



## Studies in the Book of Exodus

Text

Exodus 27:20-21 & 28:1-43

Topic

Moses describes the unique garments  
of the High Priest's wardrobe

Title

*"Clothes Encounters of the Priest Kind"*

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Ever wonder how many, and which, emoji are being used on twitter at any given moment? Apparently people do, and when they do, they consult [emojitracker.com](http://emojitracker.com)

It is a screenful of pictograms and numbers that show you all the emoji, with live updating of their numbers.

Please wait to visit the site; and use caution. The web page opens with a warning that it could trigger epilepsy.

The word emoji itself originates from Japanese – *e* meaning "picture," and *moji* meaning "character."

English experts are split as to the plural form of emoji. Some say it's emojis, with an 's,' while others say there's no need to add the 's' at the end.

Fully 92% of all people online use emoji now, and one-third of them do so daily. On Instagram, nearly half of the posts contain emoji.

Emoji are so popular they're killing off netspeak. How is your netspeak? See if you know the meaning of these abbreviations:

- LOL (Laugh out loud).
- OMG (O my God; *don't use that one*).
- OMW (On my way).
- IDK (I don't know).
- JK (Just kidding).
- GTG (Got to go).
- PAW (Parents are watching).

One article made a bold statement about emoji, claiming, "In essence, we're watching the birth of a new type of language."

We've always communicated in pictures. It can be more effective than words - especially when you're traveling in a foreign country and need to figure-out which bathroom to enter.

### **God often uses pictures to communicate spiritual truth.**

Nowhere is that more true than in the Old Testament Tabernacle we are discussing in Exodus.

We are told that the Tabernacle was "a copy and shadow of heavenly things" (Hebrews 8:5).

Commenting on this, Dr. J. Vernon McGee writes, “The Tabernacle... is God’s **story book** with **pictures** for babes in Christ.”

Our text today describes the garments of the priests who served in the Tabernacle, and especially those of the High Priest. It’s all a picture of Jesus:

- The High Priest pictures Jesus as our Great High Priest. We know it does because we read in Hebrews 4:14, “Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into Heaven, Jesus the Son of God.”
- The priests picture us as we serve the Lord. We know that because we read in the Revelation 1:6, “and [Jesus] has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father.”

Keeping that in mind, I’ll organize my comments around two questions: #1 What Does The High Priest Reveal To You About Jesus?, and #2 What Do The Priests Reveal To You About You?

### #1 What Does The High Priest Reveal To You About Jesus?

(27:20-21 & 28:1-39)

My entire high school wardrobe consisted of white pocket t-shirts and button-fly Levi 501 jeans. Day-in, day-out, it worked for me.

Boots and a hand-made fabric belt filled out my wardrobe - besides socks, underwear, and a light jacket.

The High Priests of Israel dressed way better... But their wardrobe was not very diverse. It consisted of only a few items.

If you're paying attention, you know that we did not discuss the last two verses of chapter twenty-seven in our previous study.

Exo 27:20 "And you shall command the children of Israel that they bring you pure oil of pressed olives for the light, to cause the lamp to burn continually.

Exo 27:21 In the tabernacle of meeting, outside the veil which *is* before the Testimony, Aaron and his sons shall tend it from evening until morning before the LORD. *It shall be* a statute forever to their generations on behalf of the children of Israel.

One of the duties of the priests was to be certain that the Menorah in the Holy Place "burn[ed] continually," i.e., *all night* - "from evening until morning." They depended on a steady supply of oil from the worshippers who visited the Tabernacle.

Without the priests, who were the only ones allowed in the Holy Place, there would be no light. But without the people bringing their offerings of oil, there would be no light, either.

All of us have our part serving God. Together we reveal Him to those who are living in spiritual darkness.

Exo 28:1 "Now take Aaron your brother, and his sons with him, from among the children of Israel, that he may minister to Me as priest, Aaron *and* Aaron's sons: Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar.

Exo 28:2 And you shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother, for glory and for beauty.

