Whoever put on a tallis when he was young will never forget:

taking it out of the soft velvet bag, opening the folded shawl,

spreading it out, kissing the length of the neckband (embroidered

or trimmed in gold). Then swinging it in a great swoop overhead

like a sky, a wedding canopy, a parachute. And then winding it

around his head as in Hide-and-Seek, wrappings.

his whole body in it, close and slow, snuggling into it like the cocoon

of a butterfly, then opening would-be wings to fly.

And why is the tallis striped and not checkered black and white

like a chessboard? Because squares are finite and hopeless.

Stripes come from infinity and to infinity they go|

like airport runways where angels land and take off

Whoever has put on a tallis will never forget.

When he comes out of a swimming pool or the sea,

he wraps himself in a large towel, spreads it out again

over his head, and again snuggles into it close and slow,

still shivering a little, and he laughs and blesses.

- Yehuda Amichai