

The Urim and Thummim

Exodus 28:28–30 (NKJV)

²⁸They 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.

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

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

- *Exodus and Leviticus describe in great detail the Tabernacle of Moses and how it was to be constructed. There is also a detailed description of the priestly garments as well as the priestly functions, including carrying out the numerous sacrifices and ministries in the Tabernacle.*
- *However, there is one aspect of the high priest’s garments that remains a mystery—the Urim and the Thummim.*
- *The Urim and Thummim were to be kept in a pouch in the high priest’s breastplate and were used to determine the will of God.*

Picture of High Priest dressed in his priestly garments.

- *These two items are of great importance since it was essential for the high priest to know the will of God, but there is no description of exactly what they were, if they were acquired or made, or how they actually functioned.*
- *The answers the high priest received were not prophetic messages, but an immediate answer to the present circumstances, not some future event.*
- *The breastplate that the high priest wore was called the “the breastplate of judgment.” The Hebrew word translated “judgment” refers to “the act of deciding a case, passing a judgment, making a verdict, making a decision.”*
- *“So Aaron shall bear the names of the sons of Israel on the breastplate of judgment over his heart” - The breastplate of judgment was worn over the heart of the high priest.*
- *“put in the breastplate of judgment the Urim and the Thummim, and they shall be over Aaron’s heart” - Not only was the breastplate of judgment worn over the high priest’s heart, but the exact place where the Urim and Thummim were placed in the breastplate was directly over his heart.*

- *It is interesting and noteworthy that the Urim and the Thummim, used to determine the Lord's will and to pass judgment, was not to be placed in the mitre worn on Aaron's head, but over his heart.*
- *God speaks to us not through our intellect, but through our hearts just as Jesus said, "blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God." (Matthew 5:8).*
- *We receive the revelation from God not through our heads, but through our hearts. "For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written: "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, And bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent"" and "Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe." (1 Corinthians 1:18 – 21).*
- *Saving faith does not spring from the head, but from the heart. "For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." (Romans 10:10).*
- *"So Aaron shall bear the names of the sons of Israel on the breastplate of judgment over his heart." - Upon Aaron's heart were the names of the people of Israel, so anytime he came before God they were "on his heart."*
- *An important element for us to hear from God is to have a heart of compassion towards others and be moved by their pain and struggles as we bring them before the throne of grace in prayer.*

Leviticus 8:6–9 (NKJV)

⁶Then Moses brought Aaron and his sons and washed them with water.

⁷And he put the tunic on him, girded him with the sash, 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.

⁸Then he put the breastplate on him, and he put the Urim and the Thummim in the breastplate.

⁹And he put the turban on his head. Also on the turban, on its front, he put the golden plate, the holy crown, as the LORD had commanded Moses.

- *At the ordination of Aaron as the high priest, Moses dressed him in his high priestly attire which included placing the breastplate on him and then he placed the Urim and Thummim within the pouch of the breastplate.*
- *Without the Urim and Thummim placed in the hidden pouch of the breastplate, the high priest would not be equipped to carry out his priestly duties.*

- *Although Aaron would have outwardly appeared fully ready to minister, without the Urim and Thummim, a very important part of his ministry would be lacking—the ability to inquire of the Lord and to know the will of God.*

Numbers 27:18–21 (NKJV)

¹⁸And the LORD said to Moses: “Take Joshua the son of Nun with you, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay your hand on him;

¹⁹set him before Eleazar the priest and before all the congregation, and inaugurate him in their sight.

²⁰And you shall give some of your authority to him, that all the congregation of the children of Israel may be obedient.

²¹He shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall inquire before the LORD 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.”

- “He (*Joshua*) shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall inquire before the LORD for him by the judgment of the Urim.” – *One of Eleazar’s duties as the high priest was to use the Urim and Thummim to inquire before the Lord for Joshua.*
- “At his word they shall go out, and at his word they shall come in” – *On Eleazar’s word, Joshua would know when to go into battle, how they were to take the Promised Land, and receive all the inheritance that God had for the children of Israel.*
- *It was absolutely essential for Joshua and the children of Israel to constantly be inquiring of the Lord, so they would not make any missteps or stray from the path God had set before them. “Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint; But happy is he who keeps the law.” (Proverbs 29:18).*
- *David is an example of a great man of faith. Although the entire army of Israel trembled before Goliath, through his faith in God, David was able to overcome Goliath with a simple slingshot.*
- *Through David, God showed Himself mighty to deliver and brought many great victories to Israel. However, every time that David failed to inquire of the Lord it resulted in needless sorrow and loss.*

1 Samuel 27:1–2 (NKJV)

¹And David said in his heart, “Now I shall perish someday by the hand of Saul. There is nothing better for me than that I should speedily escape to the land of the Philistines; and Saul will despair of me, to seek me anymore in any part of Israel. So I shall escape out of his hand.”

²Then David arose and went over with the six hundred men who were with him to Achish the son of Maach, king of Gath.

