

# The Turin Shroud as John Mark's temple garment

A. A.M. van der Hoeven, www.JesusKing.info, updated version of September 27, 2012

**In this article I will show how the garment left by the young man who "ran away naked" (Mr 14,51-52) became the burial shroud of Jesus. The properties of the Turin Shroud for its identification as a garment, even a priest's garment, are its Pharisaic enlarged border and cut off corners (and fringes), its apparel weave, its threads' possibly sacerdotal Z-twist, and its images of a priest's oval ornament and seal with its cord. The most outstanding biblical fact that identifies Jesus' shroud as a priest's garment is the beloved disciple's belief that Jesus had risen because he saw the shroud rolled up and placed aside (Jo 20,7-8), just as a priest's garment was always rolled up and placed aside in the temple. In this article I reckon that the beloved disciple was the secret disciple John Mark, the Sanhedrin's priest-secretary.<sup>1</sup>**

## Temple garment with enlarged border and removable blue cords

In my earlier articles (see note 1) I showed that John Mark can be identified as the secretary of the Council of the Temple, which formed a distinct priestly block within the Great Sanhedrin. In this office he had to wear ritually clean and white linen temple garments (Ex 28,5-6). But, as the young man who ran to Jesus and said that he had observed all the commandments from his youth (Mr 10,20), he had also fulfilled the commandment of Nu 15,38:

*"Say to the children of Israel that through all their generations they are to put on the edges of their robes an ornament of twisted threads ('tsiytsith'), and in every ornament ('tsiytsith') a blue cord ('pathiyl' = cord, twisted thread)." Nu 15,38 (Bible in Basic English)*

Here the expression "an ornament of twisted threads" translates just the one word 'tsiytsith', which means (literally) a shining thing, (figuratively) ornament. But in the Septuagint – the Bible translation used in the first century in Judea – at Nu 15,38, the word 'tsiytsith' is translated as *kraspeda* = (plural of) hem, margin. So, the commandment of Nu 15,38 can be read as a prescription to put on every robe an ornamental margin with a blue cord in it. In order to fulfill this commandment in a Pharisaic meticulous way, even for his all white linen temple garment, Mark probably applied a margin to his mantle by making a long seam a few centimeters from one of its long edges, and made a hole in the corners of this margin, to which a blue cord could be fastened (for out-of-temple situations, such as in the House of Caiphas in the Upper City and perhaps also Caiphas' office palace in Antonia) or loosened (for in-temple situations, especially for when in the Chamber of Hewn Stones in the Court of the Israelites). John Mark probably belonged to the Pharisees, who believed in the resurrection of the dead, for he already believed in the existence of "eternal life" before he came running to Jesus (Ac 23,8 Mt 19,16 Mr 10,17 Lu 18,18). And it was the custom of Pharisees to "enlarge the borders (*kraspeda*) of their garments" (Mt 23,5 KJ21).

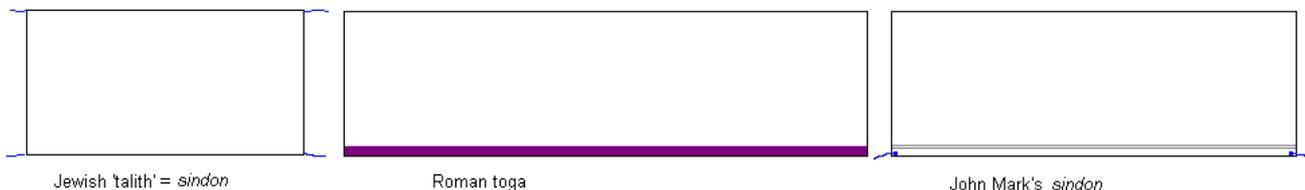
## Mark's lost *sindōn* is a Jewish 'talith'

John Lightfoot, in his commentary on the scene of the naked fleeing young man (Mr 14,51-52), says that the word סִידוֹן ('sydwn') = *sindōn* was used in the Talmud (Menacoth fol. 40.I) for a Jewish linen upper garment ('talith' = mantle), (also) worn by boys and priests, especially in the summer in Jerusalem, and that "with this garment they commonly covered their head when they prayed". Lightfoot also cites the Talmud: "the 'talith' whereby the boy covers his head, and a great part of himself" and "the priests who veil themselves when they go up into the pulpit with a טלית = 'talith' which is not their own". He also says, that this garment usually had the blue corded tassels (called 'tsiytsith') attached to its corners, although there was a discussion among the rabbis whether a linen garment could have the usually woollen tassels, as this would go against the commandment not to

