

EXODUS CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

1. This chapter deals with three topics:

@ - The construction of the brass altar (vs. 1-8)

@ - The construction of the courtyard (vs. 9-19) and

@ - The preparation of the oil for the lampstand (vs. 20,21).

2. A translation of the measurements of the brass burnt offering altar makes it 7 ½ x 7 ½ x 4 ½ feet. This altar was to be used for the burning of the sacrificial animals and the various grain offerings.

3. As far as man was concerned, this was the most important piece of furniture in the whole tabernacle, because it offered the solution to the problem of sin.

4. Apparently the shape of this altar was not unconventional. Altars were commonly either square or round. An Assyrian triangular one was found at Nineveh; but even this had a round top. The square shape is the most usual, and was preserved, probably in all the Temple altars, certainly in those of Solomon and Herod.

5. Whether this altar was unique in the sense that such an altar had never been built before, or whether this kind of altar existed in Egypt also, we don't know. The altars we encountered previously in the Bible were made of earth or stone. Earlier, before the plan for the tabernacle was revealed, God had told Moses:

"Make an altar of earth for me and sacrifice on it your burnt offerings and fellowship offerings, your sheep and goats and your cattle." (chap. 20)

6. Obviously, the plan for this altar entails a deviation from the commands given previously. Many commentators suppose that, once this brass altar was put in a place from where it would no longer be moved around, the hollow section of it was filled with earth, but of this we find no indication in the Bible.

7. The horns of the altar formed an intriguing part of the structure. No direct explanation is given in the Bible as to the use of these projections. There are only a few scant indications as to what function these horns must have had in the temple service and in the mind of the people. Psalm 118:27 seems to indicate that sacrificial animals were, at least sometimes, tied to the horns of the altar. "The LORD is God, and He has given us light; bind the festival sacrifice with cords to the horns of the altar." There are also two occasions when these horns were to provide sanctuary for those holding on to them. (First Kings 1 & 2) This also shows that the courtyard of the Tabernacle [and Temple] were to be accessible to the common Jew at any and all times.

8. The wooden structure which formed the basis of the altar was to be covered

with bronze. The Hebrew word is defined as copper, hence, something made of that metal, relatively base as compared with gold or silver. Commentators generally, agree that no pure copper was used, but an alloy of copper and tin, which is bronze. Archeological finds confirm this idea. The solid plate of bronze is no doubt intended to protect the wood and prevent it from being consumed.

9. Most of the activities in the tabernacle, and later in the temple, center around the bronze altar. All of the sacrifices prescribed in the first seven chapters of Leviticus are brought to this altar to be burned. The bronze altar is the place where the sacrificial animal died. It is, more than any other part of the tabernacle, an image of the cross upon which Christ died for the sins of the world.

10. Remembering this, it is the most amazing to read that God says to Moses that he is to make according to the vision of the altar in heaven that he was shown on the mountain. This would indicate that here is a real spiritual altar in Heaven. Further, we read in Revelation: "When he [the Lamb] opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained." (chap. 6)

11. It is surprising to find any kind of altar in heaven, for an altar exists only because of sin that has to be atoned for, and sin is nonexistent in eternity; it is not part of God's plan of creation. Yet there stands the altar in Heaven, of which this bronze one was a copy. And Jesus is called: "the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world." (Revelation 13) O, mystery of mysteries!

Q. Why would there be a sacrificial altar in the perfect heaven?

Exodus 27:9-19

1. The description of the construction of the courtyard completes the blueprint of the actual structure. A fence of white linen was to be erected around the tabernacle. The dimensions were about 150 x 75 feet. The south and north sides were each to have twenty bronze posts on which the curtain was hung and the west and east sides ten posts each. So the posts were placed approximately 7 ½ feet apart. The posts were connected with each other by silver rods from which the curtain was suspended by bronze hooks.

2. The entrance to the Tabernacle was to be on the east side. The Hebrew word used there is derived from a word which means to irradiate or shoot forth beams, so its usual translation is sunrise, or east.

