

EXODUS

Lesson 28 - Chapters 28 and 29

We ended part way through chapter 28 last week and were just getting into the garb of the Levite priests. Pardon me for being repetitive, but we need to remember that it was the tribe of Levi that was set part as the priestly tribe for God. But even though we used the general designation of the tribe of Levi as the “Priestly Tribe” that does NOT mean that all Levites were priests. While ALL members of the tribe of Levi were to be involved in service to the Tabernacle in some form or another, and later the Temple, only some of the Levites were to be actual priests (meaning those who officiated at the sacrificial rituals) with the remainder being equivalent to the blue collar laborers who did various needed tasks around the Tabernacle like clean up or guard duty. So while we tend to bandy about the term “Levite Priests” in fact only a few Levites ever became priests and that was determined solely by which of the clans within the tribe of Levi they were born into. The High Priest was supposed to come ONLY from the descendants of Aaron, and then only from the line of descended from Aaron’s son Eleazar. That said, that is not always what actually happened.

Now, on to the High Priest, whose clothing was distinct from the other priests.

Let’s read Exodus chapter 28.

READ EXODUS CHAPTER 28 all

Working from the inside out, the High Priest, just as the lower priests, was to wear breeches, underwear very akin to long johns. Usually this undergarment went from the waste to the knees. White in color, its purpose was twofold: 1) to maintain a high degree of modesty. Many of the pagan religions of that day had their priests serve their gods naked, or they wore something very sensual and erotic. 2) it served the same practical sanitary purposes as our modern underwear does today. The Priests outer garments could not be soiled by conditions of the flesh, normal or abnormal. If they were, they had to be carefully washed, and that was quite a chore.

Over the breeches was a tunic, usually mistakenly called a coat in most Bible translations. According to Josephus, the tunic was fairly tight fitting, and went from neck to feet. Like the breeches, it was made of white linen. Generally, the only part of the tunic that could be seen was 3 or 4 inches of it, around the ankle area.

Over the tunic was a blue colored robe. It was required to be seamless, and so had a slit for the High Priest’s head to fit through, and two more slits on the sides for his arms. Around the bottom of the garment, the hem, were blue, purple, and red pomegranates, which alternated

with little metal bells, made out of gold. This blue robe went from his neck to just below his knees.

Next, the High Priest would don his ephod. It was a two-piece garment, part of it covering the chest, the other his back. Sometimes the ephod gets confused with the Breastplate; this is because at times BOTH were called ephod...I suppose because they worked together. Actually, the ephod was what the Breastplate was attached to. It was embroidered with blue, purple and red linen yarns. The front and the back were separate pieces, which were held together by a braided strap that lay over the shoulders.

Two Onyx stones were attached to the braided should straps. Each stone was engraved with the names of 6 of the tribes of Israel.

Over, and attached to, the Ephod was the breastplate.....also called the Breastplate of Judgment. This was a most interesting accessory. It was square, had a pouch, and 12 precious stones of varying kinds were placed on it, each engraved with the name of one of the Israelite tribes. Inside the pouch were placed two very mysterious stones, called the Urim and the Thummim.

The High Priest wore a turban, called a mitre. And, on the turban, around his forehead, he wore a gold head plate with the words "Holiness to Yahweh" inscribed on it.

Now, that we've taken a quick look at the High Priest's special uniform, let's back up and talk about some special aspects of these various articles of clothing. The Ephod is quite interesting, as it contains the names of all the tribes of Israel, and it is worn over the High Priest's heart. Each precious stone on the Ephod had the name of ONE tribe of Israel inscribed on it: 12 stones, 12 names. Conversely, the two larger stones on the shoulder straps of the Ephod, together, carried all the tribal names.....6 names on one, 6 names on the other. The 12 separate and different kinds of stones indicate that each of the 12 tribes had a unique and separate tribal identity. The two large shoulder stones indicated that Israel is actually two groups, later they will be called houses....the two houses of Israel, Ephraim and Judah. So, by means of these different stones of the Ephod, we actually see the 3 fold nature of Israel: 1) All Israel, 2) the Two Houses of Israel, and 3) the individual tribes of Israel.