---

<sup>1</sup> The evidence for this new thesis on John Mark is much too elaborate for this newsletter article, but is in my long free biblical article/book "John Mark – Author of the Gospel of John with Jesus' mother" on my site www.JesusKing.info. More sources for this newsletter article are also in my free article "The seam and missing corners of the Turin Shroud as characteristics of John Mark's temple garment" on my site www.JesusKing.info.

wear garments made of two different kinds of material (De 22,11); and that for this reason some rabbis loosened the woollen tassels from their linen ‘talith’. John Mark, as the rich young ruler, “had great possessions” (Mr 10,22), and may have owned quite a few of these ‘talith’s, in his case probably resembling the long, rectangular, purple edged togas of Roman magistrates – and perhaps his Roman colleague secretaries of Pilate, with whom he had frequent contact –, but made of linen and with an ornamental seam and holes in the margin to which a blue cord could be fastened and loosened. Just as his Jewish-Roman name – ‘Jochanan’ Marcus – also his mantle was Jewish-Roman.



The fact that the young man who followed the arrested Jesus, had his *sindōn* (“*sindona*”) “cast about his naked body” and could leave it behind and flee naked, indicates that this *sindōn* certainly wasn’t an ‘ephod’, which had “joined” “shoulder pieces” (Mr 14,51 Ex 28,6-7) and could not as easily be put off, while running, as a ‘talith’. Lightfoot says that, as the *sindōn* was usually worn as an outer garment, some think that the person who wore it in the night when Jesus was captured, had been roused from his bed. So, it may certainly have been worn by John Mark, who, while lying in bed, or elsewhere at home, heard that Jesus had come secretly to the upper room of his house – only Mark says Jesus “came with the Twelve” Mr 14,17 –, and who then, with a (perhaps brand new) *sindōn* cast about his naked body, rushed to Jesus and was allowed to lie down at Jesus’ breast, on the bench where Jesus already lay amidst the benches of his twelve apostles. And when Jesus and the Twelve went to Gethsemane, in the beginning of the night, he followed them wearing only his *sindōn*. The fact that only the young man wearing the *sindōn* there, was caught by the temple officers, and Simon Peter was not, indicates that the *sindōn* probably was white and thus more visible at night than the ordinary clothes of the fisherman Simon Peter. When the young man fled naked, he wasn’t caught again, probably because he had become less visible when he left his white *sindōn*.

### Jesus’ bruised face

Joseph of Arimathea was member of the Great Sanhedrin as an elder, and not as a scribe or temple priest, for he had hewn his own new tomb in the rock (Mt 27,60). He thus may have been one of the “elders” who had come with the band and were present when Jesus was arrested in Gethsemane by the officers of the temple prison (*hypēretai*) (Lu 22,52). Here it was John Mark who fled naked and Joseph of Arimathea who followed Jesus and the officers back to the gate of the high priest and overruled the doormaid to let Simon Peter enter. John Mark ran home, got dressed, and was present at the trials of Jesus as the high priest’s secretary. Here he is the *hypēretēs* (Greek word used for both a prison officer and a secretary of a judge) who first slaps Jesus’ face, still caught in fear to be recognized by the prison officers – or addressed by Jesus – as a disciple, when Jesus points his finger in his direction and says “Behold, they know what I said” (Jo 18,21). This slap and the argument used to justify himself – “Is that how you answer the high priest?” (Jo 18,22) – would not be expected or accepted from a prison officer, who should only act to order, but they comply very well with John Mark’s office of secretary of the high priests. And although only Annas, Jesus, and *hypēretai* were present at the incident, it is reported in John’s gospel. This suggests the presence of the evangelist himself. A fact is, that after this first slap in the face Jesus was beaten further by the other *hypēretai*. If one of their rulers had slapped Jesus before He even had been trialled, then the lower officers felt they could freely beat Jesus too. When Jesus was in prison, ready for the trial the next morning, the “men who were holding Jesus mocked him and beat him; they also blindfolded him and asked him, “Prophecy! Who is it that struck you?”” (Lu 22,63-65). In this way they took revenge on Him for pointing his finger to them in Annas’ room, as the ones who had heard Him in the temple. And the cloth which they used for blindfolding Him, literally “covering him up” (Darby) (*perikalupsantes* Lu 22,64 = ‘cover all around, i.e. entirely’), may very well have been the *sindōn* which they perchance had gotten into their hands in Gethsemane and had brought to the prison, with Jesus.

