

Exegetical Notes, Exodus 28:31-43
“Reminders of His Presence: The Blue Robe”

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(After the affirmation of the Covenant {See Exodus 24}, God set up a system of organized religion to help the Israelites remember the obligation of the Covenant to which they had agreed. This religion was centered in the Tabernacle and its furnishings. These items were to remind the people of God’s presence and of their obligation to listen to God and to obey him. The promise of God’s blessing was linked to listening to him and obeying him. In this chapter, God calls the first priests. The priests’ function will be more clearly defined later in our study. However, the priest performed two essential functions: 1. they stood between God and the people essentially to offer sacrifice on behalf of the people so that the people could approach God; and 2. they administered the functioning of the religious system God had ordained.)

Exodus 28:31-43

Verse 31-32

Make the robe of the ephod entirely of blue cloth, with an opening for the head in its center. There shall be a woven edge like a collar around this opening, so that it will not tear.

- Under the ephod (see Exodus 28:2-14 and exegetical notes prepared for that passage) Aaron was to wear a blue robe.

Verse 33-34

Make pomegranates of blue, purple, and scarlet yarn around the hem of the robe, with gold bells between them. The gold bells and the pomegranates are to alternate around the hem of the robe.

- The robe was to have a fringe at its hem made up of alternating gold bells and purple, blue, and scarlet yarn pomegranates.

Verse 35

Aaron must wear it when he ministers. The sound of the bells will be heard when he enters the Holy Place before YHWH and when he comes out, so that he will not die.

- The sound of the bells on the hem of the robe would tell the people that Aaron was alive when he was functioning in the Holy Place in the presence of God but out of their sight. Their function was practical.
- The reason for the pomegranates is not mentioned. Many traditions have arisen related to these objects. Some scholars point out that the pomegranate has twelve sections inside. Thus it could represent the nation of Israel which was composed of twelve tribes. Others point out that traditionally the pomegranate is said to have 613 seeds and the rabbis taught that there are 613 commandments in the Torah. Christian scholars point out that the seeds of the pomegranate are white while the juice is red. They claim that its use on the blue robe foreshadows Christ's role as our High Priest, the white seed representing his body and his pure life, the red juice representing his spilled blood and his sacrifice. However, the Hebrew word for pomegranate is "rimmon" which means to exalt. Perhaps their presence in the fringe was a call to exalt God.

Verse 36-38

Make a plate of pure gold and engrave on it as on a seal: HOLY TO YHWH. Fasten a blue cord to it to attach it to the turban; it is to be on the front of the turban. It will be on Aaron's forehead, and he will bear the guilt involved in the sacred gifts the Israelites consecrate, whatever their gifts may be. It will be on Aaron's forehead continually so that they will be acceptable to YHWH.

- Part of the High Priest's function was to offer the gifts of the people to YHWH. These gifts were by nature imperfect. Therefore they were unacceptable in their natural form to God. On his head the High Priest was to wear a turban of the finest white linen (see verse 39.) Fine white linen is a symbol of purity. On the turban, probably like a modern hat band, was to be a gold plate on which were engraved the words, "holy to YHWH." This gold band is called the High Priest's crown. It declared that by his consecration to the office of High Priest he had been made holy and so the sacrifices he brought to God on behalf of the people were acceptable to God.
- This function of the High Priest foreshadows the function of Christ who, by his sacrifice, makes us acceptable to God and declares us to be "holy to the Lord."

Verse 39

Weave the tunic of fine linen and make the turban of fine linen. The sash is to be the work of an embroiderer.

- The tunic was a white linen garment which was worn under the blue robe.
- The sash was a fancy embroidered belt worn around the tunic under the blue robe.

Verse 40

Make tunics, sashes, and head bands for Aaron's sons, to give them dignity and honor.

- The other priests were also to have distinguishing robes, but their robes lacked several items of the High Priest's costume. They did not have ephods, breastpieces, or blue robes.

Verse 41

After you have put these clothes on your brother Aaron and his sons, anoint and ordain them. Consecrate them so they may serve me as priests.

- A service of consecration was to mark the beginning of the functioning of the priesthood. See Exodus 29 for more details related to this consecration.

Verse 42-43

Make linen undergarments as a covering for the body, reaching from the waist to the thigh. Aaron and his sons must wear them whenever they enter the Tent of Meeting or approach the altar to minister in the Holy Place, so that they will not incur guilt and die. This is to be a lasting ordinance for Aaron and his descendants.

- Next to their bodies, from their waists to their thighs, the priests were to wear linen undergarments whenever they wore their priestly robes. This was to remind them of the necessity to be sexually pure and so keep from incurring God's wrath and judgment.

(These exegetical notes are the foundational study for the sermon entitled *Reminders of His Presence: The Blue Robe*. They have been prepared by the Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen, Senior Pastor at Cornerstone Fellowship, Coatesville Pennsylvania. All rights are reserved by Dr. Jensen and *Cornerstone Fellowship*.)