

THE TEXT OF EXODUS
TRANSLATION

28 And bring thou near unto thee Aar-on thy brother, and his sons with him, from among the children of Is-ra-el, that he may minister unto me in the priest's office, even Aar-on, Na-dab and A-bi-hu, E-le-a-zar and Ith-a-mar, Aar-on's sons. (2) And thou shalt make holy garments for Aar-on thy brother, for glory and for beauty. (3) And thou shalt speak unto all that are wise-hearted, whom I have filled with the spirit of wisdom, that they make Aar-on's garments to sanctify him, that he may minister unto me in the priest's office. (4) And these are the garments which they shall make: a breast-plate, and an eph-od, and a robe, and a coat of checker work, a mitre, and a girdle: and they shall make holy garments for Aar-on thy brother, and his sons, that he may minister unto me in the priest's office. (5) And they shall take the gold, and the blue, and the purple, and the scarlet, and the fine linen.

(6) And they shall make the eph-od of gold, of blue, and purple, scarlet, and fine twisted linen, the work of the skilful workman. (7) It shall have two shoulder-pieces joined to the two ends thereof, that it may be joined together. (8) And the skilfully woven band, which is upon it, wherewith to gird it on, shall be like the work thereof *and* of the same piece; of gold, of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen. (9) And thou shalt take two onyx stones, and grave on them the names of the children of Is-ra-el: (10) six of their names on the one stone, and the names of the six that remain on the other stone, according to their birth. (11) With the work of an engraver in stone, like the engravings of a signet, shalt thou engrave the two stones, according to the names of the children of Is-ra-el: thou shalt make them to be inclosed in settings of gold. (12) And thou shalt put the two stones upon the shoulder-pieces of the eph-od, to be stones of memorial for the children of Is-ra-el: and Aar-on shall bear their names before Je-ho-vah upon his two shoulders for a memorial. (13) And thou shalt make settings of gold, (14) and two chains of pure gold; like

cords shalt thou make them, of wreathen work: and thou shalt put the wreathen chains on the settings.

(15) And thou shalt make a breastplate of judgment, the work of the skilful workman; like the work of the eph-od thou shalt make it; of gold, of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen, shalt thou make it. (16) Foursquare it shall be *and* double; a span shall be the length thereof, and a span the breadth thereof. (17) And thou shalt set in it settings of stones, four rows of stones: a row of sardius, topaz, and carbuncle shall be the first row; (18) and the second row an emerald, a sapphire, and a diamond; (19) and the third row a jacinth, an agate, and an amethyst; (20) and the fourth row a beryl, and an onyx, and a jasper: they shall be inclosed in gold in their settings. (21) And the stones shall be according to the names of the children of Is-ra-el, twelve, according to their names; like the engravings of a signet, every one according to his name, they shall be for the twelve tribes. (22) And thou shalt make upon the breastplate chains like cords, of wreathen work of pure gold. (23) And thou shalt make upon the breastplate two rings of gold, and shalt put the two rings on the two ends of the breastplate. (24) And thou shalt put the two wreathen chains of gold in the two rings at the ends of the breastplate. (25) And the *other* two ends of the two wreathen chains thou shalt put on the two settings, and put them on the shoulder-pieces of the eph-od in the forepart thereof. (26) And thou shalt make two rings of gold, and thou shalt put them upon the two ends of the breastplate, upon the edge thereof, which is toward the side of the eph-od inward. (27) And thou shalt make two rings of gold, and shalt put them on the two shoulder-pieces of the eph-od underneath, in the forepart thereof, close by the coupling thereof, above the skilfully woven hand of the eph-od. (28) And they shall bind the breastplate by the rings thereof unto the rings of the eph-od with a lace of blue, that it may be upon the skilfully woven band of the eph-od, and that the breastplate be not loosed from the eph-od. (29) And Aar-on shall bear the names of the children of Is-ra-el in the breastplate of judgment upon his heart, when he goeth in unto

the holy place, for a memorial before Je-ho-vah continually. (30) And thou shalt put in the breastplate of judgment the U-rim and the Thum-mim; and they shall be upon Aar-on's heart, when he goeth in before Je-ho-vah: and Aar-on shall bear the judgment of the children of Is-ra-el upon his heart before Je-ho-vah continually.

(31) And thou shalt make the robe of the eph-od all of blue.

(32) And it shall have a hole for the head in the midst thereof: it shall have a binding of woven work round about the hole of it, as it were the hole of a coat of mail, that it be not rent. (33) And upon the skirts of it thou shalt make pomegranates of blue, and of purple, and of scarlet, round about the skirts thereof; and bells of gold between them round about: (34) a golden bell and a pomegranate, a golden bell and a pomegranate, upon the skirts of the robe round about. (35) And it shall be upon Aar-on to minister: and the sound thereof shall be heard when he goeth in unto the holy place before Je-ho-vah, and when he cometh out, that he die not.