Part of the Ephod was a pouch called the *hoshen* that contained the two stones that were used in decision-making process: the Urim and the Thummim. Now the exact way these stones were used is a mystery. However there are some characteristics about them that we can know. For instance, they were contained in, and considered part of, the total Ephod....that is the ephod and the Breastplate. The Breastplate was also called the Breastplate of Justice or Judgment, or in Hebrew "*hoshen ha-mishpat*". I hope you recall our lesson about the words "judgment", and "justice", which in Hebrew is "mishpat". The first thing to keep in mind is that we are not to take the use of the word judgment, here, as generally meaning wrath or punishment. Mishpat does NOT mean punishment. We of the Church have generally been taught to think of the Biblical use of the word "judgment" as meaning a negative consequence for something mankind has done wrong.....a divine punishment. In other words we should NOT think of the breastplate as the Breastplate of Wrath.

Mishpat most literally means “justice”; so **Breastplate of Justice** or even Breastplate of God’s Will is probably a better rendering according to the way our 21st century western culture minds think of those words. And with all the tribes of Israel represented on this breastplate the idea is that God is going to deal with Israel according to His system of justice.

Now as for the Urim and the Thummim one of the most marvelous aspects of these two objects is hidden from us if we don’t understand Hebrew. Urim means “light”, and Thummim means “perfection” or “fulfillment”(technically, because these two words are plurals, it is lights and fulfillments or perfections). Light and perfection are perhaps the two most recognizable qualities of God Almighty. But, it goes further. One of the titles given to Yahweh in the New Testament, one we’re all familiar with, is the “Alpha and the Omega”, the beginning and the end. This comes from the idea that in the Greek Alphabet, the Alpha is the first letter, and the Omega is the last.....in English its like saying A and Z. But, this “Alpha and Omega” concept was hardly a New Testament revelation. For, here in Exodus, the first letter of the word Urim is the Hebrew “Aleph”, which is the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet. And, the first letter of the word Thummim is the Hebrew “Tav”, which is the LAST letter of the Hebrew alphabet. The Aleph is the Hebrew equivalent to Alpha, and the Tav equivalent to Omega.....Alpha-Omega, Aleph-Tav. So, the Urim and the Thummim represent part of God’s very nature.....the first and the last.

The Urim and the Thummim were apparently used in decision making whereby a choice from among two options needed to be made. It could have been a “one or the other” type of choice, or a “yes or no”. We only read of 3 or 4 places in the Old Testament where the Urim and Thummim are specifically mentioned as used for decision-making. However, we also get a couple more references that seem to indicate the use of these two stones, although they’re not mentioned by name because the Biblical passages say that a decision was arrived at by means of the Ephod.....which included the Breastplate and that pouch that held the Urim and Thummim. There was no other known means of making a decision with the use of the Ephod or Breastplate, than in using the Urim and Thummim.

It also appears that after the time of King David the Urim and the Thummim went into disuse. There are implications that although the Urim and Thummim were still available that they ceased to function as before and so the High Priests determined that God’s will was no longer reflected in them. There is disagreement as to whether the Urim and Thummim were even part of the High Priest’s uniform in the time of Yeshua.

The point is that the Breastplate carries enormous prophetic symbolism with it that those Moses-led Hebrews could only have **barely** understood, if at all; and it was that God’s nature of light and perfection is the very essence of His justice system. And that God’s justice system is both applied TO Israel, and will be brought to all mankind THROUGH Israel. If you’ll recall our lesson on the word Mishpat you’ll also recall that I told you that as God introduces His justice system in Exodus 21 He calls it His Misphat. And that His system of justice was devised to bring about redemption and salvation. We have a commonly used church-word for this process and it is “The Gospel”. The breastplate could be characterized, quite correctly, as being the Breastplate of the Gospel.....as it incorporates the concepts of God’s justice, God’s light and perfection, and Israel as the nation through whom God would justify the whole of

mankind. Of course it turns out that the nation of Israel would produce a very special Israelite, Jesus of Nazareth, who was the cornerstone of God's justice.

