

THE BREASTPLATE OF THE HIGH PRIEST

"And you shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother... and these are the garments which they shall make: a breastplate, and an ephod, and a robe..." (*Exodus 28*)

The garment is called *choshen mishpat* in Hebrew, which means the "breastplate of judgment" or "decision." The Breastplate is Square-shaped and worn over the heart. It is made of two pieces and has a small pouch behind the plate of gemstones, in which two sacred stones, named the Urim (representing light and excellence) and the Thummim (representing perfection and completion) are kept. The Urim and Thummim are divinely appointed instruments by which the High Priest inquired of God about matters concerning the welfare of the Children of Israel. (*Exodus 28:30*)



The breastplate is designed with the idea that the names of the twelve tribes engraved on the stones should be brought before God "as a continual memorial," and Aaron should "bear them upon his heart, when he goes into the most holy place." (*Exodus 28:29*)

G. W. Kunz in "The Curious Lore of Precious Stones" says "In the Midrash Bemidbar, the Rabbinical commentary on numbers, the tribes are given in their order, with the stones appropriate to each and the color of the tribal standard pitched in the desert camp, this color corresponding in each case with that of the tribal stone."

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In general, the following composite is most accepted:

BIBLICAL NAME	COLOR	TRIBE	TRIBE SYMBOL
Row 1			
SARDIS	RED	JUDAH	LION
TOPAZ	PALE GREEN	ISSACHAR	DONKEY
CARBUNCLE	DEEP RED	ZEBULUN	SHIP
Row 2			
EMERALD	GREEN	REUBEN	SUNRISE
SAPPHIRE	DEEP BLUE	SIMEON	PITCHER & SWORD
DIAMOND	TRANSPARENT	GAD	TROOP or TENTS
Row 3			
LIGURE	DULL RED	EPHRAIM	GRAPES
AGATE	GREY	MANASSEH	PALM TREE
AMYETHYST	PURPLE	BENJAMIN	WOLF
Row 4			
BERYL	BLUISH GREEN	DAN	SCALES
ONYX	BLUISH WHITE	ASHER	OLIVE TREE
JASPER	BLUE & BROWN	NAPHTALI	HIND (Female deer)

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