(36) And thou shalt make a plate of pure gold, and grave upon it, like the engravings of a signet, HOLY TO JE-HO-VAH. (37) And thou shalt put it on a lace of blue, and it shall be upon the mitre; upon the forefront of the mitre it shall be. (38) And it shall be upon Aar-on's forehead, and Aar-on shall bear the iniquity of the holy things, which the children of Is-ra-el shall hallow in all their holy gifts; and it shall be always upon his forehead, that they may be accepted before Je-ho-vah. (39) And thou shalt weave the coat in checker work of fine linen, and thou shalt make a mitre of fine linen, and thou shalt make a girdle, the work of the embroiderer.

(40) And for Aar-on's sons thou shalt make coats, and thou shalt make for them girdles, and head-tires shalt make for them, for glory and for beauty. (41) And thou shalt put them upon Aar-on thy brother, and upon his sons with him, and shalt anoint them, and consecrate them, and sanctify them, that they may minister unto me in the priest's office. (42) And thou shalt make them linen breeches to cover the flesh of their nakedness; from the loins even unto the thighs they shall

reach: (43) and they shall be upon Aar-on, and upon his sons, when they go in unto the tent of meeting, or when they come near unto the altar to minister in the holy place; that they bear not iniquity, and die: it shall be a statute for ever unto him and unto his seed after him.

EXPLORING EXODUS: CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT
QUESTIONS ANSWERABLE FROM THE BIBLE

1. After reading the chapter carefully, propose a very brief topic-title for it.
2. Who was to bring Aaron near and clothe him? (28:1, 2, 41)
3. What office were Aaron and his sons to have? (28:1)
4. Did Aaron take this office unto himself by volunteering? (Heb. 5:4)
5. Who is the Christian's high priest? (Heb. 4:14)
6. What other people are priests NOW? (I Peter 2:9; Rev. 1:6; 5:10)
7. Name Aaron's four sons. (Ex. 28:1)
8. What were two purposes of the priests' garments? (28:2, 40)
9. Who were to make Aaron's garments? (28:3; 31:2, 3, 10)
10. What were Aaron's garments to do for him? (28:3)
11. Name the six garments of Aaron. (28:4)
12. What materials went into the garments? (28:5)
13. Who contributed these materials? (35:4-9)
14. What materials went into the ephod? (28:6; 39:2, 3)
15. What part of the ephod went over the priest's shoulders? (28:7)
16. What was used to gird (or tie) the ephod on? (28:8)
17. What was placed on the shoulders, as part of the ephod? (28:12)
18. What was carved on the onyx stones on the shoulders? (28:9-11)

19. What class of men wore ephods? (I Sam. 22:18; I Sam. 2:18, 28; 14:3; 30:7; II Sam. 6:14)
 20. What was the breastplate said to be for? (28:15)
 21. What material was used to make the breastplate? (28:15)
 22. What was set upon the breastplate? (28:17-20)
 23. What was engraved on the stones of the breastplate? (28:21)
 24. To what was the breastplate tied? (28:26-28)
 25. What did Aaron bear on his heart? (28:29) What may this symbolize if we apply it to Christ?
 26. What was placed in the breastplate? (28:30)
 27. What was the purpose of these items? (28:30; Num. 27:21; I Sam. 28:6; Ezra 2:62, 63)
 28. What was Aaron to bear upon his heart as he wore the breastplate? (28:30)
 29. What was the color of the robe of the ephod? (28:31)
 30. What was upon the skirts of the robe of the ephod? (28:33, 34)
 31. How important were these items? (28:35)
 32. What was engraved upon a golden plate? (28:36)
 33. Where was the golden plate worn? (28:37, 38)
 34. Besides Aaron, what other priest is *holy*? (Heb. 7:26)
 35. What did Aaron bear? (28:38)
 36. What was the coat of Aaron made of? (28:39; 39:27)
 37. What was the mitre? (28:39; 39:28)
 38. What garments were made for Aaron's sons? (28:40)
 39. What four things was Moses to do to the priests? (28:42)
 40. What covered the naked flesh of the priests? (28:42)
 41. When were the priests to wear the linen breeches? (28:43). What might happen if they did not wear them? (Compare Ex. 20:26.)
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EXODUS TWENTY-EIGHT: HOLY GARMENTS! (28:2)

I. PEOPLE ASSOCIATED WITH THE HOLY GARMENTS; 28:1-5.

1. Aaron and his sons - To be priests. (28:1)
2. Moses - To make the garments and put them on the priests. (28:1, 2)
3. Wise-hearted men - To make the garments. (28:3-5)

II. PURPOSES OF THE HOLY GARMENTS

1. "For glory and beauty" (28:2, 40)
2. "To sanctify Aaron and his sons" (28:3)
3. "That he may minister unto me in the PRIEST'S office" (28:3, 4)

III. PLANS OF THE HOLY GARMENTS; 28:6-43.

1. The ephod; 28:6-14.
2. The breastplate; 28:15-30.
(Urim and Thummim; 28:30)
3. The robe of the ephod; 28:31-35.
4. The plate of gold; 28:36-38.
5. The coat, mitre, and girdle; 28:39.
6. Garments for Aaron's sons; 28:40, 41.
7. Linen breeches; 28:42, 43.

