

## Yahweh's Team

In the previous chapter, we looked at the Tabernacle with an eye toward discerning the Master Plan that lay behind its design. Just as any company's facilities can be expected to reflect their purpose and mission, the physical Tabernacle reveals what its Designer meant for its function to be—in this case, an elaborate picture of Yahweh's Plan for the redemption of all mankind. And just as it's sometimes hard to figure out what companies do by looking at their buildings or factories from the outside, we discovered that God's Plan and purpose can be perceived only from a vantage point *inside* the Tabernacle.

The lessons continue as we now meet the staff: the priests, leaders, and key personnel of Yahweh's team—Israel. We've already discovered that this is a "family firm." Many of the positions are hereditary—not sinecures, necessarily, but meaningful jobs appointed on the basis of family and clan. Some—like royalty in a constitutional democracy—seem to be little more than figureheads. And yet, like the crown worn by a king or queen, the accoutrements of their position make a statement about their responsibilities, what their people expect of them, the symbolic roles they're required to fill—even though it's the office, not the officer, that's significant. This will be most markedly demonstrated in the clothing Yahweh required to be worn by the High Priest. Each article of clothing he wore had spiritual and prophetic significance, and we will endeavor to find out what the implications are for us.

We don't have to be born into Israel, of course, to benefit from the significance of the priestly symbols. Any one of us can choose to be adopted into the family of God—to become a vital part of this "family business." Israel was chosen by Yahweh to show us the way—to personify the world's "road map to peace" (to coin a phrase). It is sadly ironic that, having been selected to be the custodians of God's instructions, they themselves have largely chosen to ignore them, to wander off following their own path. I can assure you, it's a temporary situation—they *will* find their way again, and Yahweh has told us so to the point of ennui. In the meantime, we who choose to be adopted into a familial relationship with our Father Yahweh can learn all we need to know from what He told our Israelite brothers. What will our position be in the family business of God? That's for Yahweh Himself to decide. But whether assigned to the mailroom or the boardroom, none of us need remain spiritually unemployed for even one more day.

## THE STAFF

(730) *Don't hesitate to play a supporting role. "And Yahweh said to Aaron, 'Go into the wilderness to meet Moses.' So he went and met him on the mountain of God."* (Exodus 4:27) We're not all called to be Moses, to lead the flock to the promised land, to hand down the Law of God. Truth be told, we're far more likely to be "chosen" to dig latrines in the wilderness. The differences between Moses and Aaron are a revealing study. Aaron (Moses' *elder* brother, a fact we can deduce from the historical record and from his being listed first in the genealogy of Numbers 26:59) was an ordinary Israelite who was "drafted" to play a supporting role in Yahweh's drama. But Moses was different: it was apparent from his birth onward that he had been chosen by Yahweh for his remarkable destiny. Miraculously spared during a period of genocidal persecution, he was raised and educated in the royal palace of Egypt, making him for all intents and purposes the adopted grandson of the most powerful monarch on the face of the earth. But after spending the first forty years of his life as the scion of privilege, Moses committed murder and fled the land. He found himself tending somebody else's sheep in a foreign country for the next four decades—in retrospect, another and equally valuable phase of his educational experience.

It was apparently Moses' reluctance to accept the mantle of responsibility God had asked him to bear that prompted Yahweh to appoint his brother Aaron as his spokesman before Pharaoh. But it's clear from Exodus 4:14 that Aaron had *already* been told to **"Go into the wilderness to meet Moses"** when Mo dug in his heels at the burning bush. So it is a matter of conjecture whether Aaron's intended role was expanded from merely being "liaison officer" with the elders of Israel at this time to being the prophet's front man in the court of Pharaoh. However, I have a feeling that Aaron's coming position as High Priest was always the heart of Yahweh's anticipated role for him—the High Priest ultimately being symbolic of Yahshua the Messiah. Aaron's metaphorical identity as the firstborn son of Amram (which means "a people exalted") destined him for the job, if nothing else.

The point of this discussion is simply that our roles, responsibilities, and gifts as children of Yahweh, whether great or small, are assigned to us—we do not choose them. Some of us are able to administer ten "talents," others only one. As in Paul's illustration of the "body of Christ," we cannot all be the right hand or the tongue, as glorious as that might be; some of us have to be the liver and kidneys—and some (let's face it) are

the appendix or the tonsils. Though it is up to us to choose whether or not *to be* part of the body, choosing *which part* is Yahweh's prerogative. Let us each endeavor to serve the body well wherever we find ourselves.

- (731) *Prepare to meet God.* **"Then Yahweh said to Moses, 'Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their clothes. And let them be ready for the third day. For on the third day Yahweh will come down upon Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people. You shall set bounds for the people all around, saying, 'Take heed to yourselves that you do not go up to the mountain or touch its base. Whoever touches the mountain shall surely be put to death. Not a hand shall touch him, but he shall surely be stoned or shot with an arrow; whether man or beast, he shall not live.' When the trumpet sounds long, they shall come near the mountain.'"** (Exodus 19:10-13) Brace yourselves, folks. This is about to get heavy. Although the instructions to the Israelites of the exodus were plain enough, there are ramifications latent in the text that speak to us today.

We'll come back to the "third-day" thing. The imperative here is, **"Do not go up to the mountain or touch its base."** Let us begin by examining what it means to "touch the mountain." A mountain is a symbol of power, of majesty. In this case (Sinai) it represents the authority of the Law. Another mountain (Zion) indicates the potency of grace. A reference to a city on seven mountains in Revelation 17:9 speaks of unchallenged temporal power (while identifying Rome as the seat of the harlot of Babylon). Mount Sinai draws its power from Yahweh. That is, the authority of the Law is derived from the worthiness of the One who spoke it into being. We are therefore being instructed not to usurp Yahweh's authority.

A close look at several of these words in the original language will clarify the matter. To "go up" is the Hebrew word *'alah*, meaning primarily to ascend or climb, but with secondary connotations of exalting oneself, of lifting oneself up, to come up (as before God), or to go up over or extend (as in violating a boundary). To "touch" (Hebrew: *naga*) is to reach, strike, approach or extend to. (The noun with the same consonant root, *nega*, means "a stroke or wound," so it's clear that mere physical contact isn't remotely the whole story.) And "base" is *qatseh*, meaning a "limit, edge, outskirts, extremity, tip, i.e., the distant end of a space or defined area; an end, finish, i.e., a point in time marking the completion of a duration; or a foot, base, or foundation, i.e., the lowest point of an elevated place." (*Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains*). So in addition to the plain meaning of the warning to its original audience, Yahweh is telling us, "Do not lift yourself up to usurp

My authority; do not strike or wound the foundation of the Law I am giving you.”

And who is that “foundation?” It’s none other than Yahshua, the Messiah. I know, you think I’ve stretched this beyond it’s breaking point—you think I’m merely seeing something I *want* to see. Don’t be too sure. The verse immediately preceding this informs us, **“And Yahweh said to Moses, ‘Behold, I come to you in the thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with you, and believe you forever.’”** (Exodus 19:9) This is a description of the Shekinah, a form in which Yahweh would physically dwell within the Tabernacle (see Exodus 40:34-38). But let’s look closely at that phrase “thick cloud.” One of the meanings of the word translated “thick” (Hebrew: *abiy*) is “a casting mold, i.e., a matrix for holding and casting molten metal.” “Cloud” is the Hebrew *'anan*, a cloud of smoke or water vapor dense enough to be clearly visible. We have been given a description of a physical manifestation of God’s Spirit—something with corporeal form (“cast” as in a mold), yet composed of something ephemeral, spiritual. Further, this is an entity through which Yahweh Himself will speak to the people in a voice they can comprehend. That’s a perfect, albeit poetic, description of the Messiah, Yahshua. It’s another way of stating the “coming Prophet” promise recorded in Deuteronomy 18:15-19.

Still think I’ve gone round the bend? Then factor in what He said about the third day: **“Consecrate them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their clothes.”** Our washed clothes are a picture of the cleansing made available by the Messiah’s sacrifice. We’re given garments of light that enable us to stand before a holy God. These garments will be available to us “today and tomorrow,” two days (that is, two thousand years, according to II Peter 3:8) *subsequent* to the coming of the “thick cloud” spoken of in the previous paragraph: Yahshua the Christ. **“And let them be ready for the third day.”** Since “today and tomorrow,” the first two days, began in 33 A.D. with the passion of Yahshua, the third day is therefore scheduled to begin precisely two thousand years later, in 2033. (See Hosea 6:2 for a stunning confirmation that Israel *will* “be ready for the third day.”) Further evidence of this timeline is provided through the dimensions of the Tabernacle (Precept #715) and of the courtyard (Precept #728).

**“For on the third day Yahweh will come down upon Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people.”** The actual site of the Messiah’s future “coming down” will be the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem, not Sinai (in northwestern Arabia—see Galatians 4:25). But by doing so, Yahshua will have fulfilled the Torah down to the smallest detail: “Mount Sinai” *will* have been visited by Yahweh in the sight of all the people, once and for all.

