

# How Do Women Define the Sacred?



By Rabbi Susan Schnur with Anna Schnur-Fishman

Several issues ago, *Lilith* put out a call asking women who wore *tallesim*\*—traditionally men’s prayer shawls—to tell us about them, and the response was overwhelming. Sifting through scores of photos and stories, we began to realize that the contemporary woman’s tallit extends the legacy of two historical threads. First, the bold *tallesim* we wear today—whimsical, hemp-virtuous, showy, girly or deeply personal—announce the end of the era of self-conscious awkwardness and politicization that challenged the pioneer tallit-wearers of the ’70s and ’80s. Second, the *tallesim* arise out of thousands of years of domestic female rites that flourished entirely independent of men’s.

The appearance of our technicolor dreamcoats in synagogues is electrifying. Though women have become increasingly enfranchised over the past several decades in many areas of Jewish life, our gains in the world of liturgy and worship are nominal, and prayer remains a legacy almost entirely composed and transmitted by and for men. Handmade women’s tallitot offer the beginnings of a serious challenge to that. They are not, it turns out, just aesthetic tweaks on men’s unchanging-through-the-millennia wool or rayon prayer shawls, but rather communiqués from a distinctly gendered spiritual front. Females in their hand-made tallitot are Trojan horses in the pews: the beginnings of what will be, over time, a recasting of the patriarchal *davennnen* that has been Jews’ inheritance.

These *tallesim* also reveal how gendered one’s experience of the sacred actually is. Century after century, men have largely been completely happy to don the identical sacerdotal rectangles as one another. Women’s tallitot, however, almost immediately morphed into individualized and exuberantly self-expressive garments, providing Jews with a wonderful window into how women experience the sacred. Opening

the synagogue doors to females also opened the doors onto female sensibilities, and so the tallit, as one woman told us, reflects “everything that was left out; everything that women find holy that doesn’t yet have a place in conventional Jewish worship.”

**Jewish women have historically been excluded**, until late, from formal synagogue worship, but the received cant that “women stayed at home while men went to shul to pray” is patently false. It exposes a narrow and tendentious framing—and a deep misunderstanding—of prayer and the spiritual. Women’s homes, indeed, are and have always been “shuls,” and we—our mothers, grandmothers, great-grandmothers, our friends’ mothers—have reigned supreme there as autonomous “priests,” freed from clerical supervision.

Unfortunately, Western tradition (through thinkers like Plato, Durkheim, Eliade, Weber and others) has made normative the rigid binary notion that “spirit” is sacred and “matter” irredeemably profane. (In the story of the Golden Calf, for example, the wayward, unenlightened Hebrews

\* *Tallit* is the accepted pronunciation of the Hebrew for prayer shawl; *tallesim* (Yiddish) and *tallitot* (Hebrew) are the plural forms. We have used them interchangeably here.



need a material crutch to access the divine, while the pious Moses experiences God directly without the intercession of “matter.”) In this dichotomous formulation, females, along with illiterates, children, the elderly and the infirm, are associated with “things”—which are intrinsically devalued. Our spiritual attachment to Grandma’s table linens that we use on Shabbat, to our grown child’s ancient tattered “blanky,” to our bodies as mediators of religious experience—classically speaking, these all warrant a giant *feh!* As Colleen McDannell, a religion scholar, writes, “While awe...and a sense of the foreign mark the sacred, the profane is commonplace, frequently boring, and familiar. The space of the church or temple is sacred; the home and workplace are profane. The clergy are sacred; women and children are profane.”

This polarization disfigures everyone’s understanding of how religion and a sense of the sacred “works in the real world,” as McDannell puts it. Women’s perception of the spiritual is inclusive, embracing William Blake’s well-known pronouncement that “Everything that lives is holy.” A religion of the senses—seeing, hearing, and touching God—is as valid

**Tallit by Lucy Rose Fischer.** “On my *atara* [tallit neck-piece], joyful women are dancing in the waves of the sea, their arms held high and wide. The text is from my favorite morning prayer: “If our mouths were filled with song as the sea, and our eyes shone like the sun....” The tallit corners are an homage to Jewish women’s domestic ties.

