Christian Symbolism

in the

Breastplate of Judgment

By Harry A. Gaylord
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Introduction

Since the Old Testament (OT) rituals put into effect by Moses at the Lord’s command are to serve as an example and shadow of heavenly things (Heb. 8:5) concerning the relationship between God and his believers, I thought it would be a good idea to explore in detail the breastplate of judgment worn by the high priest. The breastplate, like the rest of the things involved with the tabernacle, has a rich symbolism that provides followers of Christ with a picture of who we are in God’s eyes, and what he expects from us.

In this study, I will begin with a general explanation of the breastplate’s purpose and symbolism of materials used to make it as described in Exodus (Ex.) 28:15-30. Then I will focus on each of the gems placed in the breastplate, how they relate to the twelve tribes based on prophesies by Jacob and Moses along with other scriptures, and, finally, their symbolic meanings to Christians. With each stone, I have included Strong’s key numbers, the Hebrew word for the stone, and definitions.

The breastplate was only worn by the high priest, who is a type of our New Testament (NT) high priest, Jesus Christ (Heb. 2:17). The purposes of the breastplate are given to us from Ex. 28 as follows:

First purpose

“And Aaron shall bear the names of the children of Israel in the breastplate of judgment upon his heart, when he goeth in unto the holy place, for a memorial before the LORD continually.” (Ex. 28:29)

Therefore, the first purpose was to show the constant concern for the Israelites that the high priest was to have as he ministered before the Lord.

Second purpose

“And thou shalt put in the breastplate of judgment the Urim and the Thummim; and they shall be upon Aaron's heart, when he goeth in before the LORD: and Aaron shall bear the judgment of the children of Israel upon his heart before the LORD continually.” (Ex. 28:30)

The high priest was also to be prepared to hear from God because the Lord would tell him about things concerning Israel whether they were good or bad.

Observation: In the same way the high priest wore the breastplate on his heart when he entered the temple, so Christ constantly has the church (including individual believers) on his heart as he prays for us to the Father (Heb. 7:25; 1 Jn.2:1). As he goes to the Father on our behalf, Christ hears from the Father the decisions he makes concerning us and our situations, then does his part to carry out what the Father tells him.
Materials used to make the breastplate

Ex. 28:15–“And thou shalt make the breastplate of judgment with cunning work; after the work of the ephod thou shalt make it; of gold, of blue, and of purple, and of scarlet and of fine twined linen, shalt thou make it.”

**Gold (yellow):** this represents faith in God and purity (Zech. 13:9 (God’s people are like gold tried in the fire–in the midst of hardships, they are shown to be pure in their faithfulness to God); Rev. 3:18); works that please God (1 Cor. 3:12-15; 2 Tim. 2:19-21).

**Blue:** symbolizes royalty, sovereignty, rulership, power and authority worthy of honor (Es. 8:15 (blue was known to be royal apparel); Eze. 23:6 (speaks of the leaders of Assyria being clothed in blue)).

**Purple:** symbolic of royalty, prosperity, and preciousness (Jud. 8:26; Prov. 31:22 (the context of this scripture is a virtuous woman who is prosperous); Jer. 10:9 (this passage talks about how the heathen dress up their idols as if those idols are royalty, hence the blue and purple that is mentioned)).

**Scarlet (red):** represents redemption (Josh. 2:18-21); royalty, prosperity, prestige, and valiance (Lam. 4:5 (in this scripture, “they that were brought up in scarlet” refers to the class of people who were the most prestigious and wealthy); Dan. 5:7,16,29; Nah. 2:3).

**Fine twined linen:** symbolizes the righteousness of the saints (Rev. 19:8) that comes through Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 1:30).

**Observation:** The breastplate was a “cunning work.” The word *cunning* when used as an adjective in the context of the scriptures means *skillful* or *skillfully devised.* This means it was crafted with careful deliberation and represents how God crafts his church with the same mindset. We are God’s workmanship (Eph. 2:10) and he has not haphazardly thrown us together, but has re-created us in the image of his Son.