3. Interestingly, Hebrew doesn't actually use the words east, west, north and south, but rather, in front, to the right, to the left, behind. Rabbinical tradition suggests that Adam found himself at his creation fronting toward the east, and had consequently the west behind him. Hence, the four cardinal points received the names of 'in front' (the east); 'the right hand' (the south); 'behind' (the west); and 'the left hand' (the north).
4. The entrance curtain was made of the same material as the curtain that led into the Holy Place and the one that separated the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place. It was about 30 feet wide, leaving a section of white curtain of about 10 feet on either side. The height of the pillars was about 7 ½ feet, which was half the size of the height of the tabernacle, so the building could be seen from the outside as rising up from inside.
5. The existence of the fence indicated that the Tabernacle could only be entered in one way. This is also true of heaven, of course, which can only be entered through faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior!
6. It has been said that the church should project an impression of holiness and purity as the white linen fence did. But at the same time, there is the one gate with inviting colors that invite the people to come close and go in. Unfortunately, the image the contemporary church projects mostly is a soiled testimony and an entrance that lacks much that is truly inviting or awe-inspiring.
7. We do not read that the curtains at the entrance of the courtyard were open. It seems that the people who entered had to pass through them. They may have been tied at the corners to leave a passage for the public. Otherwise, if every man who entered had to shove aside the curtains, the curtains would not have lasted long, or at the very least would have become quickly soiled and would have to be replaced quite often.

Q. How do you picture the entrance to the Tabernacle – always open or always closed, and why?

8. v. 19 combines a large inventory of articles to be used for the various services that are carried out in the Tabernacle and it makes a casual reference to the tent pins, which are not mentioned anywhere else. We may conclude from this, however, that pins and cords were used to tie down the covers, the posts of the tabernacle and fence posts, much in the same way as tents are put up in our time.

The 'pins' of the tabernacle are undoubtedly the pegs or tent-pins, whereby the tent-cloth with which it was covered was extended and kept taut. There were also probably similar pegs or pins for cords used to keep the 'pillars' or tent-poles in place.

Exodus 27: 20-21

1. The two final verses of this chapter mention the olive oil used for the lamps inside the Holy Place. None of the commentaries touch on the problem as to where the Israelites would manage to find olives in the desert. Olive oil is notorious for its capacity to spoil eventually. If olive trees were found in some of the oases the Israelites encountered on their journey, the fact is not mentioned in the Torah.
2. Of course, we know that food was provided supernaturally during the forty years Israel spent in the desert. The manna came down daily, and there were periods during which quail would descend upon the camp for meat, but we do not read that olives were included in the "bread from Heaven." It is hard to imagine that the Israelites would have brought a supply of olives out of Egypt which lasted them forty years. This is yet another of the unsolved mysteries of the Exodus.
3. There is one more possibility, and it is not pleasant to consider: We know that the Jews brought idols with them, and we also know that they did not observe circumcision during most of the time of wandering. It is possible that other regulations concerning Tabernacle worship were also not observed. This would certainly fit the pattern of their behavior, both during the time of the Judges and after the days of Solomon. If this is indeed the case, God's patience with them is all the more amazing!
4. At the same time, we need to remember that several of the prescribed sacrifices could not be acted out while Israel was traveling through the desert. None of the grain offerings could be brought, for instance. So, it might be that the operation of the lampstand in the Holy Place had to be postponed till Israel arrived in the promised land.
5. On this point, the words here could be translated, "that a lamp may be set up to burn continually." From this expression it would seem that the lamp must have been kept constantly burning both day and night; and Josephus declares that this was actually so, at least with three out of the seven lights (*Antiquities of the Jews*, Book 3), but there are several places in Scripture which at least imply the contrary. (Ex. 30; and First Samuel 3.)

6. It seems to have been the duty of the High Priest to light the lamps every evening, and to give them a sufficient supply of oil to last till daybreak, at which time “the lamp of God went out” (First Samuel I) If we regard the lamp as extinguished during the daytime we must understand ‘always’ here to mean ‘regularly every night.’

7. Let us also consider the vision Zechariah receives from the angel, where he sees that the lampstand is fed with oil supernaturally (chap. 4).

