

**Exegetical Notes, Exodus 28:15-30**  
**“Reminders of His Presence: The Breastpiece”**

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(After the affirmation of the Covenant {See Exodus 24}, God set up a system of organized religion to help the Israelites remember the obligation of the Covenant to which they had agreed. This religion was centered in the Tabernacle and its furnishings. These items were to remind the people of God’s presence and of their obligation to listen to God and to obey him. The promise of God’s blessing was linked to listening to him and obeying him. In this chapter, God calls the first priests. The priests’ function will be more clearly defined later in our study. However, the priests performed two essential functions: 1. they stood between God and the people essentially to offer sacrifice on behalf of the people so that the people could approach God; and 2. they administered the functioning of the religious system God had ordained.)

**Exodus 28:15-30**

**Verse 15-16**

*Fashion a breastpiece for making decisions -- the work of a skilled craftsman. Make it like the ephod: of gold, and of blue, purple and scarlet yarn, and of finely twisted linen. It is to be a square -- a span long and a span wide -- folded double.*

- The second piece of the High Priest’s outfit discussed is called the breastpiece. It was a square of fabric exactly like that from which the ephod was woven about eighteen inches square and folded double so that it functioned like a pocket.

**Verse 17-21**

*Then mount four rows of precious stones on it. In the first row there shall be a ruby, a topaz, and a beryl; in the second row a turquoise, a sapphire, and an emerald; in the third row a jacinth, an agate, and an amethyst; in the fourth row a chrysolite, an onyx, and a jasper. Mount them in gold filigree settings. There are to be twelve stones, one for*

*each of the names of the sons of Israel, each engraved like a seal with the name of one of the twelve tribes.*

- The breastpiece was to have four rows of precious stones upon it mounted in gold filigree each engraved with the name of one of the twelve tribes.

#### **Verse 22-25**

*For the breastpiece make braided chains of pure gold, like a rope. Make two gold rings for it and fasten them to two corners of the breastpiece. Fasten the two gold chains to the rings at the corners of the breastpiece, and the other ends of the chains to the two settings, attaching them to the shoulder pieces of the ephod at the front.*

- The breastpiece was to be attached to the shoulder pieces of the ephod so that it hung over the High Priest's chest. It was to be attached by gold chains or cords and golden rings.

#### **Verse 26-28**

*Make two gold rings and attach them to the other two corners of the breastpiece on the inside edge next to the ephod. Make two more gold rings and attach them to the bottom of the shoulder pieces on the front of the ephod, close to the seam just above the waistband of the ephod. The rings of the breastpiece are to be tied to the rings of the ephod with blue cord, connecting it to the waistband, so that the breastpiece will not swing out from the ephod.*

- The breastpiece was to be tied to the waistband of the ephod so that when the priest bent over it did not swing out in front of him.

#### **Verse 29**

*Whenever Aaron enters the Holy Place, he will bear the names of the sons of Israel over his heart on the breastpiece of decision as a continuing memorial before YHWH.*

- The High Priest was to wear the ephod bearing the twelve stones engraved with the names of Israel's tribes whenever he went before the Lord.

#### **Verse 30**

*Also put the Urim and the Thummin in the breastpiece, so they may be over Aaron's heart whenever he enters the presence of YHWH. Thus Aaron will always bear the means of making decisions for the Israelites over his heart before YHWH.*

- The Urim and the Thummin were carried in the pocket-like fold of the breastpiece. No one knows exactly what these objects looked like. They were used by the Israelites to determine the will of God. No one knows exactly how these objects were used.

(These exegetical notes are the foundational study for the sermon entitled *Reminders of His Presence: The Breastpiece*. They have been prepared by the Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen, Senior Pastor at Cornerstone Fellowship, Coatesville Pennsylvania. All rights are reserved by Dr. Jensen and *Cornerstone Fellowship*.)