### Bought by Joseph of Arimathea

When Jesus was dead, Joseph of Arimathea went to Pilate and asked for Jesus' dead body. Pilate's pretorium was located in the temple fortress Antonia, just as the high priest Caiphas' palace and the temple prison. This can be proved by Simon Peter's movements in the night of Jesus' arrest and by the presence of the temple's *hypēretai* at Pilate's midday process. So, after Pilate's consent, Joseph, who knew that the prison officers had taken John Mark's precious *sindōn* to their barracks, and who needed a burial shroud for Jesus, and who didn't have the time or opportunity to go and buy a burial shroud in the city (it was the day of Preparation and almost evening), bought John Mark's ritually clean (*katharos*) temple *sindōn* ("sindona") for the burial of Jesus, whom he considered to be the Christ, the biblically promised high priest-king (Mr 15,46). Note that none of the evangelists writes that Joseph bought a new *sindōn*, but they do say it was (ritually) clean (*katharos* Mt 27,59). It was only the grave that was "new" (Mt 27,60 Jo 19,41), not the *sindōn*.

### Buried in a garment "as is the burial custom of the Jews"

In Jesus' days, i.e. before the death of Gamaliel II in the beginning of the 2nd century CE, it was still the custom to bury a person in the garments he had worn in life. So, they didn't have to be new:

"In Biblical times persons, especially of high rank, were arrayed at burial in the garments, ornaments, and weapons which they had worn in life ... To be buried without garments was considered a disgrace ... As a token of honor, it was customary to cast the most costly garments and ornaments upon the bier of a dear relative or friend ... In fact, since funeral expenses became common extravagances and an object of alarm to the relatives, R. Gamaliel II. set the example by the order he gave for his own funeral, and thus introduced the custom of burying the dead in simple linen garments (Ket. 8b; M. K. 27b)." (Jewish Encyclopedia)

It is very significant now, that only John says that Jesus Christ – the "high priest" and "priest for ever" (Ps 110,4 Heb 5,6.10 6,20) – was buried "as is the burial custom of the Jews" (Jo 19,40). Only John and Joseph of Arimathea knew that Jesus was buried in a priest's garment: John Mark's own *sindōn*. But Nicodemus also abode by the burial custom of the Jews by bringing for the Christ (= 'Messiah' = Anointed High Priest-King) an enormous amount of the most costly high priestly/royal spices (used to anoint the high priest and for his incense sacrifice/a king). Jesus' own clothes had been divided among the soldiers who had crucified Him and who were Romans, for over Jesus' head "they put the charge against him, which read, "This is Jesus the King of the Jews"". It certainly weren't the high priests' *hypēretai* who put it there, for the high priests protested strongly. After the crucifixion Jesus' clothes were in the hands of the ritually unclean Roman soldiers, and probably brought to the ritually unclean Roman pretorium (cf. Jo 18,28). So, Jesus' clothes were already defiled by the touch of the Romans anyway. But John Mark's temple *sindōn* was still very near Pilate's pretorium, in the ritually clean hands and barracks of the temple's prison guards. This was a very providential opportunity for Joseph to spare Jesus a disgraceful burial and to give Him the burial even of a temple priest. And John was present at this burial, for on Easter morning he would find Jesus' empty tomb without the help of anyone: the beloved disciple "outran Peter and reached the tomb first" (Jo 20,4).

### Obligated to check out the grave cloths

When John reached the tomb on Easter morning, he didn't enter it, but waited for Simon Peter to arrive and take a look inside. The reason for waiting outside may have been that he didn't want to be ritually defiled by the tomb or the dead body unnecessarily, for it was only the beginning of "the first day of the week" (Jo 20,1). He had to be ritually clean to be able to enter the temple and go to work. So, when Peter first entered the tomb and told John Mark that the tomb was empty except for a linen roll, John Mark must have thought "A roll? But it was only folded once at Jesus' head, enveloping his body, at the burial! Is this roll really my *sindōn* then?" But as Peter didn't know – and wasn't supposed to know – that Jesus had been buried in John Mark's *sindōn*, bought from the *hypēretai*, John Mark could not ask him "Is the linen roll, that you're seeing, my *sindōn*?" So, John had to enter the grave himself, for if it was his unique *sindōn*, he would have to take it away, as it was the proof of his discipleship. He entered the tomb, not to verify it was empty, for Peter had already told him this. He entered it to check out the roll: did it show the ornamental seam?