Moses' brother Aaron and his descendants from the tribe of Levi served as priests. All priests were Levites; but not all Levites were priests.

Only the sons of Aaron were accepted as priests to actually serve in the sanctuary, making sacrifices, keeping the lamp lit, replacing the bread, and so forth.

Levites not descended from Aaron were assigned to all the other duties of the Tabernacle, e.g., packing it up and moving it when the Lord directed them to a new campground.

Exo 28:3 So you shall speak to all *who are* gifted artisans, whom I have filled with the spirit of wisdom, that they may make Aaron's garments, to consecrate him, that he may minister to Me as priest.

Giftedness needed “the spirit of wisdom” in order for an artisan to serve the Lord. It’s best to dedicate any gifts, or we might say talents, to the Lord. Let Him use them for His glory. Chances are you won’t be as recognized, or as famous, as you could be in the world; you won’t win the world’s *awards*. But you’ll garner for yourself *rewards* in eternity.

Exo 28:4 And these *are* the garments which they shall make: a breastplate, an ephod, a robe, a skillfully woven tunic, a turban, and a sash. So they shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother and his sons, that he may minister to Me as priest.

In total, there would be eight items in the High Priest’s wardrobe: The six just mentioned, plus a crown (v6), and an undergarment called “trousers” (v42).

Here is a good way of organizing the wardrobe:

1. There was the High Priest's uniform. This consisted of the eight garments, called by some the "golden garments."

2. There was the uniform of the regular priests. These were four garments - tunic, trousers, turban and sash - and were called the "white garments."

Moses started with the ephod:

Exo 28:5 "They shall take the gold, blue, purple, and scarlet *thread*, and the fine linen,

Exo 28:6 and they shall make the **ephod** of gold, blue, purple, *and* scarlet *thread*, and fine woven linen, artistically worked.

Exo 28:7 It shall have two shoulder straps joined at its two edges, and *so* it shall be joined together.

Exo 28:8 And the intricately woven band of the ephod, which *is* on it, shall be of the same workmanship, *made of* gold, blue, purple, and scarlet *thread*, and fine woven linen.

Exo 28:9 "Then you shall take two onyx stones and engrave on them the names of the sons of Israel:

Exo 28:10 six of their names on one stone and six names on the other stone, in order of their birth.

Exo 28:11 With the work of an engraver in stone, *like* the engravings of a signet, you shall engrave the two stones with the names of the sons of Israel. You shall set them in settings of gold.

Exo 28:12 And you shall put the two stones on the shoulders of the ephod *as* memorial stones for the sons of Israel. So Aaron shall bear their names before the LORD on his two shoulders as a memorial.

Exo 28:13 You shall also make settings of gold,

Exo 28:14 and you shall make two chains of pure gold like braided cords, and fasten the braided chains to the settings.

You can think of the ephod as an apron worn over the tunic, although longer than a normal apron - almost full length.

Two sardonyx stones were fixed in settings of gold on the ephod, on the High Priest's shoulders; one on the right, and one on the left. The names of the tribes of Israel were engraved upon these two stones.

Exo 28:15 "You shall make the **breastplate** of judgment. Artistically woven according to the workmanship of the ephod you shall make it: of gold, blue, purple, and scarlet *thread*, and fine woven linen, you shall make it.

Exo 28:16 It shall be doubled into a square: a span *shall be* its length, and a span *shall be* its width.

Exo 28:17 And you shall put settings of stones in it, four rows of stones: *The first row shall be* a sardius, a topaz, and an emerald; *this shall be* the first row;

Exo 28:18 the second row *shall be* a turquoise, a sapphire, and a diamond;

Exo 28:19 the third row, a jacinth, an agate, and an amethyst;

Exo 28:20 and the fourth row, a beryl, an onyx, and a jasper.

They shall be set in gold settings.

Exo 28:21 And the stones shall have the names of the sons of Israel, twelve according to their names, *like* the engravings of a signet, each one with its own name; they shall be according to the twelve tribes.