How the breastplate was fashioned

Ex. 28:16–“Foursquare it shall be being doubled; a span shall be the length thereof, and a span shall be the breadth.”

**Foursquare:** symbolic of the new Jerusalem (Rev. 21:16).

General observations of the symbolisms in the breastplate

1. The gems represent the characteristics and benefits of the saints as well as the types of service they give to God. The glistening or shininess of the gems is symbolic of the glory of God that we, as saints, should reflect in our character.
2. As saints, we are clothed in gold, blue, purple, scarlet, and fine twined linen (i.e. we have put on Christ; see Gal. 3:27). We are royalty in God’s eyes (1 Pet. 2:9).

3. The gems being placed in a foursquare container is symbolic of our citizenship in the New Jerusalem.

The layout of the stones on the breastplate

Ex. 28:17-21–

“17 And thou shalt set in it settings of stones, even four rows of stones: the first row shall be a sardius, a topaz, and a carbuncle: this shall be the first row.
18 And the second row shall be an emerald, a sapphire, and a diamond.
19 And the third row a ligure, an agate, and an amethyst.
20 And the fourth row a beryl, and an onyx, and a jasper: they shall be set in gold in their inclosings.
21 And the stones shall be with the names of the children of Israel, twelve, according to their names, like the engravings of a signet; every one with his name shall they be according to the twelve tribes.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Carbuncle (Levi)</th>
<th>Topaz (Simeon)</th>
<th>Sardius (Reuben)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diamond (Naphtali)</td>
<td>Sapphire (Dan)</td>
<td>Emerald (Judah)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amethyst (Issachar)</td>
<td>Agate (Asher)</td>
<td>Ligure (Gad)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jasper (Benjamin)</td>
<td>Onyx (Joseph)</td>
<td>Beryl (Zebulun)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hebrew is read and counted from right to left, hence the order of the stones in this diagram.

The order of the tribes’ names on the stones is implied in the context of Ex. 28. In verses 9 and 10, the Lord tells Moses that the two onyx stones to be placed on Aaron’s shoulders should have the names of the children of Israel in order according to their birth—six on one stone and six on the other. When he gives instructions concerning the names on the breastplate stones in verse 21, it is implied that he wants the names in the same order because he doesn’t give any details to the contrary.
Chapter 1 -- Reuben and the Sardius

The very first stone is the sardius (124): (odem /o’-dem/) redness; a red gem (also known as sardine).¹ Sardius is the sixth foundation stone in the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:20).

Symbols in the stone

The stone is red which is symbolic of blood, sacrifice, blood atonement, the passing over of God’s destructive judgment (see Ex. 12:3-28; Josh. 2:18-21); it also represents royalty, prosperity, prestige, and valiance (Lam. 4:5; Dan. 5:7,16,29; Nah. 2:3).

Symbols in the order of the stone

The cardinal number one is symbolic of God and unity (Jn. 17:21-23; Eph. 4:1-6; 1 Jn. 5:7) while the ordinal number first represents beginning (Gen. 1:1).²

Facts about Reuben

- He was Jacob’s firstborn.
- His name means “Behold, a son”
- Leah knew she was despised and realized the birth of her son was because of God’s compassion for her. Since the Lord blessed her with a son, this meant that Jacob would love her (Gen. 29:31, 32).
- He lost out on the birthright privileges that usually fall to the firstborn son because he laid with his father’s concubine (Gen. 35:22; 1 Chron. 5:1,2).
- Reuben was responsible for saving Joseph’s life when his brothers wanted to kill him (Gen. 37:21-22).

Observation: In the same way Leah proclaimed “Behold, a son,” others should be able to look at a Christian’s life (public and private) to behold the Son of the living God in us. Jacob was pleased Leah bore him a son just as God is pleased when his Son dwells in us.

