**YESHIVAT HAR ETZION**

**ISRAEL KOSCHITZKY VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH (VBM)**

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**Deracheha: Women and Mitzvot**

*Tzitzit* I: *Keli Gever*?

Why don't most women wear tzitzit? Would wearing them be a violation of the prohibition of cross-dressing?

**By Deracheha Staff; Laurie Novick, Director**

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## Why should we explore this question?

## On Deracheha, we are committed to exploring questions concerning women and mitzva observance as comprehensively as possible.

## We will see that, for a few reasons, many halachic authorities prohibit or discourage women from fulfilling the mitzva of *tzitzit.* Additionally, most Orthodox women seem to show little to no interest in fulfilling the mitzva.

Still, there are some religiously-observant women who **are** interested in exploring whether it is permissible to observe this mitzva voluntarily, the same way a woman may choose to perform other *mitzvot* from which she is exempt.

## Even if a woman herself has no personal interest in performing the mitzva of *tzitzit*, she should understand its significance and why women have not traditionally observed it. Learning about the mitzva can also give her insight into other women who might feel differently, and greater understanding of rabbinic responses to that.

# The Mitzva of *Tzitzit*

The Torah's primary discussion of the mitzva of *tzitzit* (fringes) comes at the end of *Parashat Shelach*:

*Bemidbar* 15

37 And God spoke to Moshe, saying: 38 Speak to the children of Israel (*benei Yisrael)*, and say to them to make themselves fringes on the corners of their garments throughout their generations, and to put on the fringe of each corner a thread of blue (*techelet*). 39 And it will be for you for a fringe, that you will see it and remember all God's commandments, and do them; and not go about after your heart and your eyes, after which you go astray; 40 So that you will remember and do all My commandments, and be holy to your God.

A single *pasuk* in *Devarim* adds more detail:

*Devarim* 22:12

Twisted cords you shall make on the four corners of your covering, with which you cover yourself (*asher techaseh bah*).

The mitzva is to wear *tzitzit*, fringes, on a four-cornered garment,[[1]](#footnote-1) and ideally to include blue (*techelet*) threads in the fringes.[[2]](#footnote-2)

Verse 39 of *Bemidbar* emphasizes "that you will see it." Why is that important? Seeing *tzitzit* on one's garment reminds the wearer of "all God's commandments" in order to keep one’s heart and eyes from straying.

*Menachot* 43b

"And you will see them and you will remember all of God's commandments" – This mitzva is considered as weighty as all of the *mitzvot* together.

The ultimate purpose of *tzitzit* is to encourage the wearer to perform the *mitzvot* and, in so doing, to "be holy."[[3]](#footnote-3)

The Talmud offers additional explanations for the significance of the mitzva. The blue strings of *techelet* are like the sea, the sea like the sky, and the sky like the Divine throne.[[4]](#footnote-4) The mitzva of *tzitzit* invites the Divine presence (*Shechina*) into our lives.[[5]](#footnote-5)

**Obligatory?** To be clear, wearing a four-cornered garment (picture a shawl, poncho, toga or sari) is not obligatory for anyone. So too, having fringes on a four-cornered garment that is folded in the closet is not obligatory. The obligation applies only if one wears[[6]](#footnote-6) a four-cornered garment.

*Shulchan Aruch* OC 24:1

If a man does not wear a *tallit* [a garment] with four corners, he is not obligated in *tzitzit.* It is good and correct for every person to be careful to wear a *tallit katan* every day, in order that he remember the mitzva at every moment.

Nowadays, many people do not wear ponchos or shawls, and wearing a large, four-cornered *tallit* (prayer shawl) is limited by custom to the morning service. One should not try to get out of performing this mitzva, though.[[7]](#footnote-7) For this reason, halachic practice is to wear a *tallit katan* (literally, little shawl), a small, fringed, four-cornered garment, colloquially known as '*tzitzit*,' which creates the opportunity to fulfill the mitzva regularly.