 PRIESTS APPOINTED BY GOD! (Ex. 28:3, 4)

1. Aaron - A type of Christ, our high priest; (Heb. 8:1-6)
 2. Aaron's sons - A type of Christians, who are priests unto God; (I Peter 2:9; Rev. 1:6).
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THE EPHOD! (28:6-14)

1. A garment distinctively for priests; (28:6; I Sam. 22:18; 2:28).

2. A garment of beauty and glory; (28:6, 8, 13).
(Christ, our priest, is glorious; Rev. 1:13-16; Phil. 3:21.)
 3. A garment for bearing the names of God's people; (28:9-12)
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THE PRIESTLY BREASTPLATE! (28:15-30)

I. Its purposes

1. For judgment; 28:15.
2. To contain the Urim and Thummim; 28:30.
3. To bear the names of the children of Israel; 28:29.

II. Its pattern

1. Made as a folded cloth pouch; 28:15, 16.
 2. Made of gold; 28:15, 20, 24.
 3. Adorned with gems; 28:17-20.
 4. Supported on golden chains; 28:22-28.
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ROBE OF THE EPHOD! (28:31-35)

1. Its blue color suggests the close connection of the priest to other blue things of the tabernacle. (25:4; 26:31; 27:16; Num. 4:6)
 2. Its seamless form suggests the robe of Christ. (John 19:23)
 3. Its bells suggest the public nature of Christ's work. (No secret priestly rituals)
 4. Its pomegranates suggest the beauty and fruitfulness which there is in Christ.
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THE GOLDEN PLATE - THE BADGE OF HOLINESS! (28:36-38)

1. By means of the plate of sinful priests became HOLINESS.
2. By means of the plate the priest bore the iniquity of the holy gifts presented by the people. (28:38)

3. By means of the plate the people and their gifts were accepted before the Lord!
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CLOTHES FOR AARON'S SONS! (28:40-43)

1. Resembled those of the high priest; (28:40)
(We also are dressed in the righteousness of Christ, our high priest. Phil. 3:9; Rom. 9:30)
 2. Provided the priests with glory and beauty.
(We also are changed from glory to glory. II Cor. 3:18)
 3. Covered their nakedness. (Ex. 28:42; Rev. 3:18)
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EXPLORING EXODUS: NOTES ON CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

1. *What is in Exodus twenty-eight?*

The chapter deals with the garments of the high priest and the other priests. We entitle the chapter "Holy Garments" (28:2). It forms an obvious unit of subject matter. The next chapter continues the instructions about the priesthood, but takes up the topic of their consecration ritual. The material in chapter twenty-eight is very similar to 39:1-31, where we read of the actual making of the garments.

2. *Who was to go get Aaron and make holy garments for him? (28:1, 2)*

Moses was to do this. The "thou" ("you") in 28:1 is stressed. Moses is made very prominent here as the mediator of God's covenant. God does His work through chosen, clearly-designated men.

Moses was to bring near unto himself from the midst of the children of Israel Aaron and his sons, so they might serve as priests unto God. The names of Aaron's four sons - Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar - appear

here together.

Nadab and Abihu had been mentioned in 24:1 as among those going up into the mount. They later died by fire during their consecration ritual (Lev. 10:1, 2). Aaron's sons Eleazar succeeded him as high priest (Num. 3:4; 20:25, 26). Still later the descendants of Ithamar became the high priests, from Eli through Abiathar (I Sam. 2:27, 28; I Kings 2:26, 27). After that time the descendants of Eleazar resumed the priesthood, from Zadok onward (I Chron. 6:8-15).

3. *What service were Aaron and his sons to perform? (28:1)*

They were to be *priests*. Note that they were *called*; they did not volunteer (Heb. 5:4). The priesthood was serious business, as we can see by the case of Nadab and Abihu (Lev. 10:1, 2).

The creation of a special hereditary priesthood was a new development in Israel. Up until this time priestly functions had been conducted by the head of each family or tribe, generally in accordance with the principle of the dedication of the firstborn son (Ex. 13:2; Num. 3:12, 13). We read of priests serving at various times and places - men like Melchizedek and Jethro. Job offered sacrifices for his family (Job 1:5). But if there was any continuity in the office of priest - as from father to son - we are not informed about it. Now the priesthood is to become an "established" order in Israel.

The duties of the priests included burning incense daily (30:7, 8; 27:21); keeping fire on the altar (Lev. 6:9-13); offering daily sacrifices (Ex. 29:38-44); blessing the people (Lev. 9:22; Num. 6:23-26); blowing the silver trumpets (Num. 10:8-10); testing for adultery (Num. 5); and teaching the people (Deut. 17:8; 19:17; 21:5).

Many scholars of a skeptical ("liberal") persuasion have set forth the idea that the whole priestly system did not originate until the Babylonian captivity or afterwards. This is part of the Wellhausen theory about a P (Priestly) source of some of the O.T. books. But even Martin Noth

(himself a rather extreme liberal) admits that P would not have written his account of Aaron and his garments purely from fantasy.¹ But while admitting that the priesthood is older than the time of the Babylonian captivity, they still think that the priesthood originated through the people's common reverence of holy men separated from usual worldly activities. Not so! The priesthood was established by divine choice.

