

PRIEST'S GARMENTS EXODUS 28:2-43

Having established the fact that Aaron and his sons were going to be the priests serving Yahweh in the Tabernacle, Moses was commanded to have their garments made according to the pattern God provided. The basic garments for all the priests was the same, but the High Priest's garments had some accoutrements the other priests did not have. At this point, all four of Aaron's sons are alive and included in the command. Later, Nadab and Abihu would be killed by Yahweh for abusing the privileges of their office by offering strange fire before the Lord in violation of His commands.

Exodus 28:2 ²“You shall make holy [קֹדֶשׁ] garments [בְּגָדִים] for Aaron your brother, for glory [כְּבוֹד] and for beauty [תְּפָאֳרֵת].

Garments, בְּגָדִים, means garments or clothes; in this context, it is referring to the sanctified clothing the priests were to wear in the administration of their priestly duties in the Tabernacle. Holy, קֹדֶשׁ, means a holy thing, holiness, and sacredness. It refers to something consecrated and set aside for sacred use only; it was not to be put into common use which would profane it and render it unfit for the purpose for which it was put into use. No one but the priests could wear clothes like these and no one but the High Priest could wear the accoutrements that were specific to his office.

If there are specifically stated prohibitions against anyone other than a priest about wearing a priest's clothing, I didn't find it. Only a Jew in rebellion

against God would make and wear one. It probably didn't need to be said; most Israelites probably recognized that would be a serious breach of covenant conduct. In contrast, the people were specifically told not to use the Tabernacle formula for incense to make perfume for themselves. If they did, they would be cut off from the community (Ex. 30:38). How much less then would it be for those attempting to usurp the priest's prerogatives?

Glory, *קְבוֹד*, means honor, glory, and majesty. The priesthood was not only meant to glorify God among the Israelites, as His priests, they were to present a picture of God's glory to the world. Their dress was meant to set them apart, glorify their God, and represent Him to the world. Beauty, *תְּפִאֲרֹת*, means beauty or glory and it represents the same idea that glory represents. It is not unusual for pagan religious figures to be clothed with garments that are not what could be termed "normal" clothing, but something about the Israelite priest's clothing set them apart and simply by their "look" glorified God. If that "look" glorified God, then something about it must have set them apart from pagan priests. Some commentators believe only kings dressed this ornately and elaborately; therefore, the priest's clothing emphasized the great God they were representing.

The clothing the priests wore also had functional purposes not the least of which is the clothing covered their nakedness. The length of the robes would have allowed them to go up to the Temple altar without exposing themselves although that would not have been a consideration with the altar in the Tabernacle because they didn't need to ascend up to tend it. Their clothing signified

being set apart, that is, it represented holiness and sanctification, but as sinful men, they were not experientially holy and sanctified. Their clothing served as a covering for their sinful flesh as they ministered in the presence of a completely holy God.

Moses had a group of skilled craftsmen capable of creating the garments and the adornments the High Priest wore. These men would be granted the “spirit of wisdom” to assist them in making these things according to the pattern God showed Moses on the mountain.

Exodus 28:3 ³“You shall speak to all the skillful [הַכֹּהֲנִים] persons whom I have endowed [מָלֵא] with the spirit of wisdom, that they make Aaron's garments to consecrate [קִדְּשׁוּ] him, that he may minister [יִשְׁתָּחֲוֶה] as priest to Me.

Skillful, הַכֹּהֲנִים, refers to a person who is skilled or experienced. In this context, it is pertaining to the knowledge of a craftsman in some technical work requiring skill to complete. These were men who possessed the skills to accomplish their assigned tasks, but additionally, God blessed them with the spirit of wisdom. Endowed, מָלֵא, in this context means to fill. Almost all of the English translations translate this word as “filled” and the text clearly reveals that God filled them with wisdom which was in addition to the skills they had already developed. This seems to be the equivalent thought in relation to the New Testament concept of being filled with the Spirit. If so, this is the first such mention of being filled in the Bible. These men, skilled craftsmen all, had divine guidance to insure their work was completed as Yahweh intended it to be and that it was of the highest quality befitting the God they represented.

Consecrate, קִדַּשׁ, has numerous meanings relating to holiness. Here, it refers to being set apart or sanctified in service to Yahweh. In this verse, it is specifically referring to the High Priest, Aaron, but all the priests would go through a consecration ceremony before they could begin serving in the Tabernacle. Minister, שָׁמַר, simply means to serve as a priest.

