

# EXODUS

## Chapter 28

### *The Priests' Garments*

28 “Then bring near to you Aaron your brother, and his sons with him, from among the people of Israel, to serve me as priests—Aaron and Aaron’s sons, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar. 2 And you shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother, for glory and for beauty. 3 You shall speak to all the skillful, whom I have filled with a spirit of skill, that they make Aaron’s garments to consecrate him for my priesthood. 4 These are the garments that they shall make: a breastpiece, an ephod, a robe, a coat of checker work, a turban, and a sash. They shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother and his sons to serve me as priests. 5 They shall receive gold, blue and purple and scarlet yarns, and fine twined linen. 6 “And they shall make the ephod of gold, of blue and purple and scarlet yarns, and of fine twined linen, skillfully worked. 7 It shall have two shoulder pieces attached to its two edges, so that it may be joined together. 8 And the skillfully woven band on it shall be made like it and be of one piece with it, of gold, blue and purple and scarlet yarns, and fine twined linen. 9 You shall take two onyx stones, and engrave on them the names of the sons of Israel, 10 six of their names on the one stone, and the names of the remaining six on the other stone, in the order of their birth. 11 As a jeweler engraves signets, so shall you engrave the two stones with the names of the sons of Israel. You shall enclose them in settings of gold filigree. 12 And you shall set the two stones on the shoulder pieces of the ephod, as stones of remembrance for the sons of Israel. And Aaron shall bear their names before the LORD on his two shoulders for remembrance. 13 You shall make settings of gold filigree, 14 and two chains of pure gold, twisted like cords; and you shall attach the corded chains to the settings. 15 “You shall make a breastpiece of judgment, in skilled work. In the style of the ephod you shall make it—of gold, blue and purple and scarlet yarns, and fine twined linen shall you make it. 16 It shall be square and doubled, a span its length and a span its breadth. 17 You shall set in it four rows of stones. A row of sardius, topaz, and carbuncle shall be the first row; 18 and the second row an emerald, a sapphire, and a diamond; 19 and the third row a jacinth, an agate, and an amethyst; 20 and the fourth row a beryl, an onyx, and a jasper. They shall be set in gold filigree. 21 There shall be twelve stones with their names according to the names of the sons of Israel. They shall be like signets, each engraved with its name, for the twelve tribes. 22 You shall make for the breastpiece twisted chains like cords, of pure gold. 23 And you shall make for the breastpiece two rings of gold, and put the two rings on the two edges of the breastpiece. 24 And you shall put the two cords of gold in the two rings at the edges of the breastpiece. 25 The two ends of the two cords you shall attach to the two settings of filigree, and so attach it in front to the shoulder pieces of the ephod. 26 You shall make two rings of gold, and put them at the two ends of the breastpiece, on its inside edge next to the ephod. 27 And you shall make two rings of gold, and attach them in front to the lower part of the two shoulder pieces of the ephod, at its seam above the skillfully woven band of the ephod. 28 And they shall bind the breastpiece by its rings to the rings of the ephod with a lace of blue, so that it may lie on the skillfully woven band of the ephod, so that the breastpiece shall not come loose from the ephod. 29 So Aaron shall bear the names of the sons of Israel in the breastpiece of judgment on his heart, when he goes into the Holy Place, to bring them to regular remembrance before the LORD. 30 And in the breastpiece of judgment you shall put the Urim and the Thummim, and they shall be on Aaron’s heart, when he goes in before the LORD. Thus Aaron shall bear the judgment of the people of Israel on his heart before the LORD regularly. 31 “You shall make the robe of the ephod all of blue. 32 It shall have an opening for the head in the middle of it, with a woven binding around the opening, like the opening

in a garment,[c] so that it may not tear. 33 On its hem you shall make pomegranates of blue and purple and scarlet yarns, around its hem, with bells of gold between them, 34 a golden bell and a pomegranate, a golden bell and a pomegranate, around the hem of the robe. 35 And it shall be on Aaron when he ministers, and its sound shall be heard when he goes into the Holy Place before the LORD, and when he comes out, so that he does not die. 36 “You shall make a plate of pure gold and engrave on it, like the engraving of a signet, ‘Holy to the LORD.’ 37 And you shall fasten it on the turban by a cord of blue. It shall be on the front of the turban. 38 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 regularly be on his forehead, that they may be accepted before the LORD. 39 “You shall weave the coat in checker work of fine linen, and you shall make a turban of fine linen, and you shall make a sash embroidered with needlework. 40 “For Aaron’s sons you shall make coats and sashes and caps. You shall make them for glory and beauty. 41 And you shall put them on Aaron your brother, and on his sons with him, and shall anoint them and ordain them and consecrate them, that they may serve me as priests. 42 You shall make for them linen undergarments to cover their naked flesh. They shall reach from the hips to the thighs; 43 and they shall be on Aaron and on his sons when they go into the tent of meeting or when they come near the altar to minister in the Holy Place, lest they bear guilt and die. This shall be a statute forever for him and for his offspring after him.

**28:1** *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** *for glory and for beauty.* 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)

**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. (TLSB)

**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)

**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)

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 ... on his heart.* Thus the nation was doubly represented before the Lord. (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)

**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 any 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** *coat*. Worn under the robe. (CSB)

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

*for glory and beauty*. 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** *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** *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)