An additional, and related, command is given in the same “third-day” context: **“And he said to the people, ‘Be ready for the third day; do not come near your wives.’”** (Exodus 19:15) Under normal circumstances, sexual contact between husbands and their wives is characterized as a good thing, its love and intimacy leading to fruitfulness. So what was different on the “third day?” I believe the lesson here is that for those of us who had been consecrated during the first two days of Yahshua’s ekklesia (the “Church age”), for us who have donned clean clothes (the **“righteous acts of the saints”**—Revelation 19:8), the time for us to bear fruit, i.e., reach lost souls with the Good News, will have come to an end when the “third day” commences. Clothed in our new resurrection bodies during the Millennial Kingdom, our roles, responsibilities, and capabilities will all have changed. For the better, I’m guessing.

(732) *Warn the people not to approach Yahweh in their sinful state.* **“And Yahweh said to Moses, ‘Go down and warn the people, lest they break through to gaze at Yahweh, and many of them perish. Also let the priests who come near Yahweh consecrate themselves, lest Yahweh break out against them.’ But Moses said to Yahweh, ‘The people cannot come up to Mount Sinai; for You warned us, saying, ‘Set bounds around the mountain and consecrate it.’ Then Yahweh said to him, ‘Away! Get down and then come up, you and Aaron with you. But do not let the priests and the people break through to come up to Yahweh, lest He break out against them.’ So Moses went down to the people and spoke to them.”** (Exodus 19:21-25) Yahweh was very concerned about the people “breaking through” to Mount Sinai to “gaze” at Him. But there was more to this than keeping the curious at bay. The Hebrew word translated “break through” (*haras*) also means: “to tear down, break down, overthrow, beat down, break, destroy, pull down, throw down, or ruin.” (S) It’s a much more violent term than a casual reading might suggest.

Remember the context: Moses was about to be given the Law—specifically, the Ten Commandments—on the mountain. I think the warning here is basically the same as what we saw in Precept #731: we are not to usurp Yahweh’s authority; we are not to institute our own Law. The authority in question in this case was God’s right to make the rules, for those “rules” would contain within them the key to attaining life in Yahweh’s presence—not by defining human perfection, but by pointing toward the One whose mortal life would fulfill their promise. This life, death, and resurrection would define Him as our Savior.

Beside the obvious problem of an unconsecrated people coming into the presence of a Holy God—which would cause them to immediately “perish,” there was a more subtle warning. As we have seen, the “bounds” of the mountain—the foundation of Yahweh’s authority as it relates to

mankind—is in reality Yahshua the Messiah. If the people were to “break through” (*haras*: tear down, overthrow, and destroy) Him, Yahweh would have no choice but to “break out against them.” Alas, they did—so He did. This very thing happened in history: the same generation that crucified Yahshua witnessed the destruction of the Jewish state. And ironically, Yahweh used the same demolition tool they had: the Romans.

(733) *Approach Yahweh only as He directs.* “Now He said to Moses, ‘Come up to Yahweh, you and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, and worship from afar. And Moses alone shall come near Yahweh, but they shall not come near; nor shall the people go up with him.’ ...Then Yahweh said to Moses, ‘Come up to Me on the mountain and be there; and I will give you tablets of stone, and the law and commandments which I have written, that you may teach them.’” (Exodus 24:1-2, 12) The reaction of the congregation at Moses’ first meeting with Yahweh on Mount Sinai had been sheer terror: “All the people witnessed the thunderings, the lightning flashes, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they trembled and stood afar off. Then they said to Moses, “You speak with us, and we will hear, but let not God speak with us, lest we die.” (Exodus 20:18) It was clear that Yahweh was an awesome God; He was not to be approached flippantly, but only with the deepest reverence. But that doesn’t mean He *can’t* be approached. Here in chapter 24, we see Yahweh assuming a less frightening form for the benefit of the leaders of Israel, not only Moses, but also Aaron, his two eldest sons, and seventy of the tribal elders. Now, instead of warning everyone strictly to stay off the mountain, Yahweh is seen inviting the leaders to approach Him. There’s still some distance, but it’s clear that Yahweh doesn’t want to be isolated from His people, speaking to them only through the filter of an exalted prophet, a mortal representative. If He has to lay aside His glory in order to interact with us, then so be it. As strange as it may sound, communion with us is the whole point.

In stark contrast with Yahweh’s previous displays of power, we now read, “Then Moses went up, also Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, and they saw the God of Israel. And there was under His feet as it were a paved work of sapphire stone, and it was like the very heavens in its clarity. But on the nobles of the children of Israel He did not lay His hand. So they saw God, and they ate and drank.” (Exodus 24:9-11) They *saw God*? Not in His undiminished form, for they lived to tell the tale. But not in the humble humanity of Yahweh’s future Messianic manifestation, Yahshua of Nazareth, either. I imagine that the deity they saw was a bit like what Peter, James, and John saw on the Mount of Transfiguration—Christ in His glorified state, utterly, blindingly majestic but still identifiably “human” in form.

It's clear, then, that this kind of intimate communion with God is an invitation-only affair, but it's equally clear that the invitation has been extended to all mankind. We may approach God, but only as He directs—and there is but one path. Following that path is designed to be a life-altering experience. At first, I was puzzled by the fact that, having seen God, not one of the people invited up onto the mountain survived to enter the Promised Land. Nadab and Abihu are especially perplexing, for they soon showed their contempt for Yahweh's instructions and were subsequently slain for their disrespect (Leviticus 10:1-2). How could anyone have "seen God" only to turn around and treat Him with so little reverence? But then I realized to my shame, and the shame of my race, that we have all "seen God" in the person of Yahshua—and none of us respects His Word as we should, even the best of us. Were it not for His mercy, we would not survive ten minutes.

#### CORPORATE APPAREL AND GRAPHIC DESIGN

In the next few precepts, we'll explore the "uniform" the High Priest was to wear, an ensemble described in great detail in Exodus 28. This can get a little hard to follow, for we don't dress like this these days. (For me, anything beyond "jeans, sneakers, and a clean sweatshirt" requires research.) We'll follow the order of Yahweh's instructions as related in Exodus, though this passage won't tell us much about how the basic garments were worn. I mean, when's the last time you threw on an ephod? Fortunately, the order of dress was recounted in the record of Aaron's ordination in Leviticus: **"Then Moses brought Aaron and his sons and washed them with water. And he put the tunic on him...."** Well, we're already confused. As it turns out, the *first* article of clothing to be put on was a pair of linen trousers (think: boxer shorts) described in Exodus 28:42 as reaching from the waist to the thighs. But all the priests wore them, so they were not worthy of special note here. The "tunic" was a long, loose, shirt-like affair, sleeved or sleeveless, reaching to the knees. It would ordinarily have been tied at the waist with a sash.

This tunic was the basic common garment everybody would wear. Yahshua's tunic became the prize in a game of dice at His crucifixion (see John 19:23-24), in fulfillment of the prophecy of Psalm 22:18. And that's not the only sartorial prophecy that was fulfilled at the foot of the cross. The soldiers dividing their victims' garments among them were gambling for the tunic only because they didn't want to tear it. So we read, **"He who is the high priest among his brethren, on whose head the anointing oil was poured and who is consecrated to wear the garments, shall not uncover his head or tear his clothes."** (Leviticus 21:10) Yahshua *was* our anointed High Priest—not of the order of Aaron, but of Melchizedek. Between the

crown of thorns He wore and the tunic that remained intact, its clear that Yahshua fulfilled the prophetic requirements of the Torah perfectly, even when matters were “out of His hands.”

Anyway, after Moses “girded him [Aaron] with the sash,” he “clothed him with the robe, and put the ephod on him and he girded him with the intricately woven band of the ephod, and with it tied the ephod on him....” We’ll discuss each of these garments in turn as they come up in the narrative. The ephod, an apron-like garment with shoulder straps, was worn over the robe and held in place around the waist with an integral decorative “band.” **“Then he put the breastplate on him, and he put the Urim and the Thummim in the breastplate.”** The breast-piece was to be secured to the straps of the ephod with an elaborate and symbolically specific assortment of cords and rings. It was actually a pocket, into which were placed two objects, the Urim and Thummim, that were somehow used to determine the will of Yahweh in certain situations. **“And he put the turban on his head. Also on the turban, on its front, he put the golden plate, the holy crown, as Yahweh had commanded Moses.”** (Leviticus 8:6-9) Lastly, the headgear was donned. We’ll explore each of these garments in turn. No footwear is mentioned in the account of the priestly garments, but that’s probably because the priest’s sandals would have been removed every time he entered the Holy Place, so his feet could be washed at the bronze laver stationed at the Tabernacle entrance.