Jacob’s prophecy over Reuben

“Reuben, thou art my firstborn, my might, and the beginning of my strength, the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power: ” (Gen. 49:3)

Firstborn sons were considered very special in biblical times and were given special responsibilities and privileges. The word figuratively implies anything that is considered most

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excellent, with Jesus being the ultimate example (Rom. 8:29; Col 1:18; Rev. 1:5). Since Christ is the firstborn, he is God’s might, the beginning of God’s strength, the excellency of his dignity, and excellency of his power.

_God’s might:_ Since Christ is God, he is mighty to carry out his will anywhere in the earth and in the heavens.

_Beginning of God’s strength:_ Jesus is the first and the last, the beginning and the end, the Alpha and Omega, the author and finisher of our faith.

_Excellency of dignity:_ Dignity means exaltation in rank or character. Christ displays this as head of the church and the preeminent ruler of the universe.

_Excellency of power:_ He displayed power over all of the devil’s works, including sickness, sin, death, and hell. The miracles he performed and that have been performed by his followers in his name manifest his limitless power.

Christians are the church of the firstborn (Heb. 12:23) and should manifest God’s might, his strength, and the excellency of his dignity and power in what we say, think, and do.

“Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel; because thou wentest up to thy father’s bed; then defiledst thou it: he went up to my couch.” (Gen. 49:4)

Jacob placed a curse on Reuben because he slept with one of his father’s concubines. We should be the opposite of Reuben in this case. God expects us to be stable in our devotion and obedience to him so we can excel in receiving heavenly rewards. This curse also points out the fact that sexual sins can hinder blessings. Unfortunately, in today’s congregations it is taken much too lightly.

_Moses’ prophecy about Reuben_

“Let Reuben live, and not die; and let not his men be few.” (Deut. 33:6)

A blessing that the tribe of Reuben will not become extinct and that their offspring will continually multiply.

_Application:_ Those who are the sons of the living God are blessed with eternal life. Indeed, Christ promised us that since he is the resurrection and the life, those of us who live and believe in him will never die (Jn. 11:26). This, of course, refers to our soul and spirit dwelling in God’s presence forever. It is also God’s desire that as many people as possible be saved. He does not want the number of his children to be few so it is up to us to preach the gospel and live by it before men consistently.

“How then shall they (the lost) call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?” (Rom. 10:14). Furthermore, Christians must “be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:” (1 Pet. 3:15)

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In summary, Reuben and the sardius stone represent the following: the beginning of our new life in Christ; unity; royalty; prosperity; prestige; valiance; reflection of God’s character in us; the Lord’s might, strength, dignity and power in us; spiritual stability; excelling in godly things; eternal life; the multiplication of the number of believers by preaching the gospel.
Chapter 2 – Simeon and the Topaz

The second stone is *topaz (6357)*: (pitdah /pit-daw’/)\(^1\) a yellow gem. Topaz is the ninth foundation stone of New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:20).

**Symbols in the stone**

Yellow represents 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)\(^\text{Note: Since gold is yellow, the color takes on the symbolic properties of the element.}\)

*Observation:* In the context of Ps. 68 where “yellow” is mentioned, it speaks of how even those who do the lowliest tasks and may have the lowest status in life by man’s standards are the ones God will reward in due time if they are faithful saints.

**Symbols in the order of the stone**

Two is the number of witness or testimony (Deut. 19:15; Matt. 18:16); it also means teamwork, partnership, and companionship (Deut. 32:30; Eccl. 4:9-11; Amos 3:3). The cardinal number two and the ordinal number *second* can also refer to division and separation (Gen. 1:6-8; 2 Chron. 10:16-19; 1 Ki. 16:21; Acts 15:36-41). This separation can result from either positive or negative situations. The Lord will one day divide people into two camps—the sheep and the goats (the children of God and the children of the devil). Until that day, believers are to be separate (sanctified) from the world’s way of thinking and behaving (2 Cor. 6:14-17).

**Facts about Simeon**

- He was Jacob’s second son through Leah.
- His name means “Hearing” because the Lord heard that Leah was hated for her lack of physical beauty and blessed her.
- Simeon, with Levi’s help, slew all the Hivite men in the town where Hamor and his son Shechem lived because Shechem laid with their sister Dinah.
- The men of Simeon helped the men of Judah drive out the Canaanites when Judah was ready to settle in the promised land.

