

Exodus 28:1-31:18

Vestments for the Priesthood



Then bring near to you your brother Aaron, and his sons with him, from among the Israelites, to serve me as priests—Aaron and Aaron’s sons, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar. You shall make sacred vestments for the glorious adornment of your brother Aaron. And you shall speak to all who have ability, whom I have endowed with skill, that they make Aaron’s vestments to consecrate him for my priesthood. These are the vestments that they shall make: a breastpiece, an ephod, a robe, a checkered tunic, a turban, and a sash. When they make these sacred vestments for your brother Aaron and his sons to serve me as priests, they shall use gold, blue, purple, and crimson yarns, and fine linen.

The Ephod

They shall make the ephod of gold, of blue, purple, and crimson yarns, and of fine twisted linen, skillfully worked. It shall have two shoulder-pieces attached to its two edges, so that it may be joined together. The decorated band on it shall be of the same workmanship and materials, of gold, of blue, purple, and crimson yarns, and of fine twisted linen. You shall take two onyx stones, and engrave on them the names of the sons of Israel, six of their names on one stone, and the names of the remaining six on the other stone, in the order of their birth. As a gem-cutter engraves signets, so you shall engrave the two stones with the names of the sons of Israel; you shall mount them in settings of gold filigree. 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. You shall make settings of gold filigree, and two chains of pure gold, twisted like cords; and you shall attach the corded chains to the settings.

The Breastplate

You shall make a breastpiece of judgment, in skilled work; you shall make it in the style of the ephod; of gold, of blue and purple and crimson yarns, and of fine twisted linen you shall make it. It shall be square and doubled, a span in length and a span in width. You shall set in it four rows of stones. A row of carnelian, chrysolite, and emerald shall be the first row; and the second row a turquoise, a sapphire, and a moonstone; and the third row a jacinth, an agate, and an amethyst; and the fourth row a beryl, an onyx, and a jasper; they shall be set in gold filigree. There shall be twelve stones with names corresponding to the names of the sons of Israel; they shall be like signets, each engraved with its name, for the twelve tribes. You shall make for the breastpiece chains of pure gold, twisted like cords; and you shall make for the breastpiece two rings of gold, and put the two rings on the two edges of the breastpiece. You shall put the two cords of gold in the two rings at the edges of the breastpiece; the two ends of the two cords you shall attach to the two settings, and so attach it in front to the shoulder-pieces of the ephod. 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. 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 joining above the decorated band of the ephod. The breastpiece shall be bound by its rings to the rings of the ephod with a blue cord, so that it may lie on the decorated band of the ephod, and so that the breastpiece shall not come loose from the ephod. 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, for a continual remembrance before the Lord. 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 Israelites on his heart before the Lord continually.

Other Priestly Vestments

You shall make the robe of the ephod all of blue. It shall have an opening for the head in the middle of it, with a woven binding round the opening, like the opening in a coat of mail, so that it may not be torn. On its lower hem you shall make pomegranates of blue, purple, and crimson yarns, all round the lower hem, with bells of gold between them all round— a golden bell and a pomegranate alternating all round the lower hem of the robe. Aaron shall wear it 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 may not die.

You shall make a rosette of pure gold, and engrave on it, like the engraving of a signet, 'Holy to the Lord.' You shall fasten it on the turban with a blue cord; it shall be on the front of the turban. It shall be on Aaron's forehead, and Aaron shall take on himself any guilt incurred in the holy offering that the Israelites consecrate as their sacred donations; it shall always be on his forehead, in order that they may find favor before the Lord.

You shall make the checkered tunic of fine linen, and you shall make a turban of fine linen, and you shall make a sash embroidered with needlework.

