

## Chapter 10 – Zebulun and the Beryl

The tenth stone is **beryl (8658)**: (tarshiysh /tar-sheesh'/) “a mineral consisting of a silicate of beryllium and aluminum of great hardness and occurring in ... hexagonal prisms”<sup>1</sup>; a transparent precious stone that is available in various colors including green (emerald), blue-green (aquamarine), pink (morganite), yellow (heliodor, chrysoberyl, chrysoprase, chrysolite), and colorless (goshenite).<sup>2,3</sup>

The Hebrew word *tarshish* used for this stone is first mentioned as a man’s name in Gen. 10. It means *refinery* or *smelting plant* and is derived from the root word *rasasu* (to be smelted).<sup>4</sup> The stone was given the name based on where it was from. Tarshish is believed to have been on the coastline of Spain near Gibraltar. It is now called Tartessos.

“Over the centuries ‘precious stones’ ... excavated from mines by the people of Tarshish became associated with the idea of ‘that which is precious, or delightful’ and so ‘delightful’ was added to the meaning of Tarshish ... and the ... (High Priest’s) breastplate.”<sup>5</sup> Beryl is the eighth foundation stone of New Jerusalem.

### Symbols in the stone

This stone symbolizes the following:

- ▶ God’s testing (refining) of his saints to free them from moral imperfections (Ps. 66:10; Zech. 13:9; 1 Pet. 1:7).
- ▶ Saints using God’s gifts and resources to purify themselves from moral imperfections (1 Pet. 1:22; 1 Jn. 3:3).
- ▶ God’s *delight* in his saints when their works are righteous (1 Sam. 15:22; Jer. 9:24).
- ▶ The saints’ *delight* in the Lord (Ps. 37:4; 119:16).
- ▶ Beryl in the scriptures had a specific color as is stated in Ezek. 1:16 and 10:9 where the wheels in Ezekiel’s vision had the color of beryl. The color is never mentioned directly, but one can figure it out by searching the scriptures. Daniel had a similar vision of the same wheels in Dan. 7:9 where he said the wheels were as a burning fire. From this we can conclude that the beryl in the scriptures is yellow. (For further proof see Daniel’s vision of an angel whose body was like beryl in Dan. 10.) **Yellow** is symbolic of liberty and divine exaltation through the Holy Spirit (Ps. 68:13); faith in God and purity (Zech. 13:9; Rev. 3:18); works that please God (1 Cor. 3:12-15; 2 Tim. 2:19-21).

### Symbols in the order of the stone

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<sup>1</sup> Merriam-Webster, p. 108.

<sup>2</sup> *Encyclopedia Americana*. Intl. ed. (Danbury, CT: Grolier Inc., 1995) v. 3, p. 620.

<sup>3</sup> J. A. Simpson, E. S. C. Weiner. *Oxford English Dictionary*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Oxford, Eng.: Clarendon Press, 1989) p. 129.

<sup>4</sup> Les Gosling, “Re: Tarshish,” e-mail message, April 22, 2003.

<sup>5</sup> Gosling.

Ten is the number of law, order, government, and restoration<sup>6</sup>(Ex. 34:28; Dan. 7:24). It is also the number of trial, testing, and responsibility<sup>7</sup>(2 Ki. 20:8-11 (*Hezekiah asked for proof that God would heal him and the shadow of the sun dial moved back 10 degrees*); Dan. 1:12, 15; Luke 19:13; Rev. 2:10).

*Observation:* This number goes hand-in-hand with the symbolic meaning of the stone since the refinery, or smelting, process calls for trial and testing.

### **Facts about Zebulun**

- ▶ He was Jacob's tenth son (Leah's sixth).
- ▶ His name means "dwelling."
- ▶ Leah named him Zebulun because she knew Jacob would be content to dwell with her since she had six sons by him (Gen. 30:20).
- ▶ Leah gave God glory for blessing her with a good dowry through her sons. Dowry: benefits, such as money, goods, or property that a woman brings her husband in marriage.

*Observation:* Just as Leah was excited to have Jacob dwell with her, it should be our desire to have God dwell with us. God wants to dwell with us also. Jacob was happy to dwell with Leah because the seed he deposited into her produced children, the fruit of the womb. Likewise, God is happy to dwell with us when we produce the fruit of the spirit as a result of the seed of his word that he deposits into us.