**Jacob’s prophecy concerning Simeon**

“*Simeon and Levi are brethren; instruments of cruelty are in their habitations. O my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united: for in their anger they slew a man, and in their selfwill they digged down a wall. Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce; and their wrath, for it was cruel: I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel.*” (Gen. 49:5-7)

\(^1\) Strong, p. 94.
This is a negative prophecy. Therefore, we should take it as a warning and its spiritual application should be taken as the opposite of what is said.

Simeon (“hearing”) and Levi (“joined”) share this prophecy. They are brothers literally and figuratively which means they share the same fate and are united in accomplishing certain goals. They have a partnership. Since Simeon and Levi were united in bringing forth evil, when settling the promised land they were to be divided and scattered.

Simeon is the only tribe without a specific blessing from Moses. The tribe settled right in the middle of the land of Judah and eventually was assimilated into Judah to disappear. Levi was not allowed to own property when Israel was settled. Instead, they were assigned to live in 48 cities scattered throughout the land of Israel.

Spiritually speaking, God hears us because we are joined to him and we are joined to him because he hears us at the moment we believe and confess that Jesus is Lord. God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble (Jas. 4:6; 1 Pet. 5:5). If we want him to hear us, we must be a repentant and contrite people (Ps. 34:18; 51:17; Isa. 57:15). One of our goals as Christians should be to constantly place ourselves in a position to hear God.

Applications:

- As Christians, we should not be instruments of cruelty but of mercy and longsuffering toward others (Mat. 5:7; Col. 3:12, 13). However, there are times we are to carry out judgments against people which might seem cruel but must be carried out because we love God (e.g. 1 Tim 6:3-5).
- Avoid entering into partnerships and friendships with those who let their anger lead them into sin because they will influence you to become like them (Prov. 22:24,25; 1 Cor. 15:33).
- Christians are allowed to be angry as long as they don’t sin in the process (Eph. 4:26). Uncontrolled anger leads to harming others needlessly which, in turn, leads to severe judgment (Matt. 5:21-22).
- Selfwill is dangerous because people under its influence end up destroying walls of protection that are built up to keep them safe.
- Fierce anger and cruel wrath bring a curse, i.e. severe consequences. A Christian, therefore, must display gentleness and temperance (restraint).

Observation: When unity hinders God’s purposes from being fulfilled, he causes divisions in the midst of the united parties to scatter them away from each other (Gen. 11:5-9; Matt. 10:34-36).

In summary, Simeon and the topaz represent the following: Liberty and exaltation through the Holy Spirit; faith in God; purity; works that please God; witnessing; blessings from the Lord on our godly partnerships but curses on our ungodly ones; sanctification; the process of God hearing us and us hearing God; mercy; longsuffering; gentleness; temperance.
Chapter 3 – Levi and the Carbuncle

The third stone is carbuncle \((1304)\): (bareqeth /baw-reh’-keth/) a red gem (the Hebrew word for the gem means “flashing”).

**Symbols in the stone**

Red, as previously mentioned, represents blood, sacrifice, blood atonement, the passing over of God’s judgment (see Ex. 12:3-28; Josh. 2:18-21); it also represents royalty, prosperity, prestige, and valiance (Lam. 4:5; Dan. 5:7,16,29; Nah. 2:3).

This gem was known to reflect light brightly and suddenly, hence the name flashing. Therefore, the stone symbolizes the glory of God reflected through the saints (Mat. 5:14-16).

**Symbols in the order of the stone**

Three is the number of the Godhead (1 Jn. 5:7) and the number of testimony, or witness (Deut. 19:15; Mat. 18:16; 2 Cor. 13:1). Since the stone is the third, it is also symbolic of the yielding, or producing, of seed and fruit (Gen. 1:9-13). Believers are expected to bear God’s seed, the word of God (Lu. 8:11) and bring forth fruit unto God (Rom. 7:4; Gal. 5:22-23; Eph. 5:9).

