

Parashah Sixty-Five

Exodus 27:20-28:43; Hosea 14:4-9; Hebrews 4:14-16

Notes by Tim Hegg

The Garments of the High Priest

Our Torah portion this Shabbat deals almost exclusively with the garments of the High Priest—Aaron and his sons. Described in detail, there is every reason to believe that the garments worn by the High Priest are used by God to reveal both the purpose of the High Priest’s intercession, as well as the manner in which this intercession would be made. It seems most clear that the details given are ultimately to help describe and define the work of the final High Priest Who, from the priesthood of Melchizedek, would bring about the redemption of which Aaron and his sons were types.

But the opening paragraph describes the oil for the menorah, and the duty of Aaron and his sons to maintain the menorah, keeping it lit as a constant light before HaShem. The oil, provided by the people, was used to keep the lights burning “from evening until morning,” a phrase well known from the opening story of creation. Since the text indicates that the lamps are to burn “continually,” the phrase “from evening to morning” must indicate “every day.”

The menorah was the only light in the Holy Place aside from the burning coals of the altar of incense. That the people brought the oil for the lamp shows that they participated in making the priestly service possible, for apart from the menorah the Holy Place would be dark. Since the menorah was fashioned after a living almond branch, it symbolized life. Indeed, in the Ancient Near East, “light” speaks of life, while “darkness” speaks of death. The same is true in the Tanach (cf. Job 28:30, 33; Is 9:1, cp. Lk 1:79; Ps 23:4; Is 53:10-11 in Lxx and Qumran). While the work of the priests regularly included death (sacrifice), the purpose was ultimately for life.

We know that the High Priest foreshadowed Yeshua—this is clear from the Apostolic Writings (particularly Hebrews). How much the people of Ancient Israel recognized that the High Priest was a foreshadowing of Messiah and His priestly work is not certain, but it would seem very likely that some, and perhaps more than we think, recognized in the ornate garments and regulations of the High Priest that he stood as a picture of the final redemption that would be effected by Messiah. Indeed, “Messiah,” meaning “anointed one,” figures in very closely to the consecration of the High Priest through anointing oil. That this anointing was significant is clear by its mention in Psalm 133.

The garments prescribed for the High Priest are said to be given “for glory and for beauty” (לְכָבוֹד וּלְתִפְאֻרָה, 28:2). The first word, כְּבוֹד, *kavod*, has as much the sense of “honor” as “glory.” The office of High Priest was to have a special honor, accorded to it by the unique garments worn. The second word, תִּפְאֻרָה, *tiferet*, means “beauty,” “ornate,” and describes something of extra-ordinary splendor. Clearly the High Priest was set apart from all the other priests by these designations.

It can hardly be missed that such designations set the High Priest apart as well for the duties he would perform for the people. They, dependent upon him for the intercessory work he would do, had to rest assured that God would be pleased with him, and by His pleasure forgive their sins. He acted independent of them: he did not take their sacrifices but concerned himself entirely with his own sacrifices, particularly on Yom HaKippurim. Indeed, he prefigured the coming Promised One Who would deal with sin in a final fashion.

It should also be noted that three times the High Priest is said to function as a priest “for Me,” (לְפָנַי and similar constructions) that is, to minister before God (28:3-4, 41). Thus, we may presume that the garments herein described function both to set the High Priest apart as well as to reveal the character of holiness required for his special and unique duties.

What might each of the garments suggest regarding the office and service of the High Priest? The turban and crown upon it (on which was written קֹדֶשׁ לַיהוָה, *kodesh la'donai*), like the colors of the outer garments, bespeak “royalty” and give the High Priest the look of a King.

The Ephod marks the High Priest out as the one who carried the people of Israel before the Lord, for to the Ephod was attached the breastplate upon which precious stones were mounted, each representing one of the Twelve tribes of Israel, being engraved as a signet or seal (cf. Song of Songs 8:6). The

word itself (אָפֵד) is derived from the verb אָפַד meaning “to fit closely,” “to secure an outer garment,” “to gird” (cf. Ex 29:5; Lev 8:7). Two shoulder stones, also engraved with the names of the tribes, are attached to the Ephod and carried upon the shoulders. Thus, Israel is borne by the High Priest upon his shoulders (strength) and upon his heart (covenant loyalty).

Likewise, the Urim and Tummim are contained in the breastplate, indicating that the High Priest was the one through whom God’s direct revelation would come. The outer Tunic was made entirely of wool dyed with *techeilet*. It therefore marked the High Priest as connected with the “heavenly” realm (for the *techeilet* was the color of the sky). The linen tunic, made of pure white linen, was indicative of the purity of the High Priest, as were the linen breaches worn as an under garment. This emphasizes the personal purity needed to accomplish the priestly intercession for the people. That he wore no shoes teaches that his duties were performed on “holy ground.” The sacred nature of his priestly work is thus “before HaShem.” In the High Priest, and in him alone, could the people approach the Most High. Consider how this informs Paul’s phrase, “in Messiah.”