Please remember that the whole religious system connected with the tabernacle, including the priesthood, was only a shadow and type of the heavenly realities (Heb. 10:1). Thus Aaron and his sons were only representations of the true eternal priesthood. God never planned that the priesthood from the tribe of Levi (Aaron's family) would be priests forever. God foretold that there would come a priest after the order and likeness of Melchizedek, who would be a priest forever (Psalm 110:4). This, of course, refers to our Lord Jesus Christ (Heb. 7:11-17). In the age of the "new covenant" under which we live, the preparatory symbolic religious system existing in the time of Moses has been replaced by the genuine heavenly realities themselves! Thus we are no longer under the priesthood of Aaron and his sons, but of Christ Jesus, of whom Aaron was only a foreshadowing.

Similarly Aaron's sons no longer function as lesser priests working with their father. All Christians are now God's priests. See I Peter 2:5; Rev. 1:6; 5:9, 10. We may all pray for ourselves and for others!

We must beware of religions like Roman Catholicism and its descendants, that set up a special class of individuals within the church as "priests." To adopt a system of having a special class of men as priests is to lapse back into the covenant of Moses! We live under a new and better covenant, with a better priesthood (Heb. 7:18-22). To

¹Exodus, p. 220.

revert to the system of the law of Moses is to revert to condemnation (Gal. 3:10; II Cor. 3:9).

4. *What were the purposes of the priests' garments?* (28:2-4)

They were for "glory and for beauty." God intended that His priests be prominent and glorious before the people. Also the garments were prepared "that he may minister unto me in the priest's office." It surely seems that in Aaron's case the clothes made the man! He was *invested* with his office, not created in it. Note that 28:2 refers to the garments as "holy garments" (or "garments of holiness").

5. *Who was to make the priestly garments?* (28:3)

"Wise-hearted" men. These wise-hearted men were the craftsmen Bezalel and Oholiab (Ex. 31:1-6). "Wise-hearted" in the Hebrew idiom meant able to enjoy skill and practical wisdom, as in artistic skill. (The R.S.V. rendering "endowed with an able mind" seems a rather weak rendering.)

6. *What were the garments of the priest?* (28:4)

Six items are listed: breastplate, ephod, robe, coat, mitre (or turban), and girdle (belt, or sash). Aaron's sons had only coats, girdles, and head covering. In addition, linen breeches (under-pants) were provided (28:42).

7. *What materials were used in the priests' clothing?* (28:5; 39:1)

The gold, blue (cloth), purple, scarlet, and fine linen were used. The use of the article *the* points to specific gold and specific cloth, namely that presented by the people (35:20-23).

8. *What was the ephod?* (28:6-8; 39:2-5)

The ephod was a cloth garment worn by the priest, and sometimes by others temporarily engaged in religious ceremonies.

The ephod worn by the high priest was very much more magnificent than those worn by others. See I Sam. 2:28; 14:2; 21:9; 23:6-9; 30:7. But we do read of common priests wearing ephods (I Sam. 22:18). The boy Samuel wore one

(although he was of the tribe of Levi [I Chron. 6:16, 28]). King David wore one when he brought up the ark to Jerusalem (II Sam. 6:14). References to the "ephod" of Gideon (Judges 8:27) and that of Micah (Judges 17:5) seem to be euphemisms for idols,² although that is not definite.

The ephod was made of gold wires (like threads), and of blue, purple, scarlet, and fine twisted linen. The gold was beaten into thin plates and then cut into fine wires and worked into the fabric (39:3). The ephod had the same material in it as the veil and the screen, except for the added gold threads and the absence of embroidered cherubim. The ephod was a spectacular garment.

The exact form of the ephod is rather uncertain. One view is that it was somewhat of a double apron, with one section over the front of the body and another section on the back. These were coupled at the shoulders by strips of cloth attached to the front section (28:25). These shoulder-pieces had upon them two engraved onyx stones resting upon the shoulders. A girdle at the waist held the two sections to the body.³ Compare 28:7 and 39:4. The ancient rabbis seemed to think the ephod had this general form and hung down to about the hips.

Another view of the form of the ephod is that it was sort of a loin-cloth, of one piece, held up by shoulder straps like suspenders, and having its two ends attached together in some way at the back of the body. The band (or girdle) of the ephod was a thicker, belt-like section of the ephod made of one piece with the rest of the garment (28:8). The ephod did not extend higher on the body than the waist. The band (girdle) of the ephod was of the same material as the rest of the ephod. The rings on the lower part of the breastplate (28:28) were attached to the band of the ephod.

²Cole, *op. cit.*, p. 200.

³Keil and Delitzsch, *op. cit.*, pp. 193-194, favor this view.

With some hesitancy we adopt this latter view.⁴ *Ancient Near East in Pictures* (Princeton, 1969), p. 66, shows male dancers in Egypt during the Old Kingdom (prior to Moses' time) wearing garments somewhat similar to ephods of this description.