- *God armed David with many promises that he would be king of Israel. God had proven Himself faithful to protect David during the many years when he fled from Saul. However, there came a day when David made a decision without inquiring of the Lord. - “Now I shall perish someday by the hand of Saul. There is nothing better for me than that I should speedily escape to the land of the Philistines.”*
- *David allowed fear and doubt to divert his focus from the Lord and that led him to seek protection from the enemy camp which resulted in great loss and sorrow.*

1 Samuel 30:1–8 (NKJV)

¹Now it happened, when David and his men came to Ziklag, on the third day, that the Amalekites had invaded the South and Ziklag, attacked Ziklag and burned it with fire,

²and had taken captive the women and those who were there, from small to great; they did not kill anyone, but carried them away and went their way.

³So David and his men came to the city, and there it was, burned with fire; and their wives, their sons, and their daughters had been taken captive.

⁴Then David and the people who were with him lifted up their voices and wept, until they had no more power to weep.

⁵And David’s two wives, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail the widow of Nabal the Carmelite, had been taken captive.

⁶Now David was greatly distressed, for the people spoke of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and his daughters. But David strengthened himself in the LORD his God.

⁷Then David said to Abiathar the priest, Ahimelech’s son, “Please bring the ephod here to me.” And Abiathar brought the ephod to David.

⁸So David inquired of the LORD, saying, “Shall I pursue this troop? Shall I overtake them?” And He answered him, “Pursue, for you shall surely overtake them and without fail recover all.”

- *David found himself in the throes of despair, weeping with his people “until they had no more power to weep” at the loss of their families. David’s once loyal men now considered stoning him and with no hope for the future, David made a very important decision, “David strengthened himself in the LORD his God.”*
- *David turned to Abiathar the priest and gave these instructions, “Please bring the ephod here to me.” David’s words were essentially “Bring the priestly garments which contained the Urim and Thummim so that I can inquire of the Lord.”*
- *David sought divine guidance from the Lord and asked, “Shall I pursue this troop? Shall I overtake them?”*
- *The question reflects David’s revived level of faith, for he did not ask, “Are You still with me?” but “What do You want me to do?”*
- *In our times of need, when we are overwhelmed by our own sense of failure or recognizing our weaknesses, “Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” (Hebrews 4:16).*
- *We need to strengthen ourselves in the Lord by turning to Him and asking Him to lead us and guide us.*

- *The answer David received gives us an important insight into the Urim and Thummim.*
- *Some have speculated that the Urim and Thummim were used to give a simple “yes” or “no” answer, but in fact God’s answer was very specific and detailed, ““And He answered him, “Pursue, for you shall surely overtake them and without fail recover all.””*

1 Samuel 28:4–6 (NKJV)

⁴Then the Philistines gathered together, and came and encamped at Shunem. So Saul gathered all Israel together, and they encamped at Gilboa.

⁵When Saul saw the army of the Philistines, he was afraid, and his heart trembled greatly.

⁶And when Saul inquired of the LORD, the LORD did not answer him, either by dreams or by Urim or by the prophets.

- *Another important insight into the Urim and Thummim is that God would only communicate if those who inquired of Him were sincere and truly sought to do His will. “And when Saul inquired of the LORD, the LORD did not answer him, either by dreams or by Urim or by the prophets.”*
- *What impresses God and moves His heart are not the great things we do, but a humble and submitted heart. ““For all those things My hand has made, And all those things exist,” Says the LORD. “But on this one will I look: On him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, And who trembles at My word.” (Isaiah 66:2).*

Nehemiah 7:64–65 (NKJV)

⁶⁴These sought their listing among those who were registered by genealogy, but it was not found; therefore they were excluded from the priesthood as defiled.

⁶⁵And the governor said to them that they should not eat of the most holy things till a priest could consult with the Urim and Thummim.

- *Nehemiah is an example of a godly man who feared God and sought to uphold the Law and not to make a decision until he had the word of the Lord. “the governor said to them that they should not eat of the most holy things till a priest could consult with the Urim and Thummim.”*
- *The New Testament unlocks the Old Testament and the Old Testament provides insights that enhance our understanding of the New Testament.*
- *The word “Urim” in the Hebrew is the plural of the word meaning “light” and it comes from the Hebrew root word meaning “flame, the light produced by fire.” It comes from the Hebrew root word meaning, “to be luminous.” Thus Urim may be translated as “lights” or “exceeding brightness.”*
- *The word “Thummim” in the Hebrew is the plural of the word, “perfection, completeness, fullness, innocence.” Thus Thummim may be translated as “perfections” or “fullnesses.”*

- *While the actual rendering of Urim and Thummim into English is awkward at best because of the pluralizing of the words “light” and “perfection,” they indicate something about God’s divine attributes that transcends human vocabulary and understanding.*
- *The New Testament states that Christ “has made us kings and priests to His God and Father.” (Revelation 1:6), and therefore as kings and priests before God we are to be clothed in specific ways in our service to Him.*

Ephesians 6:14 (NKJV)

¹⁴Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness,

- *Paul states that we are to put on “the breastplate of righteousness” in our service to God.*
- *When we have received Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour we have received His imputed righteousness through faith apart from our deeds.*
- *However, as we begin to put our faith into action through obedience and acts of righteousness, we then experience His imparted righteousness as we put on the breastplate of righteousness.*

1 Thessalonians 5:8 (NKJV)

⁸But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation.