For Aaron's sons you shall make tunics and sashes and head-dresses; you shall make them for their glorious adornment. You shall put them on your brother Aaron, and on his sons with him, and shall anoint them and ordain them and consecrate them, so that they may serve me as priests. You shall make for them linen undergarments to cover their naked flesh; they shall reach from the hips to the thighs; Aaron and his sons shall wear them when they go into the tent of meeting, or when they come near the altar to minister in the holy place; or they will bring guilt on themselves and die. This shall be a perpetual ordinance for him and for his descendants after him.

The Ordination of the Priests

Now this is what you shall do to them to consecrate them, so that they may serve me as priests. Take one young bull and two rams without blemish, and unleavened bread, unleavened cakes mixed with oil, and unleavened wafers spread with oil. You shall make them of choice wheat flour. You shall put them in one basket and bring them in the basket, and bring the bull and the two rams. You shall bring Aaron and his sons to the entrance of the tent of meeting, and wash them with water. Then you shall take the vestments, and put on Aaron the tunic and the robe of the ephod, and the ephod, and the breastpiece, and gird him with the decorated band

of the ephod; and you shall set the turban on his head, and put the holy diadem on the turban. You shall take the anointing-oil, and pour it on his head and anoint him. Then you shall bring his sons, and put tunics on them, and you shall gird them with sashes and tie head-dresses on them; and the priesthood shall be theirs by a perpetual ordinance. You shall then ordain Aaron and his sons.

You shall bring the bull in front of the tent of meeting. Aaron and his sons shall lay their hands on the head of the bull, and you shall slaughter the bull before the Lord, at the entrance of the tent of meeting, and shall take some of the blood of the bull and put it on the horns of the altar with your finger, and all the rest of the blood you shall pour out at the base of the altar. You shall take all the fat that covers the entrails, and the appendage of the liver, and the two kidneys with the fat that is on them, and turn them into smoke on the altar. But the flesh of the bull, and its skin, and its dung, you shall burn with fire outside the camp; it is a sin-offering.

Then you shall take one of the rams, and Aaron and his sons shall lay their hands on the head of the ram, and you shall slaughter the ram, and shall take its blood and dash it against all sides of the altar. Then you shall cut the ram into its parts, and wash its entrails and its legs, and put them with its parts and its head, and turn the whole ram into smoke on the altar; it is a burnt-offering to the Lord; it is a pleasing odor, an offering by fire to the Lord.

You shall take the other ram; and Aaron and his sons shall lay their hands on the head of the ram, and you shall slaughter the ram, and take some of its blood and put it on the lobe of Aaron's right ear and on the lobes of the right ears of his sons, and on the thumbs of their right hands, and on the big toes of their right feet, and dash the rest of the blood against all sides of the altar. Then you shall take some of the blood that is on the altar, and some of the anointing-oil, and sprinkle it on Aaron and his vestments and on his sons and his sons' vestments with him; then he and his vestments shall be holy, as well as his sons and his sons' vestments.

You shall also take the fat of the ram, the fat-tail, the fat that covers the entrails, the appendage of the liver, the two kidneys with the fat that is on them, and the right thigh (for it is a ram of ordination), and one loaf of bread, one cake of bread made with oil, and one wafer, out of the basket of unleavened bread that is before the Lord; and you shall place all these on the palms of Aaron and on the palms of his sons, and raise them as an elevation-offering before the Lord. Then you shall take them from their hands, and turn them into smoke on the altar on top of the burnt-offering of pleasing odor before the Lord; it is an offering by fire to the Lord.

You shall take the breast of the ram of Aaron's ordination and raise it as an elevation-offering before the Lord; and it shall be your portion. You shall consecrate the breast that was raised as an elevation-offering and the thigh that was raised as an elevation-offering from the ram of ordination, from that which belonged to Aaron and his sons. These things shall be a perpetual ordinance for Aaron and his sons from the Israelites, for this is an offering; and it shall be an offering by the Israelites from their sacrifice of offerings of well-being, their offering to the Lord.