## Is there any significance to wrapping oneself up for prayer in a garment without *tzitzit*, like a pashmina shawl?

In *Devarim* 22:12, the *tzitzit* are attached to a garment "*asher techaseh bah*," "with which you cover yourself." That word choice suggests that ideal fulfillment of the mitzva is with a garment that provides full coverage, that can wrap a person in the mitzva. The concept of wrapping finds expression in the blessing over the *tallit gadol* (large prayer shawl), "*lehitatef batzitzit*," "to wrap oneself in *tzitzit*." Although wearing a *tallit katan* is widely accepted, there is some debate as to whether it fulfills the mitzva on the same level as the *tallit gadol*.[[8]](#footnote-8)

While it is understandable that being wrapped in a shawl during prayer might feel embracingly spiritual, the wrapping itself bears no halachic significance if the garment does not have *tzitzit*.

# Exemption

If wearing *tzitzit* is such a valued mitzva, to the point that we encourage men to wear a special four-cornered garment in order to fulfill it, why have women not customarily performed it?

**Initial Debate** The *Sifrei*, *midrash halacha* to *Bemidbar*, presents a debate over whether women are obligated in *tzitzit*:

*Sifrei Bemidbar* 115

“God spoke to Moshe, saying speak to the children of Israel (*benei Yisrael*), and say to them to make themselves *tzitzit*.” Even women are included in the meaning [of the verse]. Rabbi Shimon exempts women from *tzitzit* because women are exempt from positive time-bound commandments. For this is the rule: Rabbi Shimon said, every positive time-bound commandment applies to men and not to women, to the fit and not to the unfit. Rabbi Yehuda ben Bava says the sages specifically exempted a woman's veil from *tzitzit* and they only obligated the shawl, because sometimes her husband covers himself with it.

The anonymous first opinion maintains that women "are included" in the obligation of *tzitzit*, i.e., women are subject to the obligation.

Rabbi Shimon disagrees. He maintains that women are exempt from the mitzva of *tzitzit*, because it falls under the category of positive time-bound commandments.

Note that, according to **both** points of view, the phrase "*benei Yisrael*," "children of Israel," in *Bemidbar* 19:38 does not **exclude** women from the mitzva.[[9]](#footnote-9) The first opinion clearly understands the phrase as including women. Rabbi Shimon must consider the phrase inconclusive. He would not have needed to mention that *tzitzit* is a positive time-bound mitzva if he read *"benei Yisrael"* as excluding women.

Building on Rabbi Shimon's view, Rabbi Yehuda ben Bava adds another point, that a woman's garment must have *tzitzit* on it specifically when it may come to be shared with her husband. Even if she is not obligated in *tzitzit* on her own account, a woman is permitted to wear a garment with *tzitzit* attached to it.

**In the Talmud** Why should we consider *tzitzit* a time-bound commandment? The Babylonian Talmud cites the *midrash halacha* above and then offers an explanation for Rabbi Shimon's view:[[10]](#footnote-10)

*Menachot* 43a

Our rabbis taught: everyone is obligated in *tzitzit*, kohanim, levites, and Israelites, converts, women, and bondsmen. Rabbi Shimon exempts women, because it is a positive time-bound commandment, and women are exempt from all positive time-bound commandments…

Regarding women, what is Rabbi Shimon's rationale? As it is taught: "And you shall see it," that excludes night clothing.

*Bemidbar* 15:39 specifies that we should **see** the *tzitzit*. Because we see best by the light of the day. Rabbi Shimon derives from this verse that *tzitzit* is time-bound.

The simplest reading of this passage, found in Rambam, is that the obligation of *tzitzit* only applies during the day.[[11]](#footnote-11)

*Mishneh Torah*, Laws of *Tzitzit* 3:7

For the obligation of *tzitzit* is in the day and not at night, as it is said, "And you shall see it"—at a time of seeing.