For the *tzitzit* [the knotted fringes], I went to a shop in Mea She’arim and there were two kinds, one cheaper and one more expensive. I asked the saleswoman what the difference was and she answered that the more expensive ones had been touched only by men. ‘I’ll take the cheaper one,’ I said.”

as a religion of the intellect. There are many doors to the sacred, both shared and unique; women celebrate the heterogeneity of religious experience. Indeed, as opposed to the classic hierarchical sensibility that prescribes “top down” social expression and change, and that posits “illiterate, undifferentiated masses,” women have always championed “bottom up”



social expression and change, relying on the authenticity of subjective experience.

Kay Turner, a scholar of folklore, recognizes that “one need go no further for the holy than home.” And historically, the home is where women have been free to practice their own brand of faith. Here, in our domestic lives, we acknowledge the “holiness of the ordinary,” as feminist theologian Christine Downing calls it. Our *ner tamid* [eternal light] is the “shrine” on our mantle piece consisting of Jewish artifacts and family photographs; our beautifully curated Sabbath and holiday dining tables are “altars” set with infinite liturgical care; our mothers’ and grandmothers’ holy “Bible” was *The*

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*Settlement Cookbook*—ours, perhaps, is Joan Nathan’s *Jewish Holiday Kitchen*, as well as recipes on dog-eared index cards that became, at some point, sacred replacements for a receding past. Certainly, then, we “*davened*” at home, practicing what scholars call “affective faith”—engaging our emotions and our senses in ways that are not text-centered. The particular smells that emanate from our kitchens on holy days, for instance—chulent or fassoulia, roast chicken or meat sambusak, apple cake, ma’amoul or sufganiyot—what could be more central to sacred experience, what could better define religion of the heart?

**What, then, is holy to women**, and what do our “prayers” encompass? Women describing their tallitot to us answered these questions in ways that revealed themselves to be universal.

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**Tallit by Beth Shepherd Peters.** “I transferred family photographs, dating back to my great-great-great-grandmother, onto silk. Wrapped in my tallit, I glance to my left. Cradled in my arm is my grandmother at 99. It is as though she is sitting right next to me, as she had when we attended services together.”

**Tallit by Rachel Kanter.** “This tallit, from my series *Sewing Midrash*, makes a political statement on reproductive choice while searching for a just, Jewish response. When I pray and am wrapped in my tallit, I am surrounded by the warmth, safety and peace it creates. In a private way I can meditate on these ideas and bring attention to my prayers. In a public way, it communicates my thoughts about Judaism and feminism.”



# Handwork and Healing Are Sacred

My mother made a beautiful lace tallit a few months before my bat mitzvah, but she did not make it for me. Back then, I would have been the only girl in my day school class to wear a tallit, and my adolescent self craved the acceptance conferred by conformity. So instead, my mother used the occasion of my bat mitzvah as an opportunity to make a tallit of her own. Later, when I became the *gabbai* of the egalitarian minyan at college, I told my mother that I had changed my mind about wearing a tallit. She generously mailed me the one she had made six years earlier, and began stitching a new one for herself.

A few years later, I fell in love with a man who made me a beautiful tallit bag for my twenty-sixth birthday. He bought linen and lace at a fabric store, sewed the bag on his mother's sewing machine, and embroidered my name, Ilana, along with a delicate green and brown tree. It was one of the most meaningful gifts that anyone had ever given me, and I cherished it.

Months later, we got married, and we went to Israel to study. I continued to wear my tallit with pride until one day my Talmud teacher called me into his office for a private conference. "I feel bad about telling you this," he said, "but your tallit is not kosher. It doesn't technically have four corners." He pointed out the relevant halakha in Rambam's *Hilkhot Tzitzit*, and I realized that, sure enough, the lacy scalloped edges that ornamented

my tallit did not fulfill the requirements for *arba kanfot* [four corners]. My husband offered to buy some extra white cotton material, and he sewed on four proper corners. I was worried that my mother would be offended that my teacher had in some sense "disapproved" of her handiwork, and for several months I refrained from telling her.

Before I had a chance to tie on new tzitzit, however, our marriage unraveled quite tragically. Suddenly I found myself with no husband and, *l'havdil*, no kosher tallit. Distraught and deeply hurting, I returned to my parents' home in New York for several months and stopped wearing a tallit altogether. It was bound up in memories that were just too painful—laced with sadness and with untied knots.

