

Exegetical Notes, Exodus 28:2-14
“Reminders of His Presence: The Ephod”

Prepared by Charles H. Jensen, Pastor, Cornerstone Fellowship
101 Kyllies Road, Coatesville, PA 19329
610-384-1375
charleshjensen@aol.com

(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 28:2-14

Verse 2-4a

Make sacred garments for your brother Aaron, to give him dignity and honor. Tell all the skilled men to whom I have given wisdom in such matters that they are to make garments for Aaron, for his consecration, so he may serve me as priest. These are the garments they are to make: a breastpiece, an ephod, a robe, a woven tunic, a turban, and a sash.

- Aaron is to wear garments that will set him aside and distinguish him from the people and even from the other priests. These garments and their function and meaning will be dealt with in future notes. However, the purpose of the attire is to mark Aaron as God’s man, a man set aside by God for a special function.
- When the Aaron is robed in these garments, he must remember his office and act with dignity. When the people see Aaron robed in these garments they must honor him. The issues of dignity and honor do not relate to Aaron as a person, they relate to Aaron as the officer God has appointed.

Verse 4b-5

They are to make these sacred garments for your brother Aaron and his sons, so they may serve me as priests. Have them use gold, and blue, purple and scarlet yarn, and fine linen.

- Aaron's sons are also to have special garments to distinguish them as priests. These garments are different from Aaron's, although similar, to mark Aaron as chief among them.
- The garments are to reflect the royal presence of YHWH as they are to be made of fine materials that indicate a royal presence.

Verse 6

Make the ephod of gold, and of blue, purple and scarlet yarn, and of finely twisted linen -- the work of a skilled craftsman.

- The first garment discussed is the ephod. The ephod was an apron-like garment worn over the High Priest's blue robe. We assume that the purpose of this garment was to serve as an apron would to protect the robe. However this apron was no ordinary apron.
- It was made of fine linen, pure white, into which was woven blue, purple, and scarlet thread. Also woven into the ephod was thread spun from purest gold. It combined all of the colors used in the coverings of the Tabernacle and its curtains, including the gold. In so doing, the garment proclaimed the unity of the design and that the priest was mystically connected to the household of God by God's calling on his life.
- The ephod was not to be thrown together without thought, but was to be the careful work of skilled craftsmen.

Verse 7-8

It is to have two shoulder pieces attached to two of its corners, so it can be fastened. Its skillfully woven waistband is to be like it -- of one piece with the ephod and made with gold, and with blue, purple and scarlet yarn, and finely twisted linen.

- The ephod was held on by shoulder straps and a waistband that were made of the same material as the ephod itself.

Verse 9-12

Take two onyx stones and engrave on them the names of the sons of Israel in order of their birth -- six names on one stone and the remaining six on the other. Engrave the names of the sons of Israel on

the two stones the way a gem cutter engraves a seal. Then mount the stones in gold filigree settings and fasten them on the shoulder pieces of the ephod as memorial stones for the sons of Israel. Aaron is to bear the names on his shoulders as a memorial before YHWH.

- Onyx is a stone which has rings or bands of color in it. Black onyx with bands from white to red is common. However, some onyx is green and some blue. Some scholars believe that blue onyx was most likely used in the garments of the High Priest to complement the color of the blue robe and the blue thread used throughout the garment.
- Two onyx stones in gold mountings were to be placed on the shoulder straps of the ephod. These would rest on top of the High Priest's shoulders facing upward toward heaven.
- On these two stones were to be engraved the names of Jacob's twelve sons.
- These stones served as a memorial to the twelve patriarchs of Israel whose names were the names of Israel's twelve tribes. The High Priest was to wear these engraved stones whenever he came into the presence of YHWH.

Verse 13-14

Make gold filigree settings and two braided chains of pure gold, like a rope, and attach the chains to the settings.

- Also, on the shoulder straps of the ephod were to be two additional gold filigree ornaments. Attached to these were to be two golden braids. As we shall see, these two braids were to be used to hold the Breastpiece to the ephod.

(These exegetical notes are the foundational study for the sermon entitled *Reminders of His Presence: The Ephod*. 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*.)