Interestingly, the Talmud provides examples of two Babylonian Amora'im of the second generation who attached *tzitzit* to their wives' garments:

*Menachot* 43a

Rav Yehuda attached *techelet* to his wife's apron... [We derive] from his attaching them that he considers *tzitzit* a positive commandment that is not time-bound.

*Sukka* 11a

Rav Amram Chasida attached *techelet* to his wife's apron.

In the first case, Rav Yehuda's, the Talmud specifically says that he disagrees with Rabbi Shimon's view that *tzitzit* is a time-bound commandment. Though the Talmud does not offer a rationale for Rav Amram's action, Rashi explains it in the same way.[[12]](#footnote-12)

Ran reads the passage differently:

Ran on the Rif, *Kiddushin* 14b

That which we say there and in the first chapter of *Sukka*, that Master Amram Chasida attached *techelet* to his wife's apron, it is only out of piety that he acted thus. Only he [Rav Amram] attached them, and others of our sages did not.

According to Ran, Rav Amram considered women exempt from *tzitzit*. He attached *tzitzit* to his wife’s garment only as a *midat chassidut*, a pious act. It is not clear if his piety was to allow for the possibility that he might come to share the apron, as we saw in *Sifrei*, or because his wife herself wished to fulfill the mitzva of *tzitzit* voluntarily.

Ran asserts that dissent with Rabbi Shimon's view exempting women from the mitzva of *tzitzit* was uncommon.

**Halachic Rulings** Halachic authorities follows the opinion of Rabbi Shimon, that *tzitzit* is time bound. Here, for example, is the ruling of *Shulchan Aruch*:

*Shulchan Aruch* OC 17:2

Women and bondsmen are exempt because it is a positive time-bound commandment.

Women and bondsmen, thus, are exempt from the mitzva altogether.[[13]](#footnote-13)

# Voluntary Performance

May a woman choose to fulfil the mitzva of *tzitzit*? On the whole, women can choose to perform positive time-bound *mitzvot* voluntarily. Indeed, Rambam explicitly categorizes *tzitzit* in this way:

*Mishneh Torah*, *Hilchot Tzitzit*, 3:9

And women and bondsmen who want to wrap themselves in *tzitzit* may wrap themselves without a blessing. And so too all other positive time-bound commandments from which women are exempt. If they want to perform it without a blessing, we do not protest [that act].

Beyond permitting women to wear *tzitzit*, Rambam states explicitly that a woman's choice to do so is one "we do not protest." (See [here](http://www.deracheha.org/beracha-on-voluntary-performance) for more information on his opposition to women reciting a *beracha* over voluntary mitzva performance*.*)

There is also no indication from Shulchan Aruch (quoted above) that there is any unique aspect to the relationship of women to this mitzva, as opposed to any other time-bound mitzva, such as *shofar* or *lulav*. We would assume, then, that a woman who chooses to perform these *mitzvot* and whose custom it is to make *berachot* on positive, time-bound commandments could choose to put on *tzitzit* and to recite a *beracha*.

The beginning of Rema's gloss on this halacha also reads this way:

Rema OC 17:2

Gloss: And in any case, if they want to wrap it and recite a *beracha* on it, they may do so, as with other positive time-bound commandments…

But there is more to the story. Two additional concerns have arisen about women fulfilling the mitzva of *tzitzit: keli gever* (men's garb) and *yuhara* (spiritual aggrandizement). We explore the connection to *keli gever* below. In our next installment, we will address *yuhara,* which Rema himself goes on to discuss.

# Men's Garb: *Keli Gever*

We've seen that there is nothing specifically male about the way this mitzva is presented in the Torah, and a couple of early sages attached *tzitzit* to their wives' garments. Nevertheless, some halachic sources raise the concern that wearing a garment with *tzitzit* attached may violate the Torah's prohibition of cross-dressing:

*Devarim* 22 5

A man's article shall not be on a woman, neither shall a man wear a woman's garment; for whoever does these things is an abomination to the Lord your God.