8. In the end we are left with another question that is not totally answerable on this side of eternity!

Q. Which answer to this conundrum to you favor, and why?

EXODUS CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

v.1-2

1. In this chapter the LORD turns from the tabernacle to the priest. The link

between this chapter and the preceding one is the lampstand. The following chapters will then describe the High Priest's ordination and his tasks. This chapter deals with his garments.

2. Aaron was the best dressed man in the world. God clothed him with His glory. David speaks about "the splendor of his [God's] holiness." (Psalm 29)

3. We can see the significance of the lampstand being the link between these chapters and the previous one. The light of the lampstand represented, both the character of God and the testimony of this to the nation (and world) by man, in this case the High Priest. God lets His light shine upon man to make him become light. "You are the light of the world," said Jesus. (Matthew 5)

4. This is what the priesthood is all about. This priesthood is initiated by God. We know little about the priests and their calling before this time. Before Aaron's ordination only two other priests are mentioned in the Old Testament: Melchizedek and Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses.

@. About Melchizedek we read: "He was priest of God Most High." (Genesis 14) Nothing is said, however, about how he served in this position.

Interestingly, he was also referred to as "king" of Salem (future Jerusalem). He also bestowed a blessing upon Abram, and he publicly proclaimed the glory of the LORD God. Thus, he was also a Prophet.

@. Regarding Jethro's priesthood we don't read anything except that he was a priest of Midian. (Exodus 2) No other details are given. His priesthood was most certainly in the service of Yahweh, and not to any heathen idol, for when he brings his daughter and two grandsons back to Moses he clearly recognizes the supremacy of Yahweh. (Exodus 18)

5. The priesthood to which God called Aaron is, particularly, connected to the service in the Tabernacle. Aaron and his descendants were to serve in this limited context of space and time. The space is the Tabernacle and later the Temple on earth; the time limit is death. Melchizedek exemplified the eternal priesthood. As such he was a type of Christ. About Him David prophesied: "You [the Messiah] are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek." (Psalm 110) Jewish commentators equated Melchizedek with the Patriarch Shem. If true, then he lived to be 600 years old. But there is no proof they were the same.

6. The true High Priest is our Lord Jesus Christ, Who is not subject to the limitations of space and time. The writer to the Hebrews says about Him: "Now there have been many of those priests, since death prevented them from continuing in office; but because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. . . . The point of what we are saying is this: We do have such a high priest, Who sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, and

Who serves in the sanctuary, the true Tabernacle set up by the LORD, not by man." (chs. 7 & 8)

7. Although we are looking at a picture that gives a limited and partial view of the heavenly reality, there is enough beauty and glory here to bless our study.

8. God calls Aaron and his four sons to the priesthood. Two of his sons, Nadab and Abihu, would not fulfill their task for long. They died when they got drunk and "presented strange fire before the LORD." (Leviticus 10) Eleazar would later succeed Aaron as High Priest upon his death. (Numbers 20)

Q. Since Jesus is our Great High Priest, we need no other earthly priests anymore. Yet what functions of a priest can still be seen in the office of Pastor in the New Testament Church?

v.3-14

1. The best tailors of the people are to make the priestly garments, which consist Of the following: an Ephod, a Breastpiece of Judgment, a Robe, a Tunic, a Turban, and a Sash.

2. There is an important point in the fact that God deigns to deal with clothing here at all. Does God really care all that much how a person is dressed, or even dressed at all? We take it for granted that the priests would not go around naked in the Tabernacle, but we should never forget that God did not create man wearing clothes! Follow me here - - -

@. We read about Adam and Eve: "The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame." (Genesis 2)

@. The shame of nakedness came with the awareness of sin. After eating fruit from the tree God had forbidden, we read: "Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves." (Genesis 3)

@. God asked them: "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?" Then God makes accommodations to this fallen condition, and we read: "The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them." (Genesis 3)

@. So there is in the description of the clothing of Aaron and his sons a reference to the Fall into sin. But here now the tables are turned. The clothing which God provided for Adam and Eve protected them from the results of sin with animal

skins, which had been obtained by the killing of animals and the spilling of blood (the first sacrifice). The priestly garments covered the priest with glory.

3. So, although clothing was not part of God's original plan of creation, it is incorporated into God's glorious scheme through redemption.