**Facts about Levi**

- His name means “joined”.
- He was Jacob and Leah’s third son.
- Leah believed Jacob would now be genuinely “joined” to her since she had given him three sons (Gen. 29:34). In other words, she thought Jacob would be devoted to her instead of Rachel.
- The Levites served in the tabernacle and temples as priests (if they were Aaron’s descendants) and as assistants to the priests during offerings and in the maintenance of the places of worship.
- They are the only ones who stood on the Lord’s side when Moses rebuked Israel for worshiping the golden calf (Ex. 32:26).
- Levites were not given any tribal land in the promised land. Instead, God said he would be their portion (Num. 18:20). However, they received 48 cities from the other tribes that they could live in.

**Jacob’s prophecy about Levi**

See discussion on Jacob’s prophecy of Simeon in Chapter 2.

**Moses’ prophecy about Levi**

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1 Strong, p. 24.
“And of Levi he said, Let thy Thummim and thy Urim be with thy holy one, whom thou didst prove at Massah, and with whom thou didst strive at the waters of Meribah.” (Deut. 33:8)

In the blessing Moses has for Levi, he is actually praying to God on the tribe’s behalf. The following are definitions to help us understand this scripture better:

1. **Thummim (8550):** (Tummiym /toom-meem’/) plural of 8537 (tom /tome/) which means completeness, integrity, or perfection; perfections.
2. **Urim (224):** (Uwriym /oo-reem’/) plural of 217 (uwr /oor/) which means flame or light; lights.

The Thummim and Urim were objects placed on the breastplate of judgment so the high priest could “bear the judgment” of Israel (Ex. 28:30). Apparently, if an issue came up that needed God’s attention, the Lord would communicate to the high priest through these objects to tell him what he wanted done. No one is sure what the objects actually were.

Moses’ prayer is that God’s lights and perfections would be with Levi, the Lord’s holy one. It was crucial for the Levites to be able to hear from God so they could discern good or bad and right from wrong.

**Application:** We as saints of God have God’s perfections and lights in our hearts through Christ so we can make correct judgments about various matters in life. Our judgments must not be according to appearances, but we must judge righteous judgment (Jn. 7:24). Looks can be deceiving so we must stay in close contact with God to know the truth behind what we may see in life’s serious situations.

The Levites were tested at Massah (meaning “testing, see Ex. 17:1-7) and Meribah (meaning “strife”, see Num. 20:1-13) when the rest of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron. Levi was the only tribe to remain faithful to their God-given leadership. However at Meribah, Moses and Aaron reacted to Israel in a way that displeased the Lord and as punishment they were not allowed to go to the Promised Land.

**Observation:** God allows us to face moments of testing and will strive with us at times (like he did when he wrestled Jacob) to show us where we stand spiritually (Prov. 17:3). These are situations which reveal our level of spiritual maturity and the Lord uses them to let us know whether he is pleased or displeased with how we think and act.

“Who said unto his father and to his mother, I have not seen him; neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor knew his own children: for they have observed thy word and kept thy covenant.” (Deut. 33:9)

It was more important to the tribe of Levi to obey the Lord than to have any regard for their friends or family when Israel bowed down to the golden calf at Mt. Sinai (Ex. 32:26-29). They reflected character that was true to the commandment God gave them in Deut. 13:6-11 which stated that any person, no matter how close to you, was to be stoned if they tried to turn...
you to idolatry.

Observation: Jesus upheld the principle behind this commandment when he told us that anyone who puts family before him was not worthy of him (Matt. 10:37; Lu. 14:26).

“They shall teach Jacob thy judgments, and Israel thy law: they shall put incense before thee, and whole burnt sacrifice upon thine altar.” (Deut. 33:10)

The Levites had the responsibility to teach the whole nation of Israel the word of God and to be in charge of the worship services. The worship services included burning incense (symbolic of the prayers of the saints; see Ps. 141:2, Rev. 8:3) and offering burnt sacrifices (symbolic of Christ’s sacrifice for our sins).