The picture we have here is of Aaron and his sons being set apart for service to Yahweh in His designated place of worship in order to represent the Israelites before Him and to perform the duties necessary to service the articles of worship in the sanctuary and in the outer court. Their clothing would represent the holiness of their position and of their God.

Next, the instructions for the various garments were issued although what is mentioned here is not exhaustive.

Exodus 28:4–5 4“These are the garments which they shall make: a breastpiece and an ephod and a robe and a tunic of checkered work, a turban and a sash, and they shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother and his sons, that he may minister as priest to Me. 5“They shall take the gold and the blue and the purple and the scarlet *material* and the fine linen.

The woven cloth is the same cloth that was used for the veil between the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place, for the entrance to the sanctuary, and for the entrance to the Tabernacle courtyard. The fine linen is the same material that was used along with the woven cloth to make part of the sanctuary roof.

The first garment made was for the High Priest alone and that was the ephod.

Exodus 28:6–14 6“They shall also make the ephod [אֵפֹד] of gold, of blue and purple and scarlet material and fine twisted linen, the work of the skillful workman. 7“It shall have two shoulder pieces joined to its two ends, that it may be joined. 8“The skillfully woven band, which is on it, shall be like its workmanship, of the same material: of gold, of blue and purple and scarlet material and fine twisted linen. 9“You shall take two onyx stones and engrave on them the names of the sons of Israel, 10six of their names on the one stone and the names of the remaining six on the other stone, according to their birth. 11“As a jeweler engraves a signet, you shall engrave the two stones according to the names of the sons of Israel; you shall set them in filigree [מִשְׁבָּּוֹת] settings of gold. 12“You shall put the two stones on the shoulder pieces of the ephod, as stones of memorial [זִכְרוֹן] for the sons of Israel, and Aaron shall bear their names before the LORD on his two shoulders for a memorial. 13“You shall make filigree settings of gold, 14and two chains of pure gold; you shall make them of twisted cordage work, and you shall put the corded chains on the filigree settings.

Ephod, אֵפֹד, refers to the coat of a priest; a garment to aid priestly service and to adorn the priest. Many theologians want to connect this vestment only with the High Priest, but linen ephods were used by the other priests. This particular type was one of a kind and only for the High Priest. Many also want to connect the ephod and the breastplate such that they are one item, but they are not. One lexicon, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament*, specifically identified the stones as part of the ephod, but that is incorrect. Both are together referred to as the ephod in the Scriptures, but they are separate and should be thought of in that way. The ephod was an outer garment that hung from shoulder to thigh. It wasn't an appropriate stand-alone garment; it was an outer garment. Ephods were worn by pagan priests as well, but this ephod was distinct from all others and served as another element that set Israel apart from all others.

With the exception of Samuel and David, linen ephods were connected to the priesthood. Samuel, not of the priestly line but raised by the High Priest, wore one as a child in the Tabernacle and David danced in the streets of Jerusalem wearing one. These ephods were simply a linen garment apparently without adornment and could not have been mistaken for the elaborate ephod of the High Priest. They may have covered the priests and been suitable as an outer garment for them, but the High Priest's ephod was open on the sides and was not suitable as a covering. The High Priest's ephod was a one and only design and meant for only the man holding that office.

1 Samuel 2:18 ¹⁸Now Samuel was ministering before the LORD, as a boy wearing a linen ephod.

1 Samuel 22:18 ¹⁸Then the king said to Doeg, "You turn around and attack the priests." And Doeg the Edomite turned around and attacked the priests, and he killed that day eighty-five men who wore the linen ephod.

2 Samuel 6:14 ¹⁴And David was dancing before the LORD with all *his* might, and David was wearing a linen ephod.

Neither Samuel nor David were priests nor were they eligible for the Aaronic priesthood, yet they wore linen ephods. Samuel, as a child, was apparently allowed to wear the ephod of a priest by Eli. It would be reasonable to suggest wearing an ephod was connected to religious service and the priesthood despite these two apparent exceptions.

Israelites who rebelled against God created their own ephods in order to worship in their own way. Micah, an Israelite of the tribe of Ephraim, made his own ephod and basically created his own idolatrous worship system of sorts that

he eventually entrusted to a Levite as his priest. Gideon, an Israelite from the tribe of Manasseh, made an ephod that became an object of idolatrous worship.