### “Rolled up in one place” by Jesus: John “saw and believed”

It is remarkable, that only for John Mark it was decisive to see that in Jesus’ open grave not only the *othonia* (windings) lay at the entrance, but also the cloth that had covered his face (*soudarion* = sweat cloth) lay inside the grave, neatly “rolled up in a place by itself”, in Greek: *entetuligmenon eis hena topon* (Jo 20,5-8). This may refer to the special place where the roll lay, namely on the stone platform where Jesus had lain – or on the rock floor right under it –, at his head. This is what the Mishnah and its commentary says about the priests who slept on stone platforms along the walls of the priests’ guard room in the temple:

“They did not sleep in the consecrated garments. But they spread them out, doubled them over, and lay them down under their heads, and cover themselves with their own clothes” (Tamid 1,1 J, translation by J. Neusner); “The priests on watch did not sleep in the priestly garments. Instead, they folded (מקפלין) (‘mqplyn’) them, placed them at their heads, and wore their own clothes.” (Mishneh Torah by Maimonides)

Maimonides also says that they did not lay the clothes under their heads and use them as pillows, for they were not allowed to derive benefit from the priestly clothes outside the sacrificial service, because they contained a mixture of linen and wool (Sha’atnez). And in his text the Hebrew word used here for “doubled over”/“folded” is מקפלין (‘mqplyn’) and in the Jastrow Hebrew dictionary the verb קפל (‘qapel’) is translated as “to double, fold, roll up”. So, מקפלין (‘mqplyn’) certainly could be expressed in Greek as *entetuligmenon*, which means “rolled up” (Online Bible Greek Lexicon). And the fact that the priests first spread out the clothes, also indicates that they probably rolled them up, for folding could be done while the garment hung down from the hands. And a priest probably first spread out all his five garments – including a white ‘talith’ (Middot 5,4) – on top of each other, and then made one single roll of them, for in this way his garments would not get mixed up with the garments of the priests who slept next to him. Only the girdle contained a mixture of wool and linen. So, that the girdle was inside the roll, must have been the reason why the whole roll could not be used as a pillow: all his clothes were rolled up together and in one place, at his head. Now, when the beloved disciple – the secretary of the Council of the Temple, which regulated these details – entered the tomb, he “saw (the roll with seam, placed at the head) and believed” (that Jesus had risen – and he didn’t know this from Scripture) (Jo 20,7-9). The moment John Mark sees his *sindōn* lying there in the grave, identifiable by the ornamental seam and rolled up and placed at the head as a priest’s garment, he realizes it must have been laid there by Jesus for him: it had to have been done by someone who knew it was a priest’s garment and nevertheless left it in the grave, and thus by someone who had seen that John Mark fled from the *hypēretai* leaving his *sindōn*, and who knew that Joseph of Arimathea had bought it, and who would understand that John Mark, as a secret disciple, would want the garment back as it was the proof of his discipleship. This person was not one of the *hypēretai*, for they would simply have taken possession of the precious linen cloth again and would not have left it in the grave, nor Joseph of Arimathea (or Nicodemus) – he would have taken the body with the *sindōn* –, nor Simon Peter – he had been with John Mark all night and didn’t know the grave was empty and wondered about what had happened –, nor John Mark himself, so only a risen Jesus could have done it. John Mark interprets the rolled up *sindōn* as a personal gift from Jesus to himself, and takes it from the grave, and thus takes away the proof of his discipleship.

### Given to “the servant of the priest”

In this sense the risen Jesus “had given the grave cloth to the servant of the priest”, as Jerome cites the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> century Gospel of the Hebrews in *De Viris Illustribus* II. John Mark doesn’t destroy the *sindōn*, perhaps because it could be regarded as the proof of Jesus’ resurrection, and perhaps because of its significance: Jesus’ personal forgiveness for John Mark, “the servant of the priest” who had fled from Jesus and had slapped Him and had betrayed Him.