A few months later, I was preparing for a High Holiday pulpit when I realized that I would need to wear a tallit when davening before the congregation. I wasn't ready to buy a new tallit—I still felt like I was in mourning for my marriage. Late one night, while I was sobbing on the couch, my mother sat down beside me holding the tallit bag with its delicately embroidered tree. The fallen leaves had kept their green, and the tallit was neatly folded inside. My mother unzipped the bag and together, in silence, we tied on new tzitzit.

Someday I will be ready for a new tallit, but this one seems right for the time being. Sometimes I need to talk to God, and I wear it on my shoulders. Other times, I just need to cry. I lift my tallit over my head, root my feet firmly, and hide beneath its sheltering canopy.

—Ilana Kurshan

"Ordinary objects are religious to me," wrote Leslie Dolin of Portland, Oregon, who used her deceased father's neckties to create delicate wavy stripes on her elegant white raw-silk tallit, "and so are relationships, and memory, and beauty." (Women have always been the sacerdotal keepers of memory: a yellowed songster of Hebrew melodies that we take out on Chanukah, a wooden bowl in which our great-grandmother chopped liver, a cracked china platter on which our partner's mother arranged her fish.)

"For me, the sacred has to be embodied," Ruth Meyers, from San Diego, said. "Wrapped in my tallit, I experience a kind of quiet centeredness, and even rapture. I connect with the natural world, with the miracle of my being here, with the eternal, with a recovered understanding of the beauty of my own aging flesh, and with gratitude."

"My tallit has tzitzit tied by four friends," Joan Vick, of New Hampshire, wrote. "When I bring them together before saying the *Sh'ma*, it feels like gathering loved ones from all over. To me, that's comforting and sacred."

"When I made my first tallit in 1975, I embroidered on the atara, "*Brukha Shekhina sh'astani isha*—Blessed are you,

## Thinking Inside the Bag

Found inside the *tallis zekel* [tallit bag] of women: Tums ("someone might need one"), Tampax ("I'm menopausal, but someone might need one"), pacifiers ("I don't have a baby, but someone might need one"), Band-Aids, a poem, an old letter, recipes, a Splenda packet, a brooch ("I love this, but I never wear it"), socks ("air conditioning"), lipstick, photographs, hair gel, a list of allergies, a living will, a rock ("I forget why I have this"), a finger puppet, a receipt, a note from the weaver who made the tallit, a ketubah, origami cranes ("my son made them 20 years ago"), Kleenex, toothpicks, a camera, a water bottle, rubber bands, tongue depressors, wrapped hard candies ("The kids get hungry." Your kids? "I don't have kids"), a candle, a diary, an inhaler ("I don't know why I have this"), sheet music, orthotics, a stuffed pig, eyeglasses, a neck pillow, a bra, water purifying tablets ("I carry these"), one packet each of ketchup and mayonnaise, herbal tea bags and a miniature stapler.

Found inside a man's *tallis zekel*: A tallis.

## Memory Is Sacred

In the shtetl of Orleh, near Bialystock, over one hundred years ago, my paternal grandmother, Rivka Lyman Simiatitsky, crocheted a *tallis koton* [a small tallit that is worn under the shirt] for my grandfather, Yankev. These *arba kanfos*, as they're called, are generally plain cotton rectangles with an opening for the head, but the one that my grandmother made was exquisite—expertly crocheted white fillet with birds, flowers, my grandfather's initials in Cyrillic, and the sweetest little scalloped edge in soft baby-blue. I received it from my Aunt Bella when I married in 1969 and it stayed in its box—except for



once in 1978 when I let my seven-year-old son use it as part of his Purim costume. What was I thinking? That it was a shame for such a labor of love—of museum quality—

to be sitting in a box, but what was one to do with it?

Meanwhile, I wore a tallit myself, but never had a tallit zekel [bag] for it. My husband Frank Talmage died in 1988, and I began to use his, but the zipper broke. My son Daniel died in 1991, and I began to use his, but again the zipper broke. One evening I walked over to the textile artist Sarah Jacobs' apartment, carrying, in a big plastic sack, the tallit bags that had belonged to

all the important men in my life: my grandfather, my father, my husband, and my son. Each bag was ordinary, entirely typical of its era. "Can you turn these into a new tallit bag for me?" I asked Sarah, "and could you somehow incorporate this exquisite tallis koton?"