The exact meaning of "two ends" in 28:7 is uncertain.

Josephus (*Ant.* III, vii, 5) said that the ephod was made with sleeves also, and did not appear to be made differently from a short coat. To us this idea does not seem to fit the scriptural information.

9. *What was on the shoulder-pieces of the ephod?* (28:9-14; 39:6, 7)

Two onyx stones were on the shoulders, each engraved with names of the sons of Jacob. Six names were on one stone and six on the other, listed in the order of their births. The names were engraved with the type of engraving used on signets. (A "signet" was a seal, or stamp. These were made of stone or other hard material. They were often shaped like small cylinders about the size of a little finger, with carvings around them. Others were like pebbles with one flat side, and had a carving of a name or figure on the flat face, which was used to stamp an impression on a soft clay tablet.)

The onyx stones were enclosed in setting (K.J.V., "ouches") (or frames) of gold. These settings were of "wreathen" work, which was gold wire twisted to form sort of a chain (28:13, 14). The breastplate was fastened from its top side to these settings (28:25).

The exact function of two chains attached to the settings of the onyx stones (28:14) is not stated. Keil and Delitzsch⁵ think they were the same chains as those extending up from the top of the breastplate to the settings. (See notes on 28:24 below). Others feel that they held the two sections of the ephod together at the shoulders.

⁴Cassuto, *op. cit.*, p. 373, holds this view.

⁵*Op. cit.*, p. 197.

We do not know for certain what type of gemstone is referred to as "onyx" here (Heb. *shocham*). According to the Greek LXX they were emeralds. Josephus (*Ant.* III, vii, 5) called them sardonyx, which is the best variety of onyx. Harkavy's *Lexicon* suggests that they may have been a beryl.

10. *What was the purpose of the onyx stones and the ephod?* (28:12)

By means of the inscribed shoulder stones Aaron bore the names of the children of Israel before Jehovah for a "memorial." They were "stones of memorial" for the children of Israel.

The term *memorial* is a sacrificial term referring to that which brings the one remembered into favorable remembrance before God. See Ex. 30:16.

It is a delight to our souls to meditate upon the fact that Christ, though he does not wear an ephod made by hands, bears our names before the Father for a memorial. He causes us to be remembered with favor before the Father, and not as we deserve to be remembered. The Lord Jesus is our ADVOCATE with the father (I John 2:1).

The ephod was a garment associated with holy men, with priests. The ephod of Aaron was designed so that he carried about the names of God's people. Similarly Christ is plainly set forth before our minds as the holy priest of God, and one who bears our names before God.

11. *What was the form of the breastplate?* (28:15, 16; 39:8, 9)

Basically it was a folded cloth, forming sort of a pouch, decorated with 12 inscribed gemstones, and worn on Aaron's chest.

It was made of the same gold and fabric material as the ephod (28:6). It was square and doubled, that is, folded double. It was a span each way, about nine inches square. We suppose that it was two spans long and one wide, but when folded double it was a span square. Four rows of jewels were set upon it.

It appears that the fold was at its bottom, so as to form

a kind of pouch to hold the Urim and Thummim (28:30).

The translation "breastplate" is only an interpretation, because we do not know for certain what the Hebrew word *chosen* (translated "breastplate") meant.

12. *What was upon the breastplate?* (28:17-21; 39:10-14)

There was a "setting" (Hebrew, "filling") for stones. In the Hebrew the word for "setting" is singular, suggesting one large setting holding all the gems. However, verse twenty plainly refers to "settings" (plural), showing that the "setting" was a collective plural word.⁶

In the settings were twelve gems, arranged in four rows, and having the names of the twelve sons of Israel engraved upon them, much as the names were engraved upon the onyx stones worn upon the shoulders.

13. *What gemstones were set on the breastplate?* (28:17-19)

The Hebrew names of the gemstones are hard to link positively with modern names of gemstones. The topaz is probably a correct identification. It is a golden yellow gemstone. The blue sapphire is known. The "diamond" is named in several English versions, but there is no indication that the ancients were either acquainted with this stone or had acquired the skill to engrave upon it. The amethyst is probably a correct identification. It is purple.

The Greek LXX renderings of the Hebrew words probably carry no great authority in identifying the stones. But it is interesting that eight of the twelve stones named in the Greek LXX as being on the priest's breastplate are mentioned as adornments of the foundations of the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:19, 20).

14. *What held the breastplate in place?* (28:22-28; 39:15-21)⁷

⁶Noth, *op. cit.*, p. 222 refers to a rectangular golden breastplate set with precious stones and found at Byblos. It dates from the Middle Bronze (about 1700 B.C.). It hung from a golden chain. Thus it slightly resembled the ephod of Aaron. Nonetheless, we do not feel that it resembled the breastplate of Aaron closely enough to indicate any real relationship between the two, since Aaron's breastplate had the gems in individual settings.

⁷The Greek LXX uses the 29th verse from the Hebrew text as verse 23. To us this
(Continued on next page.)