(734) *Make the High Priest’s ephod.* **“They shall take the gold, blue, purple, and scarlet thread, and the fine linen, and they shall make the ephod of gold, blue, purple, and scarlet thread, and fine woven linen, artistically worked. It shall have two shoulder straps joined at its two edges, and so it shall be joined together. 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.”** (Exodus 28:5-8) In Mitzvah #372 we encountered Yahweh’s general instructions defining what the High Priest was to wear in his official role, including **“a breastplate, an ephod, a robe, a skillfully woven tunic, a turban, and a sash.”** (Exodus 28:4) Here we are given more specific directions concerning the ephod, which was like a skirt or apron that covered the hips and thighs. The ephod had two straps or suspenders, which were worn over the shoulders. There were many layers to the ensemble, all telling the same story in slightly different ways (kind of like God’s Word, it’s turning out): the High Priest was to be a divinely appointed intermediary between man and God, an exalted servant. He is a living metaphor for the Messiah, and his wardrobe says a great deal about his divine antitype.

The ephod was, in a way, an echo of the inner curtain of the Tabernacle (see Precept #712) and the veil (Precept #723). It too was to be

made of fine-threaded linen cloth, woven or embroidered with costly blue, purple, and scarlet thread (Precept #712 again), indicating the righteousness, heavenly royalty, and shed blood of the coming Messiah. Remember, these dyes were extracted from sources the Torah defined as “unclean.” Therefore, like the *tsitzit* every Israelite was to wear, with its single thread of *tekelet* blue, they indicated the defilement caused by the human condition, defilement that was to be borne *in profusion* by the High Priest. Even then, it’s only a pale reminder of the actual defilement that would be endured for our sakes by the High Priest’s antitype, the Messiah. That Almighty God condescended to take upon Himself human form and dwell in a fallen world is a sacrifice so vast I have a hard time comprehending it. The crucifixion I can understand. *This*, I can’t.

The shoulder straps indicate that this costly defilement was *purposely* borne on our behalf. Furthermore, the work, the lifting of this burden, was to be shouldered by the Anointed One alone. And what of the “intricately woven band,” made with the same materials but with the addition of gold thread (indicating immutable purity achieved in the crucible of judgment)? The designation is a single Hebrew word: *chesheb*, which denotes “ingenious work” as much as it does “a waistband, girdle, or sash to attach clothing around the waist.” The word is based on the verb *chasab*: to think, plan, make a judgment, imagine, or count. We are being subtly told that the Messiah’s role in our redemption was neither an accident nor an act of desperation, but rather the very plan of God—the ingenious product of His loving imagination—conceived in his mind before we humans had even demonstrated our need for salvation. The *chesheb* is what holds the whole thing together.

- (735) *Engrave two onyx stones for the ephod.* “Then 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 six names on the other stone, in order of their birth. 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. 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 Yahweh on his two shoulders as a memorial. You shall also make settings of gold, and you shall make two chains of pure gold like braided cords, and fasten the braided chains to the settings.” (Exodus 28:9-14) The High Priest, in his role as intercessor, was to “bear” (Hebrew: *nasa*): lift up, carry, support, or exalt, the “names” (Hebrew: *shem*)—more than just the proper designation of someone, but also their character or reputation—of God’s people as a “memorial” before Him. This *zikarown*-memorial is based on the verb (*zakar*) meaning “to think about, meditate upon, pay attention to; remember, recollect;

mention, declare, recite, proclaim, invoke, commemorate, or confess.” (*Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*) In short, the High Priest was to represent the people before Yahweh, be their advocate, their spokesman, their ambassador. This is precisely the role Yahshua our Messiah fills on our behalf as He sits “at the right hand of God” today. Satan accuses us; He defends us.

This is all a two-way street, however. If you’ll recall, the Third Commandment put the shoe on the other foot: we are not to *nasa* (lift up, bear, or present) the *shem* (the name, character, or reputation) of Yahweh in a manner that is *shav* (empty, worthless, false, or futile). In other words, we are to be *His* advocates, spokespersons, and ambassadors before the world. He’s not asking us to do anything he hasn’t already done for us.

As usual, the material specified for the symbol is significant. Onyx, a stone soft enough to be engraved or carved, would soon be listed among twelve gemstones adorning the High Priest’s breastplate (see Precept #737). I believe they’re the same twelve stones (at least as far as what they signify) that are specified for the foundations of the New Jerusalem, listed in Revelation 21:19-20. In *Future History*, Chapter 30, I discussed each of them in turn. If I may be allowed to quote myself: “Listed fifth in the foundation stones, sardonyx was composed of two layers, sard, or sardius—a translucent deep red or red-orange form of chalcedony—and onyx, a white form of calcium carbonate soft enough to be easily carved. Onyx (Hebrew: *shoham*) was listed in the middle of the fourth row of the ephod. Sardonyx was prized for making cameos and signet rings—the soft onyx carving standing out against the red sardius background. Signet rings, of course, were used for impressing the owner’s seal into hot wax—a means of identification, proof of ownership, and exercise of authority. The sardonyx, then symbolizes our being “sealed” by Yahshua—the red of the sardius represents His blood, while the white onyx speaks of His purity.”

Finally, the two onyx nameplates were to be encased in pure gold settings and secured to the shoulder straps of the ephod with a braided chain of pure gold. It’s as if Yahweh is saying, *My people are precious to Me: I shall protect and honor them with My own character as their case is brought before Me.*

- (736) *Make the High Priest’s breast-piece.* “**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. It shall be doubled into a square: a span shall be its length, and a span shall be its width.**” (Exodus 28:15-16) When we hear the word

“breastplate,” we (or is it just me?) envision a heavy metal or leather shield-like affair covering the wearer’s entire chest, used to protect his vital organs in a battle, sort of like the Kevlar vests our law-enforcement officers wear for protection today. But that’s not what this is at all. It’s a *hosen*, a pouch, pocket, or envelope about nine inches square, made by folding a piece of cloth over upon itself and stitching up the two sides. In this case, the *hosen* was to hold two items called the Urim and Thummim (see Precept #739), used to discern the will of God in certain matters. That’s why this is called the “breastplate (or breast-piece) of *judgment*.” That’s the Hebrew word *mishpat*, meaning the act of deciding a legal case, the court where justice is rendered, the process of litigation, or the verdict itself. We tend to read “wrath” into judgment, but that’s only because we’re guilty. The word can actually lead either to wrath or vindication.

The same materials, craftsmanship, and design used in the ephod were to be used to make the breast-piece. Its finished shape was to be a square, reminiscent of the altar’s shape, its four equal sides indicating once again the completion of our redemption—this time stressing the comprehensive satisfaction of the legal *mishpat* requirements of the Law.

- (737) *Adorn the breastplate with gemstones.* “**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; the second row shall be a turquoise, a sapphire, and a diamond; 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 settings. 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.**” (Exodus 28:17-21) The breast-piece was to be studded with twelve precious or semi-precious stones, each representing one of the patriarchs of Israel. They were affixed in order of their birth to Jacob, so the list started with Reuben (represented by the sardius) and ended with Benjamin (the jasper). Significantly, the onyx stone—which had been specified to bear the names of the twelve tribes of Israel on the epaulets of the ephod—was the eleventh stone: Joseph’s. Of all the sons of Israel, Joseph became a living metaphor for the coming Messiah, his story prefiguring Christ’s in dozens of ways.

Once again, I would refer you to *Future History*, Chapter 30: “Heaven, Hell, and Eternity,” for a thorough analysis of what each of the twelve stones signify. If my take is valid, then they indicate twelve separate facets of Yahweh’s plan for our redemption (listed here in the order they appear in the foundations of the heavenly city): (1) Jasper: the blood of God’s perfect sacrifice, Yahshua, sprinkled upon the mercy seat to atone for our

sins. (2) Sapphire: heaven, our eternal destiny in Christ. (3) Chalcedony: mankind, the object of Yahweh's unfathomable love, and the humanity of Yahshua that enabled Him to rescue us. (4) Emerald: our need for the Holy Spirit—God's very presence living within us. (5) Sardonyx: our "sealing" by Yahshua. (6) Sardius: the blood of Yahshua, shed for our sins. (7) Chrysolite: the unfathomable riches of God's love toward us. (8) Beryl: Yahweh's loving provision for us—the exquisite balance of the whole created universe. (9) Topaz: Yahshua's work in us through the testing of this world, making us more useful, more beautiful, and infinitely more valuable. (10) Chrysoprase: the fruit of the Spirit in the believer's life—i.e., love and the things that grow out of it. (11) Jacinth: our glorious future in the "dwelling places" Yahshua has prepared for us. And (12) Amethyst: divine royalty, Yahshua—and through Him the status of the redeemed, described as a "royal priesthood."