This verse is asymmetrical. A man may not “wear” a woman’s “garment.” However, a man’s “article” may not “be upon” a woman. The use of broader terms with the prohibition for women leaves room for applying it to more than just clothing.[[14]](#footnote-14)

Targum Yerushalmi, a translation of the Torah into Aramaic from *Eretz Yisrael* (precise date unknown), includes a garment with *tzitzit* in the cross-dressing prohibition:

*Targum Yerushalmi Devarim* 22:5

There shall not be a cloak of *tzitzit* and *tefillin*, which are men's articles, on a woman.

The earliest halachic authorities do not take up this issue, likely because *tzitzit* were originally placed on regular garments, not on garments worn specifically for the mitzva like we have today. The *tallit katan,* a ritual garment whose entire purpose is to have *tzitzit* affixed to it, became customary for men only in the Middle Ages. Following that shift, Rav Mordechai Yafe (Bohemia, sixteenth century) does discuss *keli gever* in his commentary to *Shulchan Aruch*, *Levush*.

*Levush* 17:2

Since the Torah only obligated [*tzitzit*] for male attire, how can a woman obligate herself in a matter that contains a bit of transgression, namely, male attire?

To Levush, women's exemption from the mitzva of *tzitzit* (because it is positive and time bound)means that the mitzva by definition applies specifically to a man’s garment and not to a woman's. Therefore, a woman seeking to fulfill this mitzva would have to contend with the prohibition of cross-dressing, and this alone should keep her from pursuing it.[[15]](#footnote-15)

Indeed, the *tallit* and *tallit katan* have become firmly entrenched in common custom as male garments. Many halachic authorities agree with Levush,[[16]](#footnote-16) notably Ben Ish Chai, who adds a kabbalistic concern:[[17]](#footnote-17)

Ben Ish Chai First year, Lech Lecha 13

Further there is also a concern because a woman should not wear a man's article…In [Arizal's] *Sefer Ha-kavanot* the rationale of the details of this mitzva is explained according to *sod* [*kabbala*], that this mitzva does not apply to women.

**The Scope of *Keli Gever***

Prohibiting voluntary fulfilment of the mitzva of *tzitzit* by women because of *keli gever* has been questioned on two counts: One, does the prohibition of *keli gever* apply to a feminine garment with *tzitzit* attached? Two, does it apply when a garment is worn in order to fulfill a mitzva?

**I. A Feminine Garment** If a woman wears a four-cornered feminine garment with *tzitzit* attached, would wearing it transgress *keli gever?*

Notably, neither Rambam nor Rema raise the concern of *keli gever* at all. Still, Rav Zalman Nechemya Goldberg argues that there might be a transgression of *keli gever*, because *tzitzit* themselves are a type of male article:[[18]](#footnote-18)

Rav Zalman Nechemya Goldberg, "Women's Prayer in Public"

There is room to prohibit *tzitzit* strings themselves to a woman on account of "a man's article shall not be [on a woman]"… Albeit this is not a clear-cut prohibition, but a *tallit* is clearly prohibited.

Rav Goldberg concedes that considering a *tallit* to be *keli gever* is much more clear-cut than considering the strings themselves to be a male garment.

In a landmark responsum on feminism, Rav Moshe Feinstein expresses a number of concerns about women who wear *tallit,* but he leaves open the possibility of a woman fulfilling the mitzva of *tzitzit* under certain conditions (some of which we will explore in Part II):

*Iggerot Moshe* OC 4:49

Even concerning *tzitzit*, [voluntary mitzva fulfillment] applies to a woman who is willing to wear a garment that is different in form from men's clothing but has four corners, and to put *tzitzit* on it and fulfill this mitzva...

Rav Moshe suggests that *keli gever* concerns could be addressed by attaching *tzitzit* to a garment "different in form from men's clothing." The strings themselves are not a *keli gever* issue.