Q. It has become very common in today's church to tell people to "come as you are" to worship. While this may serve some commendable purpose, what does this section of Exodus tell us about appearing before the LORD for worship?

4. In the description of the garments to be made, much attention is given to the Ephod. Beginning with v.6 nine verses are devoted to it.

5. The Hebrew word ephod has been left untranslated in most English versions. One definition given in Bible dictionaries is: "a girdle; specifically the High-Priest's shoulder-piece." In another we find: "This word, which appears in Assyrian and Ugaritic, occurs 49 times in the biblical Hebrew, 31 times in the legal prescriptions of Exodus & Leviticus and only once in biblical poetry (Hosea 3:4). It describes a close-fitting outer garment associated with worship. It was a long vest, generally reaching to the thighs. The 'ephod' of the high priest was fastened with a beautifully woven girdle and had shoulder straps set in onyx stones, on which were engraved the names of the twelve tribes. Over the chest of the high priest was the breastplate, also containing twelve stones engraved with the tribal names. Rings attached it to the 'ephod.'"

6. Little is known of the etymology of the word, but it was an important part of the high priestly outfit. The material to be used was the same as that used for the making of the curtains that separated the Most Holy Place from the Holy Place and the latter from the courtyard, with two exceptions; no cherubs were embroidered on it and the curtains had no gold thread woven into them.

7. The ephod was secured in three ways: the two shoulder pieces were fastened together and the waistband was tied in the back. The shoulder pieces performed a double function: they served as clasps to hold the ephod together on top and they held two onyx stones on which the names of the twelve tribes of Israel were engraved. The Hebrew word which is translated with "so it can be fastened," is defined as, "to unite, to be joined."

8. The Hebrew word translated by onyx is derived from the word to blanch. It is thought by some to be the gem called beryl (from its pale green color). Josephus

states that the stone on the breastplate was indeed black onyx, and the shoulder-pieces of the ephod sardonyx - the variety of onyx with bands of dark red.

9. On the onyx stones the names of the twelve sons of Jacob were engraved in their original birth order. Since twelve sons' names were used, the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh were combined into Joseph, and Levi and Simeon included in this list.

10. These names were also engraved individually on the twelve stones of the Breastplate, only there the "tribes" names are indicated. Aaron was to carry the names of the sons on his shoulders and the tribes over his heart when he appeared before the LORD.

11. The significance of this arrangement should not be overlooked. The shoulder pieces and the breastplate are perfect images of intercession as we will note later in v. 29.

12. What we will read in v. 38 regarding the gold plate Aaron was to wear on his forehead is applicable to these parts of the outfit also. As a high priest Aaron was held responsible for his people. He bore their guilt. More on this later.

v.15-30

1. On top of the ephod was fastened "a breastpiece for making decisions." (v. 15) Thus, the ephod had for its main object or purpose to be a receptacle for the breast-plate which was attached to it after it had been put on, and formed its principal ornament.

2. The Hebrew for "breast-plate," means "ornament"; and this piece must certainly have been the most striking and brilliant object in the whole attire of the high priest.

3. Externally, the Breastplate repeated the symbolism of the ephod, exhibiting the High Priest as the representative of the twelve sons and twelve tribes, whose names were engraved upon its twelve stones, as well as upon the onyxes of the ephod.

Q. Why were both the list of 'sons' and 'tribes' used?

4. Internally, the Breastplate had another purpose. It contained within the Urim

and the Thummim, (v. 30), by means of which God was consulted, and signified His will to His people. This must be regarded as its main use. It was from these decisions thus given that it received the name of “the breast-plate (or ornament) of judgment.” We will discuss the Urim & Thummim when we come to those verses.

5. The Breastplate was a separate piece of cloth made of the same material as the rest of the ephod, but with an attachment of a gold filigree setting. The Hebrew word used here is defined as “plaited or filigree or checkered work as settings for gems.” Different translations have used “buttons,” “sockets,” and “rosettes.”

6. On this cloth a gold frame was to be attached in which twelve precious stones were mounted. These stones are listed as: a ruby, a topaz, a beryl, a turquoise, a sapphire, an emerald, a jacinth, an agate, an amethyst, a chrysolite, an onyx, and a jasper. However, the exact identification of each stone is not certain. When we compare the different translations we see that not all agree concerning the names for the stones. When we compare the lists, we see that translators agreed only on the topaz, sapphire, and jasper.

