**Exodus 28:31-35**

[*https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/exod/exod-28/exodus-2831-35/*](https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/exod/exod-28/exodus-2831-35/)

*The LORD describes how the High Priest’s robe was to be made. The account of the making of the golden plate is in*[*Exodus 39:22 – 27*](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+39.22+%E2%80%93+27&t=NASB95)*.*

There was instruction to *make* *a* *robe* (Hebrew “me’il”) that was to be worn over the undergarments but under the *ephod*. It probably extended below the knees.

The *robe* was to be made *all of blue*. The Hebrew word for “*blue*” (“tekeleth”) can also be translated “purple” or “violet,” which could mean that the color here was bluish-purple.

There was to be *an opening at its top in the middle of it* to allow it to be pulled over the priest’s head, like an undershirt. This makes it clear the *robe* goes on under the *ephod.*Also,*around its opening there shall be a binding of woven work, like the opening of a coat of mail, so that it will not be torn*. The hole for the head was to be reinforced with *woven work*to prevent a tear. Any tear in the fabric could be considered an impurity or defect, making it unfit for worship of the holy LORD. So, the weavers were to create a *binding of woven work* to reinforce the opening to prevent it from tearing or being frayed.

The High Priest is prohibited from tearing his robe in [Leviticus 21:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Leviticus+21.10&t=NASB95), “The priest who is the highest among his brothers, on whose head the anointing oil has been poured and who has been consecrated to wear the garments, shall not uncover his head nor tear his clothes.” But in [Matt 26:65](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matt+26.65&t=NASB95), Caiaphas violates this commandment, “Then the high priest tore his robes and said, ‘He has blasphemed! What further need do we have of witnesses? Behold, you have now heard the blasphemy.’” In that situation, Jesus was accused of blasphemy, yet it was really Caiaphas who was blaspheming the High Priest’s office. His total disregard for God’s commands is shown by his act of tearing his robes.

The *robe* of the high priest was also to have *on its hem pomegranates of blue and purple and scarlet material, all around on its hem*. Being *on* *its* *hem* could mean that the *pomegranates* were woven into the fabric along the bottom of the *robe* (its *hem*), or it could mean that they were items that hung down from the *hem*. *Pomegranates* probably signified abundance, and having them on the *hem* of the robe indicated that the LORD was the source of this abundance.

Also, on the *hem* of the *robe* were to be *bells of gold between them all around*. Specifically, they needed to alternate the *bells of gold* and *pomegranates*, *a golden bell and a pomegranate, a golden bell and a pomegranate, all around on the hem of the robe*. These were actual bells that made sounds.

The purpose of the *bells* is stated in verse 35. They were put on the *robe* for *Aaron when he ministers*. Specifically, they were put on the *robe* so the *tinkling shall be heard when he enters and leaves the holy place before the Lord, so that he will not die*. As long as the *bells* were *tinkling* everyone close by (probably the priests) would know that everything was going well with the high priest’s activities in the Holy of Holies. Because these were functioning bells, it seems more likely that both the *bells*and the *pomegranates hung from the hem.*

Most translations say *so that he will not die*, which reads as though the bells prevent the priest from dying. The phrase literally is “and he does not die,” which could indicate the obvious fact that if the folks waiting outside the holy place in the tent are hearing the bells, it means the high priest is still alive. This seems more likely. Otherwise God would be saying the bells prevented the priest from death. More likely the bells are a signal to the folks outside that the priest working in the holy place is still alive. If something went wrong, and the high priest was dead, the bells would be silent. This indicates that the high priest was in danger of his life if he ministered in the holy place improperly.

**Biblical Text:**

**31 “You shall make the robe of the ephod all of blue. 32 There shall be an opening at its top in the middle of it; around its opening there shall be a binding of woven work, like the opening of a coat of mail, so that it will not be torn. 33 You shall make on its hem pomegranates of blue and purple and scarlet material, all around on its hem, and bells of gold between them all around: 34 a golden bell and a pomegranate, a golden bell and a pomegranate, all around on the hem of the robe. 35 It shall be on Aaron when he ministers; and its tinkling shall be heard when he enters and leaves the holy place before the Lord, so that he will not die.**