Application: Christ has made us his royal priesthood and now every saint’s responsibility is to know God’s word and to share it with others, especially the lost. We are called upon to pray without ceasing (1 Thes. 5:17) so our prayers should be constantly rising to heaven like sweet-smelling incense. As Christ sacrificed his life for us, we are to present our bodies as a living sacrifice to God (Rom. 12:1). In summary, our lives are to be a worship service to the Lord.

“Bless, LORD, his substance, and accept the work of his hands: smite through the loins of them that rise against him, and of them that hate him, that they rise not again.” (Deut. 33:8-11)

Since the Levites’ duties were so important and serious, they would need Jehovah to bless everything pertaining to them and to accept their works. Undoubtedly, theirs would be a thankless job in many instances so rewards from the Lord would be needed for their encouragement. Furthermore, standing for the truth and having a ministry such as theirs could stir up jealousies and hatred in others. Therefore, they would need God’s divine protection to defeat their enemies so their works for God could continue.

Observation: Standing for righteousness and speaking the truth in love in this sinful, dark world can be discouraging at times. However, when God blesses us and we are aware that he accepts our works, the persecutions we face prove to be nothing in comparison to God’s approval. If necessary, the Lord will bring down our enemies when they try to hinder us from completing the works he called us to do.

In summary, Levi and the carbuncle represent the following ideas & characteristics: our being joined to the Lord through Christ; royalty; prosperity; prestige; valiance; saints bringing forth spiritual seed (the word of God, Lu. 8:11) and the fruit of the Spirit; mercy; longsuffering; gentleness; temperance; blessings from the Lord on our godly partnerships but curses on our ungodly ones; maintaining God’s perfections and lights in our hearts; testing from God; striving with God; learning God’s word and sharing it with others; the importance of pleasing God over pleasing men, especially family; God’s defeat of our enemies in the midst of our lifestyle of service to him.
Chapter 4 – Judah and the Emerald

Emerald is the fourth stone. **Emerald (5306):** (nophek /no’-fek/) a bright or rich green gem (taken from Heb. word meaning to glisten or shine). It is the fourth foundation stone of New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:19).

**Symbols in the stone**

The color green symbolizes life.

**Symbols in the order of the stone**

Four is the number that refers to the world, the whole earth (e.g. the four corners of the earth in Rev. 7:1); it also represents the rulership of lights over the earth and the division of light from darkness (Gen. 1:14-19).

*Observation:* Saints are children of light and day (citizens of God’s kingdom) and are spiritually divided from the children of darkness (unbelievers)(see Eph. 5:8; 1 Thes. 5:5). God’s heavenly light shines in our hearts (2 Cor. 4:6; 2 Pet. 1:19) and just like the physical heavenly lights rule the earth, we will one day rule the earth with Christ (2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 20:6).

**Facts about Judah**

- He was Jacob’s fourth son.
- He was born to Leah, Jacob’s less preferred wife.
- Leah named him Judah (praise) because she praised the Lord for showing her favor over Rachel (Gen. 29:31, 35).

**Jacob’s prophecy over Judah**

“Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise: thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies; thy father’s children shall bow down before thee.” (Gen. 49:8)

This is the foretelling of Judah’s reign over Israel. Reuben was removed from being the favored son to receive the birthright because he defiled his father’s bed by sleeping with his father’s concubine. This opened the door for Judah to prevail above his brothers (1 Chron. 5:2). He is blessed with power & strength over his enemies.

This prophecy can also be viewed as a parallel meaning, testifying to the fact all of God’s children bow down to Jesus.

“Judah is a lion’s whelp: from the prey, my son, thou art gone up: ...” (Gen. 49:9a)

Judah is like a young lion full of strength and prowess, easily able to overcome its prey.

1 Strong, p. 79.
The term *gone up* (5927): (alah /aw-law'/) means to ascend, exalt, or excel. As each prey is defeated, the lion (Judah) is strengthened and becomes more skillful, allowing him to excel to stalk larger prey.