The sacred vestments of Aaron shall be passed on to his sons after him; they shall be anointed in them and ordained in them. The son who is priest in his place shall wear them for seven days, when he comes into the tent of meeting to minister in the holy place.

You shall take the ram of ordination, and boil its flesh in a holy place; and Aaron and his sons shall eat the flesh of the ram and the bread that is in the basket, at the entrance of the tent of meeting. They themselves shall eat the food by which atonement is made, to ordain and consecrate them, but no one else shall eat of them, because they are holy. If any of the flesh for the ordination, or of the bread, remains until the morning, then you shall burn the remainder with fire; it shall not be eaten, because it is holy.

Thus you shall do to Aaron and to his sons, just as I have commanded you; over seven days you shall ordain them. Also every day you shall offer a bull as a sin-offering for atonement. Also you shall offer a sin-offering for the altar, when you make atonement for it, and shall anoint it, to consecrate it. For seven days you shall make atonement for the altar, and consecrate it, and the altar shall be most holy; whatever touches the altar shall become holy.

The Daily Offerings

Now this is what you shall offer on the altar: two lambs a year old regularly each day. One lamb you shall offer in the morning, and the other lamb you shall offer in the evening; and with the first lamb one-tenth of a measure of choice flour mixed with one-fourth of a hin of beaten oil, and one-fourth of a hin of wine for a drink-offering. And the other lamb you shall offer in the evening, and shall offer with it a grain-offering and its drink-offering, as in the morning, for a pleasing odor, an offering by fire to the Lord. It shall be a regular burnt-offering throughout your generations at the entrance of the tent of meeting before the Lord, where I will meet you, to speak to you there. I will meet the Israelites there, and it shall be sanctified by my glory; I will consecrate the tent of meeting and the altar; Aaron also and his sons I will consecrate, to serve me as priests. I will dwell among the Israelites, and I will be their God. And they shall know that I am the Lord their God, who brought them out of the land of Egypt that I might dwell among them; I am the Lord their God.

The Altar of Incense

You shall make an altar on which to offer incense; you shall make it of acacia wood. It shall be one cubit long, and one cubit wide; it shall be square, and shall be two cubits high; its horns shall be of one piece with it. You shall overlay it with pure gold, its top, and its sides all round and its horns; and you shall make for it a molding of gold all round. And you shall make two golden rings for it; under its molding on two opposite sides of it you shall make them, and they shall hold the poles with which to carry it. You shall make the poles of acacia wood, and overlay them with gold. You shall place it in front of the curtain that is above the ark of the covenant, in front of the mercy-seat that is over the covenant, where I will meet you. Aaron shall offer fragrant incense on it; every morning when he dresses the lamps he shall offer it, and when Aaron sets up the lamps in the evening he shall offer it, a regular incense-offering before the Lord throughout your generations. You shall not offer unholy incense on it, or a burnt-offering, or a grain-offering; and you shall not pour a drink-offering on it. Once a year Aaron shall perform the rite of atonement on its horns. Throughout your generations he shall perform the atonement for it once a year with the blood of the atoning sin-offering. It is most holy to the Lord.

The Half-Shekel for the Sanctuary

The Lord spoke to Moses: When you take a census of the Israelites to register them, at registration all of them shall give a ransom for their lives to the Lord, so that no plague may come upon them for being registered. This is what each one who is registered shall give: half a shekel according to the shekel of the sanctuary (the shekel is twenty gerahs), half a shekel as an offering to the Lord. Each one who is registered, from twenty years old and upwards, shall give the Lord's offering. The rich shall not give more, and the poor shall not give less, than the half-shekel, when you bring this offering to the Lord to make atonement for your lives. You shall take the atonement money from the Israelites and shall designate it for the service of the tent of meeting; before the Lord it will be a reminder to the Israelites of the ransom given for your lives.