Exo 28:22 "You shall make chains for the breastplate at the end, like braided cords of pure gold.

Exo 28:23 And you shall make two rings of gold for the breastplate, and put the two rings on the two ends of the breastplate.

Exo 28:24 Then you shall put the two braided *chains* of gold in the two rings which are on the ends of the breastplate;

Exo 28:25 and the *other* two ends of the two braided *chains* you shall fasten to the two settings, and put them on the shoulder straps of the ephod in the front.

Exo 28:26 "You shall make two rings of gold, and put them on the two ends of the breastplate, on the edge of it, which is on the inner side of the ephod.

Exo 28:27 And two *other* rings of gold you shall make, and put them on the two shoulder straps, underneath the ephod toward its front, right at the seam above the intricately woven band of the ephod.

Exo 28:28 They shall bind the breastplate by means of its rings to the rings of the ephod, using a blue cord, so that it is above the intricately woven band of the ephod, and so that the breastplate does not come loose from the ephod.

Exo 28:29 "So Aaron shall bear the names of the sons of Israel on the breastplate of judgment over his heart, when he goes into the holy *place*, as a memorial before the LORD continually.

The breastplate was a square-shaped fabric garment, worn on the chest over the heart, set with four rows of small square stones, in settings of knitted or braided gold. Each row contained three stones, totaling twelve stones, one stone representing each of the twelve tribes of Israel. The name of the corresponding tribe was engraved on each stone.

Exo 28:30 And you shall put in the breastplate of judgment the Urim and the Thummim, and they shall be over Aaron's heart when he goes in before the LORD. So Aaron shall bear the judgment of the children of Israel over his heart before the LORD continually.

The Urim and the Thummim was an oracle-like aspect of the breastplate by which you could ask God a question and receive His answer. No one knows exactly what the Urim and Thummim were, or how it or they operated. I like this explanation from the Temple Institute in Jerusalem:



According to most authoritative opinions, the expression Urim and Thummim actually refers not to the breastplate itself, but to the mystical Divine name of God which was written on a piece of parchment and inserted into a flap of the garment. The presence of the name facilitated the reception of divine guidance through the shining of specific letters on the stones.

Maybe; maybe not. But somehow God supernaturally directed the High Priest using the Urim and Thummim.

Exo 28:31 "You shall make the **robe** of the ephod all of blue.

Exo 28:32 There shall be an opening for his head in the middle of it; it shall have a woven binding all around its opening, like the opening in a coat of mail, so that it does not tear.

Exo 28:33 And upon its hem you shall make pomegranates of blue, purple, and scarlet, all around its hem, and bells of gold between them all around:

Exo 28:34 a golden bell and a pomegranate, a golden bell and a pomegranate, upon the hem of the robe all around.

Exo 28:35 And it shall be upon Aaron when he ministers, and its sound will be heard when he goes into the holy *place* before the LORD and when he comes out, that he may not die.

According to the opinion of most scholars, the robe was a closed garment, seamlessly woven from one piece of fabric, and slipped on over the head. It was worn over the tunic; the tunic was longer than the robe by one handbreadth, so it was visible underneath the robe at the bottom. The opening at the neck was round. The garment hung down in front and in back, and its length extended all the way down to the priest's feet. There is a difference of opinion as to whether there were sleeves.

Decorative pomegranates made of sky-blue, dark-red and crimson dyed wool were attached to the lower hem of the robe. These pomegranates were actually hollow spheres of fabric in the shape of pomegranates. We find a debate in the Talmud and other holy books as to whether there were 36, 70, or 72 pomegranates in all.

The verse tells us that these pomegranates were interspersed with golden bells. You've probably heard it said that the bells were so that you could hear the High Priest while he ministered alone in the Holy of Holies... And that he had a rope tied around his ankle so that, should the sound of the bells cease because God struck him dead, the regular priests could haul him out without entering.