7. It will be noted that several of these stones are found as foundations in St. John’s vision of the New Jerusalem in Revelation 21. In my humble opinion it would be a rather time-consuming and largely unprofitable exercise to study in detail what each of these stones may have stood for. Instead, the main point is clear: they are precious stones, and they reflect the character of God. Earlier in Revelation John gives us a brief glimpse of God’s glorious character when he tries to describe the glory of the Triune God sitting on the throne in Heaven. He says: “And the one who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian.” (ch. 4)

8. The stones on the High Priest’s breastplate are engraved with the names of the tribes of Israel. They are embedded in the glory of God’s character. Here we need to remember the value and meaning of a name in the Old Testament. Names were more than appellations; they stood for character and personality. Aaron was not just wearing some decorative jewelry. He presented the names of human beings to the Lord in a setting of His glory.

9. It was as though when Aaron enters the sanctuary, thus dressed, he is reminding the LORD of His gracious covenant with the people Israel. The essence of worship is not what we say to God, but what He says to us. Aaron’s outfit is not meant to remind God of how we feel, but to remind us of what God has done for all mankind!

10. Far too many in the modern church have forgotten that God speaks more to us in worship than we speak to God. When Aaron brings the names of the Twelve

Tribes before the LORD, God wants him to understand what His attitude is toward His people. That is what intercession is all about. Worship is not the Believer moving the heart of God, but God moving ours!

11. God wants to share His compassion for all mankind with us. When Jesus exhorts us to pray for workers in God's harvest, it is because He is moved with compassion. And He wants us to have the same compassion He has. We read: "When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.'" (Matthew 9)

12. What Aaron does expresses that which is so beautifully put in words by the author of the letter to the Hebrews: "For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." (ch. 2) Aaron brings the tribes of Israel into the presence of God in a way which symbolizes the way Jesus brings many sons into glory.

13. The jewelry Aaron wore was an outward expression of an inward reality. God's compassion for His people that is expressed in Aaron's shoulder pieces and breastplate, is put in words by Isaiah when he says: "Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you! See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands; your walls are ever before me." (ch. 49)

14. Names engraved in precious stones are permanent. They can never be erased. Neither can they be wiped off when God engraves them on the palms of His hands. The stones on Aaron's shoulders and over his heart displayed a touch of eternity as well as of glory.

Q. To what other Biblical image could we compare these names engraved in stone?

15. The breastpiece was a separate piece of cloth attached to the ephod with gold chains as noted in v.16. It was to be square and of two folds of cloth, forming a pouch nine inches square.

16. This pouch had the double function of holding the frame with the twelve

stones on the outside and the Urim and Thummim on the inside. The stones were set in four rows of three.

17. The description of the way in which the breastpiece was to be fastened to the ephod is rather complicated. The attachment of the top part was different from the one at the bottom and it is described separately. The two gold rings of the top are not mentioned at the same time as the two at the bottom. The top rings were attached to the shoulder pieces by two cords made of gold thread braided together and the two bottom rings were tied to the belt of the ephod by two blue ribbons. This sounds too different not to have any deeper meaning. What follows is one possible interpretation:

@. In Ecclesiastes, Solomon compares the human spirit to a silver cord. Describing the death of man he says: "Remember Him [God] before the silver cord is severed, or the golden bowl is broken." (ch. 12) If the human spirit is represented by a silver cord, a golden cord could be the image of the Spirit of God. This is the cord that goes upward and links the precious stones on Aaron's heart with the ones on his shoulders. Without the link that the Holy Spirit provides there would be no ministry of intercession. The way Aaron is dressed expresses what the apostle St. Paul would later put in words: "We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will." (Romans 8)

@. There is a human connection also, which is represented by the blue ribbons that attach the breastpiece to the belt. There is a heavenly element in this also, which is expressed in the color blue, but the downward direction of the ribbons and also the way they are contrasted to the golden braids on top would indicate that man has his share of responsibility in the ministry of intercession. The Holy Spirit does not work without Means and does not simply take over and push us aside. The breastplate is kept in place by both the two golden cords on top and the two blue ribbons on the bottom.

