

# BREAD OF LIFE TORAH STUDIES

"I am the bread of life. He who comes to me shall never hunger ..." John 6:35

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## EXODUS 28

After a long section regarding the building of the Tabernacle, chapter 27 concluded:

*Ex. 27:20-21 And you shall command the children of Israel that they take for you pure, pressed olive oil for the illumination, to kindle the lamp continually. In the tent of meeting, outside the partition that is near the testimonial tablets, Aaron and his sons shall arrange it from evening until morning before the LORD, an eternal decree for their generations, from the children of Israel.*

Just as the tabernacle is not complete without the priesthood, the menorah is not complete without the oil for illumination, which was the only source of light in the Holy Place. Immediately after the tabernacle came into existence, there was the need for the priesthood to kindle the lamp—but take note that it is the children of Israel who will provide the oil. This dwelling place of the LORD is to be a LIVING house.

We will now see Aaron coming to the fore. Moses personifies Torah and the legal system that flows from Torah. Aaron personifies priesthood and the principle of love.

Aaron personifies the *principle of love* 'His legendary goodness, inexhaustible love for others, talents as a conciliator and peacemaker are highly praised. These virtues qualified Aaron to be High Priest, whose **principal mission is to bring men closer to their Creator**, building a bond of love that can stand the test of time.'<sup>1</sup>

As you know, Yeshua is the High Priest of our confession and I ask you to keep this in mind throughout the study, because all the details concerning the High Priest ultimately point to Him.

### Vestments of sanctity for glory and beauty

*28:2 And you shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother, for glory and for beauty... 4 "And these are the garments which they shall make: a breastplate, an ephod, a robe, a skillfully woven tunic, a turban, and a sash. So they shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother and his sons, that he may minister to Me as priest.*

The glory here refers to the divine expression, and the beauty to human virtues.<sup>2</sup> The priestly garments described are first for the high priest and then for the priests. The normal priests wore four white garments during the course of performing his service: breeches, a tunic, a sash and a turban. The High Priest wears these four basic garments and four others in addition: a robe, an ephod, a breastplate, and a gold plate on the turban. The High Priest represents the ideal/perfect human being, who is called upon to facilitate the union of the Creator and His Creatures.

The priestly garments 'conferred their sacred character upon the man wearing them, personifying the ideal of purity and holiness.' It is said that power of purification emanated from the High Priest, and the holy vestments contributed to this holiness. "Whoever came into close contact with the Tabernacle and the High Priest, felt himself becoming better, purer, more spiritual."

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<sup>1</sup> Rabbi Elie Munk, *The Call of the Torah*, p395.

<sup>2</sup> Watchman Nee

How beautifully this expresses the role of our Messiah and High Priest, Jesus Christ. As we examine the details of the High Priest's garments, we will see how every detail expresses His divinity, mercy and forgiveness.

*28:3 You shall speak to all the skilful, whom I have filled with a spirit of wisdom, that they make Aaron's garments to consecrate him for my priesthood.*

### **Ephod & Band - v.5-8**

The Hebrew word, *ephod*, is never transliterated into English because there is no word in our vocabulary to describe this item. When priestly garments were revealed to Moses, the ephod was something absolutely new—a close-fitting, long vest, generally reaching the thighs, and fastened with a 'curious girdle' of the same materials—all thoughtfully and cleverly woven. Only in the Ephod, and the Breastplate of Judgment (below) do we find gold woven into the fabric, along with blue, purple and scarlet and fine twined linen. Notice how this combination depicts the deity, heavenly origin, royalty, the shed blood of Christ, and His spotless righteousness, in that order.

### **Shoulder Stones - v.9-13**

*<sup>9</sup>Then you shall take two onyx stones and engrave on them the names of the sons of Israel:... <sup>12</sup>And you shall put the two stones on the shoulders of the ephod as memorial stones for the sons of Israel. The two onyx stones are placed in gold settings, and Aaron shall bear their names before the Lord on his two shoulders as a memorial.*

As Aaron ministers before God, he carries upon his shoulders the symbolic burden of his office, for he represents the entire people of Israel. We first see onyx stones in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 2:12), so they are part of the richness and "goodness" found in God's original creation. The fact that the names of the tribes of Israel are engraved on them, and they are set in gold, is a powerful picture of the uplifting and transforming aspect of our being when we are united to Christ, our High Priest. The number 12 (6 x 2), represents the governmental system. In Isaiah 9:6 we read "...the government shall be upon his shoulder...".

**Q. How does this add to our understanding of what the engraved shoulder stones represent?**

### **Breastplate of Judgment – 28:15-29**

*v.29 Aaron shall bear the names of the sons of Israel on the Breastplate of Judgment when he enters the sanctuary, as a constant remembrance before Hashem.*

The breastplate consisted of woven fabric in the same manner and colours as the ephod and mounted with four rows of three precious stones engraved with the names of the sons of Israel, and securely fastened by four gold chains. Each tribe had a characteristic and a particular gifting or mission and together made one whole. Later we see that the tribal banners matched the colour of each tribe's stone.

There is an extraordinary identification of the High Priest with the people. In His intercessory ministry, Christ always bears the names of God's children on His heart. They are the reason he stands there, before the Holiness of the LORD. The children of Israel are held, not only upon his shoulders, but also upon His breast—fastened by His power and authority, and also by His love.

