

Snapshots of the Cross in the Old Testament—the high priest

The activities on the *Day of Atonement* took place *around and in* God's dwelling, **the tabernacle**. Though many priests were involved, the High Priest played the central role. I want to concentrate on two objects that the High Priest wore when he walked into God's presence.



The ephod was similar to a pair of suspenders. “Have the Ephod made from gold; blue, purple, and scarlet material; and fine twisted linen by a skilled craftsman. Give it two shoulder pieces at two of the corners so it can be fastened. Next take two onyx stones and engrave the names of the sons of Israel on them in the order of their birth, six names on one stone and the remaining six on the other. Then mount the stones in settings of filigreed gold. Fasten the two stones on the shoulder pieces of the Ephod. The High Priest will wear **these names on his shoulders** as a memorial before God” (Exodus 28:6-13).

The breastpiece was similar to a baseball catcher's vest, though much smaller. “Now make a Breastpiece, using gold; blue, purple, and scarlet material; and fine twisted linen. Make it nine inches square. Mount four rows of precious gemstones on it. Set them in gold filigree.

*First row: carnelian, topaz,
emerald.*

Second row: ruby, sapphire, crystal.

Third row: jacinth, agate, amethyst.

Fourth row: beryl, onyx, jasper.



*“The twelve stones correspond to the names of the Israelites, a name engraved on each. The High Priest will carry **the names** of the sons of Israel **over his heart** as a memorial before God when he enters the Sanctuary” (Exodus 28:15-30).*

Now, let's proceed to the “*main event.*” A spotless lamb is slaughtered. Its blood is drained. The High Priest takes the blood into the Sanctuary of God's presence. God observes the stones (names) through the efficacy of the blood. He views the names **over his heart**—the symbol of love, compassion, mercy and grace. In a similar fashion He observes the names **on his shoulders**—the symbol of responsibility (as in, “*he shouldered the whole task*”).

Who is Jesus? He's the Lamb of God who was slaughtered so that His blood flowed profusely. He's the Great High Priest who presented His own blood to the Father for our redemption. Ah yes, what about the stones? Jesus bears **on His shoulders** and **over His heart** the name of every person who has received Him as Savior!

In a single sentence Paul beautifully summarizes the meaning of the Ephod and Breastpiece: “***I am absolutely convinced that there is nothing in all creation that will ever be able to separate us from the love of God which is ours through Christ Jesus***” (Romans 8:30-32).