I may not have gotten all of the symbols correct (or *any* of them, for that matter). But it's clear to me that they're each symbolic of *something* in Yahweh's plan for our redemption. Like the ephod's epaulets, the twelve stones of the breast-piece were to be set in gold, signifying (at the very least) that the twelve tribes of Israel were set apart and protected through Yahweh's immutable, imperishable character. They were each to be engraved with their individual tribal names. (Perhaps this was done on their gold settings, for some of these stones were quite hard.) I take this as a reminder that Yahweh knows each of us individually, not just by the group to which we belong, either by choice or genetic serendipity. Beyond that, against what seem like very long odds, each and every tribe of Israel will regain its place in the national heritage during Yahshua's Millennial reign (see Ezekiel 48). Makes perfect sense: **"They shall be set in gold settings."**

Lest we forget, the breast-piece was to be worn by Aaron, the High Priest, in his role as prophetically appointed intercessor for his people. **"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 Yahweh continually."** (Exodus 28:29) The twelve tribes of his people were to be literally *on his heart* as he ministered before Yahweh. No less so are all the saints on the heart and mind of Yahshua as he intercedes for us before the Father in heaven.

- (738) *Attach the High Priest's breastplate to his ephod. "You shall make chains for the breastplate at the end, like braided cords of pure gold. And you shall make two rings of gold for the breastplate, and put the two rings on the two ends of the breastplate. Then you shall put the two braided chains of gold in the two rings*

**which are on the ends of the breastplate; 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.”** (Exodus 28:22-25) Here we see how the breast-piece was to be attached to the High Priest’s wardrobe. If you’ll recall, the ephod was like an apron or skirt that was held up with two straps over the High Priest’s shoulders. The breast-piece was to be suspended between these two shoulder straps. Here we see the top attachment points. Golden rings were to be attached to both the “ends” (i.e., the edge, extremity, or selvedge—Hebrew: *qatsah*) of the breast-piece, and also to the two “settings,” that is, the gold frames into which were set the two onyx stones with the names of the sons of Israel, which perched upon the High Priest’s shoulders. These rings were to be joined by two braided cords of pure gold, which I would guess were five or six inches long.

The breast-piece didn’t just hang there loose, however. Its lower edge was attached in a similar way to the straps, just above the ephod’s “intricately woven band,” the *chesheb* we mentioned in Precept #734. **“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. 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. 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.”** (Exodus 28:26-28) We covered this briefly in Mitzvah #432, where I noted, “It’s a picture of service and intercession. The reason the ephod and breastplate were to remain attached was that service without love is worthless, just as love without service is impossible.”

If you’re like me, you’re wondering why we were given such intricate and exacting instructions for the attachment of the breast-piece. Following the principle that Yahweh never tells us anything on a pointless whim, I was compelled to ask myself: why, if the breast-piece was never to be removed from the ephod, was it attached in such a convoluted manner? Why not just sew it on, or for that matter, why not make the whole affair out of a single piece of linen and be done with it? Yahweh’s trying to tell us something here, but He’s making us dig for it.

Let’s review the details. There were four points of attachment. The top two corners of the breast-piece were attached to the gold settings of the onyx epaulets with golden cords. At the bottom, it was attached to the straps near the ephod’s “intricately woven band,” but this time, the

attachment was done with a blue (*tekelet*) cord. In no case, however, was the cord affixed directly to the ephod or the breast-piece. Rather, it was attached to an intermediate ring, made of gold, which was in turn joined to the ephod. We might expect these rings, then, eight of them in all, to have significance beyond their mere attachment capabilities, since they weren't really necessary if all you wanted to do was connect the breast-piece to the ephod. So it with some interest that we find that the Hebrew word for "ring" (*taba'at*)—a ring or signet ring—has far more to do with "signet" than it does "ring." The root verb *taba* means to sink, to penetrate, as a signet ring would sink into the hot wax of a ruler's seal. The use of the *taba'at* signet ring verified the authority of the one who used it. The round shape that allowed it to stay on his finger when not in use was pretty much beside the point.

What, then, is the symbolic significance of the unusual and counter-intuitive method of attaching the breast-piece to the ephod? Let's look at the individual pieces of the puzzle. (1) The High Priest, the one who wears these items, is metaphorical of Yahshua the Messiah. (2) The ephod speaks of the Messiah's service and sacrifice—His shouldering the burden of Israel's sin (on the one end) and (3) His "intricately woven band," the *chesheb*, signifying His sacrifice and voluntary defilement on behalf of everybody else (on the other). (4) The breast-piece with its twelve stones worn over the High Priest's heart symbolizes Yahweh's love as demonstrated by His multi-faceted plan for our redemption. (5) The gold cords between the breast-piece and the onyx epaulets inscribed with Israel's tribal names signify the precious and immutable promises of Yahweh toward them. (6) The blue cords running between the breast-piece and the ephod's *chesleb* band represent the direct line between the Messiah and His ekklesia (something not enjoyed by Israel as a nation—yet). And (7) the rings that appear at every juncture remind us that God's people—all of us—are sealed through the authority of Almighty Yahweh. In point of fact, then, the High Priest is *wearing* the story of our redemption upon his body.

- (739) *Provide for the Urim and Thummim.* **"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 Yahweh. So Aaron shall bear the judgment of the children of Israel over his heart before Yahweh continually."** (Exodus 28:30) The breast-piece, you'll recall, was a doubled-over piece of cloth, with the "pocket" opening at the top. These two mysterious objects, the *Urim* and *Thummim*, were to be placed within that pocket. They were used exclusively by the High Priest to discern the will of Yahweh in matters of national importance, though the actual method or means he used has been lost to

history (which is probably a good thing). These weren't "divination" devices, like reading tea leaves or throwing dice. Such practices, in fact, were strictly forbidden. Rather, the idea and goal was to elicit guidance from Yahweh in the absence of a Torah precept covering the question, or a prophet like Samuel or Elijah with which to consult. Neither chance nor occult knowledge was in view. It seems the *Urim* and *Thummim* were most often used to elicit a "yes or no" answer from Yahweh (e.g. I Samuel 23:9-12). But unlike "flipping a coin," the question could entail more than a simple binary decision (as in Judges 1:1). And the answer might even be, "I'm not going to give you an answer," (as in I Samuel 28:6).

Both of these words are plural forms. *Urim* is based on *ur*, a verb meaning "to be light, to shine; to give light, cause to shine; or to illumine." Literally, then, *urim* means "lights" or "illumination." *Thummim* (or *Tumim*) is derived from the verb *tamam*: to be complete, as in the related words *tom* (integrity or uprightness) and *tam* (perfect). Thus *thummim*, the plural of *tom*, literally means "perfections." It speaks of truth that is arrived at honestly, in a natural, non-calculating way, with a clear conscience and pure motives. The use of the word to describe the random, un-aimed arrow shot that killed Ahab almost by accident (I Kings 22) gives us a clearer picture of the underlying tone of *tom* and *thummim*.

We needn't get hung up on how the High Priest used the *Urim* and *Thummim* to discern the will of Yahweh. I realize that Josephus reported that the twelve stones of the ephod would shine when the Israelites were to be victorious in battle (Antiquities, 3.8, 9) and that the Talmudic rabbis suggested that the Shekinah would illumine letters within the engraved names of these stones to spell out secret messages (never mind the fact that they were five letters short of an alphabet using that method). These fanciful extrapolations on history and scripture ignore the fact that we never hear of the *Urim* and *Thummim* being used after the reign of David. Ezra and Nehemiah both mention their need, but not their use, at the time of the return of Judah's exiles from Babylon. It's quite possible that there was no physical property associated with them at all, but that their use in faith gave the High Priest prophetic insight into the question at hand.

We, rather, should consider what the *Urim* and *Thummim* mean as metaphors in Yahweh's plan for our lives. Because they are the exclusive province of *our* High Priest, Yahshua, we are blessed with the counsel they provide, for His Spirit dwells within us today. We need only to ask for guidance. We would be fools not to avail ourselves of this priceless resource: lights and perfections—illumination and truth.

(740) *Make the High Priest's robe.* "You shall make the robe of the ephod all of blue. 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. 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: a golden bell and a pomegranate, a golden bell and a pomegranate, upon the hem of the robe all around. And it shall be upon Aaron when he ministers, and its sound will be heard when he goes into the holy place before Yahweh and when he comes out, that he may not die." (Exodus 28:31-35) Worn over the linen tunic, the High Priest's "robe" was more like a sleeved poncho than a coat, in that it wasn't open at the front. Rather, it was slipped on over the head. The "neck" was reinforced so it wouldn't tear. It was customary in these times for one to rend his clothing in order to express profound anguish or deep mourning, but the High Priest was specifically prohibited from doing so (see Mitzvah #373). The reason, I believe, is wrapped up in what the robe represented: since it was made entirely of blue-dyed fabric, the ultimate High Priest's role as King is being stressed here.