Judges 17:5 ⁵And the man Micah had a shrine and he made an ephod and household idols and consecrated one of his sons, that he might become his priest.

Judges 8:27 ²⁷Gideon made it into an ephod, and placed it in his city, Ophrah, and all Israel played the harlot with it there, so that it became a snare to Gideon and his household.

Twice David asked for the ephod to be brought into his presence in order to determine the Lord's will presumably by using the Urim and Thummim housed in the breastpiece, but the text doesn't say that. This is where we see the combining of the two, the ephod and the breastplate, into one. You need to recognize the fact the Bible makes that connection between the two, but they are two separate pieces one only loosely joined to the other.

1 Samuel 23:9 ⁹Now David knew that Saul was plotting evil against him; so he said to Abiathar the priest, "Bring the ephod here."

1 Samuel 30:7 ⁷Then David said to Abiathar the priest, the son of Ahimelech, "Please bring me the ephod." So Abiathar brought the ephod to David.

The ephod was joined at the shoulder front and back and it was open at the sides. It must have been two pieces which were attached by a strap over shoulders and joined to the edges of the front and back pieces and held in place by a girdle or belt around the waist and knotted in front. The text seems to indicate the straps were woven as integral parts of the front and back. The gir-

dle kept the ephod tight to the body and it was the same material as the ephod.

Attached to the shoulders were two gold filigrees or settings in which onyx stones were set. Six names of the Israelite tribes were engraved on one stone and the other six names were engraved on the second stone. They were engraved in the order of their birth although we don't know which six went on which shoulder. Filigree, מִשְׁבָּצוֹת, refers to a "lace-like ornamental work of intertwined wire made of gold, silver, copper, or bronze to receive settings of precious jewels."¹ These stones were to serve as a "memorial for the sons of Israel" before Yahweh every time Aaron wore that garment into the sanctuary. Memorial, זִכָּרוֹן, refers to a memorial or a commemoration in the form of a place or an object to remind one of something that has particular significance. It may have been more of a memorial for the Israelites than for Yahweh; He didn't need a memorial. Every time the High Priest went into the Holy Place, the Israelites knew the names of Jacob's sons were in His presence.

Two chains of gold were attached to the filigrees either to adorn it or to serve as the chains used to fasten the upper corners of the breastpiece to the filigrees. Whether or not these chains served any kind of fastening function for the filigrees to the ephod's shoulder straps seems to be doubtful because they needed to be secure enough to prevent swinging around on the shoulders. It apparently needed to be anchored firmly enough to hold the weight of the

¹ Warren Baker and Eugene Carpenter, s.v. "מִשְׁבָּצוֹת," *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG, 2003), 676.

breastpiece which was to be attached to it by gold chains and keep it in place on the High Priest's chest.

The next piece constructed and worn only by the High Priest was the breastpiece. It served two purposes. First, it represented the twelve tribes of Israel and second, it was a pouch for holding the Urim and Thummim.

Exodus 28:15–16 ¹⁵“You shall make a breastpiece of judgment [הַחֹשֶׁן מִשְׁפָּטִים], the work of a skillful workman; like the work of the ephod you shall make it: of gold, of blue and purple and scarlet *material* and fine twisted linen you shall make it. ¹⁶“It shall be square *and* folded double, a span [זַרְתָּ] in length and a span in width.

The breastpiece was made of the same material from which the sanctuary veil and screen were made and this was the same material from which the ephod was constructed. It was a span in width and height. Span, זַרְתָּ, is a Hebrew measurement of ½ cubit or 9 inches. It was doubled over so a pouch was formed on the back side which was used for storing the Urim and Thummim. This provided a surface area of 81 square inches. The twelve stones engraved with the names of the twelve tribes were fastened to the front of it.

It was called a “breastpiece of judgment” [הַחֹשֶׁן מִשְׁפָּטִים]. Given the fact the Urim and Thummim were stored in the breastpiece, this may have been better if rendered “breastpiece of decision” rather than judgment. The TANAKH and the HCSB read that way and the NET Bible translates it “a breastpiece used for making decisions.” Decision, מִשְׁפָּט, means a judgment or a legal decision. In this con-

text, it refers to a decision or judgment rendered by God as revealed to the Israelites through the use of the Urim and Thummim.

The next set of instructions concerned the stones.