Another interesting item that the High Priest wore was this "head plate".....a gold band that was held on with a thread. This band went just about the High Priest's brow line, on his forehead. And, it read "**Kodesh Yehoveh**".....which means Holiness to Yehoveh, or set-apart to Yehoveh. You see the High Priest was Israel's representative before God. Upon the High Priest's shoulders rested either the acceptance or rejection of all of Israel. What a responsibility!

As we will see shortly in the consecration and dedication ceremony of Aaron and the other priests the concept of "**substitution**" in God's justice system is made quite clear and is demonstrated in the High Priest. When the High Priest goes into the Holy of Holies on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, he carries upon him ALL the sin of Israel when he approaches God and makes atonement. The garments worn by the High Priest speak of him as the **substitute** for all Israel (although, interestingly, on Yom Kippur he wears ONLY a simple white linen outfit into the Holy of Holies instead of his normal resplendent clothing). And the sacrificial animal whose blood the High Priest (cohen ha-gadol) carries and will sprinkle on the Mercy Seat bears the **substitute death** that is due man for our sins. This is why the NT speaks of Jesus as our High Priest. He represents us. He carries the burden of our sins before the Father. He is the substitute for all Believers; but He also bears the **substitute death** that is due us. Further it is His blood that was shed and through which atonement was achieved. So Yeshua is BOTH the High Priest AND the sacrificial animal, so to speak.

I want you to please understand that this is not allegory that I'm speaking to you, or some lovely illustration in making this comparison between Christ and the High Priest of Israel. The High Priest was the shadow of who was to come.....Yeshua.....and the special garments the High Priest wore told the story of just how atonement and redemption would work.

Let's move on to chapter 29.

READ EXODUS CHAPTER 29 all

Allow to mention something that I said a while back: what we are witness to in these last few chapters is NOT of Yehoveh **altering** the principles of the religion of the Hebrews to make them different from those principles He had taught Adam and Eve, Noah, Abraham, and others; nor is He changing the Hebrew priesthood from one kind or purpose to another. Up to this moment in history Israel did NOT have priesthood, and its religion by now consisted mostly of what they had learned from, and was in line with, the Egyptians' religious system. Rather what God is doing is continuing the process of separating Israel (step-by-step) from the ways of the corrupt world....in their particular case, that world was Egypt.....and establishing them as a completely set-apart people, with a completely different religion, and a nation unto themselves.

And while they were indeed in process of becoming a wholly unique nation their **purpose** as a nation was also being established; and that purpose was to serve Yehoveh. And that service

would be taught and focused by means of the powerful Priesthood that just at this moment was coming into being with Aaron as its head....it's High Priest.....it's ***cohen ha-gadol***.

Some of the rituals that we see occur here in chapter 29 are actually but one-time happenings, because what is being described is the ceremony to consecrate the establishment of the priesthood. The consecration ceremony that takes up the bulk of this chapter is like the ribbon cutting for a new ship or a highway opening.....or the ratification of a national constitution.....by design, it's only supposed to happen once. However there are also some ongoing rituals that are being established as well, even if they are not done precisely the same way they're carried out in the consecration ceremony.

The first thing to know is that the consecration of Aaron and the priests was to be public....it was not a secret ceremony. Secrecy in God's economy is generally not compatible with light and truth. The people were able to observe and had explained to them what was going on and who was involved. The 2nd thing to know is that what we're reading about in these chapters is ONLY what God is instructing Moses to do. Moses is STILL up on the summit of Mt. Sinai so the narrative we've been reading since chapter 24 amounts to God being quoted as He instructs Moses. In a few more chapters, and AFTER the coming Golden Calf incident, THEN all of these instructions will actually be put in place so that they can be carried out.