Since kings and priests were supposed to come from different tribes (Judah versus Levi), only one candidate for fulfillment exists: Yahshua, both our King and our High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek. On the other hand, there *was* one incident where a prophet was instructed to "crown" a High Priest and speak of him as if he were a king: "**Behold, the Man whose name is the branch! From His place He shall branch out, and He shall build the temple of Yahweh. Yes, He shall build the temple of Yahweh. He shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule on His throne. So He shall be a priest on His throne, and the counsel of peace shall be between them both.**" (Zechariah 6:12-13) This was all prophetic of the coming Messiah, of course. The name of the priest? Joshua (pronounced: Yahshua), son of Jehozadak (which, not coincidentally, means "Yahweh has justified"). You think maybe God was trying to tell us something?

The point of never tearing the royal robe was that although the Messiah in his role as the Lamb of God would be torn—slain to atone for our sins—His position *as King* was unassailable. It made no difference if billions of lost and rebellious people said, "We will not have this Man to rule over us." He *does* rule, whether they like it or not. The role of King of kings cannot be torn away from Yahshua.

And what of the "decorative" elements to be applied to the hem of the robe? Pomegranates embroidered in blue, purple, and scarlet were to ring the hem, interspersed with bells made of pure gold, sewn on in a way that would allow them to ring when the High Priest walked. The reason given

for the bells is a warning: **“Its sound will be heard when he goes into the holy place before Yahweh and when he comes out, that he may not die.”** That he may not *die*? This is apparently more serious than it looks. The key, I think, is once again the metal from which the bells were to be made: gold—precious, immutable, proven pure in the crucible of adversity. The golden bells announce to Yahweh that the High Priest is there in his role as a symbolic representative of the coming Anointed One—he is *not* standing before Yahweh pretending to be “good enough” to intercede for the people on his own. He is, rather, the emissary of the King.

The pomegranates mean something else entirely. But what? Rabbis have tried to make the case that pomegranates represent the Law of Moses, because they contain 613 seeds. Problem is, they don't. These apple-sized fruits always have lots of seeds, it's true: that's what the Anglicized name of the plant means (Latin: *pomum* = “apple,” and *granatus* = “seeded”). But they range from under 200 to over 1,300 in number—hardly the precision you'd expect from a biblical metaphor, if that's really what it was supposed to mean. And besides, I've convincingly demonstrated that there *aren't* 613 “laws” in the Torah. That's a Talmudic prevarication, nothing more. But the meaning *is* tied to the seeds, which when crushed yield a sweet-to-sour red juice (the basis of grenadine, for example) that is symbolic of the shed blood of Yahshua the Messiah. (No wonder the rabbis are scrambling for alternative explanations, lame or not.) I suppose you could say that whether the “blood” of the pomegranate is sweet to you or sour depends upon your relationship with the One who did the bleeding.

The “decorative elements” on the hem of the robe, then, are anything but merely decorative. They speak of the two functions of the Messiah, suffering servant and reigning king, repeated over and over again so we wouldn't lose sight of one or the other.

- (741) *Make a golden plate for display on the High Priest's turban. “You shall also make a plate of pure gold and engrave on it, like the engraving of a signet: HOLINESS TO YAHWEH. 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. So it shall be on Aaron's forehead, that Aaron may bear [i.e., carry away] 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 Yahweh.”* (Exodus 28:36-38) The symbolism latent in the High Priest's garments is like buried treasure—it's exciting and rewarding to dig it out. But sometimes Yahweh just leaves nuggets of truth lying around on the ground for us to pick up—sometimes he literally spells it out for us. Like here. There was to be a golden sign

attached to the turban worn by the High Priest that read “Holiness to Yahweh,” or “Set Apart to Yahweh.” That is precisely the job description of not only the High Priest, but also the Messiah he represents—and indeed, all of us who are “in” him. Maybe if we all walked around with signs on our foreheads stating in no uncertain terms what (and Who) we’re about, we’d be less apt to behave the way we do.

Of course, even here, there are symbolic aspects we should address. The plate is made of gold, speaking of Christ’s precious, immutable purity. It is attached to the linen (read: righteousness) turban with a blue cord, symbolic of the Messiah’s royalty. And where is it placed? On the forehead, i.e., over the frontal lobe. As I pointed out before, the frontal cortex controls our emotions and personality, motor function, problem solving, spontaneity, memory, language, initiation, judgment, impulse control, and social and sexual behavior. If these things—what we do, think, and feel—were “covered” by our consecration to Yahweh, how far wrong could we possibly go?

(742) *Make the High Priest’s tunic, turban, and sash. “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.”* (Exodus 28:39) We’ve mentioned all of these garments one way or another in the past few pages. Perhaps we should pause and reflect on the *verbs* being used here. There are three of them in this verse. “Skillfully weave” is the Hebrew *shabats*: to weave or plait, to interlock threads at right angles to make a fabric. “Make” (used twice) is *’asah*, a generic verb for accomplishing something: do, make, cause, bring about, work (i.e., expend labor or effort in a task or endeavor), behave or conduct oneself in a certain way—even to caress or fondle. Finally, “woven” is actually a verb, *raqam*, meaning to weave variegated cloth, thus to be formed, fashioned, or woven out of a variety of existing materials—including the formation of our own bodies and souls, as in Psalm 136:15: **“My frame was not hidden from You, when I was made in secret, and skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth.”**

What, then, is Yahweh instructing us to do here (besides the obvious manufacture of the High Priest’s clothing)? We are being told to follow the creative instincts He built into us when He created us in His own “image and likeness.” Yahweh gave us the ability to do things, to make stuff, to take raw materials and craft them into something useful, beautiful, valuable, or significant. He gave us brains with which to think, fingers with which to manipulate our world, senses with which to perceive it all, and a spirit with which we can joyfully appreciate the result. We humans have the ability to grow flax, weave it into linen cloth, and sew it into the

High Priest's tunic. We have the ability to harvest wood, metal, and other materials, fashion musical instruments, learn how to play them, and proceed to praise Yahweh with a joyful noise. We have the ability to harness electrons, herd them across microscopic silicon landscapes, and use them to bring enlightenment and truth to literally billions of our fellow creatures. But what do we do? All too often, we squander our creative gifts or allow them to be stolen from us. We work for a paycheck (or worse, for *the weekend*) instead of "as unto our heavenly Father." We slouch in our Lazy-Boys watching mindless Hollywood drivel instead of using the time to sharpen our intellects or serve our fellow man. We take instead of giving, consume instead of creating, medicate instead of meditating, prey on people instead of praying for them, and complain instead of communicating. My friends, we need to get off our butts and "skillfully weave" something.

- (743) *Make tunics, trousers, sashes, and hats for all the priests. "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. 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. And you shall make for them linen trousers to cover their nakedness; they shall reach from the waist to the thighs."* (Exodus 28:40-42) The High Priest wasn't the only one who was to wear special clothing identifying his office and symbolizing some larger truth. The regular priests (all the male descendants of Aaron) were to be "uniformed" as well, though not as splendidly as the High Priest. The thing that most clearly distinguished them was their "hats," or turbans. Different from the High Priest's turban (*mitsnephesh*), the word describing the ordinary priest's headgear (*migba'ah*) stresses its height or rounded summit. The priestly turban was supposed to impart "glory" (Hebrew: *kabowd*—glory, honor, reverence, or dignity) and "beauty" (*tiph'arah*—splendor, beauty, excellence, a mark of rank or renown) to the priests as a class. With such an unexpected twist—glory and splendor being bestowed *upon men* at God's instruction—I can't help but reflect on the "hats" said to be reserved for all believers—people for whom the priests of Israel serve as symbolic types: **"There is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing."** (II Timothy 4:8)

With the linen tunics (covering the short trousers) and identical sashes, the headgear helped to identify the priests *as* a priests, setting them apart from the average Israelite—even their brother Levites—when they were performing their priestly duties in the Tabernacle: **"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.” (Exodus 28:43) Again, there’s a warning attached: wear the special clothes when you minister within the Holy Place, or die for your disobedience. This is not a pointless tradition (like that observed by some American Christians who feel they *must* wear a coat and tie to church) but rather another of Yahweh’s object lessons. The linen from which the clothing was made was symbolic of righteousness—and *imputed* righteousness at that. Linen was made from flax, which grew up out of the ground—a picture of God’s miraculous provision. It “breathes” (like cotton does), making it not only comfortable to wear, but also an apt metaphor for receiving the Spirit of God, since the Hebrew word for spirit, *ruach*, also means wind or breath.

The corresponding opposite “fabric metaphor” would be wool, which symbolizes sacrifice and labor—and not surprisingly, is said to make the wearer perspire. The comparison is spelled out plainly in Yahweh’s instructions for the priestly wardrobe in the Millennial Temple. **“And it shall be, whenever they [the priests] enter the gates of the inner court, that they shall put on linen garments; no wool shall come upon them while they minister within the gates of the inner court or within the house. They shall have linen turbans on their heads and linen trousers on their bodies; they shall not clothe themselves with anything that causes sweat.”** (Ezekiel 44:17-18) Since the priests as a class are a metaphor for believers in general, the lesson is clear: we may not approach Yahweh through our works (symbolized by wool). Only what He provides with which to cover our nakedness and shame (metaphorically, linen) is acceptable.

