The Priestly Garments

Yogi Berra was almost as famous for his quotes as his skill as a baseball player. Apparently, his ability to unintentionally say something thought provoking began an early age as he gave a childhood friend directions to his house saying “When you come to a fork in the road, take it”. It is questionable whether or not he actually said many of the quotes attributed to him. He wrote a book entitled “I Really Didn’t Say Everything I Said”. One line he actually said was “It’s too much of a coincidence to be a coincidence”. As we study Exodus chapter 28 we see that the descriptions of many seemingly random objects in the priestly garments of Aaron are linked to other parts of scripture.

The chapter begins with God telling Moses to have Aaron and his sons **serve God** as priests. Matthew Henry wrote that until God called priests for public ministry, each head of a family was a priest to his relatives. While the ornate uniform of the priest was to give glory to God, some priests sought personal glory from their position. The tenures of Nadab and Abihu were brief as they were stricken by God for unauthorized actions soon after they were ordained as priests (see Lev. 10:1-2). Perhaps owing to their witness of the consequences of their brothers’ actions, Eleazer and Ithamar proved to be more circumspect in the performance of their duties. Aaron and his sons were from the Tribe of Levi thus establishing the requirement that priests would always come from that tribe. God later gave specific instructions regarding their rights to receive offerings from other tribes in lieu of inheriting land in Canaan (see Deut. 18:1-2, Num 18:21-24).

As with the tabernacle and its furnishings, God provided specific details for the clothing that Aaron was to wear as high priest. Priests were required to be appropriately attired whenever they entered the tabernacle just as God requires us to approach Him with awe, reverence and covered by the blood of Jesus (see Zech. 3:3 and Matt. 22:12). Aaron’s clothing was also symbolic of the purity of Jesus. Yarns of gold, blue, purple and scarlet were to be used to make an ephod and breastpiece (curious girdle, KJV) which are described first. We previously studied the significance of the blue, purple and scarlet yarns. Gold yarn is added establishing the priest as a Christ like figure (see Rev. 1:13). The ephod was like an apron to which the breastpiece was attached. Note the following:

An onyx stone was fastened to the ephod on each shoulder (See Isa. 9:6). Typifying Jesus, the priest would carry the sins of the people on his shoulders. The onyx stones each would be engraved with the names of 6 tribes so Aaron would represent each tribe as he entered the Holy Place and Most Holy Place.

Next the breastpiece was to be attached to the ephod and used for making decisions. On the breastpiece 12 stones in 4 rows were to be mounted with each stone again representing one of the 12 tribes (see Joshua chapter 4 and 1st Kings 18:31). Between the onyx stones on the shoulders and the precious stones on the breastpiece, the 12 tribes are represented twice for a total of 24 which corresponds with the number of elders in chapter 4 of Revelation who account for both the Old Testament and New Testament churches. The 4 rows with 3 stones each on the breastpiece equal the 4 Israelite camps and also equal the number of gates (3 in each direction) of the New Jerusalem on which were written the names of the 12 tribes. The New Jerusalem will have 12 foundations, one for each of the 12 apostles. There were to be gold chains on the breastpiece connecting it to the stones on the shoulders again linking the old and new. The Urim and Thumin would be carried in the breastpiece over Aaron’s heart.

Next God required a blue robe to be worn with bells at the bottom which would announce his presence as he entered the Most Holy Place. A plate which read “HOLY TO THE LORD” was mounted on a turban so that the sacrifices which were made would be acceptable to God. When the clothing for Aaron and His sons were completed, they were to be anointed and consecrated to serve God.