### The seam hidden in order to “remain until I come”

At the Sea of Tiberias the risen Jesus also said that He wanted John to “remain until I come”, and not follow Him (Jo 21,22). This didn’t mean that Jesus wanted him to stay alive until Jesus’ glorious return, for this is explicitly refuted in the gospel’s next verses. John Mark had to remain a secret

disciple until Jesus would appear to him again: remain in the office and seat of the secretary right beside Annas and Caiphas and keep transmitting, what the high priests “conferred among themselves”, to the New Testament (Ac 4,15). And John Mark obeyed this commission of Jesus:

*“... Annas the high priest, and Caiphas, and John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the kindred of the high priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem. And when they had set them [Peter and John of Zebedee] in the midst, they inquired ... But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred with one another, saying, "What shall we do with these men? For that a notable sign has been performed through them is manifest ... we cannot deny it...." So they called them ...” (Ac 4,5-7.15-18)*

John Mark called himself “the disciple whom Jesus loved” (Jo 21,20) (and John’s ambiguous description of the beloved disciple’s visit to Jesus’ empty tomb is even strikingly missing in ‘Mark’s’ gospel). He could be sure Jesus loved him – the secretary of Israel who had been silently present, or even spoke his consent, when Jesus was condemned to death (“they all condemned him as deserving death” Mr 14,64 and “they asked Pilate to have him killed. ... they took him down from the tree, and laid him in a tomb” Ac 13,27-29) –, for Jesus had shown him He had forgiven him by returning his *sindōn* after He had risen. “God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins” (Ac 5,31).

Now, in order to remain a secret disciple he had to prevent that anyone would recognize the rolled up burial shroud as his temple *sindōn*. It would be sufficient to cut off the margin along the ornamental seam, for then this seam would look like an ordinary functional hem, applied to prevent the edge from loosening, and not like the unique ornamental seam of his ‘talith’. And he didn’t have to cut off the margin for the complete length of the cloth, for the seam was only visible in the last and next to last layer of the roll, formed by the ends of the cloth when it is doubled in the middle and rolled up from the fold. And in removing the two ends of the margin he of course simultaneously removed its two holes to which the blue cords were fastened. According to Pfeiffer, professor of iconography and Christian art history, a grave cloth may have been kept by John, the beloved disciple, and Mary, the virgin mother of Jesus.