#### ARTISTS AND CRAFTSMEN

- (744) *Recognize and make use of God’s gifts of talent or ability. “All who are gifted artisans among you shall come and make all that Yahweh has commanded.”* (Exodus 35:10) It bears repeating: our eternal destiny is a choice that Yahweh leaves up to us—each one individually. But choosing our roles within the household of faith—once we have become part of Yahweh’s family—remains the prerogative of the Father. Each of us is given gifts or talents—potential that we are supposed to realize and develop to the best of our ability. But we are not all given the same gifts, the same proclivities and aptitudes, or the same degree of potential. Some servants are given “ten talents” to invest; others get only one. It’s no shame to be less gifted, only to be less willing to use the gift.

The construction of the Tabernacle provided a demonstration of this principle in microcosm. A wide variety of skills were needed to get the job

done, building “the tabernacle, its tent, its covering, its clasps, its boards, its bars, its pillars, and its sockets; the ark and its poles, with the mercy seat, and the veil of the covering; the table and its poles, all its utensils, and the showbread; also the lampstand for the light, its utensils, its lamps, and the oil for the light; the incense altar, its poles, the anointing oil, the sweet incense, and the screen for the door at the entrance of the tabernacle; the altar of burnt offering with its bronze grating, its poles, all its utensils, and the laver and its base; the hangings of the court, its pillars, their sockets, and the screen for the gate of the court; the pegs of the tabernacle, the pegs of the court, and their cords; the garments of ministry, for ministering in the holy place—the holy garments for Aaron the priest and the garments of his sons, to minister as priests.” (Exodus 35:11-19) There are a score of different disciplines in there, and the Plan of God—a.k.a. the Tabernacle—required all of them, everybody working in harmony toward a common goal, according to a single master plan. Paul used a different metaphor: the “body of Christ,” to get the same idea across. Though we are united in purpose and destiny, we are quite different in function, one from another.

Yahweh has assigned to each of His children a task. Here in Exodus, one person cuts down acacia trees and mills them into lumber; another crafts those boards into furniture for the Tabernacle; another covers them with gold. One spins flax into linen thread; another weaves the thread into fabric; another fashions the fabric into the High Priest’s trousers. Nobody does it all, not even the master craftsmen Bezaleel and Aholiab, who were assigned the task of “art direction.” I can relate to these guys, for I held a similar position for most of my adult life. And along the way, God taught me a few things. (1) *You aren’t working to please yourself.* There’s always a client whose needs must be met, and he in turn is counting on using your work to meet *his* customer’s needs. Whatever you do has the potential to affect many lives. You aren’t working in a vacuum. (2) *Craftsmanship counts.* People are going to use your work as a resource in their lives. If you’re lazy or sloppy or careless, your mistakes will harm those farther down the line who depend on your part being right. Love demands that you do the best you can. (3) *You’re only one piece of the puzzle.* If you don’t “fit” those who must interact with you (whether above or below you on the food chain), you will leave a gaping hole in the overall picture, and someone is going to have to compensate for your shortcomings. (4) *What you do has value.* Even the smallest, most seemingly insignificant piece of the “big picture” has a reason for being there, a part to play. By doing your job well, you improve everything. But if you shirk your responsibilities, even small ones, you diminish the whole. (5) *You can be replaced.* It doesn’t matter how indispensable you think you are. Your employer or

your client has the right *and the power* to replace you, or simply opt to do without you. If you stop learning, you run the risk of becoming obsolete, of no use to anyone. Pride (in the sense of arrogance) has no place in our lives. (6) *Failure isn't fatal*. We all make mistakes. Learn from them. Anybody can live through success. It's how you handle disaster that defines your character. Accept responsibility; don't shift blame. Keep your word, even if it's painful or expensive to do so. (7) *Small tasks lead to bigger ones*. If we are faithful in the little things, we are more likely to be entrusted with greater responsibilities. Nobody starts at the top, and even those who have reached positions of leadership still have room for growth and improvement.

These things all have applications beyond the workplace, of course. They're true in our personal relationships too, and they have spiritual ramifications as well, for we are designed to be spiritual beings. A worker who doesn't use his gifts or talents finds himself unemployed. In our personal lives, disuse or misuse of our gifts will lead to estrangement and stagnation. It's really no different in our relationship with God. Use it or lose it.

- (745) *Set up the tabernacle on "New Year's Day."* **"Then Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying: 'On the first day of the first month you shall set up the tabernacle of the tent of meeting. You shall put in it the ark of the Testimony, and partition off the ark with the veil. You shall bring in the table and arrange the things that are to be set in order on it; and you shall bring in the lampstand and light its lamps. You shall also set the altar of gold for the incense before the ark of the Testimony, and put up the screen for the door of the tabernacle. Then you shall set the altar of the burnt offering before the door of the tabernacle of the tent of meeting. And you shall set the laver between the tabernacle of meeting and the altar, and put water in it. You shall set up the court all around, and hang up the screen at the court gate.'"**

(Exodus 40:1-8) A couple of things bear notice here. First, Yahweh has a schedule. He does things in order, on time, and according to His own plan. The first day of the first month (Abib/Nisan) wasn't one of the seven *mow'ed miqrym*, or "appointed convocations" that defined and prophesied the seven most significant milestones in His plan of redemption. Rather, it was about two weeks prior to the first of them. The lesson: Yahweh's plan of salvation was in place *before* He commenced the process of saving us. He's not making this stuff up as He goes along, reacting to unexpected emergencies and putting out fires, but is methodically pursuing a strategy and timeline He established and unveiled long before we—its beneficiaries—even realized what was going on.

And notice something else about the date: the first day of the month (when the Tabernacle was to be erected) coincided with the new moon. It was *dark* at night. But the first three *miqrym*—Passover, the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and the Feast of Firstfruits—were scheduled for the 14<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup>, when the moon was full and everybody could plainly see what was going on, even after the sun had set. His plan, in other words, is designed to be obvious to anybody willing to look. If Yahweh is so obviously on a schedule, and if He’s told us so much about that schedule, we would be idiots to disregard it, to take half a verse (“**But of that day and hour no one perceives**”—Matthew 24:36) out of context and conclude that we can’t know anything about God’s timing, and even that it’s somehow a heresy against God’s Word to pay attention to what He *did* say on the subject. He said a lot. We in this last generation ignore it at our peril.

Second, this “New Year’s Day” came less than one year after the exodus—which got underway about two weeks before this date the previous year. Considering how much had to be done in the construction of the Tabernacle and its appurtenances, I envision this project to be the primary occupation of the entire nation of Israel during that first year. To get the job done, hundreds of thousands of Israelites had to be involved in one way or another. They were starting from scratch, and it was an immense undertaking. It required focus, unity of purpose, and cooperation from every sector of society. What could we achieve if all humanity came together under the banner of King Yahshua? Or perhaps I should ask, what *will* we achieve...?

Third, although it’s not stated here, there were specific people assigned to setting up the Tabernacle. As we read on in Exodus 40 we get the vague impression that Moses himself set everything up (making him one spry and overworked 81-year old), but we get the particulars in Numbers 3: of the Levite clans, Gershon was to handle the Tabernacle’s “soft” components, curtains, veils, etc.; Kohath handled all the furnishings and utensils; and Merari was to take care of the “hard” structural elements like boards, pillars, socket-bases, and so forth. As in the previous precept, we see that our tasks are assigned by Yahweh. We are not to shirk our own duties, nor are we to covet or usurp the roles He has given to others to perform.

When viewed this way, it seems the Tabernacle was like a traveling circus: a thousand disparate pieces, from large swaths of linen and leather, to immense hunks of silver or bronze with mysterious holes in them, to small, solid gold spoons and wick trimmers. Separately, the parts suggest nothing. It is only when they come together under God’s direction that

their significance unfolds—beautiful, even stunning, to those of us who dare to look beyond the material entity to discover the Plan of God implied in every detail—put together on the first day of the year to tell us what its Designer would accomplish during the time of mankind upon the earth. Like the circus, everybody has a job to do. But this, my friends, really *is* the Greatest Show on Earth.

(746) *Consecrate the tabernacle and its components with anointing oil. “And you shall take the anointing oil, and anoint the tabernacle and all that is in it; and you shall hallow it and all its utensils, and it shall be holy. You shall anoint the altar of the burnt offering and all its utensils, and consecrate the altar. The altar shall be most holy. And you shall anoint the laver and its base, and consecrate it.”*

(Exodus 40:9-10) As we saw in Mitzvah #436, the anointing oil was more than just olive oil—which by now we should all understand to indicate the Holy Spirit. Its special and exclusive recipe also included myrrh, cinnamon, sweet cane, and cassia. These ingredients fine tune our focus: the oil of Yahweh’s *Ruach Qodesh* is the primary ingredient, but the bitter sorrow of myrrh, the attraction of cinnamon, the mortal humanity suggested by the sweet cane (*qaneh*, a six-cubit unit of measure), and fragrant cassia’s role in preparing Christ’s body for burial all conspire to identify the anointing oil with the Anointed One, Yahshua the Messiah.