**II. Wearing for a Mitzva** The prohibition of cross-dressing may not apply to cases in which an article of clothing is not worn for purposes of beautification or for resembling the opposite gender, but for another clear reason.

*Bayit Chadash* YD 182

…It may be permitted in two ways. One is that there is no prohibition even in an item that is for beautification and decoration unless the woman wears men's clothing to resemble a man…but if they wear [it] in order to protect against the sun in the sunny season and rain in the rainy season, there is no prohibition at all…The second, that even to resemble [men] is prohibited only for items that are made for beautification and decoration.

One could argue that if protection from the rain provides grounds to allow for a woman to wear a man’s garment*,* a desire to fulfil a mitzva would as well.

Rav Yechiel Ya'akov Weinberg makes an argument like this in the context of a discussion of *tefillin:*

Rav Yechi'el Ya'akov Weinberg, Responsa *Seridei Eish* II:41

Since her intention is for the sake of the mitzva, there is no prohibition here of not wearing [a man's garb].

According to this logic, if a garment with *tzitzit* is worn for the purpose of fulfilling the mitzva, and not for decorative purposes, the prohibition of "male article" may not apply.[[19]](#footnote-19)

However, the halachic authorities who prohibit *tzitzit* to women out of concern for *keli gever,* clearly do not agree with this approach. They may only permit *keli gever* when the non-decorative purpose of wearing the garment is functional, not ritual. [[20]](#footnote-20) Additionally, they may claim, as does Rav Goldberg, that a woman's ultimate purpose in wearing a garment with *tzitzit* is to emulate men:

Rav Zalman Nechemya Goldberg, "Women's Prayer in Public (Response)"

In my humble opinion it is clearly prohibited because of "a man's article shall not be on a woman." There is no article more male than a *tallit* designated for men's prayer… it seems that in the matter under discussion there is no doubt that these women seek to resemble men.

It is hard to get away from the issue of resembling men here, when men have historically been the ones to wear *tallitot*.

A woman may still see herself differently, though. Is there any way for a woman who wants to fulfill this mitzva to establish that she is not trying to resemble men?

In a responsum, Rav Yehuda Henkin makes one suggestion:

Rav Yehuda H. Henkin, Responsa *Benei Banim* II:3

In my opinion, you may wear tzitzit in private or under your clothing in order that others not suspect you of intent to resemble men.

To Rav Henkin, a woman who only wears a *tallit gadol* in private[[21]](#footnote-21) or a *tallit katan* under her clothes makes it clear that her intent is only for the mitzva.

**Summary** *Keli gever* is a Torah-level prohibition, and a woman interested in fulfilling the mitzva of *tzitzit* should be concerned about transgressing it. Some halachic authorities argue that a woman wearing *tzitzit* inevitably violates at least the spirit of the law. Others, however, suggest that she could address concerns by affixing her *tzitzit* to a discernably female garment, or that *keli gever* may not apply here, especially if she keeps the mitzva privately.

There is still the question of *yuhara* to consider. We'll do that in Tzitzit Part II.

## Is the mitzva of *tzitzit* just for men?

On the level of obligation, it is. The question of voluntary performance is less obvious. In some ways, the discussion of *keli gever* reflects many people's intuitive sense that *tzitzit* are just for men.

What is interesting is that the halachic discussion of *keli gever* can help us examine that assumption more carefully.

If the essential mitzva of *tzitzit* is a four-cornered garment with fringes, not necessarily the *tallit* most men wear, is it clear that no women's garments could fit the bill? Is it possible for a woman to seek to fulfill the mitzva without really having any interest in resembling men? Can keeping an action private mitigate some of our concerns about its halachic and social ramifications? Is a mitzva in any way diminished by being observed in private?