After God gave Moses a short list, in vs. 1-3, of animals and foods that were to be sacrificed as part of the consecration ceremony, Moses is instructed to bring Aaron and his 4 sons into the Outer Court of the Tabernacle..... in front of (but not inside) the sanctuary. And the first thing Moses must do is to wash Aaron and his sons with water. Sacrificing we've seen occurring since Adam and Eve; but, this is the beginning of the ritual washing-with-water that will be so integral to the Levitical system and a central feature of Israel's new way of life. So, let's not rush by this.... There is some important teaching buried here that resurfaces later.

Moses, as the highest leader of Israel.....and therefore, in God's eyes, of mankind.....was instructed by Yehoveh to humble himself by washing the priests. The priests were considered to be lower in rank than Moses.....even Aaron was lower than Moses in rank and authority. Yet here was this most powerful man, the only man that ever talked with God face-to-face, reduced to performing a task that usually only women or servants did.....washing others. This must have been quite a shocking sight to the people of Israel who lived in a world where the social class you belonged to was everything. The idea that your supreme ruler would stoop down and wash a lesser person was unthinkable.

Now was the idea here to humble Moses? Was this the point of having Moses wash the priests? No. The idea was all about the priests being prepared and consecrated for service to Yehoveh, but first they had to be clean from sin in God's eyes.... and, the method God established to accomplish this included ritual washing. Yet, there indeed was significance in Moses doing the washing; for it demonstrated that cleansing of people could only occur from on high, as a merciful and loving act.

Now, catch this. Hundreds of years later the Bible will show us a replay of this very incident about Moses washing the priests; but this time it will be in the NT, in the Gospel of John, when

Jesus washes the feet of His disciples. Yeshua, the highest leader on Earth.....Jesus the Master....Jesus, God incarnate.....humbles Himself as a servant. But, WHY is He doing this....what is the significance of such an act? In my opinion this is the consecration ceremony for the NEW **spiritual** priesthood. Just as it was Moses the Mediator who acted on God's behalf to establish the earthly, fleshly priesthood so Yeshua the Mediator established the spiritual heavenly priesthood built on faith in Him.

Listen to but one of many NT passages that I believe confirms my conclusion on this matter:

NAS 1 Peter 2:1 *Therefore, putting aside all malice and all guile and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, 2 like newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the word, that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, 3 if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord. 4 And coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected by men, but choice and precious in the sight of God, 5 you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*

First, because of too much false teaching running amok in the Hebrew Roots movement, notice that Believers have NOT become the new and replacement physical and earthly priesthood; that is, replacing the Hebrew Levites. Rather it is the spiritual element that is being addressed; it is from the spiritual point of view as the verse says “a **spiritual** house for a holy priesthood in order to offer up **spiritual** sacrifices.....”

Second, remember all who follow Christ, all of Messiah's disciples are as priests. We, in this room...both Jew and gentile.... who have turned the Lordship of our lives over to Yeshua are His priests....or as the Bible calls us, a Kingdom of priests or a holy house of priests. There is absolutely no doubt in my mind that the startled and bewildered disciples of Jesus could **not** have made the connection between what Yeshua was doing to them by washing their feet, and what Moses did 1300 years earlier by washing Aaron and his sons. Moses in consecrating Aaron and his sons as the first priesthood of Israel by washing them with water was a shadow and a type of what Jesus was doing as He consecrated His disciples as the spiritual order of priests for the spiritual heavenly ideal of Israel; the priests who would serve the spiritual Kingdom of God. And, naturally, Jesus performed this consecration in the same exact way Moses did..... in His role as Mediator by His performing a ritual washing of those who would be priests.

So what Yeshua HaMashiach did on that day was far more powerful and had a much higher meaning than simply His showing by example that the master must also be a meek and humble servant to His people, as is usually the limited teaching we get about that event. If we don't know and understand the Torah, the Tabernacle and the sacrificial system, the true and profound symbolism of Jesus washing the feet of His disciples goes right over our heads. It's ironic that within the same paragraph that says that Yeshua's disciples from a spiritual priesthood, we also have this instruction: ***Therefore, putting aside all malice and all guile and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, 2 like newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the word, that by it you may grow in respect to salvation,***