Exodus 28:17–21 17“*You shall mount on it four rows of stones; the first row shall be a row of ruby, topaz and emerald; 18and the second row a turquoise, a sapphire and a diamond; 19and the third row a jacinth, an agate and an amethyst; 20and the fourth row a beryl and an onyx and a jasper; they shall be set in gold filigree. 21“The stones shall be according to the names of the sons of Israel: twelve, according to their names; they shall be like the engravings of a seal, each according to his name for the twelve tribes.*

Each of the twelve stones was a different kind of stone. No one knows exactly what these stones were. The various translations represent a lack of consensus about what stones are actually named in the text. Four of the stones do have a consensus but eight do not among the five translations I compared: the NASB, NKJV, HCSB, the NET Bible, and the TANAKH. The four stones all agree on are turquoise, sapphire, agate, and jasper, but when enough translations are examined the consensus for these fades as well. Every word used for these stones has been translated to refer to more than one kind of stone. For example, the word translated diamond, יָהֲלֹם, has also been translated to mean emerald, moonstone, amethyst, jasper, beryl, and jade. The word translated ruby, אֶבֶן, simply means a stone or a piece of rock.

We also do not know whether or not each of these stones had any particular meaning to the individual tribes inscribed on each one. We do that today with the concept of birth stones, but somebody just made that up—probably to

sell jewelry. If there is any significance to these stones in connection with the tribes, the text doesn't reveal it.

On the PowerPoint slide, I have two different representations of the twelve stones. They both show different stones arranged different ways and the names are arranged in different orders. In fact, the names are not the same from one to the other. The set on the left omits Levi and Joseph and adds Manasseh and Ephraim. That could make sense because Levi was represented with the twelve in the person of the High Priest and Joseph was represented by his two sons. Israel adopted those two sons in Egypt and together they were considered to be the tribe of Joseph.

Genesis 48:5⁵“Now your two sons, who were born to you in the land of Egypt before I came to you in Egypt, are mine; Ephraim and Manasseh shall be mine, as Reuben and Simeon are.

1 Chronicles 5:1–2 ¹Now the sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel (for he was the firstborn, but because he defiled his father's bed, his birthright was given to the sons of Joseph the son of Israel; so that he is not enrolled in the genealogy according to the birthright. ²Though Judah prevailed over his brothers, and from him came the leader, yet the birthright belonged to Joseph),

The set on the right lists the twelve sons physically born to Jacob's four wives. We know the one on the left cannot be in the proper birth order, but the one on the right may be in the proper order—or it may not be. Genesis 30 does reveal the first four born were to Leah and they were Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah. That order is reflected in this set. We also know the last two were born to Rachel and they were Joseph and Benjamin. The other six were born two each to Leah, Bilhah, and Zilpah. If Genesis 30 records those births in their birth order,

this set is not in order. However, those six births may not be in strict chronological order as listed in Genesis 30 and this set may reflect the appropriate order. It appears that whoever put this set together thinks this is the appropriate birth order, but we can't be certain about it. Absent any other textual proof, I would consider the Genesis 30 revelation to be the correct order of birth. Since the stones were to be set "according to the names of the sons of Israel," we know the set on the left is completely incorrect.

The stones on the shoulder of the priest faced toward the heavens which may enlighten us about what it means for those names to be before the Lord. The names on the shoulders would not have been visible from the front. The names on breastpiece were facing outward where they could be, at the same time, before men and before the Lord in His designated place.

The next command dealt with the issue of attaching the breastpiece to the body of the High Priest.

Exodus 28:22–28 ²²"You shall make on the breastpiece chains of twisted cordage work in pure gold. ²³"You shall make on the breastpiece two rings of gold, and shall put the two rings on the two ends of the breastpiece. ²⁴"You shall put the two cords of gold on the two rings at the ends of the breastpiece. ²⁵"You shall put the *other* two ends of the two cords on the two filigree *settings*, and put them on the shoulder pieces of the ephod, at the front of it. ²⁶"You shall make two rings of gold and shall place them on the two ends of the breastpiece, on the edge of it, which is toward the inner side of the ephod. ²⁷"You shall make two rings of gold and put them on the bottom of the two shoulder pieces of the ephod, on the front of it close to the place where it is joined, above the skillfully woven band of the ephod. ²⁸"They shall bind the breastpiece by its rings to the rings of the ephod with a blue cord, so that it will be on the skillfully woven band of the ephod, and that the breastpiece will not come loose from the ephod.

