

# Exodus 28:15-21

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/exod/exod-28/exodus-2815-21/>

*God describes how to make the breastpiece for the priestly outfit. It was to be made of the same material as the ephod and was to have twelve stones representing the twelve tribes of Israel.*

The next garment to be described is the *breastpiece of judgment*. This will be worn on top of the *ephod*. It was called the *breastpiece of judgment* because it was used for making decisions. Its importance can be seen in the fact that sixteen verses are used to describe it, more than any other priestly garment. Its specifications are as follows:

It was to be *the work of a skillful workman*, meaning a master craftsman was to build it. It was to be made *like the work of the ephod*. So, it was to be made *of gold, of blue and purple and scarlet material* (probably wool) *and fine twisted linen*. It was to be *square and folded double*, and it was to have *a span in length and a span in width*. A *span* was a standard unit of measurement based on the width of a hand. This made it around nine inches. Thus, the *breastpiece* was to be nine inches square.

On the *breastpiece* there were to be *four rows of stones*. Specifically, *the first row shall be a row of ruby, topaz and emerald; and the second row a turquoise, a sapphire and a diamond; and the third row a jacinth, an agate and an amethyst; and the fourth row a beryl and an onyx and a jasper*. Each stone was to be *set in gold filigree*. The *filigree* was the setting in which the stone was to be placed. Four rows of three, twelve stones in all. The LORD then commanded that *the stones shall be according to the names of the sons of Israel: twelve, according to their names*; This means that the *names* of the *twelve* tribes should be engraved on the twelve stones and arranged according to the birth order of the sons. This made the *breastpiece* like an ancient birthstone piece.

The LORD commanded that the stones *shall be like the engravings of a seal, each according to his name for the twelve tribes*. These stones would have been engraved with the names of the twelve sons of Israel, similar to the onyx stones, but only one name per jewel. This demonstrated how precious the Israelites were to the LORD. It also demonstrates the extreme craftsmanship

available within the nation. While enslaved in Egypt, many Israelites learned skills that catered to the wealth of the elite classes of Egyptians.

**Biblical Text:**

**<sup>15</sup> “You shall make a breastpiece of judgment, the work of a skillful workman; like the work of the ephod you shall make it: of gold, of blue and purple and scarlet material and fine twisted linen you shall make it. <sup>16</sup> It shall be square and folded double, a span in length and a span in width. <sup>17</sup> You shall mount on it four rows of stones; the first row shall be a row of ruby, topaz and emerald; <sup>18</sup> and the second row a turquoise, a sapphire and a diamond; <sup>19</sup> and the third row a jacinth, an agate and an amethyst; <sup>20</sup> and the fourth row a beryl and an onyx and a jasper; they shall be set in gold filigree. <sup>21</sup> The stones shall be according to the names of the sons of Israel: twelve, according to their names; they shall be like the engravings of a seal, each according to his name for the twelve tribes.**