*"Zebulun shall dwell at the haven of the sea; and he shall be for an haven of ships;"* (Gen. 49:13)

This prophecy talks about the physical borders in the Promised Land for Zebulun and the role it would have as a seaport, yet it has spiritual parallels for Christians. *Haven*(2348): (chowph /khofe/) is derived from a root word meaning *to cover*.<sup>8</sup> It is a harbor, place of safety, and a place of favorable opportunities and conditions. The sea is symbolic of the uncertainty of life in this world (Isa. 57:20) and the trials that come with it. Ships are symbolic of people passing through life in this world.

*Application:* When we become God's *dwelling*, his Zebulun, he becomes our dwellingplace, our haven of the sea. We abide in him and he becomes our place of safety in the midst of life's troubles and uncertainties (Ps. 140:13; 32:7; 119:114). However, not only are we called to dwell in him since he is our haven, he has also called us to be a haven ourselves for those ships tossed around by the sea. As we go through life, we will continually encounter people who need godly counsel, words of encouragement, and witnesses to tell them about Jesus Christ. They are like ships wandering aimlessly and being tossed around by waves of hard knocks on the sea of life looking for a safe place to dock. We must be like lighthouses in a

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<sup>6</sup> Conner, *Tabernacle ...*, p. 116.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Strong, p. 37.

harbor, flashing God’s light to attract them to a relationship with Jesus Christ. Then, and only then, will they experience the Lord’s favorable opportunities and conditions in their lives (Matt. 5:16).

It is also interesting to note that this prophecy about Zebulun goes hand-in-hand with what Isaiah prophesies in Isa. 9:1-2. He prophesies that Zebulun (and Naphtali) would see a great light, referring to Jesus Christ. This was fulfilled when Jesus lived in Nazareth, performed his first miracle in Cana, and did other ministry in the region of Galilee, which is in Zebulun.

*“...Rejoice, Zebulun, in thy going out; and, Issachar, in thy tents. They shall call the people unto the mountain; there they shall offer sacrifices of righteousness: for they shall suck of the abundance of the seas, and of treasures hid in the sand.”* (Deut. 33:18,19)

Both Zebulun (“dwelling”) and Issachar (“there is hire or reward”) are told to rejoice because they share in the same blessing. There seems to be a play on words here regarding the names of the tribes. Zebulun, whose name implies something that is stationary, is told to rejoice when he goes out and leaves his home. Issachar, whose name implies leaving home, is told to rejoice when he stays home. Whether they are at home or in the streets and fields, they will call people to worship. The mountain spoken of here is probably Zion, where God ultimately has the temple built. Zebulun and Issachar would be the ones to encourage the people to offer righteous sacrifices before the Lord in the temple on Mt. Zion (see Isa. 2:2,3).

Isaiah 60:5 gives us insight into what “abundance of the seas” means. During the Millenium, Israel will finally be a theocracy full of believers, and Gentiles, instead of hating the Jews as they do today, will love them and will go to Israel to worship.

The last phrases of this prophecy can also be interpreted as follows:

- ▶ Whether they are on land or at sea, the two tribes would prosper.
- ▶ Symbolically, it could mean they draw out people from the world (represented by the seas) with their mouth by sharing the gospel. They also draw people who God considers treasures that are hidden in the multitude of people on the earth. (Prophetically speaking, both sea and sand refer to a multitude of people. See Gen. 22:17; Josh. 11:4; and Rev.17:15.)
- ▶ Finally, it can also be taken to mean that even in the midst of life’s trials (the seas) they will partake of God’s abundance. They will also partake of the treasures God places in his people (the sands representing Abraham’s spiritual children, people of faith in God) when his people take time to share their material and spiritual resources with other saints.

*Application:* This passage highlights the importance of witnessing. When we acknowledge that we are God’s dwelling (Zebulun) and we humble ourselves as his hired servants (Issachar), then we rejoice in the opportunities God gives us to call people to him. Whether in our homes or away from home, this should be our priority—to turn, or draw, people away from their dead works and encourage them to bring before God righteous sacrifices that can only be made when they surrender to Christ’s lordship.

**In summary, Zebulun and the beryl symbolize the following:** refining of the saints through trials; God’s delight in us as we delight in him; glorification and exaltation of the saints that comes from delight in pleasing the Lord; liberty; faith in God; purity; works that please God; allowing God to govern us; restoration; order; dwelling in the Lord as he dwells in us; in the midst of our tribulations, God is our shelter; providing shelter for others who need it; calling

people to the Lord; God prospering us even in the midst of trials; God's provision of resources to saints so they can minister to each other's needs.