Notice that? It is by studying the Word of God that we grow in respect to salvation. It is not that

reading the Word brings us Salvation; it is that once saved the Word becomes our source of growth IN our salvation. The only Word that existed in this era was what we call the OT, the first 5 books being the Torah. Oh what a tragic mistake the Church made so long ago in declaring the OT to be dead and gone and of no value to Believers. Because Peter clearly states (as do Jesus, Paul, John, and others) that the OT Scripture is what they valued as truth and the place we are to continue to go to in order to find truth to grow our faith and understanding. This is most certainly not to imply that the NT is defective or something less; rather it is to say that the OT is as valid and important as it was in ancient times. And with the return of Israel as a nation of Jews (a prophetic milestone) the OT has reemerged as Scripture of critical importance concerning our day and age.

As I mentioned earlier this ceremony in Exodus 29 with Moses washing the priests was a kind of a one-time deal. From here on, neither Moses nor anyone else washed the priests.....rather each individual was charged with the ritual washing of himself. Now the principle God was demonstrating by means of His establishment of ritual washing was **regeneration**. That is the principle that we must be made anew, regenerated, in order to be cleansed from sin before God. The Hebrews had to do these washing countless times through the centuries, because each ritual washing had an effect, which was only temporary in nature. The ritual washing was required for a huge list of reasons, which we'll cover in a few weeks.

After being washed Aaron and his sons are to put on the special priests garments that God has instructed be made for them. Their old clothing represents who they WERE. Their new clothing represents who they now ARE, before God. Then the priests are anointed by having a special anointing oil loaded up with expensive spices, an olive oil based liquid, poured over them. By the way, we'll find later in Leviticus, and even later still in the Talmud, that there was a certain manner in which this anointing was to be done. The oil had to be poured over their heads in sufficient quantity that it not only ran down their faces and dripped off of their beards, but that it flowed all the way down to the hem of their garments. Not only was this extremely messy but by Tradition the oil was poured first from right to left, than back to front, in the shape of a cross if you would. How about that for prophetic symbolism! This anointing of holy oil was symbolic and prophetic of Pentecost; that time when the Ruach HaKodesh, the Holy Spirit, could anoint man made possible by Yeshua's sacrifice on the Cross.

As we keep moving through all of these ritual processes in Exodus and Leviticus take notice how the **physical** act of the OT is always prophetic and symbolic of the **spiritual** reality of the NT. That is, the OT rituals were teachings, demonstrations, copies and shadows, of what the future spiritual reality would be. But let's be clear: they were also real and efficacious. They did exactly what they were supposed to do.

Beginning in vs. 10, a series of sacrifices is called for, with Moses officiating. Moses officiates because until the consecration ceremony is completed, there is no official priesthood to do it so Moses acts in God's stead. Recall back in chapter 24 when the ritual of sealing the covenant of Moses was happening that God ordered Moses to build a stone altar and sacrifice animals upon it; but it was NOT priests that performed those sacrifices....because there weren't any priests yet...rather, it was some young men selected (they were the households' firstborn males) who officiated the sacrificing.

A Bullock, also called an Ox, or a Bull, was to be brought into the Outer Court area of the Tabernacle, near the Tent of Meeting, the Sanctuary. Of course the sacred tent was right next to the Brazen Altar. Israel now receives a visual demonstration of the meaning of the principle of substitution; the priests all lay their hands on the Bull. This represents a transference of the priests sin onto the Bull....that is the Bull becomes their substitute.... The Bull now bears the sin that was once theirs. The Bull is then killed, skinned, and cut up into pieces. Some of the Bulls blood is captured in a ceremonial bronze pail and the blood is splashed onto the bottom of the Altar, and some is spread onto the horns of the Altar. Normally the Bull would have been tied to one of the Altar's horns, but NOT in this case. Part of what was happening here was not only the consecration of the priests but also of the Tabernacle and its utensils and even of the Brazen Altar itself. Until the Bull was killed and its blood spilled and used to cleanse the Altar, the Altar wasn't fit for use. But once that was accomplished then the meat of the sacrificed animal can then be burnt on the Altar. Notice, though, that the parts of the Bull that were placed on the Altar did not include the Bull's flesh. Only the fat that covered its inner organs was used. The entire rest the animal, including the meat, bones, and hide was taken outside the encampment of Israel and there was burned and offered up as what is called a ***sin offering***.