There are plenty of authoritative halachic voices that consider *keli gever* to be sufficient reason for a womanto stay away from the mitzva of *tzitzit,* whether or not there is a technical violation of the prohibition.

At the same time, we should be aware of other voices who maintain that considerations of *keli gever* need not bar a woman from fulfilling the mitzva.

1. If a garment has more than four corners, *tzitzit* are attached to four of the corners. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. For many generations, knowledge of what animal provides the dye for *techelet* and how to produce that dye had been lost. Recently, a compelling case has been made for *Murex trunculus* as the source of *techelet* and more people have begun to reintroduce *techelet* to *tzitzit.* For more information, see here: <https://www.tekhelet.com/>

   Others, including Rav Yosef Soloveitchik, were more hesitant to embrace the reintroduction of *techelet,* because there is no longer a clear chain of *mesora* for it. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Rashi explains here that the manner in which the *tzitzit* are tied hints at 613, the number of Torah level *mitzvot*.

   Rashi *Menachot* 43b s.v. *Shekula*

   …For *tzitzit* in *gematriya* is 600 [90+10+90+10+400] and 5 knots and 8 strings make 613. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. *Menachot* 43b

   Rabbi Meir would say: How is *techelet* different form all other colors? Because *techelet* resembles the sea, and the sea resembles the sky, and the sky [resembles] the throne of Honor. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. *Menachot* 43b

   Rashbi says: Whoever is zealous with this mitzva merits to receive the face of the *Shechina.* [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. The mitzva of *tzitzit* applies to a garment worn to cover the body, but not to a scarf or turban wrapped around the head.

   *Shulchan Aruch* OC 10

   A turban is exempt … since its primary purpose is to cover the head, for God said “your covering” (*Devarim* 22:12) and not a head-covering. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. *Menachot* 41a

   Given that the Torah obligates him when he is covered in a *tallit* that is subject to the obligation. When he is covered in a *tallit* that is not subject to the obligation, did the Torah obligate him? Rather, thus said [an angel] to Rav Katina: [You are punished at a time of Divine anger for not wearing a four-cornered garment and thus] seeking out excuses to exempt yourself from *tzitzit.* [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. *Nimukei Yosef Menachot*, *Tzitzit* 11b

   For there are those among the early authorities who said that *mitzvat tallit* is only fulfilled through wrapping the head to cover his head and his body, or most of it, with it [the *tallit*]. As is written "That you cover with it." According to them, *mitzvat tzitzit* is not fulfilled with the *tallit katan* that they are accustomed to wear in most kingdoms. It does not seem that it is so. That which they recited the *beracha* “to wrap” is because this is the ideal way to fulfil the mitzva…but according to the basic law, any garment with four corners is obligated in *tzitzit* and one discharges the obligation of *tzitzit* with it, even though it has neither coverage nor wrapping. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Shulchan Aruch clearly learns this way in his discussion of women preparing *tzitzit*, but Magen Avraham challenges this reading:

   *Shulchan Aruch* OC 14:1

   *Tzitzit* that a non-Jew made are not valid, as it is written "Speak to the children of Israel" (*Bemidbar* 15:38) to exclude the non-Jew. But a woman is fit to make them.

   *Magen Avraham* 14:2

   [A woman] is fit- This requires study because in every place we expound "*benei Yisrael*," and not "*benot Yisrael*."

   [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Another parallel source for this dispute is *Tosefta Kiddushin* 1:8, also found in Yerushalmi *Kiddushin* 1:7.