It was bound to the settings of the onyx stones on the shoulders by chains. Its bottom was tied to the girdle of the ephod.

"Chains" of "wreathen" (twisted) gold wire were attached to two gold rings at the upper corners of the breastplate. The ends of the chains were attached to the gold settings holding the onyx stones on the shoulder-pieces of the ephod.

Keil and Delitzsch⁸ maintain that the chains mentioned in 28:14 are the same chains as those of 28:22. The chains are mentioned only *once* in the account of the execution of the work in 39:15. Also the chains in both verses are said to be attached to the gold settings on the shoulders. If the chains in the two verses are not really one and the same, then no function is ascribed to those of 28:14. To us this seems true.

The lower corners of the breastplate (as folded double) had gold rings on the inner side. Then two more rings were placed on the shoulder-pieces of the ephod, evidently near their lower parts over the abdomen (28:6, 7). Then with a "lace" (probably a thread, cord, or line) of blue, the rings on the girdle of the ephod were tied to the lower rings on the breastplate. (Note that the shoulder-pieces [or straps] of the ephod extended downward to the bottom of the breastplate, probably near the waist.)

15. *What was the function of the breastplate? (28:29)*

By means of the breastplate Aaron bore the names of the children of Israel for a memorial before the LORD continually when he went into the Holy place. The priest represented ALL Israel, as indicated by the twelve stones on the breastplate. Regarding *memorial*, see notes on 28:12.

seems to break the continuity of subject matter about the construction of the breastplate as given in 28:22-28.

Also the Greek LXX omits 28:26-29 of the Hebrew (Masoretic) text. This causes omission of the information as to how the breastplate was attached to the shoulder-pieces of the ephod. Also it modifies the numbering of the following verses. We doubt the accuracy of the LXX here.

⁸*Op. cit.*, p. 197.

We know of no symbol that more vividly pictures how Christ our high priest bears us about upon His heart than the breastplate of Aaron! We are "graven upon the palms of thy hands" (Isa. 49:16).

Also the very use of gemstones is suggestive and comforting. God's people are His jewels (or possession, or treasure) (Mal. 3:17).

Also the fact that the breastplate was for *judgment* (28:15) is a pleasing idea. The word for *judgment* (*mishpat*) was used in 21:1 to refer to God's ordinances. Its use in connection with the breastplate therefore suggests that the priest is the communicator of divine truths (judgments, ordinances). Indeed Christ Jesus is the priest who revealed God's judgments to us, and will finally be the judge of all. See John 8:26! Luke 2:35; Acts 10:42.

16. *What was in the breastplate?* (28:30)

The Urim and Thummim were in it. These objects, whatever they were, were to be upon Aaron's heart when he went in to Jehovah's presence in the Holy place. By the presence of the breastplate and the Urim and Thummim, Aaron bore upon his heart continually the *judgment* of the children of Israel. This may include both bearing their guilt (compare Deut. 1:37), and interceding for Israel in prayer.

The Urim and Thummim functioned as means for discerning facts about the will of God not otherwise knowable. No one knows exactly what they consisted of.

"Urim and Thummim" are Hebrew words transliterated. Most Bibles do not attempt to translate the terms because of the uncertainty about their meaning. "Urim and Thummim" quite literally mean "lights and perfections." The Greek LXX rendered them as "revelation and truth." Symmachus' Greek translation gave a better rendering, "illumination and completion."

The function of the Urim and Thummim is illustrated by Numbers 27:21, where Joshua was instructed to inquire (seek God for unrevealed information) before the priest

Eleazar through the Urim and Thummim. (This does not indicate that the Urim and Thummim had magical power in themselves, but only that God used these items as a vehicle for his truth.)

From the way the Urim and Thummim are spoken of here in Exodus and in Lev. 8:8, it appears that they were some material things, previously existing, and familiarly known. They were separate from the breastplate itself,⁹ as well as from the gems upon the breastplate. Moses was not told to *make* the Urim and Thummim, but just to put them in the breastplate. The Urim and Thummim were considered to be the crowning glory of the tribe of Levi (Deut. 33:8). Inasmuch as the Urim is called the "Urim of judgment" in Num. 27:21, it is appropriate that it was placed in the "breastplate of judgment."

King Saul could get no answer from the Lord by Urim and Thummim or by dreams and prophets (I Sam. 28:6). In the days after the return from Babylonian captivity, the Urim and Thummim were lacking, but men still sought to locate them (Ezra 2:62, 63).

Guesses as to the nature of the Urim and Thummim are legion. Since *Urim* starts (in Hebrew) with the first letter of the alphabet and *Thummim* with the last, they may contain a reference to the nature of God as the alpha and omega (the A and Z), whose will they revealed.¹⁰

The most common opinion is that the Urim and Thummim were two sacred lots (something like dice). Compare I Sam. 14:21. However, this is not positively asserted anywhere.

In those cases in the O.T. when men inquired of the Lord for needed revelations of information, it was the kings or leaders who sought the Lord. This makes it appear

⁹Josephus identified the Urim and Thummim with the stones on the breastplate, which he reports as shining with great light and splendor when Israel marched to victory in battle. *Ant.* III, viii, 9.