The Bronze Basin

The Lord spoke to Moses: You shall make a bronze basin with a bronze stand for washing. You shall put it between the tent of meeting and the altar, and you shall put water in it; with the water Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet. When they go into the tent of meeting, or when they come near the altar to minister, to make an offering by fire to the Lord, they shall wash with water, so that they may not die. They shall wash their hands and their feet, so that they may not die: it shall be a perpetual ordinance for them, for him and for his descendants throughout their generations.

The Anointing-Oil and Incense

The Lord spoke to Moses: Take the finest spices: of liquid myrrh five hundred shekels, and of sweet-smelling cinnamon half as much, that is, two hundred and fifty, and two hundred and fifty of aromatic cane, and five hundred of cassia—measured by the sanctuary shekel—and a hin of olive oil; and you shall make of these a sacred anointing-oil blended as by the perfumer; it shall be a holy anointing-oil. With it you shall anoint the tent of meeting and the ark of the covenant, and the table and all its utensils, and the lampstand and its utensils, and the altar of incense, and the altar of burnt-offering with all its utensils, and the basin with its stand; you shall consecrate them, so that they may be most holy; whatever touches them will become holy. You shall anoint Aaron and his sons, and consecrate them, in order that they may serve me as priests. You shall say to the Israelites, 'This shall be my holy anointing-oil throughout your generations. It shall not be used in any ordinary anointing of the body, and you shall make no other like it in composition; it is holy, and it shall be holy to you. Whoever compounds any like it or whoever puts any of it on an unqualified person shall be cut off from the people.'

The Lord said to Moses: Take sweet spices, stacte, and onycha, and galbanum, sweet spices with pure frankincense (an equal part of each), and make an incense blended as by the perfumer, seasoned with salt, pure and holy; and you shall beat some of it into powder, and put part of it before the covenant in the tent of meeting where I shall meet you; it shall be for you most holy. When you make incense according to this composition, you shall not make it for

yourselves; it shall be regarded by you as holy to the Lord. Whoever makes any like it to use as perfume shall be cut off from the people.

Bezalel and Oholiab

The Lord spoke to Moses: See, I have called by name Bezalel son of Uri son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah: and I have filled him with divine spirit, with ability, intelligence, and knowledge in every kind of craft, to devise artistic designs, to work in gold, silver, and bronze, in cutting stones for setting, and in carving wood, in every kind of craft. Moreover, I have appointed with him Oholiab son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan; and I have given skill to all the skillful, so that they may make all that I have commanded you: the tent of meeting, and the ark of the covenant, and the mercy-seat that is on it, and all the furnishings of the tent, the table and its utensils, and the pure lampstand with all its utensils, and the altar of incense, and the altar of burnt-offering with all its utensils, and the basin with its stand, and the finely worked vestments, the holy vestments for the priest Aaron and the vestments of his sons, for their service as priests, and the anointing-oil and the fragrant incense for the holy place. They shall do just as I have commanded you.

The Sabbath Law

The Lord said to Moses: You yourself are to speak to the Israelites: ‘You shall keep my sabbaths, for this is a sign between me and you throughout your generations, given in order that you may know that I, the Lord, sanctify you. You shall keep the sabbath, because it is holy for you; everyone who profanes it shall be put to death; whoever does any work on it shall be cut off from among the people. For six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is a sabbath of solemn rest, holy to the Lord; whoever does any work on the sabbath day shall be put to death. Therefore the Israelites shall keep the sabbath, observing the sabbath throughout their generations, as a perpetual covenant. It is a sign for ever between me and the people of Israel that in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed.’

The Two Tablets of the Covenant

When God finished speaking with Moses on Mount Sinai, he gave him the two tablets of the covenant, tablets of stone, written with the finger of God.

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Questions for Discussion

After someone reads a portion of the above selection, prayerfully consider the following questions. Allow fifteen minutes or so for this pre-meeting Bible study.

1. What did you hear? Did anything surprise you?
2. How does what you heard apply to you?
3. How will what you've learned from this scripture affect your work together?