What, then, was to be consecrated with the Anointed One? *Everything*: “**the Tabernacle and all that is in it.**” And what was the objective of doing this? To “hallow it,” that is, to make it holy, to set it apart from the world for Yahweh’s glory and purpose. The bottom line, then, is that the Plan of God for the redemption of mankind is uniquely efficacious in achieving that goal: our salvation. Why? Because this Plan alone is based on the One who was anointed by God to redeem us. No alternative plan proposed by man—neither works, penance, sacrifice, submission, denial, hedonism, nor blatant ignorance—will suffice. God’s Plan *can* exist within the matrix of religion, but they are not at all the same thing. Indeed, religion is especially dangerous because it masquerades as the Plan itself. Knowing *about* something, even bowing down to it, is not the same thing as *knowing* it. Yahweh seeks children, not subjects—family, not a fan club.

Although the entire Tabernacle, all of its components and contents, were to be sprinkled with the anointing oil, three things are singled out here for special notice. (1) The utensils—spoons, shovels, trays, wick trimmers, and so forth—are the implements used to “get the job done.” Depending on their station, they were either solid gold (speaking of immutable purity) or bronze (indicating a function related to judgment). I believe these anointed implements are us, the believers—willing tools in

the hand of God to achieve His various purposes in this earth. (2) The altar of burnt offering is the focus of the entire Tabernacle compound—the first thing one encounters upon entering the courtyard, the “gatekeeper” of the Plan of God. It represents the sacrifice of Yahshua, of course, but it’s also the epicenter of our homage and thanksgiving. The altar is—pick a preposition: of, for, to, with, from, or about—our Anointed One. (3) The bronze laver is where the hands and feet of the priests—their works and walk—were to be cleansed with water (the Word of God) before they could enter the Tabernacle. Our text specifically mentions “its base.” The laver’s foundation pedestal—that upon which the Word is upheld—is none other than Yahshua (again), and the bronze from which it is made speaks of the judgment He endured in our stead.

#### THE PACE OF PROGRESS

- (747) *Move or stay put at Yahweh’s leading.* **“At the command of Yahweh they remained encamped, and at the command of Yahweh they journeyed; they kept the charge of Yahweh, at the command of Yahweh by the hand of Moses.”** (Numbers 9:23) The Tabernacle was the center of community life during the wilderness wanderings. The twelve tribes were to camp all around it, three of them toward each direction of the compass, in a particular God-ordained order. But they didn’t stay in one place for the whole forty years; every now and then, they packed up and moved to a new location. Yahweh made it His own prerogative to determine why and when they did this, and where they would go next.

Our text is the conclusion to a lengthy passage telling us how Israel knew where to go, and when: **“Now on the day that the tabernacle was raised up, the cloud covered the tabernacle, the tent of the Testimony; from evening until morning it was above the tabernacle like the appearance of fire....”** In context, we learn that this “raising up” of the Tabernacle is the same inaugural event as that spoken of in Exodus 40—Precept #746—the first day of the first month of the second year of the exodus. When the Levites got the structure all put together, the Shekinah, the pillar of cloud and light that had guided Israel across the Red Sea, came and stood over the newly-erected Sanctuary.

This would be the pattern for the next thirty-nine years. **“So it was always: the cloud covered it by day, and the appearance of fire by night. Whenever the cloud was taken up from above the tabernacle, after that the children of Israel would journey; and in the place where the cloud settled, there the children of Israel would pitch their tents. At the command of Yahweh the children of Israel would journey, and at the command of Yahweh they would camp; as long as the cloud**

**stayed above the tabernacle they remained encamped....**" I realize Yahweh had a "captive audience" here, and one composed of former slaves at that. But we have nary a whisper of reluctance on the part of the Israelites to follow Yahweh's leading here. That's so refreshing. Most of the Pentateuch—most of the *Bible*—is a record of one Jewish rebellion after the other. "A stubborn and stiff-necked people," they're called. Why did they obey here? Was it that they got tired or discontented with where they were and were eager to move on? (But if that was the case, why don't we hear of groups striking out on their own before God told them to move?) Was it that they feared for their lives if they didn't follow the cloud as directed? Was it that the manna fell only where the cloud was? Was it merely a case of group dynamics, of "follow the leader?" Or was it that they genuinely desired to be close to their God's visible presence every hour of the day and night—that they felt secure there? Whatever the reason, follow they did, without murmur or complaint, as far as we know. Precisely what we should endeavor to do.

More details are given: **"Even when the cloud continued long, many days above the tabernacle, the children of Israel kept the charge of Yahweh and did not journey. So it was, when the cloud was above the tabernacle a few days: according to the command of Yahweh they would remain encamped, and according to the command of Yahweh they would journey. So it was, when the cloud remained only from evening until morning: when the cloud was taken up in the morning, then they would journey; whether by day or by night, whenever the cloud was taken up, they would journey. Whether it was two days, a month, or a year that the cloud remained above the tabernacle, the children of Israel would remain encamped and not journey; but when it was taken up, they would journey."** (Numbers 9:15-22) I don't know about you, but I find Yahweh's personal direction of my own life awfully hard to discern sometimes. He no longer provides a towering pillar of cloud and fire that we can watch and say, "Oops, the Cloud is on the move—pack up the camel and grab the kids!" Now He's quite a bit more subtle. He speaks not in the whirlwind, but in the still, small voice. We have to listen hard for it. On the other hand, considering (in hindsight) how my life has been blessed, perhaps I developed the knack of listening to Yahweh early in life, and with it the propensity to do what He was telling me without Him having to raise His voice. (I need to include my wife of forty years in that observation: we don't do anything significant unless we're on the same wavelength—as we invariably are. If God announced the rapture was going to be next Saturday, Gayle and I would glance at each other, nod our heads, and say in unison, "Yeah, let's go!")

The point is, we *need* to listen to (and for) Yahweh's personal directions. They aren't written in scripture (e.g., **"Thou, O Ken, shalt forsake**

**thy business and journey forth to Virginia in 1996.”** Hezekiah 91:6) but the habits and attitudes we need to develop in order to make God’s individual instructions “audible” to us are spelled out clearly in His Word. Things to remember: (1) If you’re not Yahweh’s child, He won’t offer advice (beyond that one thing: “Become My child”). If we aren’t willing to listen to Him on that issue, He won’t waste our precious time. Choice is our prerogative. (2) God won’t cut off communication with us, but strangely enough, He has given us the power to do that very thing: our sin can “quench” the influence of the Holy Spirit living within us. (3) If we don’t trust Yahweh in the little things, He won’t trust us to do the big ones. Remember, the parable’s servant who faithfully administered ten talents was given exactly the same commendation as the one who did a good job taking care of only five. (4) There isn’t a pot of gold lurking beyond every rainbow: occasionally, all that’s there is some poor schlub who needs our help. (5) God runs things on His own perfect schedule, and our impatience (or foolishness) does not constitute an emergency on His part. (6) Yahweh’s idea of “living well” doesn’t necessarily line up with ours. Don’t be surprised to find that a new bass boat or a bigger television aren’t *nearly* as important as love among the brethren and close fellowship with Him. And (7) **“All things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son.”** (Romans 8:28-29)

#### APPOINTING THE C.E.O.

- (748) *Ask Yahweh to choose your leaders.* **“Then Moses spoke to Yahweh, saying: ‘Let Yahweh, the God of the spirits of all flesh, set a man over the congregation, who may go out before them and go in before them, who may lead them out and bring them in, that the congregation of Yahweh may not be like sheep which have no shepherd.’”** (Numbers 27:15-17) In context, Yahweh had just told Moses that his time was about up—that he wouldn’t lead his people into the promised land, but would “gathered to his people” (that is, die). Moses was a hundred and twenty years old by this time—sixty years *older* than any living Israelite except for Joshua and Caleb. Yahweh reminded Moses that his sin at Meribah, where he’d struck the rock instead of speaking to it, was what had disqualified him. I suspect, however, that Mo was thinking, *That’s alright, I understand. Frankly, I’ve been looking forward to this—I could use the rest.* He didn’t whine and pout and beg for more time. Rather, the first thing that came into his mind was, *These, my people, are going to need a good leader when I’m gone. Please select the right man for the job, O God.* Yahweh’s response (see the following precept)

indicates that Moses' concern had already been addressed. God had, in fact, been preparing Moses' successor for the last forty years. He chose one of the twelve original spies—one of only two who had given a good report—the one who had been Moses' right hand man ever since: Joshua.