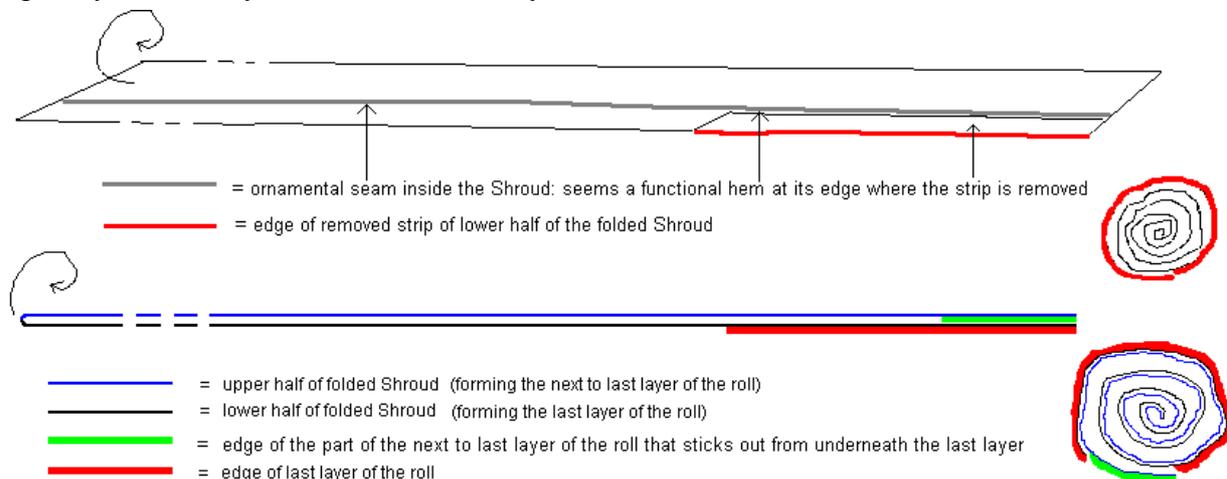
### The Turin Shroud

In the Shroud the threads’ ““Z”-twisting suggests sacerdotal Syro-Palestinian origin” (Fanti and Faccini, *Sindone: la scienza spiega la fede*, p.2). Its herringbone weave is typical of ancient expensive apparel fabric (J. Tyler, *Looking at the Shroud as Textile*). The Shroud has a margin at one of its long edges, adjoining the rest of the cloth at a long seam about 9 cm from the edge. At the ends of the margin two strips, about 35 cm and 14 cm long respectively, are missing. “Dr. Flury-Lemberg found ... an unusual type of stitching ... closely resembling that of ancient Jewish textiles as found at Masada, ... overthrown by the Romans in AD 73, never to be occupied again”. She also says that “at no time has the need to reinforce the corner parts arisen!” (The Invisible Mending of the Shroud, the Theory and the Reality, BSTS Newsletter 65,5). So, the missing of the two corner strips, already removed before the fire of 1532 CE, could be explained as an effort by John Mark to both remove the blue cords and hide the ornamental seam of his extra large ‘talith’. The Jewish Encyclopedia says on Tallit: “The finer tallit, very likely, was ... worn only by distinguished men, rabbis, and scholars ... The tallit of a "talmid hakam" extended to within a hand-breadth of the length of the bottom of his undergarment (B.B.57b). The tallit was sometimes worn partly doubled, and sometimes with the ends thrown over the shoulders”. See the image of a Jew with a ‘talith’ as long as the Shroud, with long border(s) and fringes, worn thrown around his shoulders, from a 15th-century Jewish prayer book:

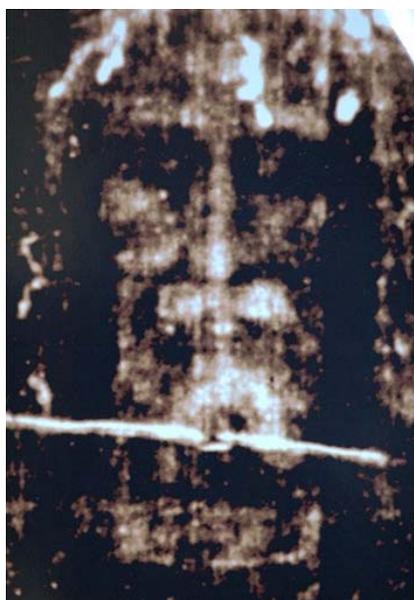
<http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/14210-tallit>

If a cloth, doubled up, is rolled up from the fold to the ends, the upper half forms circles with a smaller circumference than the circles formed by the lower half of the cloth. So, in the last layer of the roll the lower half would not completely cover the upper half, which thus would protrude from underneath the lower half. So, the ornamental seam would not only be visible in the last layer of the roll, formed by the lower half, but also, for a shorter length, in the next to last layer of the roll, where the upper half protrudes (see the figure below). When the Shroud of Turin, 4,4 m in length and about

0,4 mm in thickness, is rolled up loosely (thickness of one layer of 1 mm) with an initial circular circumference of 24 cm or less, the complete roll would attain a circumference of 34 cm or less. Cutting off the margin asymmetrically, for 35 cm and 14 cm, and thus removing the blue cords and/or the holes for the blue cords at the same time, would be enough to transform the seam into a functional hem and make John Mark's temple 'talith' an unidentifiable linen roll, especially if it is rolled up a bit askew, in order that the seam in the inner layers, and the transition from seam to 'hem', would be completely covered by the last 'hemmed' layers of the roll.



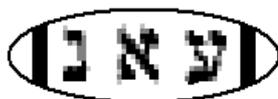
Dr. Flury-Lemberg says, that besides the patching of the burn-holes, there wasn't any other stitching done, "apart from the one vertical seam and the small rolled hems at the edges of the width. This is all that ever needed to be done - leaving out, for now, the two cut away corners." So, the side strip was originally Jewish and unilateral. And the image-bearing starch impurities on the fibers of the Shroud corroborate that it once was a sacerdotal garment, that was not supposed to be creased. The inside part of the sharp crease below the image of the chin doesn't contain an image, so, the crease was probably formed before the image was; and the crease is in the upper half of the cloth, so, it was not formed by the weight of Jesus' dead body; it is not completely horizontal and is slightly curved, so, it probably wasn't formed by folding by Joseph of Arimathea or the seller of the cloth. So, the crease may have been formed by the weight of John Mark's body, when he was wearing the *sindōn* and was leaning against Jesus' breast at the Last Supper. In 750 John Damascene called the Image of Edessa – allegedly sent to Edessa by Jesus, and often regarded as the Turin Shroud – a *himation* (= mantle, cf. Mr 10,50 Jo 19,5). In 1204 the Shroud probably was in Constantinople and (later) equated by some with the Mandylion of Edessa, in which 'Mandylion' is a unique Greek corruption of either the Latin mantellum = mantle, or the Latin mantile (also mantele) = towel.