This prophecy also refers to Christ. After Jesus died and descended to the lower parts of the earth, taking the keys of death and hell (his prey), he went up to heaven (Eph. 4:8-10).

“... *he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion; who shall rouse him up?*” (Gen. 49:9b)

The stooping and couching of a lion means that he has returned from devouring his prey. Having devoured the prey, it is time for him to rest and to be left alone. Anyone who stirs him up will regret having done so (see Num. 24:9). This refers to the fact that Judah and Jesus are conquerors who cannot be defeated, so stirring them up is futile. Through Christ, we inherit the ability to conquer our foes (Rom. 8:37).

“The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be.” (Gen. 49:10)

The sceptre (scepter) is “the official staff of a ruler, symbolizing his authority and power.” Judah was designated as ruler and lawgiver for Israel and would not cease to have someone to take the throne until the coming of Shiloh. Shiloh is a synonym for shalom, or peace, and refers to our Prince of Peace, Jesus.

From Judah came the chief ruler, Jesus Christ (1 Chron. 5:2; Mic 5:2; Matt. 2:6). The people of the world will eventually be gathered to him (see Rev. 21:24, 26).

“*Binding his foal unto the vine, and his ass’s colt unto the choice vine; he washed his garments in wine, and his clothes in the blood of grapes:*” (Gen. 49:11)

A foal is an ass’s colt. They were young beasts of burden. The vine symbolizes fruitfulness, abundant blessings, and the Lord Jesus Christ (Gen. 40:9-13; Ps. 128:2-4; Jn. 15). If we connect ourselves in humble submission to the Lord to do works for his glory (as his beasts of burden), especially in our youth, we will be fruitful both spiritually and naturally (cf. Lam. 3:27).

The wine is the joy of the Lord (Ps. 104:15) which gives strength to the saints (Neh. 8:10). When we render faithful service to God, we are rewarded with joy in abundance; our spiritual garments of righteousness are bathed in joy.

This prophecy may also refer to Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem on the ass’s colt, since he is figuratively referred to as the vine (John 15).

“*His eyes shall be red with wine, and his teeth white with milk.*” (Gen. 49:12)

The literal meaning of this statement refers to a man’s eyes being red when he is drunk

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2 Ibid., p. 88.

3 Lockyer, p. 956.
with wine. Nevertheless, as saints we are not to be drunk with wine, but filled with the Spirit (Eph. 5:18). Symbolically, Judah is to be filled with the Spirit and controlled by him just as a drunken man is controlled by wine. As natural wine affects a man’s natural eyes, so the spiritual wine of the Holy Spirit would affect Judah’s spiritual eyes.

Milk symbolizes blessings, fruitfulness, abundance, and the word of God (Ex. 3:8; Is. 55:1; 1 Pet. 2:2). Judah would not only be filled with the Spirit, but filled with God’s word.

Application: For me to have the same benefits as Judah, I must be filled with the Spirit and God’s word.

Moses’ prophecy over Judah

“And this is the blessing of Judah: and he said, Hear, LORD, the voice of Judah, and bring him unto his people: let his hands be sufficient for him; and be thou an help to him from his enemies.” (Deut. 33:7)

It was prophesied that the Lord would hear Judah’s voice. This was fulfilled through the prayers of David, Solomon, other kings from Judah, and ultimately Jesus Christ.

Application: My desire should be for God to hear me, having the confidence that through his grace he will answer me.

Judah would be brought to his people in the sense that he would be accepted as ruler over them. Ultimately, it is a prophecy of the coming Messiah who would be brought to his people to save them.

His hands were sufficient for him, which reflects willingness to work, creativity, and strength. Whatever he put his hands on to accomplish, God would bless it, causing it to prosper. Through the righteous kings of Judah, there was deliverance from enemies because their hands were skillful in battle; they were creative in designing and building the temple through David & Solomon. The hands of Jesus were sufficient in performing miracles.

Application: We should pray that God, after hearing our voices, will make our hands sufficient in doing his will and in fulfilling our godly desires.