### **Urim and Thummim – 28:30**

*And you shall put in the breastplate of judgment the Urim and the Thummim, and they shall be over Aaron's heart when he goes in before the LORD. So Aaron shall bear the judgment of the children of Israel over his heart before the LORD continually.*

"After the breastplate is set with the stones, the text says, 'into the breastplate you shall place the urim and the thummim'. It is striking that there is no explanation as to what the *urim and thummim* are, how they are made, and what the connection is between them and the "judgment" that is mentioned as a function related specifically to them.<sup>3</sup> *Rashi* explains that into the fold behind the four rows of precious stones was placed a parchment on which was written the Divine Name "It communicated its answers to questions using a power of Holy Spirit. . . . A judgment emanating from the *urim and thummim* could never be revoked." The term "judgment" here, and also in the Breastplate, is not a legal term, rather it refers to helping people decide how to live righteously, and how to apply Torah principles to their lives— discerning the divine will, especially on matters of national importance.

Let's look at some interesting insights:

- When the Ark was completed, God said to Moses: 'Into the Ark you shall place the testimonial tablets that I shall give you'. (25:21) The similar wording seems to intentionally link these scriptures together. Just as the Ark is not complete without the tablets, the breastplate is not complete without the *urim and thummim*.
- Of the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet, eighteen were contained in the names of the twelve tribes inscribed on the stones, and the remaining four were contained in the Thummim .
- Urim אֲוִרִים and תְּמִימִים Thummim begin with the first and last letters of the Hebrew Alphabet—the *aleph* and the *tav* – the *alpha* and the *omega*.
- Urim means "lights" Thummim means "perfections" - They were a combination that represented God's perfect balance of judgment with mercy, thus providing perfect justice.

In Christ are hid "all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." (Col. 2:3). *We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of **grace and truth***. ... (Jn. 1:14). In Christ we have the *lights* and the *perfections* of which Urim and Thummim were only a foreshadow.

**Q. What do you think all this might be telling us?**

## Robe – 28:31-35

The robe was worn on top of the tunic and was woven entirely out of precious sky-blue wool. *On its hem you shall make pomegranates of blue and purple and scarlet yarns, around its hem, with bells of gold between them.*

- **Pomegranates** – Fruit of divine love – that comes from the mingling of the attributes of the colours.
- **Golden bells** - divine testimony

Jesus had a clear ringing testimony, which was backed up by the fruit of divine love. The softness of pomegranates keeps the bells from clanging together and causing discord. (see 1 Cor. 13)

*35 And it shall be upon Aaron when he ministers, and its sound will be heard when he goes into the holy place before the Lord and when he comes out, that he may not die.*

## Headplate of Gold - 28:36-38

The turban, which was wrapped around his head, was to be made of white twisted linen, and on that turban was a headplate of pure gold on which were engraved the words: "HOLY TO YHVH". The high priest wearing the holy seal did not merely show that he had been dedicated to the LORD; it showed that he actually *was* the presence of the LORD in the temple, representing the LORD of Hosts. An

<sup>3</sup> For scripture references to Urim & Thummim see Num. 27:21, Deut. 33:8.

ancient historian wrote that “the crowds in the temple courtyard fall to their knees before the high priest because they acknowledged he was the presence of the LORD.”<sup>4</sup>

37-38 *“And you shall put it on a blue cord, that it may be on the turban; it shall be on the front of the turban. It shall be on Aaron’s forehead, and Aaron shall bear any guilt from the holy things that the people of Israel consecrate as their holy gifts. It shall always be on his forehead, that they may be accepted before the LORD.”*

By the above statement it is evident that the most holy things man can do are nevertheless tainted by our fallen nature, so that our High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ, must even bear the iniquity of our holy things—our very best intentions, gifts, prayers and worship are acceptable to God only by virtue of the shed blood of Christ.<sup>5</sup> His is the only righteousness we can claim.

Heb. 7:25-26 *Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. For such a High Priest was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens;*

### **Linen garments – 28:38-43**

The fine linen tunic, sash, hats for glory and beauty, and linen trousers to cover their nakedness are for Aaron, the High Priest, and his sons, the priests.

28-43 *“They shall be on Aaron and on his sons when they come into the tabernacle of meeting, or when they come near the altar to minister in the holy place, **that they do not incur iniquity and die.** It shall be a statute forever to him and his descendants after him.”*

When the High Priest entered the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement, he wore only the white linen garments. “The high priest was the only person allowed to enter the holy of holies. As he went beyond the veil, he entered heaven. When he emerged he was coming down from heaven. His role was to link heaven and earth.”<sup>6</sup>

“The miracle of redemption is that God turns me, the unholy one, into the status of Himself, the Holy One, by putting me in a new disposition, the disposition of Jesus Christ Himself... The only way we can ever stand before our Holy God is in and through Jesus Himself and his shed blood, and because His love, mercy and justice are so pure.”<sup>7</sup>

### **In Conclusion**

“The task of the high priest – and the message of his clothes – was to be a ‘signal of transcendence,’ to point, *in* himself, to something *beyond* himself, to be a living symbol of the Divine Presence in the midst of the nation.”<sup>8</sup>

A powerful truth we find in the garments of the High Priest is his total, unequivocal identification with, and on behalf of, the children of Israel – into which Gentile believers are grafted. He binds us to himself; we are inscribed on his shoulders and over his heart. However, we should also remember that the priests, his sons, needed to put on white linen garments. Let us not be found naked; not having the wedding garment, which is freely supplied, as the Parable of the Marriage Feast warns (Mt. 22:11-14). This is the only garment acceptable to be admitted to the Wedding Supper of the Lamb. The fig leaf garments of good works will never do!

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<sup>4</sup> Hecataeus, quoted in Diodorus of Sicily XL.3.5-6, cited by author, Margaret Baker.

<sup>5</sup> Brad Scott, *Seeing Christ in the Tabernacle*.

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.scribd.com/document/271775007/Our-Great-High-Priest-the-Church-as-a-New-Temple>

<sup>7</sup> *Life-study of Exodus*, Watchman Nee.

<sup>8</sup> Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, *Covenant & Conversation*, p.247.