¹⁰Cole, *op. cit.*, p. 201.

that the use of Urim and Thummim was limited to questions from the leaders of the people. Note Num. 27:21; I Sam. 14:37, 38; I Sam. 23:2; 30:7, 8; Judges 1:1, 2; 20:18, 23, 27, 28.

Also it does seem to be true that questions asked of the Urim and Thummim were so framed that they could be answered by a Yes or a No, or by a choice between two things.

These facts have led numerous scholars to feel that the Urim and Thummim were two lots. Some have speculated that the Urim and Thummim had a *yes* side and a *no* side, and that rolling two *yes*'s meant *yes*, while two *no*'s meant *no*, and a divided answer meant that no answer was given.¹¹ Certainly lots were in that age directed by the Lord. See Proverbs 16:33. Nonetheless, we still find ourselves unconvinced that Urim and Thummim were lots.

We never read of the presence of Urim and Thummim after the time of King Saul. But the time of and reason for their disappearance still remain mysteries.

The Urim and Thummim are another illustration of the fact that God is a revealer of secrets to His people. See Daniel 2:19, 22. But this does not indicate that we have a right to demand and expect God to reveal the secrets of His government to us at all times. We must be content with what He has already revealed. "The secret things belong unto the LORD our God; but the things that are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law" (Deut. 29:29).

17. *What was the robe of the ephod like?* (28:31, 32; 39:22-24)

This robe seems to have been like a sleeveless dress. It seems to have been worn under the breastplate and ephod, although this is not actually stated. It was all of blue cloth. The hole for the priest's head to pass through was rimmed with a woven border to strengthen it, so that

¹¹Compare Ramm, *op. cit.*, p. 166.

it would not become ripped at that point. The translation "habergeon" or "coat of mail" is "not beyond doubt" (to quote Cassuto) To us it seems very doubtful, indeed, and much more applicable to a medieval knight's armor than to priestly garments in the time of Moses.

The pullover robe of one piece reminds us of Christ's seamless robe. John's reference to Christ's robe seems almost an indirect reference to Christ's high priestly office. (John 19:23).

18. *What was at the bottom of the robe of the ephod?* (28:33-35; 39:25, 26)

Placed at the bottom of the skirt of the robe were alternating pomegranates and golden bells. The pomegranates were of blue, purple, and scarlet. Pomegranates are fruit about the size of oranges, bright red in color, with juicy red seeds arranged in rows parallel to the core. They have on their outside, at the end of the core where the flower was, short, pointed, calyx-like projections of tissue (like the skin of the fruit). These give the pomegranate a distinctive form and appearance.

Some have suggested that the pomegranates on the robe of the ephod were only embroidered onto the cloth of the robe. Certainly pomegranates do not naturally come in blue and purple colors. Still the fact that the golden bells were solid (and ringing!) objects and that the bells hung "between" the pomegranates (Heb., "in the midst of them") makes us feel that the pomegranates were solid material dangling like bobbles from the robe. The book of Ecclesiasticus (45:9) refers to the glory of Aaron's pomegranates and bells.

The bells provided *sound* to be heard when Aaron ministered in the Holy place before Jehovah and when he came out. This making of sound was essential to Aaron "that we die not." The scripture does not state why the bell-ringing was considered so essential. Some think it was simply a means of announcing Aaron's coming before God. If that is so, the announcement was to alert the *people*

about Aaron's activity, not to alert God that Aaron was about to enter. The ringing made the worshippers conscious that the priest was ministering in their behalf in God's presence. The ringing-forth conveyed the impression that Aaron's work was something that everyone was to know about and feel himself involved in.

The same effect of making all men aware of God's work in their midst is still necessary. See Eph. 3:9. Whether we ring out the news by bells, publish it on paper, preach it from the housetops, men still need to know that God's priest is at work for them.

19. *What object was placed on the high priest's head covering? (28:36-38; 39:30, 31)*

A plate of PURE gold inscribed with the words HOLINESS TO YAHWEH was placed on the front of Aaron's turban.

This plate was placed upon a lace (or cord, thread, line) of blue. Then the plate and its backing of lace were placed upon the mitre (or turban.) (See 28:39). Thus it was kept upon Aaron's forehead.

It appears to us that the K.J.V. translation HOLINESS TO THE LORD is preferable to "Holy to the LORD." The Hebrew word *QODESH* is a noun. Admittedly it is frequently used as an adjective, as in "holy ground" (literally, "ground of holiness"; Ex. 3:5) or "holy city" ("city of holiness"; Isa. 48:2). But the use of the word here without a closely preceding noun that it modifies indicates that it should be taken as a noun, "holiness." The Greek LXX renders it as *hagiasma*, "Holiness of the Lord."

The gold plate testified that Aaron was wholly holy.