18. v.30 introduces us to the famous Urim and Thummim. Like the earlier term 'ephod,' almost all translations leave the Hebrew words untranslated. They mean 'lights' and 'perfections' respectively, but what they actually were or how they actually worked nobody really knows. Of course, there have been many and varied speculations.

@. Some Bible scholars believe these were gemstones of some kind and cast, much as dice are thrown, to aid the high priest in making important

decisions. They were carried in the pouch of the High Priest's Breastplate. These stones or gems were engraved with symbols that signified yes or no. By these the High Priest reached a decision, according to this theory.

@. Josephus believed that the Urim and Thummim had to do with the flashing of the precious stones carried in the breastplate, again signifying 'yes' or 'no.'

@. Some other Jewish commentators believed that the letters in the names of the twelve tribes of Israel engraved on the stones stood out or flashed in succession to spell out God's answer, thus implying that the Urim and Thummim could produce answers to questions which called for more than a mere yes or no reply.

@. Another theory is that by staring at the glow of the Urim and Thummim, the High Priest went into a trance during which God spoke to him.

19. We must always remember that all of these theories are pure guesswork. No one today knows the exact nature of the Urim and Thummim or precisely how they were used.

20. There are also a few other mentions of the Urim and Thummim elsewhere in the Bible:

@. When Joshua succeeded Moses, he was to have answers from the Urim through Eleazar the priest (Numbers 27).

@. They are mentioned in Moses' dying blessing upon Levi (Deuteronomy 33).

@. Saul sought direction from the witch of En-dor when he could receive no answer from the Lord, "either by dreams or by Urim or by the prophets." (First Samuel 28)

@. Another interesting reference to the Urim and Thummim occurred during the period after the return of the Jews from their captivity by the Babylonians. The Persian governor of Jerusalem denied the people permission to observe some of their ancient Jewish food laws until "a priest could consult with the Urim and Thummim." (Ezra 2)

21. Based upon the last Scripture reference, the Urim and Thummim must have survived the Captivity; but for how long, we don't know. There is no indication that they still existed, or were used in New Testament times.

22. Obviously, this manner of consulting God and obtaining answers from Him is no longer accessible to us in our day.

23. The fact that God can no longer be consulted by us with the use of stones or dice or any such thing, but that it was an appropriate and legitimate way in Old Testament would indicate that God has fully replaced such items with the Means

of Grace, the Gospel in Word and Sacraments, for New Testament Believers. These Means are all that is needed for God to communicate to us today. This is not to say God cannot use other means, only that He has not promised to do so.

24. All of this doesn't help us much to understand the use and meaning of the Urim and Thummim in the Old Testament , but it makes us realize that we do live in a different age and that the means of communication that were proper in previous centuries are no longer available to us.

25. On the other hand, the Holy Spirit has given us access to God and to the knowledge of His will in a way that was not available to the Old Testament saints – the completed Bible!

26. In addition, the use of the Urim and Thummim was not to be a thoughtless and mechanical throwing of dice, or whatever the method may have been in which these objects were consulted. Twice we read in that Aaron was to wear these stones over his heart. Every consultation of these stones and every decision made as a result of that consultation was something that affected Aaron to the depth of his soul. The knowledge of the will of God was not to be something that was outside of him, but something that affected him deeply. This reminds of the Pastor's concern for the members of his flock as he constantly brings their needs before the Lord.

Q. Which theory about the Urim and Thummin seems most plausible to you, or do you have one you would like to share?

Q. Considering all of the minute detail given by God for many of the items concerning the Tabernacle, the priests, and the sacrifices, why would He not give us more details about what the Urim and Thummin were and how they were used?

v.31-43

1. The next few verses give us yet more information about the making of the Ephod. As was mentioned before, the same material was used for the making of the Ephod as for the curtains that separated the Most Holy Place from the Holy

Place and the Holy Place from the courtyard. This is basically true, but v. 31 tells us that the Ephod itself was entirely made of blue cloth and that the other colors were used for the decorations on the edge of the garment.