Two problems with that:

1. First, nowhere in the Bible does it say that. The rope is a Jewish tradition.
2. Second, the High Priest was only allowed in the Holy of Holies once a year, on the Day of Atonement. On that day, he dressed-down, wearing the outfit of a regular priest - with no bells.

Exo 28:36 "You shall also make a plate [**crow**n] of pure gold and engrave on it, *like* the engraving of a signet: HOLINESS TO THE LORD.

Exo 28:37 And you shall put it on a blue cord, that it may be on the **turban**; it shall be on the front of the turban.

Exo 28:38 So it shall be on Aaron's forehead, that Aaron may bear the iniquity of the holy things which the children of Israel hallow in all their holy gifts; and it shall always be on his forehead, that they may be accepted before the LORD.

The engraved plate saying “Holiness to the Lord” was a kind of crown, worn with a turban. The turban was placed on the priest's head in such a way that a space was left between it and crown upon his forehead.

Exo 28:39 "You shall skillfully weave the **tunic** of fine linen *thread*, you shall make the turban of fine linen, and you shall make the sash of woven work.

The tunic clung close to the body and extended from the priest's neck, down to the feet, just above the heels. Each tunic was tailored according to the priest's specific height. As it was one piece, it was donned by placing it over the head.

That’s the wardrobe - except for the “trousers” to be mentioned in the next set of verses in conjunction with the garments of the regular priests.

Every color... Every clasp... Every stone... Points, in some or many ways, to Jesus. For instance: Obviously the stones on the shoulders, with the names of the twelve tribes engraved on them, picture the Lord’s strength in carrying the burdens of His people. Looking at the picture of the High Priest, you are encouraged to cast all your care upon the Lord.

The stones on the breastplate remind you that Jesus has you on His heart. He calls you by name, and He loves you with an everlasting love.

I want to take a big-picture view. What is it that we can immediately see by looking at the High Priest? We see “holy garments... for glory and for beauty.” That expression, “for glory and beauty,” will be repeated in verse forty.

Think about that for a moment. Holiness, “glory,” and “beauty” were *not* intrinsic qualities in Aaron or any of his descendants. You never looked at anyone - priest or not - and described them with those three words.

- The High Priest was not holy; he had to offer sacrifice for himself before he could represent the nation. He was just as much a sinner as the next guy. So much so he might be struck dead while performing his ministry.
- “Glory” is obviously something that belongs to God alone. The “glory” of God was present in the Holy of Holies - *not* in the High Priest. The High Priest could only go in there once a year.
- “Beauty” certainly isn’t descriptive of the man, either. Even if you could say he was handsome - beautiful even - he didn’t personify beauty itself. The Hebrew word translated “beauty” could also be translated “majesty.” It’s a word describing sovereignty. God alone was to be their King, not the High Priest.

The High Priest like anyone else - **except for his garments**. The special garments he wore helped you to look *beyond* him to see holiness, “glory and beauty.” In a very real sense, you looked *past* him as a mere man to a future, final priest Who **would** be actually “holy,” and in Whom you beheld God’s “glory” - One Who was altogether beautiful, Who personifies beauty, and Who would reign forever as King.

That “One” is Jesus:

- He is the only man that has ever lived a completely holy life. Hebrews 7:26 describes Him as “**holy**, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens.”

- The apostle John tells us that the disciples “beheld His **glory**, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14).
- As to “beauty,” physically Jesus was plain. But remembering that the word can mean “majesty,” Jesus definitely is sovereign - King of kings, and Lord of lords.

The incredible garments of the High Priest disguised them as men, and made them look, spiritually speaking, more like Jesus.

Here is a little deeper insight. When you looked at the High Priest, you saw a man who had been clothed by God in order to annually atone for sin. Jesus would be God **clothed with humanity** - the God-man, Who alone could be both priest and sacrifice. We’re told in the New Testament, “when [Jesus] came into the world, He said: "SACRIFICE AND OFFERING YOU DID NOT DESIRE, BUT A BODY YOU HAVE PREPARED FOR ME” (Hebrews 10:5).