By wearing this plate Aaron was qualified by God to bear the iniquity of the holy things which the children of Israel presented to the LORD in all of their holy gifts. These "gifts" seem to refer to all their sacrifices, free-will offerings, and such. Even upon these gifts to God there was a stain from the iniquity of the donors, and possibly from the very curse of Adam (Haggai 2:12-14; Gen. 3:17).

Every thing that they offered was unclean. But the fact that a HOLY priest presented their gifts caused the people to be accepted.

These facts should cause us to thank the LORD that Jesus our priest is the HOLY ONE OF GOD! (John 6:69; Rev. 3:7; Heb. 7:26; Luke 1:35). Without a holy and undefiled priest like him, we could present nothing as acceptable to God, neither ourselves nor our gifts.

Aaron's holiness was, admittedly, more in label than in fact. But God in His grace accepted Aaron and accepted the people's gifts given through him.

The Hebrew word (*tsits*) translated "plate" may also be translated "blossom," "flower," or "crown." The N.E.B. renders it "rosette." We do not see clear indication that the golden plate worn by Aaron was flower-shaped.

20. *Which priestly garments are very briefly mentioned? (28:39; 39:27-29)*

(1) the *coat* of Aaron, his *mitre* (turban), and *girdle* (sash, or belt).

The "coat" was made of fine linen, woven in "checker work." This term does not necessarily imply that it was sewn in squares like a checker-board, but it does imply that it was in some way sewn and "quilted" together. It was the priest's inner garment. It seems that the robe of the ephod, the ephod, and the breastplate were all worn outside of it.

Josephus (*Ant.* III, 7, 2) says that the inner vestment (the coat) reached down to the feet, and was close to the body, and had sleeves tied fast to the arms. He says further that it was embroidered with flowers of scarlet, purple and blue, and hung loosely down to the ankles, and was tied about the waist. This is interesting information, but is not one hundred percent certain.

The mitre, or turban, was also made of fine linen. It appears to have been a long band of cloth, wrapped in swathes about the head. The Talmud suggests that the turban had sixteen cubits (24 feet!) of material in it.

Compare Josephus, *Ant.* III, 7, 3. The gold plate was attached to the front of it.

The "girdle" of 28:39 appears to have been that which held snug the coat referred to in the same verse. If so, it was concealed by the robe of the ephod. The word translated "girdle" in 28:39 is a different word from that translated "girdle" (or band) in 28:8. We feel they refer to entirely distinct items.

21. *What priestly garments were prepared for Aaron's sons?* (28:40; 39:27-29)

Three garments are named: coats, girdles, and head-tires.

These garments were "for glory and beauty," as were the garments of their father Aaron, the high priest. (28:2).

The priests' coats were made of fine linen, of woven work. Their mitres (turbans) were also of fine twisted linen. The mitres were "goodly." Their girdles were of fine twisted linen, blue, purple, and scarlet, the work of the embroiderer. See 39:28, 29.

While these garments of cloth adorned the flesh of the priests, they were to have a better clothing:

"Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness; . . .

Her priests will I clothe with salvation." (Psalm 132:9, 16)

The word translated "head-tires" (K.J.V. "bonnets") is not the word translated "mitre" in 28:39. This word rendered "head-tires" occurs only four times in the O.T., and refers exclusively to the dress of the priests. It is derived from a verb meaning "to be high." This hints that these head-coverings were large and prominent.

No shoes for the priests' feet are mentioned. We suppose that they ministered barefooted. Compare Joshua 5:15 and Ex. 3:5.

22. *Who was to clothe the priests?* (28:41)

Moses was to clothe them, both Aaron and his sons. Compare 28:2; 29:5-7; Lev. 8:7. Moses was also to anoint them by pouring oil upon their heads, and to consecrate them. To "consecrate" means, quite literally, "to fill the

hands." This idiom is very suggestive of the fact that the priests' hands were to be filled with the Lord's service. However, as an idiom, it seems to mean only "to install." (Compare Cassuto, *op. cit.*, p. 386.) "To sanctify" means "to set apart to holy use."

23. *What innermost garments were provided for the priests?* (28:42, 43; 39:28)

Moses was to make for them linen breeches to cover the flesh of their nakedness. These covered from the loins (abdomen) to the thighs. These were to be worn beneath all other garments whenever they came near to the altar in the Holy place. Failure to wear these could cause them to "bear iniquity," (that is, to suffer the punishment of iniquity) and die! This was to be a law for the priests forever.

Modesty was required in God's priests. Compare Ex. 20:26. It is worthy of notice that Moses put upon the priests all of their garments except these linen inner breeches. See Lev. 8:13; Ex. 29:5.

THE TEXT OF EXODUS
TRANSLATION

29 And this is the thing that thou shalt do unto them to hallow them, to minister unto me in the priest's office: take one young bullock and two rams without blemish, (2) and unleavened bread, and cakes unleavened mingled with oil, and wafers unleavened anointed with oil: of fine wheaten flour shalt thou make them. (3) And thou shalt put them into one basket, and bring them in the basket, with the bullock and the two rams. (4) And Aar-on and his sons thou shalt bring unto the door of the tent of meeting, and shalt wash them with water. (5) And thou shalt take the garments, and put