom of a bean's space] were green and [the material having been isolated for seven days] the red spread out [next to] the green, or [if] it were green and [the colour] spread out [next to] the red, it is *susceptive to uncleanness*. If [by the end of seven days' isolation the colour] had changed and spread, or had changed but did not spread, it is deemed as if no change had occurred. R. Judah says, [It is accounted a new leprosy sign because of the change] and must be inspected afresh.

Reb Greg says: These items are like a cancer and must be excised from our congregations. Using or thinking of them as Halloween costumes does give them power. We don't need them & we have absolutely no obligation whatsoever to support any messianic congregation or to give them away where they might be used by someone thinking they have a genuinely Jewish item. It's not like a baseball *kippah* - these are mockeries of our holy garments.

Reb Kevin says: As a *sofer*, my work world is filled with "Sacred Trash" and so am fascinated by the question of what gets disposed of and how. I inherited from my teacher numerous bags of tiny scraps of parchment, *giddin*, and damaged *tefillin* straps *tallitot*, and other material containing *shemot*. Some small amount of the parchment I boil down into glue for repairing torah, but most of it, including what I have accumulated in a dozen years of scribing, is in the *genizah* of my attic, waiting to be buried when my synagogue opens a grave for this purpose. Beyond *genizah*, respectful burial and sacred repurposing, there is a special service Erev Tish b'Av for burning the little scraps of *klaf* that have *Amalek* crossed out, but only those scraps. All of it was made for a sacred purpose, and so must be disposed of respectfully. On our history so much of our people's sacred physical presence has been destroyed by others, and we are very careful when faced with the task of disposing of some of it ourselves.

As for the messianic *tallitot*, I think I would bury them as *pasul* if I knew they had once been kosher *tallitot*, and only later "converted" and so made *pasul*. But if the presumption is that they never were kosher, that is, never intended by Jews to be made as kosher *tallitot*, then I really would consider them trash. I would *like* to imagine the reason the "*tsitsiot*" were made black and white was actually out of twisted sense of respect for us, lest an knowledgeable Jew take up a non kosher *tallit*. But in any case placing them in a Jewish synagogue is at best clueless (I think of this as just extremely annoying) and at worst, spiritual sabotage.

Reb Jeff says: Messianic Jews are not Jews and some do prosthetize but I don't think most do at this point and most are ignorant of what is proper Jewish views and worship. So, be nice but not overtly helpful.

Sforno

⁴⁷AND WHEN AN AFFLICTION OF LEPROSY IS IN A GARMENT.

There is no doubt that this [phenomenon] cannot possibly be a natural one, for these strange colors [appearances] cannot occur in a garment except through (1) the work (of the dyer) using various colors, by some error which happened with the color dyes intentionally or unintentionally; or (2) the dyer's performance; or (3) the [chemical] reaction in the garment being colored. Now we have a tradition that these laws of *afflictions of garments*, do not apply except to white, uncolored garments. In truth, the Torah is attesting that at times this wonder [phenomenon] will occur in garments and in houses so as to awaken [open] the ear of the owners to their transgressions, as [our Sages] tell us regarding *the Sabbatical year*, as they say, "Come and see the far-reaching results of violating the laws of the seventh year. A man who trades in seventh-year produce must eventually sell his movables . . . if he disregards this, he eventually sells his estates" (*Kiddushin* 20a). All this is because of G!d's compassion for His people. . .

Commentary to Sforno

(1) Since the discolorations mentioned in verse 49, namely green and red, can only appear in a garment for one of the three reasons listed by *Sforno*, and since the laws regarding the affliction of garments only apply to a white neutral garment, then it is impossible for this discoloration to happen naturally.

(2) it therefore follows that this phenomenon is heaven sent for the purpose of alerting the owner of the garment or house to take stock and repent for his sins, as the *Rambam* states (*Mishneh Torah*), "These changes stated (in the Torah) regarding garments and houses . . . are not according to the natural order of the world, but they are a sign and wonder for Israel, cautioning them to abstain from the evil tongue."

