

## Chapter 9 – Issachar and the Amethyst

The ninth stone is **amethyst (306)**: (achlamah /akh-law'-maw/) from the primary word *ach* (/awkh/, 251 or 253) meaning *brother* or *like* for 251 or possibly *ah!* or *alas!* for 253 and the root word *chalam* (/khaw-lam'/, 2492) meaning *to dream*.<sup>1</sup> In the Hebrew, the word probably means “like a dream” or “Ah! A dream!” Amethyst is a violet form of crystallized quartz or corundum. The English word is from the Greek *a-* (*without*) and *methystos* (*drunkenness*). It literally means remedy against drunkenness.<sup>2</sup> The meaning implies sobriety and saneness. Amethyst is the twelfth foundation stone of New Jerusalem.

### Symbolism in the stone

As mentioned before, **purple** is the color of royalty, prosperity, and preciousness. The stone also represents God speaking to his people through dreams and visions (Joel 2:28). However, when it comes to dreams, we should be cautious about whether or not they are really from God (Deut. 13:1-3; Eccl. 5:7). Sobriety and alertness are also symbolized in the amethyst.

*Application:* Through the Lord Jesus Christ we obtain royalty (1 Pet. 2:9), prosperity (3 Jn. 2), and preciousness (Ps. 49:8). Therefore, having obtained them we are to be sober so we can always be aware of what is happening around us, whether it is good or evil (1 Thes. 5:6-8; 1 Pet. 5:8).

God hates it when people put themselves in an altered state of consciousness because they are allowing themselves to be used by Satan. The scriptures speak against drunkenness (Rom. 13:13) and sorcery (from the Greek word *pharmakeia* meaning to sell and/or abuse drugs—see Rev. 21:8). Walking soberly helps us hear clearly from God when he is telling us what to do. This is a big help in those moments when we are tempted or attacked by the devil. As a result of our sobriety we can act or react in a way that pleases God.

### Symbolism in the order of the stone

Nine is the number of fullness and finality.<sup>3</sup> (It takes nine months for a baby to be completely ready for birth.). Nine is also the number of the Holy Spirit's manifestations via spiritual fruit (Gal. 5:22).

### Facts about Issachar

- ▶ His name means “there is hire” or “there is reward.”
- ▶ Jacob's ninth son (son of Leah).
- ▶ Leah's son Reuben picked some mandrakes for his mother and when Rachel saw them, she wanted them. Leah resisted giving them away at first, but then Rachel said Leah

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<sup>1</sup> Strong, pp. 11, 40.

<sup>2</sup> Merriam-Webster, p. 37.

<sup>3</sup> Conner, *Tabernacle ...*, p. 116.

could have Jacob for the night in exchange for the mandrakes. Thus, God blessed Leah with the conception of Issachar.

- ▶ Leah named him Issachar (“there is hire or reward”) because he was a reward from God for her giving Zilpah, her maid, to Jacob to be his wife and for giving away her mandrakes. Mandrakes were fruit-bearing plants which were used medicinally as an aphrodisiac and cure for sterility.<sup>4</sup>
- ▶ The men of Issachar rushed to the aid of Deborah in her war against the Canaanites (Judges 5:15).
- ▶ There was a clan in the tribe who were valiant men of might (1 Chr. 7:2,5).
- ▶ They were men who had a godly understanding of the times they lived in, knowing that it was God’s will for them to follow king David (1 Chr. 12:32).

### Jacob’s prophecy of Issachar

“*Issachar is a strong ass couching down between two burdens:*” (Gen.49:14)

The word *couching* (7257)<sup>5</sup>: (rabats /raw-bats’/) means to crouch; recline; lie down. Asses possess great strength to bear heavy loads and are reliable work animals. Issachar would be like an ass that is so strong it could carry not just one load, but two. Yet, in the midst of bearing his loads, he would enjoy rest.

Two is the number of witness or testimony. A *burden* is a prophetic word (usu. of judgment) that God gives to his servants to tell others (Isa. 19:1; Jer. 23:33; Zech. 12:1). I don’t know for sure what the two burdens symbolize here, but it could be that one burden is the OT while the other one represents the NT.

“*And he saw that rest was good, and the land that it was pleasant; and bowed his shoulder to bear, and became a servant unto tribute.*” (Gen. 49:15)

The parable continues with the strong ass realizing that the rest is good that is provided by the master who hired him. He also recognizes the master has good land. Realizing the benefits that accompany his job, he humbly submits to carry the master’s load.

The word tribute can be used in two ways. The first has to do with giving due benevolence (paying taxes) to someone in higher authority. Although we hate the idea of paying taxes, it is something that we are encouraged to do in the Word (Mat. 22:17-21; Rom. 13:1-7). Tribute is also a gift or service showing respect, gratitude, or affection. Issachar becomes his master’s willing servant out of respect, gratitude, and affection toward him.

*Application:* We receive many benefits from the Lord in our service to him. He shows us that he will give us good rest when he invites us to come to him. “Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” (Matt. 11:28). He provides rest for our souls (Matt. 11:29). This rest is based on the principle of God resting on the seventh day from all his works (Gen. 2:2). Hebrews 4 explains this rest in some detail. Before we enter into that rest,

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<sup>4</sup> Lockyer, p. 853.

<sup>5</sup> Strong, p. 106.

there is work to be done. As Hebrews says, “Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest...” (Heb. 4:11). That does not mean we have salvation by our works, but works should result from our salvation because faith without works is dead (Eph. 2:10; Jas. 2:20).

As the name Issachar implies, “there is hire or reward” in doing God’s work. One of those rewards is the rest we get after we have ceased from our labors here on earth. Therefore, all the persecution we face, all the rejection, all the slander and gossip, and any other hardships we deal with when we do righteous works cannot be compared to our eternal rest.

Like Issachar, we must be servants to tribute. We completely surrender ourselves to God in tribute to him. In serving him, we show him reverence, thankfulness, and affection. Our number one priority should be to please God. We must seek first his kingdom and righteousness (Matt. 6:33). My whole life should be a tribute to God to the point that whether I eat, drink, or whatever I do, it is all done to the glory of God (1 Cor. 10:31). There is more concerning Issachar as mentioned by Moses in Deuteronomy 33:18,19. However, the prophecy is tied in to Zebulun, so it will be highlighted when Zebulun is discussed.

**Summary of ideas & characteristics of Issachar and the amethyst:** Royalty; prosperity; preciousness; dreams and visions from God; soberness; the Lord hiring us to work for him; rewards in doing the Lord’s work; fullness (perfection) in Christ; the fruit of the Holy Spirit in his saints; humility to bear God’s burdens; paying tribute to God; calling people to the Lord (Deut. 33:18,19); offering righteous sacrifices (Deut. 33:18,19).