In the Bible the fat is considered the most valuable part of the animal. So ONLY the most valuable was offered to Yehoveh on the Brazen Altar in this ***special sacrifice***: this Sacrifice of Consecration. The rest of the animal was offered up NOT on the Brazen Altar, and not even within the camp of Israel. In fact I believe this very first sacrifice of a Bull in the Tabernacle was the model for another very special sacrifice utilizing a Red Heifer, which would come later. I mention this because those of you who like prophecy know that the sacrifice of a Red Heifer is going to be an important requirement for the dedication.....actually the consecration.... of a new Temple that will be built in Jerusalem one day, not long from now I suspect.

You see we must take notice of a most unusual and mysterious feature of this inaugural sacrifice of the Bull, and then later of the Red Heifer, because in both cases the sacrifice is offered not in a Holy place, not even in a ritually clean place as one would expect.... but rather in an unclean place, outside the camp of Israel. A good rule of thumb to understand OT Biblical lingo is that "outside the camp" refers to that area which is considered ritually impure. All the normal and regular sacrifices that Israel had to perform were to occur ONLY at the Brazen Altar which, of course, was "inside the camp" and ritually pure. We'll talk more about that at the appropriate time.

Next, beginning in vs. 15, another Burnt Offering is made; only this time it uses a Ram, a male sheep. Once again Aaron and his sons lay hands on the animal, thus identifying with the Ram as their representative, their substitute. The Ram is slain, its blood collected, and the Ram is cut up into quarters. There is a ritual washing of the inner organs and now the Ram can be burnt on the Brazen Altar because the previous sacrifice (of the Bull) is what consecrated the Altar itself so that it could now be used for its intended purpose.

Then a 2nd Ram is sacrificed following the same basic procedure as with the first. But this time some of the Ram's blood is dabbed onto the right earlobes of Aaron and his sons, then their right thumbs, then their right Big toes. Remember what we learned about the directions right

and left..... right is always the more important, more holy side or direction, just as east is the most holy and important of the 4 map directions.

Then some of the Ram's blood is sprinkled on the priests and their clothing. Some of the fat of this Ram, along with Matzah, unleavened bread (remember, leaven is symbolic of sin, so except in rare instances, the bread used in rituals is UN leavened), is given to the priests and they offer it as a wave offering. Literally this means they hold it up over their shoulders and heads, and move it back and forth in a waving motion. Then they take the wave offering and put it on the Brazen Altar and burn it up.

The breast of the Ram is then set-aside for Moses; after Moses offers it as a wave offering he may then use it for his own food. Aaron and his sons were then given the remaining portion of the Ram; they boiled it, and sat at the entrance to the Sanctuary, in front of the door, and ate it.

Most elements of this consecration ceremony were to be repeated for 7 days. Why 7 days? Because 7 is the number of completion....this was established going back to the Creation itself. In fact there is a much-intended connection between the Creation story and the establishment of Israel and we'll see several more common elements of that connection appear as we go along.

Beginning in verse 38 a fairly general outline of standard every day sacrifices is given. This is much expanded in Leviticus and we'll look at each type of offering and its significance during our study of Leviticus. By way, do not think that the study of these rituals is boring or trivial. If you want to understand the nature of sin and sacrifice Leviticus is where you'll find it.

This chapter of Exodus ends with God reminding Israel, yet again, of who He is AND who THEY are. And that with the completed consecration of the Tabernacle and the priesthood God can now do the thing He SO desires to do with His people: dwell with them. Over and over we will see this sort of statement in the Torah, and for very good reason: at the moment these 3 million Hebrews were still far more Egyptian in their thinking than were Israelite. The radical new ways God was showing them would take time and repetition and visual demonstrations and God's firm hand of discipline for them to grasp it. In fact it would take the better part of 40 years for Israel to change significantly enough for God to even allow them to set foot in the Promised Land of Canaan.