(3) The fact that these laws do not apply to gentiles serves as a springboard for the *Sforno* to stress that man is indeed the crown of creation chosen to imitate G!d through his power of reason and freedom of choice. However, the bulk of mankind did not realize this awesome responsibility except for the people of Israel. Even among them only a relatively small number attained the level of excellence which G!d had ordained for them, and even they must be reminded, when they falter and deviate, to mend their ways and return to G!d. One of the methods used by G!d to awaken them from their periodic slumber is that of *n'gaim*, *afflictions*. It therefore is

Rabbi Dan says: Let's not assume motivations when nobody knows who put the *tallitot* there. We do not want others to paint all of us with the same brush, so we should be careful not to do the same. "Jews for Jesus" has a stated mission to convert Jews - they have made their motives clear. Many other groups are Christians who do some Jewish things. A local group in Texas calls themselves "Hebraic Christians." While I am certainly not comfortable with everything about them, we share a geography. They sometimes worship at my synagogue and make no attempts to be disrespectful or bring Christianity into the synagogue. They collaborate with other Christian churches on an annual observance to remember the Holocaust. If their personal worship includes some Jewish customs, and they are doing it with respect out of a personal desire to connect with G!D, without trying to influence Jewish people to "switch teams," that is their business. I do not want another religious group telling me how to worship, and so I try to avoid telling others how to make their own connections with G!D.

Reb Zev says: I cannot consider religious items of other faiths to be "trash," any more than I would want those of other faiths to consider my religious/ritual items as "trash." I'd like to share two tales, one from the Hassidic tradition and one from my personal history.

Rebbe Levi Yitzhak of Berdichev taught that there was an individual in his town who despised the Hassidic way and who one day took several small stones to throw at the rebbe when he passed by. When he actually saw Rebbe Levi Yitzhak, however, he was so overcome by the rebbe's holiness that he broke down in tears, confessed his intent, and threw the stones to the ground. Rebbe Levi Yitzhak gently picked up the stones and handed them back to his former antagonist, saying, "You gathered these stones for a holy purpose; always treat them with the sanctity they deserve."

I studied at a very conservative institution. On the last day of class, one of the professors went around the room to pray on behalf of each student. For each of the other students, her prayer centered on issues which the student had raised during the semester. When she came to me, she prayed that G*d would lead me to see the Truth. I had four feelings:

1. I knew this school was conservative when I went in; I have no right to complain when it is.
2. She meant it out of love; it was the greatest gift she could imagine G*d giving me.
3. I trusted G*d to make an appropriate translation.
4. We don't get upset with zebras for eating grass nor with lions for eating zebras; that's what they do.

Sforno (cntd)

understandable that these laws would not apply to gentiles, for *n'gaim* are a miraculous lesson reserved only for those who understand their ultimate purpose and act accordingly.

(4) Based upon the above, *Sforno* explains that the visiting of these afflictions upon Israel is motivated by G!d's compassion for them and His desire that they repent and accept their historic mission to be a holy people. The special providence enjoyed by Israel is manifested by His ongoing attention and concern which, ironically, also carries with it these special reminders. It is precisely because Israel reached a high level of holiness that their sins create such vulnerability. Once Israel descended from that exalted plateau, they no longer were worthy to be singled out for such direct, wondrous Divine reminders as *n'gaim*. That is why we do not witness these phenomena today, nor have we heard of them for many generations.

Reb Zev (cntd)

Leaving Christian *tallitot* at a synagogue may have been an incident of disrespect for Judaism. It may have been done out of ignorance; these are Jewish-looking items, so someone thought a synagogue would be an appropriate place to put them. It may have been done by Messianics who, feeling that these were sacred items, simply wanted to leave them (perhaps because their church had disbanded?) someplace appropriate and knew no better place. Whatever the reason, these are items of sanctity for someone, even if not for us.

We cannot always control the events that transpire in our lives, but, as Victor Frankl z"l teaches us, we can always control our responses to those events.

Reb Greg responded to Reb Zev: I would make a distinction here between the *kedushah* of the *Berdichever* Rebbe and the actions of most messianics I have run across -- whose only purpose is to attempt to convince Jews to accept Jesus as their personal savior. I understand that others have had other experiences with them, but that is how they have behaved whenever they came to *shul* here ... it may start sweetly, but eventually, their true colors come to light.

For those who cannot bear the thought of trashing so much fabric, I would also offer the suggestion to untie the fake *tsitsiyot* and remove all the Christian symbols & then attempt to find a place that recycles fabric. But I cannot ascribe any measure of holiness to these items. It is not the same as if a legitimate Christian object somehow found its way into my *shul* -- that I would return, quickly and with the greatest respect.

Reb Dale says: Our teacher Rav Kook did not believe in the 'unholy'; only the holy and the not-yet holy. If it is not sanctified, our work is to bring it to sanctification. *Tazria* is a process, a conception and perception about things that require individuals and families to take time to renew their connections to community.