She was moved by all the tragedy in my life, and also by my being such a life-affirming person. I wanted these emblems of my past to be with me when I prayed; I wanted them to be turned into something beautiful. Sarah brought out a vibrant piece of Indian silk with golden threads (that was re-spun by hand from lint and floor-sweepings from the fabric mills), and while I was still sitting there, took all my tallit bags and began slicing them into strips and combining them with other sensuous fabrics – a wine-colored velvet, a fuchsia silk shantung—using a technique based on Seminole piece-work. The outside of the bag, Sarah explained, would speak to my past, but the inside would speak to my indomitable spirit. She made a wild, radiant lining with flanges which could be glimpsed on the outside, too.

The crowning touch was the tallis koton, and Sarah decided that my new tallit bag – after so many years, I finally was going to have my own!—would actually "wear" it. To add a feminine element, Sarah attached the tallis koton to the bag with tiny multicolored ribbons, making sure not to damage this museum-worthy piece of handiwork. In shul that Rosh HaShanah, the prayers became peripheral for me as I touched and reflected on this tangible homage to my family history. With me now when I pray is my grandmother Rivka, my grandfather Jake, my father Max, and my darling Frank and beloved Daniel. Sometimes words, indeed, are not up to a holy task. That's why God created artists. —**Marcia Talmage Schneider**

Shekhina, for making me a woman," said Geela Rayzel Raphael, of Philadelphia, "and whenever I wear this tallit, it continues to feel empowering and healing." [Traditionally, a man says a blessing every morning thanking God for "not making me a woman."]

"When Rabbi Heschel marched with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.," says Rachel Breen, of Minneapolis, "he said he felt as though his legs were praying. When I make art, I feel as though my hands are praying."

"Hannah in the Bible models personal prayer through having a spontaneous tête-à-tête with God," commented Sue-Ellen Perl from Fort Lauderdale. "That feels so female. With my tallit over my head, made with fabrics and symbols that are especially meaningful to me, I have a prayer experience that's both meditative and intimate."

"When I wrap myself in my tallit," writes Beth Sirull, of Oakland, California, whose prayer shawl is made out of her wedding dress, "I am enveloped in the central relationship

of my life, that which I share with my husband."

"The tallit defines my body as a natural vessel of spirituality," says Danielle Marks from Boston. "It helps me experience the sacred within the body and the body within the sacred." The idea of experiencing the spiritual not by transcending one's body, but by existing fully in it, is female. We see the "earthy" as compatible with, even essential to, faith.

"With my fiftieth birthday coming up," wrote Mindy Fastow of Virginia, "I wanted to make a statement that from now on I was going to accept who I was. I considered this 'wisdom.' It dawned on me that I could make a tallit that reflected this acceptance of myself. It should say 'me', I thought, the way a pair of old jeans does. So I made my tallit out of jeans. Someone in the congregation told me it was sacrilegious, and I thought, 'That's right'. The tallit represents an exuberance between God and me."

"It took me three years to complete the studies that would allow me to become an adult bat mitzvah," said Joan Richman,

of New York. “It also took that long to find the perfect tallit. In the end, I made it myself, and wrote my Hebrew name on the atara. As part of the bat mitzvah ceremony, my husband placed it on my shoulders. For me, it is a powerful statement of my learning and my commitment.

**“It dawned on me one day that I could make a tallit that reflected an acceptance of myself. It should say ‘me’, I thought, the way a pair of old jeans does.”**

Other recurring themes (many of which appear in sidebars here) include narrative, cultural transmission, the past, motherhood and daughterhood, and the following:

Clothing is many women’s “first language,” connecting us to everything from shopping to the ancient female craft of weaving. For some, it evokes Jewish-American immigrant history—the “*shmatte* trade”—as well as our activist foremothers who were the first to unionize textile sweatshops. The sensuousness of cloth, its textures and colors, also

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**Tallit by Rachel Kanter.** “This tallit is an attempt to merge two parts of a woman’s life—the traditional aspects of motherhood with modern-day spirituality—to create a more fulfilling prayer experience. It also points out the demands made on a young mother during prayer. Can you have small children and participate in services? Can a different type of tallit make it any easier?”

**Tallit by Sarah Jacobs.** “This tallit, for a bat mitzvah girl, depicts the two most powerful images from her Torah portion: the Red Sea parting (in green on the tallit’s lining) and the pillars of cloud and fire (in blue with the biblical verse in gold). The corners, appliqued and embroidered, show the pillars intertwined.”