- *The breastplate of righteousness is described as being made of two pieces—faith and love.*
- *It is interesting and significant that the breastplate was actually comprised of two pieces that met together to provide protection for the chest area and specifically the heart.*
- *Faith and love combined together result in us putting on righteousness.*
- *When our hearts are filled with faith and love we are able to hear the voice of His Holy Spirit and be directed by Him.*

Colossians 3:14–15 (NKJV)

¹⁴But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection.

¹⁵And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful.

- *Love is described as “the bond of perfection,” and without love we are sadly incomplete.*

1 Corinthians 13:1–3 (NKJV)

¹Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal.

²And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.

³And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.

- *No matter what great things we accomplish for God, no matter what great sacrifices we make, no matter what great acts of faith we perform, if we have not love we are nothing and it profits us nothing.*
- *Thus we may compare the Thummim to love which speaks about perfections.*
- *Love is what perfects our service to God and without it we labour in vain.*
- *It is love that empowers “the peace of God (to) rule in your hearts.”*
- *The Greek word translated “rule” means “to control the activity of someone; the activity of an umpire whose office at the game is to direct, arbitrate and decide the contest.”*
- *The Thummim meaning perfect completeness or perfection may reflect the love of God that brings us peace, so we can hear His voice and know His will.*
- *When we are motivated by love we will desire to obey Him even as Jesus said, “if anyone loves Me, he will keep My word.” (John 14:22).*

1 John 4:18 (NKJV)

¹⁸There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.

- *God’s love is perfect and it casts out all fear so God’s peace can rule in our hearts.*
- *If Thummim represents love, then Urim must represent faith.*

John 3:18–21 (NKJV)

¹⁸“He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

¹⁹And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

²⁰For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.

²¹But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God.”

- *John 3 explains why people resist coming to faith in Christ, “men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.”*
- *Faith opens our spiritual eyes to the reality of God and to His word.*
- *With eyes of faith the things that were once hidden to us become clear.*

James 1:5–7 (NKJV)

⁵If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.

⁶But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind.

⁷For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord;

- *God gives wisdom generously to all those who ask in faith.*
- *Wisdom is knowing how to handle a specific situation, knowing how to deal with a specific problem, or knowing the proper choice to make at a specific instance.*
- *The only criteria required for us to receive the wisdom that God is willing to give to us is faith – Urim.*
- *If we have doubts and are double minded it does not say that God will withhold from giving us the answer. It says that we will not be able to receive the answer from the Lord.*
- *When we are double minded, no matter what God shows us, we will always second guess if what He has shown us is really from Him.*
- *Urim is like faith that gives us unshakeable confidence that God is answering us and leading us, so we can step out in boldness as David did when he faced Goliath.*
- *Thummim is like God’s love which gives us total confidence that what He is doing is in our best interest. God is always motivated to act from His position as our loving Father.*

Acts 20:22–24 (NKJV)

²²And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there,

²³except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me.

²⁴But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

- *A couple of questions arise when studying Paul's life. "Why did God continue to warn Paul that "chains and tribulation await" him in Jerusalem?" and secondly "Why did Paul continue to go to Jerusalem in the face of those prophetic words?"*
- *The answer is found in the idea of the Urim and Thummim—Paul's unshakeable confidence in God's love for him and his unshakeable faith in God's perfect plan for Paul's life.*
- *God never told Paul that he shouldn't go to Jerusalem, but he was told what waited him.*
- *Paul's response was, "none of these things move me" and his motivation was clear, "so that I may finish my race with joy and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God."*
- *Paul knew God's purpose was to preach the gospel, not only in Jerusalem, but to the very seat of political, economic, and military power – Rome.*

Acts 20:36–38 (NKJV)

³⁶And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all.

³⁷Then they all wept freely, and fell on Paul's neck and kissed him,

³⁸sorrowing most of all for the words which he spoke, that they would see his face no more. And they accompanied him to the ship.

- *If it was God's will for Paul to go to Jerusalem and suffer all these things for the Gospel, then why did all those prophetic words follow Paul to every city he travelled through on his way to Jerusalem?*
- *All those who heard these prophecies, "sorrowing most of all for the words which he spoke, that they would see his face no more."*
- *God was raising up a multitude of believers to intercede for him as he travelled to Jerusalem and finally to Rome to testify to the grace of God!*
- *Paul was able to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit completely because of His faith in Christ and His confidence in God's love—the Urim and Thummim.*