Three Hebrew letters on the petalon

(photograph © 1978-2011 Barrie M. Schwartz Collection, STERA Inc.; enhanced by Dr. Petrus Soons, <http://shroud3d.com>)

The three protuberant Hebrew letters on the oval plate beneath the chin of the image of the Turin Shroud, seen by Dr. Soons on a hologram (<http://shroud3d.com>), may have been א נ ך ayin – aleph – nun. The last of the three letters, the nun, is not written as a final nun (long ן), but as a non-final nun (short ך). This means that the



70 1 Nesiim

three letters probably aren't one single word, but may be an

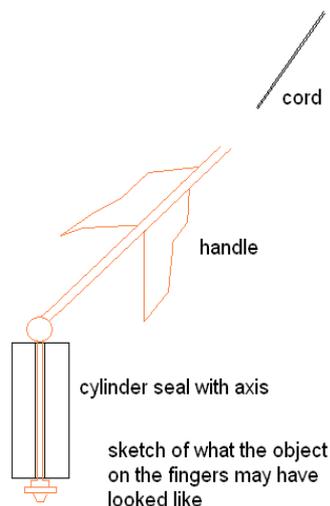
abbreviation. A possible interpretation is that the ayin – aleph are Hebrew numbers: 70 – 1, and that the nun is an abbreviation of the Hebrew word אֲנָשִׁים 'nesiim' = rulers or נָשִׂי 'nasi' = ruler, and that the three letters mean: the 71 rulers of the Great Sanhedrin, the

seventy ordinary members plus the president (the Nasi or the Ab-beth-din). In the Septuagint, the Greek version of the Bible in first-century Judea, the word ‘nesiim’ in “Aaron and all the ‘nesiim’ of the congregation” (Ex 34,31) is translated as *archontes*, which word was used for the members of the Great Sanhedrin in the first century. Jesus was buried by three *archontes* of the Great Sanhedrin (“those who live in Jerusalem and their rulers (*archontes*), ... took him down from the tree, and laid him in a tomb” Ac 13,27-29), and one of them may have held the oval object which represented the authority of this council. This person may have been John Mark, the secretary of the council, who, according to Polycrates, was ‘a priest (*hiereus* = (non-Christian) priest) wearing the *petalon*’ (Eus. 5,24,2). The “*petalon*” (Ex 28,36 LXX = leaf, cf. petal, Greek translation for the Hebrew ‘tsiyts’ = blossom, flower, Ex 28,36 BHS) originally was the unique golden crown plate of the anointed high priest, engraved with the words ‘Holy to the Lord’ and attached to his mitre with a blue ribbon (Ex 28,36-37), and Josephus says it still existed in the first century (J.Ant. 8,3,8). Maimonides says it was two fingers broad, and that it reached from ear to ear, and that the letters were protuberant, or stood out (Avoda, Kli Hamikdash 9,1-2). But in Jesus’ days the high priest’s splendid liturgical clothes with all their ornaments were kept locked up by the Romans in the fortress Antonia (J.Ant. 15,11,4 18,4,3), so, the mitre with the golden crown plate attached to it, was there too. As an alternative, the Jews may have made another oval (= petal-shaped) plate, engraved with the letters א נ נ (ayin-aleph-nun), for the high priest and perhaps all other members of the Great Sanhedrin, expressing the ruling authority of its wearer (cf. Ge 41,42 Ps 132,18 Ex 29,6 Da 5,7.16.29 Epiph.Pan. 29,3,3-6). From 6 CE the high priest was arbitrarily appointed and dismissed by the Romans, but the Great Sanhedrin was independent, and legally represented and ruled the Jewish people under the Romans. Also of James the Just, the authoritative head representative of the Israelites in the temple liturgy, and possible member of the Great Sanhedrin (Eus. 2,23,1-25; see my article “James and the brothers – Davidic representatives in the temple liturgy”, [www.JesusKing.info](http://www.JesusKing.info)), it is said that he wore the *petalon* (Epiph.Haeres. 77,14, according to note 862 on Eus. 3,31,3 [www.ccel.org](http://www.ccel.org)). Interestingly, the earliest known representation of a Jewish high priest – in a mural in the synagogue of Dura-Europos, Syria, of 245-256 AD (see figure below) – shows him wearing a headdress without a crown plate, and wearing a mantle closed on his breast by a golden oval-shaped engraved plate. A mantle did belong to the biblical outfit of the high priest but a plate attached to the mantle did not (Ex 28,31-35 39,22-26).