The craftsmen were to use gold to make twisted cord chains for fastening the breastpiece from the top two corners to the filigrees on each shoulder. These may have been the chains already commanded to be made in connection with the filigrees holding the engraved stones on the shoulders. Gold rings were fastened to the upper corners of the breastpiece. Each upper corner had two rings to connect the chains to the breastpiece one on the outside of each corner and one on the inside of each corner next to the body. On the bottom two corners, two more gold rings, one on each bottom corner, were placed on the breastpiece for securing it on the bottom. That was done by means of a blue cord that was to be fastened from the rings to the girdle which was around the waist below the breastpiece and secured the ephod at the waist. In this way, the breastpiece was held in place by gold chains at the top and by blue cords at the bottom insuring it remained securely in its place on the chest of the High Priest.

The High Priest represented the Israelites before God. By wearing the names of the twelve tribes of Israel into the Tabernacle, he was representing them in God's house to God. What he did in the Tabernacle in terms of worship was as though the people themselves did it. In turn, the people knew the High Priest was their representative to God when he was ministering before Him in the Tabernacle.

Exodus 28:29 ²⁹“Aaron shall carry the names of the sons of Israel in the breastpiece of judgment over his heart [לֵב] when he enters the holy place, for a memorial before the LORD continually.

There is some sort of metaphorical significance for the emphasis on wearing the breastpiece over the heart with the names of the tribes inscribed on the stones, but exactly what is not stated. Heart, לֵב, refers to “some aspect of the immaterial inner self or being since the heart is considered to be the seat of one's inner nature as well as one of its components.”² This is a cultural concept of what the heart meant. Heart thought of in this way is a metaphor for who we are as a human being with emotions and with the ability to rationally think and reason. We still think of the heart in this way, but whether we should or not is a separate issue. It is probably emphasizing the close interpersonal relationships between the Israelites, the High Priest as their representative before God, and Yahweh Himself.

The next items identified but not explained are the Urim and Thummim.

Exodus 28:30 ³⁰“You shall put in the breastpiece of judgment the Urim [אֲוִרִים] and the Thummim [תְּמִימִם], and they shall be over Aaron's heart when he goes in before the LORD; and Aaron shall carry the judgment of the sons of Israel over his heart before the LORD continually.

We've already discussed the fact the breastpiece of judgment may be more accurately rendered “breastpiece of decision.” The translation note on this verse in the NET Bible explains their reasoning. “Here it is translated ‘decisions’ since the Urim and Thummim contained in the breastpiece represented the means by which the LORD made decisions for the Israelites. The high priest

² Warren Baker and Eugene Carpenter, s.v. “לֵב,” *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG, 2003), 536.

bore the responsibility of discerning the divine will in areas that were beyond human knowledge.”³ This concept is related to decision making on a national scale for matters of national importance rather than for individuals seeking God’s guidance over some personal issue. The Bible only refers to a few times when they were used in the decision-making process. That doesn’t mean they weren’t used more often, but it does indicate their purpose was national and not individual even for the kings and their use was probably not often. Joshua, Saul, and David are the only people recorded resorting to the Urim and Thummim.

No one knows exactly how the Urim and Thummim worked and no one knows what form they took. Was it one article or two or more? Most people believe there were two. Were they precious stones? If so, were they cut or did they remain uncut? Were they some other material? Were they each the same or did they all differ one from the other? Most theologians think they were cast as lots, but the text never reveals the process used to arrive at a decision concerning the matter in question. The implication is there was some supernatural influence involved in this decision-making process. It would be inconceivable that Yahweh would provide them with a procedure for determining important matters, presumably according to His will, without making the decision known that would, in fact, be according to His will. How He did that is not revealed. In and of themselves, the Urim and Thummim had no power. They were activated and effec-

³ *The NET Bible* (n.p., Biblical Studies Press, L.L.C., 1996-2017), 193, n. l. Available on the internet at bible.org and netbible.com.

tive only when God thought their use appropriate and He responded only when He wanted to respond. At times he didn't respond.