    *Tosefta Kiddushin* 1:10

    What is a positive mitzva that is not time-bound? Like [returning] a lost object, and sending away [the mother bird from] the nest, a fence [around a roof], and *tzitzit.* Rabbi Shimon exempts women from *tzitzit* because it is a positive time-bound commandment. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Another reading of this gemara is that garments designed specifically for nightwear are exempt from *tzitzit* even if worn in daytime, and garments normally worn in daytime require *tzitzit* even if worn at night. Rav Yitzchak of Dampierre explains that the time element in defining the garment suffices to put the mitzva in the category of the time-bound:

    *Tosafot Kiddushin* 34a, s.v. *Utfillin*

    Ri says that since its obligation depends on [the clothing being] something that time governs as being worn in the day, it should be considered time-bound, because the time of its wearing causes the obligation. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Rashi *Sukka* 11a s.v. To his wife's apron

    To the shawl of his wife, for he considered night a time for *tzitzit.* "And you shall see it" excludes the clothing of a blind person, but night clothing is obligated. [In his view,] it is a positive non-time-bound mitzva and women are obligated. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. *Chagiga* 4a. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. This argument follows Rav Yehuda H. Henkin, Responsa *Benei Banim* II, p. 14.

    Available here: http://hebrewbooks.org/pdfpager.aspx?req=20022&st=&pgnum=14 [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Levush either does not consider the possibility of unisex garments or assumes that just by adding *tzitzit* to clothing we redefine it as male. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Including Rav Mordechai Eliyahu,in an appendix to Rav Eliav Shochetman, *"Minyanei Nashim Ba-kotel*," *Tehumin* 15. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. The reasoning seems to be that the primal space of origin of the kabbalistic feminine is below the chest cavity, where the *tallit* does not reach. However, the feminine develops beyond that space, and it is also not clear why this should be grounds for prohibition and not just exemption. [Thank you for this explanation to Rav Dr. Zvi Leshem, in consultation with Dr. Menachem Kallus.] [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Rav Zalman Nechemya Goldberg, "Women's Prayer in Public (Response)," *Tehumin* 18 (1998): 120-121. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. See also Rav Yehuda H. Henkin on this point:

    Rav Yehuda H. Henkin, Responsa *Benei Banim* II:3

    If her intention is solely for the purpose of fulfilling the mitzva, one should compare her to one who wears a man's garment not for clothing purposes but to protect against the sun and rain, which is permitted according to the views of the Bach, Taz and Shach [major commentaries on halachic codes].

    Available here: <http://hebrewbooks.org/pdfpager.aspx?req=20022&st=&pgnum=13>

    Later in this teshuva, Rav Henkin distinguishes between *tallit katan* and *tallit gadol*, preferring the former for women. According to most authorities, the *tallit katan* does constitute a complete fulfillment of the mitzva. As such, one might argue that the *tallit gadol* also serves a decorative purpose, whereas the *tallit katan* is purely a mitzva-functional garment. That might nudge the *tallit gadol* closer to a violation of *keli gever*. On the other hand, one could counter that this decorative purpose is also drawn from the principle of *hiddur mitzva*, glorifying the commandments, and as such is not the type of decoration subject to the cross-dressing prohibition. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Bach himself does not apply his approach to *simchat mitzva* of Purim or rejoicing with bride and groom, since those can be accomplished in other ways.

    Bach YD 182

    Even what he does out of the joy of mitzvah is not similar to acting in order to save oneself from sorrow and so too in the law of saving oneself from sorrow, there is no other option… [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. In his discussion of trousers for women, Rav Yitzchak Weiss maintains that *keli gever* is prohibited to women in private as well as in public. (We'll explore other opinions on trousers in a forthcoming piece.) The act of wearing itself is forbidden, not just what it might lead to.

    Rav Yitzchak Weiss, Responsa *Minchat Yitzchak* II:108

    Even at a time when men are not present, but she is by herself in her home, she still transgresses the prohibition of "There shall not be a men's article," for even if no one sees, the prohibition still remains in place…. Certainly it is at least prohibited on a rabbinic level, even if she wore [trousers] in private.

    To Rav Weiss, if we consider a *tallit* to be *keli gever,* it would be prohibited even in private. Rav Weiss leaves open the possibility, though, that according to some opinions wearing *keli gever* in private is a rabbinic-level transgression*.* [↑](#footnote-ref-21)