## Our Senses are Sacred

For me, the tallit—tactile, real, embodying—represents healing in a way that neither prayer nor therapy really could. As an act of mourning—I’d recently been divorced, had survived my third bout with breast cancer, and then lost my house in a fire—I found myself turning to a weaver. I decided I needed a tallit, and together we conceived symbols that expressed both being comforted and re-enlisting in life: a phoenix rising from ashes, a golden Jerusalem, and five cedar trees representing my parents’, grandfather’s and

great-grandparents’ resting places on the Mount of Olives. When the tallit was ready to leave the loom, a cantor accompanied me to the studio and the three of us ritualized the transformation of a textile object into something that would envelop me physically when I prayed. I could never have known how inspiring it was going to feel to envelop myself in these large and sweeping folds. When I remarried, my tallit became our huppah. When I wear it in prayer, it is as if it holds the memory of, and makes sacred, all these disparate pieces of my life. —Rena Olshansky



**Tallit by Leslie Dolin.** “I made my tallit out of my father’s neckties. Designing it was difficult. I didn’t want people to say “ties” when they saw it; I wanted it to be private. I combined thin bias strips of various ties with navy and sky-blue silk appliquéd like waves onto white raw silk. Judaism had always been important to my father; wearing my tallit is a comfort and a joy.”

speaks to women. Thus the choosing or making of a tallit can be an accessible and natural way for women to interact with traditional Judaism.

Women are moved by the physicality of a tallit’s embrace, as well as its talismanic power to protect, as was clear by their manifold descriptions. Women felt: swathed in God’s love, wrapped in a huge hug, embraced in warm and comforting folds. Their tallesim caressed, cloaked, enfolded, hugged, cradled, cushioned, loved, sheltered, swaddled, embosomed, fondled, nestled, shielded, sheltered, protected, comforted, enveloped, and enshrouded them.

Many women who wear handmade tallitot value that their prayer shawls define a private space, discrete and powerful—words used by informants include: tent, membrane, chador, womb, and even, interestingly, “a room of one’s own.”

In some Afro-Cuban religions, “sacred seamstresses” have status equal to priests’. There is an understanding that non-verbal elements of spirituality transcend words, that their sacred garments can *produce* religious experience. An exceptional seamstress is said to be “speaking without a voice.”

**It is a canard to think of women** as entering temples and synagogues as religious novitiates, as the gender that has been excluded for over two thousand years from authentic “worship.” Instead it’s that men were in one shul and women in another. And our ever-evolving tallitot reflect our bringing into the public agora, for the first time in history, our religious experience, our definition of what we find holy, our “domestic faith,”

## Motherhood Is Sacred

We had been given the date of our daughter Shira’s bat mitzvah more than two years prior to the actual event, yet in every conversation, details seemed inevitably to take over: flowers, table settings, invitations. How could I reclaim the more solemn and sacred components of the event? How could I sustain a sense of the day’s true meaning? For me, Shira’s tallis became the answer, each tiny stitch pulling me closer to the substance of what was important.

From the beginning we knew that this bat mitzvah was not about a “theme”—the theme had been dictated by history. My mother’s first three children, and my father’s only child, perished during the Holocaust. Shira’s voice chanting from the Torah was the voice of countless Jewish children, and the wearing of the tallit, and in particular its ritual fringes, spoke directly to the injunction of memory. “You will see the tzitzit,” the prayer book says, “and remember all of God’s commandments.” In our family, the memory and lessons of the Holocaust inform our essence, and the mandate for remembrance is essential.

I wanted to embroider Jewish symbols on Shira’s

tallis, but I didn’t have the religious knowledge to choose them. I studied the Bible, poured through Jewish literature, and my learning inspired and changed me, evolving into a profound sense of spirituality. The symbols I chose—the Eternal Flame, the Tree of Life, a crown, water, a tiny pomegranate, a hamsa in the shape of a dove, and a menorah—had meanings that not only embraced tradition, but wove in the personal and religious circumstances of our family.