The foreshadowing of Yeshua as the heavenly High Priest is obvious: He is both a King and a Priest (cf. Zech 6:13); He came from the Father; He is man, yet one with the Father: eternal, without beginning. He is therefore sinless while at the same time bearing our sins. He alone carries us before the Father, and only in Him may we have access to God’s grace. He is the direct revelation of the Father, and in Him all things are confirmed and established (2Cor 1:20). Apart from His high priestly work, there is no atonement and no forgiveness of sins.

The choice of the *haftarah* for the triennial cycle, Hosea 14:4–9, is not immediately apparent. The connection is based upon v. 6 (v. 7 in the Hebrew), “His shoots will sprout, and his beauty will be like the olive tree and his fragrance like the cedars of Lebanon.” Since the Torah *parashah* begins with the commandment for the children of Israel to bring olive oil (שֶׁמֶן זַיִת, *shemen zayit*) for the menorah, the mention of the olive tree (זַיִת, *zayit*) in the Hosea *haftarah* formed the necessary verbal linkage. Beyond that, the beauty ascribed to the garments of the High Priest, and the fact that he represents the tribes of Israel before Adonai, are paralleled in the *haftarah* by the beauty of Israel in the messianic age as they return to Adonai and walk in His ways. Moreover, v. 9 (v. 10 in the Hebrew) contains an admonition to “understand” and to “know them,” speaking of the *mitzvot* of the Torah. “For the ways of Adonai (דְּרָכַי יְהוָה) are right (יִשְׁרָיִם), and the righteous will walk in them, but transgressors will stumble in them.” Such a command “to know them” was taken by the Sages to mean that even the laws of the Tabernacle and Temple, along with all of the regulations for the sacrifices and priestly service, were to be studied and understood. Thus, we have yet another connection to our Torah *parashah*.

The reason for our choice of Hebrews 4:14–16 is also obvious: from the early chapters of this epistle, Yeshua is seen to be the heavenly High Priest, the One foreshadowed by the earthly High Priest and his service (cf. 2:17; 3:1). But in this text, we see that Yeshua, as our heavenly High Priest, is capable of representing us before the Father because He is Himself one of us. In the mystery of His incarnation, He took on real humanity so that He could fully represent us both in His death as well as in His life. He was “tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin,” which though difficult to explain, is nonetheless true. If ever we are tempted to think that Yeshua does not understand our weaknesses, or is somehow unsympathetic to the woes of this fallen world, His incarnation immediately proves otherwise. As “the man Messiah Yeshua” (1Tim 2:5), now at the right hand of the Majesty on high (Heb 1:3), He always lives to make intercession for us (Heb 7:25). Knowing that His work is fully accepted by the Father (Is 53:10–12; Matt 17:5), we may therefore enter into the very presence of the Father with full confidence that we are accepted in the Beloved One (Eph 1:3–5; 2:18; 3:12). This being the case, “let us hold fast our confession!”



מִצְנֶפֶת, *mitznefet*, "turban" (cf.

מִגְבָּעוֹת, *migbaot*, 28:40)

צִיץ, *tzitz*, "crown"

מְעִיל, *m'il*, "linen robe"

חֹשֶׁן מִשְׁפָּט, *choshen mishpat*,
"breastplate of justice"

אֶפֹּד, *ephod*, "ephod"

כִּתְּנֵת תְּשֻׁבֵץ, *k'tonet tashbeitz*,
"knitted tunic"

bells and pomegranates on hem

linen pants (מִכְנֵסֵי בָד, *michn'sei vad*) from the waist to the knee were worn as an under garment

no shoes or sandals described

אַבְנֵיטִים, *'avneitim*, "sashes"

Note the difference in English Translations :

NASB	NIV	KJV
ruby	ruby	sardius
topaz	topaz	topaz
emerald	beryl	carbuncle
turquoise	turquoise	emerald
sapphire	sapphire	sapphire
diamond	emerald	diamond
jacinth	jacinth	ligure
agate	agate	agate
amethyst	amethyst	amethyst
beryl	chrysolite	beryl
onyx	onyx	onyx
jasper	jasper	jasper

Urim & Tummim (הַאֲוִרִים וְהַתְּמִיִּם) literally means "lights" and "perfections." Most think they were stones used in some manner to discern God's specific will in a given situation.

The text does not specify which stone was for which tribe. If we assume the tribes were engraved in birth order, and that the order went across from top to bottom, then the following arrangement would ensue. The Sages give at least four different arrangements, including this one:

ruby	Reuben
topaz	Simeon
emerald	Levi
turquoise	Judah
sapphire	Dan
diamond	Naphtali
jacinth	Gad
agate	Asher
amethyst	Issachar
beryl	Zebulun
onyx	Joseph
jasper	Benjamin