All of this brings up an interesting question. How are we to select our leaders here on earth? There are three basic systems in operation in our world, though in practice they overlap to some extent. Human leaders come to power either through force, through heredity, or through acclamation. All three methods often involve some level of treachery. Here in America, we like to think democracy (i.e., organized acclamation) is God's gift to civilized man, but if we stopped to think about it for ten minutes, we'd realize that it's nothing but mob rule in a three-piece suit, just as susceptible to treachery as either of the alternatives (which is not to say it's not superior to its two rival methodologies, all things considered). But there's a fourth possibility, one that hardly anybody ever even considers: human leadership chosen by divine fiat.

I have no doubt that Moses, had he been asked, would have chosen Joshua for the job. (His second choice might have been Caleb, but since he was a Kennezeit—an Edomite gentile who had been “adopted” into the tribe of Judah—that might have been problematical.) But Moses didn't state his preference or his opinion. He didn't exercise what the average man in his position would have considered the least of his prerogatives—selecting his own successor. He didn't choose one of his own blood relatives for the coveted spot. He didn't poll the tribal leaders, asking them to put forth candidates. He didn't take the issue before the people so they could vote on it. He simply asked Yahweh to choose.

Why aren't we smart enough to do that? Before you answer my admittedly rhetorical question with a snappy comeback, remember this: the same God who appointed Moses, Joshua, and David to rule in Israel, also appointed Sennacherib, Nebuchadnezzar II, and Antiochus IV Epiphanes. Sometimes we need to be hauled off into captivity to purge us of our damnable pride. Sometimes we need to be oppressed within our own borders to teach us to honor the God who gave us this land.

- (749) *Anoint Joshua (Yahshua) as your leader.* **“And Yahweh said to Moses: ‘Take Joshua the son of Nun with you, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay your hand on him; set him before Eleazar the priest and before all the congregation, and inaugurate him in their sight. And you shall give some of your authority to him, that all the congregation of the children of Israel may be obedient. He shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall inquire before Yahweh for him by the judgment of the Urim. At his word they shall go out, and at his word they shall come in, he**

**and all the children of Israel with him—all the congregation.”** (Numbers 27:18-21) In answer to Moses’ request for Yahweh to select a worthy successor to lead Israel, Yahweh chose Joshua. This name, of course, is identical with that of our Savior the Messiah, who would appear some 1,500 years later: Yahshua, commonly known as “Jesus.” I trust that we all know by this time that the name means “Yahweh is Salvation.” In truth, this was a relatively common name in Israelite/Jewish society. Several other “Joshuas” were mentioned in scripture, all, I believe, with subtle (or not so subtle) prophetic implications connected with them: a resident of Bethshemesh on whose land the Ark of the Covenant came to rest after the Philistines released it; the governor of Jerusalem under king Josiah who gave his name to a city gate; and a high priest after the restoration who was crowned by Zechariah in prophetic anticipation of the Messiah’s building of the Temple (see Precept #740). So is Moses’ protégé Joshua a Messianic type as well? Let’s examine the text more closely.

Joshua was “the son of Nun.” *Nun* is a Hebrew verb meaning to continue, or to increase—as in **“His name [the subject here is “the king,” i.e., Yahshua] shall endure forever; His name shall continue (or increase—*nun*) as long as the sun. And men shall be blessed in Him. All nations shall call Him blessed.”** (Psalm 72:17) The idea is perpetuity, but continually increasing in power or rightness. So you might say that “Joshua the son of Nun” embodies the Messianic concept of being the “Son” of the perpetually greater One, Yahweh, who is our salvation.

Joshua is described as **“a man in whom is the Spirit.”** His antitype, Yahshua, told His disciples, **“I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you.”** (John 14:16-18) He has just equated Himself, on some level, with the Holy Spirit who would indwell us.

Moses was to “lay his hand on him” and “inaugurate” or “commission” him. He was to “give him some of his authority.” Moses is playing the role of God here. Significantly, the laying on of hands was most often used as an indication of transference: the priest, for instance, would lay hands upon the head of a sacrificial offering to symbolically transfer sin and guilt from the people to the animal. Here, God was prophetically transferring authority to His Son, Yahshua. To “inaugurate” (*tsavah*) is to command, give orders to, charge, appoint, or ordain. Without actually using the word, he is describing Yahshua’s anointing.

Joshua was to be “set before Eleazar the High Priest,” and “brought before the congregation.” Eleazar’s name means “God has helped.” Yahshua too would be brought before those who were to be helped by God: we crucified Him. His presentation before the congregation was the commencement of this ordeal. As the Passover Lamb was to be brought before the congregation for inspection—brought into the household—on the tenth day of Nisan, so Yahshua was presented as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world at His “triumphal entry” into Jerusalem on the tenth day of Nisan, 33 A.D. Then, having been found to be without fault, He was offered up as a sacrifice on Passover, the fourteenth, according to the requirements of the Word of God.

Yahweh promised that the Urim (see Precept #739) would authenticate the selection of Joshua, and apparently it did, for Joshua did indeed go on to lead Israel. Though we don’t know precisely how the Urim worked, we have a parallel historical record of Yahshua’s “authentication” in Luke 3:22. **“And the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven which said, “You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased.”** Thus both Joshua and Yahshua received public acclamation from God as their ministries were about to begin.

Although Joshua was an effective political leader and military commander, he is perhaps best known for confronting Israel with a choice: **“Serve Yahweh! And if it seems evil to you to serve Yahweh, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve Yahweh.”** (Joshua 24:14-15) Yahshua presented us with the same choice: **“Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born from above.’”** (John 3:7) Believers are told incessantly throughout scripture that they are chosen by God. And it’s true. But written between every line is the principle that we must first choose Him—believe in Him, trust Him, rely upon Him. But how does choosing to *serve* Yahweh relate to choosing to *believe* in Him? Paul explains: **“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”** (Romans 12:1-2) It would be pointless to “beseech” us if it weren’t our choice to make.

- (750) *Inaugurate “Joshua” when your death is imminent.* **“Then Yahweh said to Moses, ‘Behold, the days approach when you must die; call Joshua, and present yourselves in the tabernacle of meeting, that I may inaugurate him.’”**

(Deuteronomy 31:14) This, of course, is the same incident to which we've referred in the last two precepts, recounted here in Deuteronomy. We've been looking at this from the point of view of the congregation. Who would be selected to lead them (us)? But I'd like to look at this again from the point of view of Moses. After all, the instruction is addressed to him.

In a way, we're all like Moses. One way or another, we're all destined to leave our mortal earth-bound bodies behind—most of us through physical death. (Yes, some will be raptured, but the lesson applies to them as well). Yahweh first informs Moses that he's about to die. Few of us get quite such a blunt warning, so allow me to break the news to you: *You're going to die*. Maybe not today, maybe not a week from Tuesday, but you *are* on your way out: you're not going to live forever as a mortal human. Sorry.

With this fact in view, what are God's instructions? Moses was to do two things. First, he was to call Joshua, who, as we have seen, is a prototype of the Messiah of the same name, Yahshua, a.k.a. "Jesus." We, too, are to call upon Yahshua, and do it in recognition of the same fact that confronted Moses: Yahshua is the One chosen by God to finish what we've begun. Moses had accomplished some great things in his life, but he hadn't been perfect. He, like each of us, had fallen short of the glory of God (though truth be told, he came far closer to it than you or I ever did). Just as Joshua bridged the gap between Egypt and the Promised Land, Yahshua bridged the gap between our slavery to sin and the eternal relationship we seek with a Holy God who has created us for no other purpose. Moses was prohibited from crossing the Jordan River; the gap you and I face is more daunting—an unbridgeable chasm. But in both cases, the only way to get to the other side was through the work of Yahshua. Nor would we go as mortal men. It would be a journey in spirit, or not at all.

Secondly, Moses was instructed to present himself (with Joshua) at the Tabernacle of Meeting. If you'll recall from our previous chapter, the Tabernacle represents the Plan of God for the salvation of mankind. That is the "place"—the *only* place—designated by Yahweh for the work of Yahshua to commence. It is not in His teaching, or in a grand religion built around His persona, or in His healing miracles, or even in the promise of his glorious earthly reign as King of kings. No, the Plan of God begins with the altar of sacrifice; it proceeds to the laver where our walk and works are purified by the Word of God. Only then does one enter the Holy Place—set apart for fellowship between mortal man and his God. Here man is illuminated by the Spirit of Yahweh; here he is fed with the bread

of God's provision. And it is here that the sweet communication of prayer rises like incense into the presence of Yahweh. But even then, the Plan is not complete until the blood of the Sacrifice is brought within the Most Holy Place and sprinkled upon the mercy seat—the place of atonement. Only then is the Plan of God finished. Only then has Yahweh inaugurated, consecrated, and commissioned Yahshua to lead His people into the Promised Land.