Urim and Thummim is commonly thought to refer to "light" and "perfection" although some think it refers to "lights" and "darks." Still another commentator thinks it refers to "illumination" and "completion." The bottom line is no one knows exactly what these words mean. "If one accepts 'light' and 'perfection' as the meaning of the Heb. terms and as descriptive of the oracle, the use of *'ûrîm* by itself may indicate that light was a key feature in receiving a revelation. It can be further theorized that in an age when authenticating divine signs were not unknown, the revelation was accompanied by a confirmatory sign of a special or miraculous light (in connection with the gem or gems), constituting the oracular means that the message was indeed from God."⁴

God specifically entrusted the Urim and Thummim to the tribe of Levi (Dt. 33:8) and placed them in the possession of the High Priest according to the order of the Aaronic Priesthood. Anyone who wanted to inquire of the Lord by means of the Urim and Thummim had to do it through the intermediary presence of the High Priest. Presumably, only those in leadership positions were able to access the Urim and Thummim through the High Priest.

The words of Moses when Joshua was appointed to replace him as the Israelites leader, confirms the fact the Urim and Thummim were for the use of the

⁴ Willem A. VanGemeren, gen. ed., s.v. "אֲרִיִּם," *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis*, vol. 1, א—ז, 1-2458 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997), 1:330.

leadership. Eleazar the High Priest would reveal God's decisions and Joshua would carry out His will as it was revealed.

Numbers 27:18–21 ¹⁸So the LORD said to Moses, “Take Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay your hand on him; ¹⁹and have him stand before Eleazar the priest and before all the congregation, and commission him in their sight. ²⁰“You shall put some of your authority on him, in order that all the congregation of the sons of Israel may obey *him*. ²¹“Moreover, he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall inquire for him by the judgment of the Urim before the LORD. At his command they shall go out and at his command they shall come in, *both* he and the sons of Israel with him, even all the congregation.”

One of the High Priest's duties on the Day of Atonement was casting lots for the choice of the goats, one to be for the Lord and one to be the scapegoat (Lv. 16:8). If those lots were the Urim and Thummim, and some theologians present that as a possibility, then they were used as lots for making decisions, but the text doesn't say those things were used. Another obstacle to believing the High Priest used the Urim and Thummim at that time is at the beginning of the service he changed out of his High Priest garments and was only dressed in linen garments for the duration of the service including the selection of the goats and he did not have the ephod and the breastpiece on at the time. That means the Urim and Thummim were not present because he didn't have them with him. He didn't change back into the garments of the High Priest until the end of the service. The final argument against the use of the Urim and Thummim comes from Jewish sources that say the lots were golden pieces placed in a golden vessel

one marked “for YHWH” and one “for azazel.”⁵ It is never said the Urim and Thummim were used this way.

The next article of clothing made for the High Priest was the blue robe.

Exodus 28:31–32 ³¹“You shall make the robe of the ephod all of blue [תְּכֵלֶת].
³²“There shall be an opening at its top in the middle of it; around its opening there shall be a binding of woven work, like the opening of a coat of mail, so that it will not be torn.

This robe was worn over the linen clothing the High Priest wore and under the ephod. It had an opening at the top for the Priest's head to fit through and openings at the top of the sides for his arms to fit through. The openings were reinforced with woven edges so they would not tear when the robe was put on and taken off. The length was not specified. Whether or not it allowed the linen tunic under it to be visible or not is unknown. Most illustrations show it stopping short of covering the tunic, but others show it down to the ankles. Blue, תְּכֵלֶת, means a blue or violet material probably wool yarn. It has a wide range of meaning concerning the color from deep sea blue to sky blue to violet to purple. It was a solid color.

On the hem of this robe were decorative pomegranates and bells.

Exodus 28:33–35 ³³“You shall make on its hem pomegranates of blue and purple and scarlet *material*, all around on its hem, and bells of gold between them all around: ³⁴a golden bell and a pomegranate, a golden bell and a pomegranate, all around on the hem of the robe. ³⁵“It shall be on Aaron when he ministers; and its tinkling shall be heard when he enters and leaves the holy place before the LORD, so that he will not die.

⁵ Kevin Howard and Marvin Rosenthal, *The Feasts of the Lord: God's Prophetic Calendar from Calvary to the Kingdom* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1997), 123.

Little fabric balls meant to resemble pomegranates and made with the same material used for the ephod were fastened to the hem of the blue robe and alternated all around the bottom of the robe with the golden bells.

The High Priest had to show the proper respect for God when he entered the sanctuary. It is not polite to enter someone's house announced and no human being can simply waltz into God's presence whenever they want to do so. The tinkling of the bells announced the priest's presence as he entered the sanctuary. When the Priest left, he prostrated himself before the veil and the tinkling of the bells would serve to be a part of his departure ritual.