For endless hours I held the tallis in my hands, much as I had held Shira when she was a baby. The sacred rhythm of my handiwork stirred a depth of feeling. Perhaps the most holy moment came as I began to tie the tzitzit, an Orthodox friend nourishing my soul as he guided my hands and prayers throughout the process. With each knot, I repeated the phrase, “for the blessing of tzitzit,” therein tying all of the blessings and hopes I had for my daughter. I had worked on my project secretly, and I surprised Shira with the tallis on the morning of her bat mitzvah, tenderly wrapping it around her shoulders in a moment of mother-daughter solitude. I knew the tallis was a gift of love and meaning for Shira, but I couldn’t have guessed how deeply it became a gift to myself. —Anna Kolodner

## Ancestors Are Sacred

The story of my daughter Josie's tallis goes back to a day in June in 1939 in the Jewish ghetto of Tarnow, Poland. My mother, Cesia, then age 14, and my grandmother Malka (for whom I am named) had just left the leather factory where they worked as slave laborers, sewing shoes for the Germans. Their family had endured fear, overcrowding, violence, disease and hunger. They had also lost everything they owned. On this day, mother and daughter had been snatched up by the Nazis in the street and prodded into a forced march towards the dreaded boxcars that were headed to concentration camps.

Even as she stumbled along, however, clutching the hand of her only child, my grandmother anxiously scanned the crowd for a friendly face; she wanted someone to let her husband know the fate of his family. The streets were lined with jeering, taunting Poles, but she spied two young non-Jewish boys whom she knew only slightly—they were friends of a cousin. The boys looked at my grandmother and in silence a spontaneous pact was made; my mother saw nothing. As the crowd pulled mother and daughter along, the boys moved to an alleyway, then reached out and grabbed my mother, pulling her to safety as they fled up a dark passageway. My grandmother looked neither right nor left, not daring to risk her daughter's life with a parting glance.

She moved on to her death.

In an instant, she had chosen to let go of that which she treasured most in the world. She let go of her child's hand so that Cesia might live. As a mother, I cannot begin to grasp the despair and desperation that moved my grandmother to release her child into the hands of strangers. It is important for me to believe, however, that in the midst of her suffering she was sustained by the conviction that her action saved the life of her daughter.

Josie's tallis was made by our friend and textile artist, Fylis Peckham. To honor Malka's sacrifice and extraordinary courage, Fylis painted hands clasping and releasing. On the atara, Josie chose words from the Ashrei: "Your hand is always open."

On the corners of the tallis, hands also frame a heart, reminiscent of the claddagh, the Irish symbol for love and friendship. These honor Josie's Irish heritage; her paternal grandmother, Johanna or Josie, for whom she is named. At age 17, Johanna came, alone, to New York City to find work as a maid. The money that she faithfully sent home to Ireland supported her family. She never saw her homeland again.

We bless the memories of both of Josie's grandmothers, somewhat soothed by the knowledge that whenever Josie prays, in years to come, her grandmothers' hands will embrace her. —**Marcia Goggin**

our sacralizing of stories and relationships, beauty, and the sensorial and embodied.

Thirty years ago, the feminist theologian Mary Daly spoke of the need for women to create a space "where it is possible to be oneself, without the contortions of mind, will, feeling, and imagination demanded of women by sexist society." For the first time, we can do this in public because the tallit's expres-

**“My tallitot are no longer just pieces of fabric to hold the four tzitzit. They are a means of connecting my story as a woman with my story as a Jew.”**

sive and elastic canvas invites each individual to create "a room of her own." We can sit in synagogue, now, and enjoy the two spheres that are both necessary to our experience of the sacred: one shared and formal, the other intimate and private. Rachel Kanter, of Manhattan, wrote: "My tallitot are no longer just pieces of fabric to hold the four tzitzit. They are a means of connecting my story as a woman with my story as a Jew."

Our tallesim are Trojan horses—the beginnings of what promises to be, over time, the recasting of the patriarchal *davennem* that has been our (sometimes strangely atavistic) inheritance. It is only a matter of time before conventional worship and prayer will honestly express what both genders experience as "holy."

Women in tallesim visibly manifest a deeper phenomenon: Jewish women have, in the broadest terms, been overwhelmingly responsible for contemporary Judaism's remarkable efflorescence and its renewed vigor and funk. Women potently push Judaism to move and change, to stay viable in the 21st century. No symbol has expressed the fact that Judaism is moving and changing, that religion is being conceptualized in entirely new ways, as potently and explosively and visibly as the tallit.

If we pay serious attention to how women interpret and articulate the sacred, we will discover a Judaism that is not unlike some of our tallesim: richer, more personal, more varied, more thoughtful, embracing, beautiful, daring, expressive, complex, "owned." ●

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