Go ahead and meditate on all the aspects of the High Priest’s garments; all the colors and clasps and stones. But first, see the holiness, the “glory and beauty” that he pictured until the coming of Jesus to offer Himself as the final sacrifice for sin, and enter the heavenly Tabernacle.

## #2 What Do The Priests Reveal To You About You?

(28:40-43)

There were a lot of regular priests. What do they picture for us?

1Pe 2:9 But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;

Rev 1:6 [Jesus] has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

You should see yourself in these regular priests. They wore four garments all year round: turban, sash, tunic, and trousers. Those are now briefly described.

Exo 28:40 "For Aaron's sons you shall make **tunics**, and you shall make **sashes** for them. And you shall make **hats** for them, for glory and beauty.

Let's talk tunic. Last study we spent a great deal of time describing salvation in terms of spiritual clothing. Specifically, we said that at the Cross, Jesus took upon Himself your the filthy garments that represent your sin, and in their place gave you His robe of righteousness. The tunic of the regular priests pictures your imputed righteousness - your garment of salvation.

The sash is a belt that can function as a girdle. Since the twentieth century, we think of a girdle as something to flatten our stomach, and make us more shapely. Before then, girdles functioned to hold-up your tunic, so you could bend to perform tasks more easily.

The sash of the regular priest pictures you serving the Lord.

They also wore “hats,” the turban. Turban comes from a word whose root is “to wrap,” so we’re talking about a head covering that’s wrapped around. According to one historical researcher,

During the time of Jesus, Jewish teachers would always have their heads covered in public, as a sign of righteous reverence. They apparently wore the "sudarium" (white linen cloth), wound round the head as a turban, with the ends of it falling down over the neck. Common people sometimes wore a cloth with a band, or just a band in warm months. Today religious Jews wear the Yarmulke ("kippa" in Hebrew), because it is believed that by covering the head during prayer, one showed respect for God.

The turban pictures you submitted to Jesus, having Him as authority over you.

Exo 28:41 So you shall put them on Aaron your brother and on his sons with him. You shall anoint them, consecrate them, and sanctify them, that they may minister to Me as priests.

They were anointed with oil, representing God the Holy Spirit. We are the Temple of the Holy Spirit; He dwells within us. We need His continual filling, which we might refer to as His anointing.

Am I being led by the Spirit? Or am I serving the Lord in the energy of my own flesh?

“Consecrated” is from a word that means *to fill the hand*, e.g., with offerings. It’s a word that summarizes the idea I should offer myself a living sacrifice to Jesus.

“Sanctify” refers to the progress I am to make in becoming more like Jesus on a daily basis.

“That they may minister.” Am I serving the Lord - in the place where He has put me?

Exo 28:42 And you shall make for them linen **trousers** to cover their nakedness; they shall reach from the waist to the thighs.

Exo 28:43 They shall be on Aaron and on his sons when they come into the tabernacle of meeting, or when they come near the altar to minister in the holy *place*, that they do not incur iniquity and die. *It shall be* a statute forever to him and his descendants after him.

Most of the sources I consulted indicate it was common in pagan religions for the priests to serve naked. It makes sense, since so many of the pagan rituals were sexual in nature.

There was no going commando for the regular priests. We ought therefore to keep ourselves from sexual sin. The apostle Paul said this to the Thessalonians:

1Th 4:3 For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality;

1Th 4:4 that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor,

1Th 4:5 not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God;

In view of the permissive culture in Thessalonica, Paul considered abstaining from sexual immorality to be the priority one. We most certainly live in a permissive culture. Sexual sin is abounding. It probably ought to be priority one. We should be certain our spiritual trousers are in place.



The regular priests were also described in terms of “glory and beauty.” When folks look at you and me, they shouldn’t see us. They should see Jesus in us - His holiness... His glory... His beauty.

The apostle Paul spoke of us as “living letters... known and read by everyone” (Second Corinthians 3:2). You’re being read; we might go so far as to say that you are a picture - an emoji - of what it means to believe in Jesus.