The turban and golden plate formed the piece of headgear the High Priest wore as part of his garments.

Exodus 28:36–38 ³⁶“You shall also make a plate of pure gold and shall engrave on it, like the engravings of a seal, ‘Holy to the LORD.’ [קֹדֶשׁ לַיהוָה] ³⁷“You shall fasten it on a blue cord, and it shall be on the turban; it shall be at the front of the turban. ³⁸“It shall be on Aaron's forehead, and Aaron shall take away the iniquity of the holy things which the sons of Israel consecrate, with regard to all their holy gifts; and it shall always be on his forehead, that they may be accepted before the LORD.

This plate served as a crown of sorts and it was called a “holy crown” in Exodus 29:6. This plate was affixed to the turban and it was worn whenever the High Priest was performing his duties. It was affixed to the turban by a blue cord or ribbon. It was a permanent part of his priestly garb.

The plate symbolized the fact the High Priest atoned for the transgressions of the people he represented before the Lord. He performed the appropriate atonement rituals for them concerning their transgressions. The High Priest serving in his capacity be-

fore the Lord insured the proper procedures rendered the Israelite's worship acceptable despite their sin nature. It was also evidence that Israel, represented by the High Priest, was the nation God created them to be as a kingdom of priests and a holy nation set apart for His service and acceptable to Him.

The white linen tunic worn under the ephod and the robe was woven of fine linen.

Exodus 28:39 ³⁹“You shall weave the tunic of ~~checked work~~ of fine linen, and shall make a turban of fine linen, and you shall make a sash, the work of a weaver.

The qualifier “checked work” is not in the text in this verse, but it was in verse 4. Checked, תִּשְׁבֵּץ, means checked, woven, or braided. Here it refers to the design of the material used to make the tunic which was worked into the design. It is a decorative fiber special either because of the variegated pattern of the weaving or the special threads woven into it. Whatever it was, this would have been a very nice piece of work by the craftsmen.

The turban was also made of fine linen. The sash was woven from the blue and purple and scarlet material. It was worn as a girdle around the tunic under the blue robe.

The clothing for “Aaron's sons” was simpler, different, and they lacked the accoutrements specific only to the High Priest. Aaron's sons do not just refer to his four sons by birth, but to the perpetual Aaronic Priesthood their descendants inherited from them.

Exodus 28:40–42 ⁴⁰“For Aaron's sons you shall make tunics; you shall also make sashes for them, and you shall make caps for them, for glory and for beauty.

⁴¹“You shall put them on Aaron your brother and on his sons with him; and you shall anoint [מָשַׁח] them and ordain [מָלֵא] them and consecrate [קָדַשׁ] them, that they may serve Me as priests. ⁴²“You shall make for them linen breeches to cover *their* bare flesh; they shall reach from the loins even to the thighs.

This is the first indication that all the priests would be anointed, ordained, and consecrated for service as a priesthood. Anoint, מָשַׁח, means to smear an object with a liquid or a semi-liquid as a religious activity to dedicate or consecrate a person or object for service. In this context, it set apart Aaron and his sons for divine service. Consecrate, קָדַשׁ, means to be set apart and to be holy which means setting Aaron and his sons apart as holy men for the priesthood. Ordain, מָלֵא, to fill or to be full. As a figure of speech, it refers to the ordination of the priests. “The word ‘ordained’ can be literally translated as ‘fill their hand.’ ... This ‘filling of the hand’ signified two things for the ordination of the priests. First, it represented the duty and privilege the priest had in making offerings to the Lord on behalf of others. Second, it represented that the Lord would indeed fill their hand in the sense of providing for the material needs of the priests. The ceremonial act of filling the hand represented God’s sufficiency.”⁶

The garments prescribed in this pericope were to be worn at all times when they were in the Tabernacle. Violation of this command was punishable by death. It was a perpetual statute and binding on the Aaronic Priesthood in perpetuity.

⁶ Willem A. VanGemeren, gen. ed., s.v. “אֲזָרִים,” *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis*, vol. 2, ח—ג, 2459-5525 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997), 2:940.

Exodus 28:43 ⁴³They shall be on Aaron and on his sons when they enter the tent of meeting, or when they approach the altar to minister in the holy place, so that they do not incur guilt and die. It *shall be* a statute forever to him and to his descendants after him.