EXODUS

Chapter 28

*The Priestly Garments*

**“Have Aaron your brother brought to you from among the Israelites, along with his sons Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar, so they may serve me as priests. 2 Make sacred garments for your brother Aaron, to give him dignity and honor. 3 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. 4 These are the garments they are to make: a breastpiece, an ephod, a robe, a woven tunic, a turban and a sash. They are to make these sacred garments for your brother Aaron and his sons, so they may serve me as priests. 5 Have them use gold, and blue, purple and scarlet yarn, and fine linen.**

**28:1** *Nadab and Abihu.* See note on 24:1. (CSB)

 *serve me as priests.* In order “to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins” and “to deal gently with those who are ignorant and are going astray” (Heb 5:1–2). Another important function of the priests was to read the law of Moses to the people and remind them of their covenant obligations (see Dt 31:9–13; Ne 8:2–3). (CSB)

Hbr *kahan*. Priests represent worshipers and present the worshipers’ cause before God. (TLSB)

**28:2** *to give him dignity and honor.* The garments were to exalt the office and functions of lesser priests (see v. 40) as well as of the high priest. (CSB)

Just as sacred space in the tabernacle was separated from secular space, so the priests of the tabernacle were distinct from the laity. (TLSB)

**28:3** *garments to consecrate*. Priestly garments symbolized the office of the priesthood and set the priests apart in their service. (TLSB)

**28:4** *checker work*. Woven in a pattern of squares. The ephod, breastpiece, lace of blue (v 28), and blue robe were luxurious apparel. (TLSB)

*The Ephod*

**6 “Make the ephod of gold, and of blue, purple and scarlet yarn, and of finely twisted linen—the work of a skilled craftsman. 7 It is to have two shoulder pieces attached to two of its corners, so it can be fastened. 8 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 with finely twisted linen. 9 “Take two onyx stones and engrave on them the names of the sons of Israel 10 in the order of their birth—six names on one stone and the remaining six on the other. 11 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 12 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 the Lord. 13 Make gold filigree settings 14 and two braided chains of pure gold, like a rope, and attach the chains to the settings.**

**28:6** *ephod.* A sleeveless vestment worn by the high priest. Sometimes the word refers to an otherwise unidentified object of worship (see, e.g., Jdg 8:27; 18:17; Hos 3:4). (CSB)

**28:8** *waistband.* Apparently to hold the front and the back of the ephod to the priest’s body. (CSB)

Tied around the waist; kept the ephod snug. (TLSB)

**28:9** *onyx*. Translucent stones set in gold on the shoulder (vv 12–13). (TLSB)

**28:10** *in the order of their birth*. Cf Gn 29:32–30:24; 35:16–19. (TLSB)

**28:11** *jeweler engraves signets*. Seals engraved with the names of Israel’s sons. (TLSB)

 *gold filigree*. Intricate ornamental design using strands of gold wire.

**28:12** *stones of remembrance*. To remind the priest that he mediated for Israel and bore witness to God that Israel was His people. (TLSB)

 *Aaron is to bear the names on his shoulders.* To symbolize the fact that the high priest represents all Israel when he ministers in the tabernacle. (CSB)

*The Breastpiece*

**15 “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. 16 It is to be square—a span long and a span wide—and folded double. 17 Then mount four rows of precious stones on it. In the first row there shall be a ruby, a topaz and a beryl; 18 in the second row a turquoise, a sapphire and an emerald; 19 in the third row a jacinth, an agate and an amethyst; 20 in the fourth row a chrysolite, an onyx and a jasper. Mount them in gold filigree settings. 21 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. 22 “For the breastpiece make braided chains of pure gold, like a rope. 23 Make two gold rings for it and fasten them to two corners of the breastpiece. 24 Fasten the two gold chains to the rings at the corners of the breastpiece, 25 and the other ends of the chains to the two settings, attaching them to the shoulder pieces of the ephod at the front. 26 Make two gold rings and attach them to the other two corners of the breastpiece on the inside edge next to the ephod. 27 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. 28 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. 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 the Lord. 30 Also put the Urim and the Thummim in the breastpiece, so they may be over Aaron’s heart whenever he enters the presence of the Lord. Thus Aaron will always bear the means of making decisions for the Israelites over his heart before the Lord.**

**28:15–43** Note the key body parts for jewelry: shoulders, heart, and forehead. Cf Dt 6:5, 8. As mediator, Aaron bore responsibility for Israel and loved Israel. (TLSB)

**28:15** *breastpiece*. Typically, a warrior’s armor but here modified for priestly service. (TLSB)

 *for making decisions.* By means of the Urim and Thummim (see note on v. 30). (CSB)

Contained within the breast piece were the instruments of decision making: the Urim and Thummim. (TLSB)

**28:16** *doubled*. Forming the shape of a pocket. Cf v 30. (TLSB)

**28:17–21** Cf 12:35–36. Precious stones, representing the 12 tribes of Israel, illustrated that God’s people were His treasured possession. Cf Dt 7:6. (TLSB)

**28:29** *Aaron … will bear the names … over his heart.* Thus the nation was doubly represented before the Lord (see v. 12 and note). (CSB)