2. The hem of the ephod was embroidered with pomegranates and decorated with little gold bells. The sound of the bells was more than a means to produce pleasant sound as Aaron moved around. It was to protect him from death! Here again, no further explanation is given at this point! What's this all about!?!?

3. We know from the incident reported in Leviticus 10, that Aaron's two sons died as they entered the sanctuary, but again that was because of the "strange fire" they sought to offer before the LORD, and the fact that they were drunk. But why would it be that the High Priest would perform duties commanded by God in the Holy Place at the risk of his life? He must have had to be alert and to know what he was doing. Clearly, the sound of the bells would assist him in this. Did he have to also let God know he was coming in?!?! Mystery!!!

4. We further read in v. 32 that the ephod had to have a woven collar at the neck to keep it from fraying or from being torn. This collar would protect the Ephod not only from involuntary tears, but also from voluntary ones. A High Priest was not allowed to tear his clothes.

@. We read in Leviticus: "The High Priest, the one among his brothers who has had the anointing oil poured on his head and who has been ordained to wear the priestly garments, must not let his hair become unkempt or tear his clothes." (ch. 21)

@. This is why Caiphas committed such a grave sin during Jesus' trial. We read: "Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, 'He has spoken blasphemy! Why do we need any more witnesses? Look, now you have heard the blasphemy.'" (Matthew 26)

5. The last part of Aaron's priestly outfit was a golden plate with the inscription "Holy to the Lord" engraved upon it. This plate was attached to his turban with blue cords. Aaron would wear these words on his forehead as he entered the sanctuary.

6. The significance of this is clear. It was as if Aaron had to remind himself constantly that he had been set apart for the Lord's service. The plate protected his mind and his thinking.

7. THE great command in the Bible is "Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength." (Deuteronomy 6) Jesus interpreted this as involving the mind. Answering one of the questions asked in public he replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with

all your soul and with all your mind.”(Matthew 22) The slightly different wording was not a revolutionary statement. In saying this He was obviously giving a divinely accepted interpretation for the people of His time. Love is not only a matter of the heart, but also of the head. It involves the whole man.

8. The head plate also suggests that our relationship with God does not annul the use of our intellect. Faith and intelligence are not incompatible. The idea that obedience to God’s will would mean intellectual suicide is foolish and nowhere taught in the Bible.

9. Eve’s thought that the forbidden fruit would be desirable for gaining wisdom was a myth invented by the devil. (Genesis 3) Indeed, “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge.” (Proverbs 1) God is the source of all intelligence.

10. The man who thinks that the Gospel is for the simple minded alone, overestimates his own intelligence. Entering into a faith-relationship with God means entering into a world of supreme knowledge, logic, and wisdom that is far superior to our own world of limited comprehension. God is the God of the mind as well as of the emotions. He created Adam as an intelligent being. Truly, it is smart and wise, and also “cool” and “with it” to believe in God!

11. v. 38 gives us somewhat of a surprise. The wearing of the head plate also indicated that “he will bear the guilt involved in the sacred gifts the Israelites consecrate, whatever their gifts may be.” There are several statements here that require a bit of clarification:

@. The first concerns the guilt that was involved in the gifts the Israelites brought. We understand the relationship among certain sacrifices, such as the sin offering and the guilt offering and the people’s guilt. But the verse includes all sacrifices, those that had no relationship with sin, such as the burnt offering, the food offerings, and the various fellowship offerings. There was guilt attached to everything the Israelites brought to the Lord, and this guilt fell upon Aaron’s head. The fact is that nothing we bring to God is acceptable to Him “as is,” because we are not acceptable to Him “just as we are” (Mr. Rogers notwithstanding!). God could only accept Israel’s sacrifices if someone would bear the guilt for them. It all came down upon the head of him who was wearing the plate “holy to the Lord.” This, of course, points to our Lord Jesus Christ, in Whom all the sacrifices, whatever they may be, were fulfilled when He died upon the cross as the only and ultimate sacrifice. We can now come to God with sacrifices that are acceptable to Him because we come in His Name. We are now acceptable ourselves because of Jesus. He bore the guilt for all we bring to God and for ourselves.