These rulers of the Sanhedrin – high priests, elders, and scribes – probably didn’t all wear a mitre/turban, and for this reason the alternative *petalon* may have been worn as a breast plate, also by John Mark. In this case it would have been very appropriate, and in line with the “burial custom of

the Jews” (to bury a person of high rank with his most costly ornaments and weapons), and also in line with the high priestly/royal spices brought by Nicodemus and with the high priestly temple *sindōn* brought by Joseph of Arimathea, that John Mark put his high priestly authoritative *petalon* on the breast of Jesus, the everlasting high priest-king. The fact that the linen shroud (one of the *othonia* of Jo 19,40) and the spices are explicitly mentioned in the Fourth Gospel, and the *petalon* isn’t, suggests that its anonymous author, the secret beloved disciple, was himself the one who offered it to Jesus. John Mark, as the very rich secretary of the Great Sanhedrin, may very well have been the executive who conferred such a breast plate to each new member of this council. In that case, when he put his own *petalon* on Jesus’ breast – where he expected it to remain, especially after they had sealed the grave (Mt 27,66) –, he knew how to get himself a new one, secretly.



### “your seal and its cord”

On the hologram Dr. Soons also found the presence of a certain object lying on the hand of the crucified man: one part that is visible looks like a rope or a rod, and another, cylindrical, part, at the other end, looks like an ampoule or bud or fruit, and two parts in the middle look like two leaves. A possible interpretation is that the object on the hand is a cylinder seal in a pendant, in the shape of a fruit bearing almond twig, the biblical sign of high priestly election (Nu 17,5-10). It seems attached to a cord as a necklace. Ge 38,18 has “your seal and its cord (‘pathiy1’)” NIVUS; for “cord” the Septuagint has *ormiskos* = creek, cf. the verb *ormizō* = anchor, place in a certain position, be suspended from (Bartelink, Greek-Dutch lexicon, 1978). “Graves and other sites housing precious items such as gold, silver, beads, and gemstones often included one or two cylinder seals, as honorific grave goods” (Wikipedia on Cylinder seal). For a

precious pierced stone cylinder seal of a priest with a silver knob on its top, see Grollenberg, *Kleine Atlas van de Bijbel*, 1973, 49 (cf. [www.lessing-photo.com/dispimg.asp?i=08021531+&cr=5&cl=1](http://www.lessing-photo.com/dispimg.asp?i=08021531+&cr=5&cl=1)). “The seal [of king Ahaz] ... was set in a metal bezel, either in a signet ring or in a pendant. ... The letters are small (the seal itself is only 2/5 of an inch wide), but they are of very high quality” ([www.archaeological-center.com/en/monographs/m1](http://www.archaeological-center.com/en/monographs/m1)). The rope-shaped object along the lower arm on the Shroud, of which on a certain photograph there even seem to be two ([www.youtube.com/watch?v=WRB16BARvz0](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WRB16BARvz0), at 01:56), and which seems to run up to the upper arm, then probably is the seal’s corresponding cord. The high priests sealed Jesus’ grave with a seal or mark (Mt 27,66). And John Mark, as the Great Sanhedrin’s secretary, must have had a seal, perhaps even that of the high priest himself. Joseph of Egypt received fine linen, a gold necklace, and a seal as signs of his ruling authority (Ge 41,42-43). And the reason why John Mark left his seal in Jesus’ grave? It wasn’t just the most appropriate honorific grave good for the Christ: it was also the ‘murder weapon’, the seal that had sealed Jesus’ fate, the proof that he, John Mark, had personally consented to Jesus’ death, as this seal’s impress was on the written verdict. Perhaps he wanted to get rid of it and get himself/the high priest another, different one.

### Conclusion

As my hypothesis about John Mark’s *sindōn* solves seven biblical enigmas all at once (buried “as is the burial custom of the Jews”, “rolled up in one place”, “saw and believed”, “remain until I come”, the why and the who of “the disciple whom He loved”, and the striking sudden end of Mark’s gospel), and as it is in accordance with both the Talmud (a ‘talith’ is a *sindōn*) and Christian tradition (John was “a priest wearing the *petalon*” and the grave cloth was given to “the servant of the priest”) and with the physical properties of the Turin Shroud (the apparel weave, the threads’ possibly sacerdotal “Z” twist, the first-century enlarged border and asymmetrically cut off corners (and fringes), no reinforcement or other stitching needed or done, the image-bearing starch impurities, the imageless curved crease, and the possible images of a *petalon* and a cylinder seal) and its possible names (*himation* and Mandylion), the hypothesis can’t be far from the historical truth. ■