**28:30** *the Urim and Thummim.* The Hebrew for this phrase probably means “the curses and the perfections.” The Hebrew word *Urim* begins with the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet (*aleph*) and *Thummim* begins with the last letter (*taw*). They were sacred lots and were often used in times of crisis to determine the will of God (see Nu 27:21). It has been suggested that if Urim (“curses”) dominated when the lots were cast the answer was “no,” but if Thummim (“perfections”) dominated it was “yes.” In any event, their “every decision” was “from the Lord” (Pr 16:33). (CSB)

Two sacred lots placed in the breast piece that were used by the high priest to receive answers from the Lord. (TLSB)

 *on Aaron’s heart*. The heart of the high priest was to be one with Israel. (TLSB)

 *judgment*. Guidance. (TLSB)

*Other Priestly Garments*

**31 “Make the robe of the ephod entirely of blue cloth, 32 with an opening for the head in its center. There shall be a woven edge like a collar around this opening, so that it will not tear. 33 Make pomegranates of blue, purple and scarlet yarn around the hem of the robe, with gold bells between them. 34 The gold bells and the pomegranates are to alternate around the hem of the robe. 35 Aaron must wear it when he ministers. The sound of the bells will be heard when he enters the Holy Place before the Lord and when he comes out, so that he will not die. 36 “Make a plate of pure gold and engrave on it as on a seal: holy to the Lord. 37 Fasten a blue cord to it to attach it to the turban; it is to be on the front of the turban. 38 It will be on Aaron’s forehead, and he will bear the guilt involved in the sacred gifts the Israelites consecrate, whatever their gifts may be. It will be on Aaron’s forehead continually so that they will be acceptable to the Lord. 39 “Weave the tunic of fine linen and make the turban of fine linen. The sash is to be the work of an embroiderer. 40 Make tunics, sashes and headbands for Aaron’s sons, to give them dignity and honor. 41 After you put these clothes on your brother Aaron and his sons, anoint and ordain them. Consecrate them so they may serve me as priests. 42 “Make linen undergarments as a covering for the body, reaching from the waist to the thigh. 43 Aaron and his sons must wear them whenever they enter the Tent of Meeting or approach the altar to minister in the Holy Place, so that they will not incur guilt and die. “This is to be a lasting ordinance for Aaron and his descendants.**

**28:31** *robe.* Worn under the ephod. (CSB)

**28:33** *pomegranates*. Fruit about the size of an apple. (TLSB)

**28:35** A musical offering. Whether bells also served a practical purpose is unclear. (TLSB)

According to Jewish tradition, one end of a length of rope was tied to the high priest’s ankle and the other end remained outside the tabernacle. If the bells on his robe stopped tinkling while he was in the Holy Place, the assumption that he had died could be tested by pulling gently on the rope. (CSB)

**28:36** *engraving of a signet*. Writing etched into gold. (TLSB)

 *Holy to the Lord*. The high priest was devoted to the Lord. The ephod (v 6), breastpiece (v 15), robe (v 31), turban (v 37), and plate of pure gold (v 36) were made with the same materials used for the tabernacle (26:1), inner veil (26:31), outer veil (26:36), and court veil (27:16). The attire of the priests was associated with the holy presence of the Lord. (TLSB)

**28:37** *turban*. Headdress worn by Aaron to remind him that his thoughts were to be pure. (TLSB)

**28:38** *bear the guilt.* Symbolically. (CSB)

Aaron functioned as a mediator to take sins away through sacrifices. (TLSB)

 *accepted before the Lord*. Aaron represented the people as he presented their offerings. (TLSB)

**28:39** *tunic.* Worn under the robe. (CSB)

**28:40** *coats and sashes and caps*. Regular priestly garments. (TLSB)

 *to give them dignity and honor.* See note on v. 2. (CSB)

God designed the priesthood so that the people would give Him the glory due His name. (TLSB)

**28:41** *anoint* … *ordain* … *consecrate*. The priests were set apart, ritually ordained into their office. (TLSB)

**28:42–43** See note on 20:26. (CSB)

**28:42** *linen undergarments to cover their naked flesh*. Pagan priests frequently performed their rites naked or used sexual rituals. Before the true God, modesty is required. (TLSB)

**28:43** *Tent of Meeting.* See note on 27:21. (CSB)

 *altar* … *in the Holy Place*. They ministered at the altar of incense. (TLSB)

 *bear guilt and die*. Cf Lv 10:1–2. (TLSB)

**Ch 28** The beautiful priestly attire reflects the beauty of God as well as the office in which the priests minister. Often today, our devotion to God grows more and more lax. Rather than stand to pray, we sit. Rather than dress properly, we become casual or immodest. Rather than sing, we just listen. In contrast, the Lord required that even the clothing and movement of the high priest would bring glory and offer praise. Reassess your offering of praise and service to the Lord. Give all glory to Jesus, who diligently bore your guilt and consecrates you by grace. • O Lord God, draw us to the One whom our pastors preach, Christ crucified for the forgiveness of sins. Amen. (TLSB)