@. The fact that this truth is tied to Aaron's turban indicates that the bearing of the people's guilt is a matter of a willing choice. Jesus had made up His mind, when He came into this world, that He came to die for the sins of the world. David prophesied about Jesus' decision to become the Lamb of God. We read: "Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, but My ears You have pierced; burnt offerings and sin offerings You did not require. Then I said, 'Here I am, I have come; it is written about Me in the scroll.'" (Psalm 40)

Jesus talks about this decision Himself. He says in the Gospel of John: "The reason My Father loves Me is that I lay down My life, only to take it up again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of My own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from My Father." (ch. 10)

Q. How does the fact that our Great High Priest, Christ, bears upon Himself all the guilt of whatever we do for or give to God bring us comfort in our life of faith?

12. v. 39 deals with the Tunic, the Turban, and the Sash. The first two are to be made of fine linen which means that they were white. The Sash was the Sash for the Tunic, not to be confused with the Sash for the Ephod. This part of Aaron's outfit would be the same as of the garments his sons were to wear as priests.

13. What distinguished the High Priest from the priests was the Ephod with the Breastplate, the shoulder pieces and the head plate. The basic outfit was the same: that is, a tunic of white linen with a sash and a turban. John sees Jesus in this basic outfit, without the turban, in the first vision in the book of Revelation (ch. 1). However, we do not read here that Aaron's Sash was made of gold like Christ's, although gold thread may have been used in the embroidery. Jesus appears to John, not as the High Priest, but as an ordinary priest, although infinitely more glorious than any priest on earth.

14. The garments for Aaron's sons, although they were only the elementary outfit, were meant to give them dignity and honor, in the same way as the complete high priestly outfit was to give dignity to Aaron.

Q. While these ordinances were all fulfilled in Christ and thus are not prescriptive for New Testament Believers, what do they say about God's attitude toward those who serve as Called Workers before Him in worship?

Q. Might this be applied to pastors today who dress in a very casual manner

during worship? What do you think?

15. The consecration, which is briefly mentioned here in v. 41, is described in detail in the following chapter.

16. The last two verses of this chapter are of an unusual character. The priests were to wear linen underwear. We are not told why, only what will happen if they do not comply: their life would forfeit! "So that they will not incur guilt and die."

17. We note that the tunic did not reach all the way to their feet, but that it was a rather short garment, probably reaching to the knees – "from the loins even to the thighs." (v.42)

18. Remember the warning given back in Exodus 20, where we read: "And do not go up to my altar on steps, lest your nakedness be exposed on it." God desires to prevent any instances of "indecent exposure" of those who come before Him.

19. On this point it is interesting to note that at the time of Christ, Josephus tells us "The tunic was a long linen gown or cassock, worn immediately over the drawers. It reached to the feet, and had tightly-fitting sleeves." (Antiquities of the Jews, Book 3, chapter 7, paragraph 2). This would contradict the description in v. 42, however, remember that the Jews had become quite fond of adding to God's Word many more hedges or protections in order not to even come close to disobeying the legal requirements of the Old Testament.

Q. Once again this begs the question: Why is God so bothered by human nakedness, especially in relation to those who lead in worship?

20. Another interesting feature of the description of the priestly outfit, including the undergarments, is the requirement that they be made from linen. The prophet Ezekiel throws an interesting light upon this in his detailed description of the temple and the service of the priests. We read: "They [the priests] are to wear linen turbans on their heads and linen undergarments around their waists. They must not wear anything that makes them perspire." (ch. 44) So, God seems to hate sweat!

21. Well, sweat was part of the curse that Adam incurred upon himself when he sinned. God said to him: "By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground." (Genesis 3) Sweat is usually the result of

human exertion. It is also, of course, a protection of the body against overheating.

22. In the context of the comment in Ezekiel, it speaks of human work contrasted to the work of God. The service the priests perform before the Lord is not a human endeavor to please God, it is God's initiative, it is God's work, it is grace. Paul gives us the spiritual application when he says: "Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation. However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness." (Romans 4)

23. It is amazing what we can learn from an undergarment. God protects us from the shame of sin by keeping us covered, not only with underwear, but with the blood of Christ; He wants us to serve Him, not in our own strength, which would make us perspire, but in His grace, which sets us free. God's priests are free from toil and shame. And all Believers are His priests!