Application: Whatever we do, even if it’s the same old routine and menial tasks, should be done to the glory of God. (1 Cor. 10:31)

God would be a help to him from his enemies. The Lord preserved the righteous kings of Judah from all their enemies when evil rulers of surrounding nations rose up against them. Jesus displayed his power over enemies such as sin, hell, death, and devils in his life, death, and resurrection.

Application: God has given me help against the same enemies Jesus conquered.

Summary of ideas & characteristics represented by Judah and the emerald: We have new life in Christ; the gospel message is for the whole world; God’s heavenly light shines in our hearts—hence, we are divided from spiritual darkness; people from all tongues and nations will become believers; we will one day reign with Christ; we live a life of praise to the Lord; joy
dwells in us; our lives bear good fruit and abundant blessings for God’s glory; we are conquerors through Christ; saints are to be filled with the Spirit and the word; God hears our prayers; the Lord makes us sufficient for the works he calls us to do.

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The fifth stone is **sapphire (5601):** (cappiyr/sap-peer’) from the root word *caphar* /saw-far’/ meaning to scratch, inscribe, or score. It may have been used to inscribe or scratch other objects. Sapphire is a transparent rich blue or deep purplish-blue gem and is the second foundation stone of the New Jerusalem.

**Symbols in the stone**

Blue symbolizes royalty, sovereignty, rulership, power and authority worthy of honor (Es. 8:15; Eze. 23:6). Its transparency refers to there being no guile, no deception, or no clouding of the truth.

*Application:* As a Christian, I should be transparent like the sapphire. I am to rid myself of ulterior motives and deceptive intents in what I say or do. I am to fulfill my calling without guile.

**Symbols in the order of the stone**

Five is symbolic of abundant life (Gen. 1:20-23); atonement (as displayed in the 5 offerings of the OT—burnt, meal, peace, sin, and trespass); and grace (revealed in the five names of Christ in Isa. 9:6).

**Facts about Dan**

- His name means “judge.”
- He was Jacob’s fifth son and his mother was Bilhah, Rachel’s maid.
- Rachel, since she was barren, gave Bilhah to Jacob so she could bare children to Jacob on her behalf. When Dan was born, Rachel saw it as a sign that God had judged in her favor to give her a son, so she named him “judge.”

**Jacob’s prophecy about Dan**

“*Dan shall judge his people, as one of the tribes of Israel. Dan shall be a serpent by the way, an adder in the path, that biteth the horse heels, so that his rider shall fall backward. I have waited for thy salvation, O LORD.*” (Gen. 49:16-18)

Dan judged his people when Samson ruled as judge over Israel (Judges 13).

The serpent in this prophecy symbolizes swift, sudden, and unexpected judgment that is executed with prudence against an evil foe. This is the type of spirit Samson displayed against

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1 Strong, p. 83.
the Philistines. The horse and rider represent the swiftness, capability, and pride that the enemies of the Lord (and of his saints) have in carrying out evil (Ex. 15:1; Hag. 2:22).

Eccl. 10:8 can give us some insight into this prophecy—“He that diggeth a pit shall fall into it; and whoso breaketh an hedge, a serpent shall bite him.” Hedges are symbolic of boundaries established by God for a person’s well-being and ultimately God’s glory. They can be just about anything righteous, from God’s commandments to just laws made by man to a just agreement between two parties. If someone with evil intent comes along to try to tear down those boundaries, they will suffer a swift, sudden, and unexpected judgment that is directly or indirectly sent by God.

In Jacob’s prophecy there is a person (the rider) full of pride who has the determination to carry out a wicked scheme (probably to trample the serpent). In his attempt to do so, a righteous party (the serpent), who probably appeared harmless and powerless to the rider, carries out godly judgment against him in a prudent fashion that totally disrupts and destroys the evil plot. Thus in the end the salvation of the LORD is manifested to those who waited for it.

Application: Jesus commanded us to be wise as serpents and harmless as doves (Matt. 10:16). When the need arises for us to take a stand or act on God’s behalf in some way, we should move quickly with prudence. Acting with prudence avoids needless offenses and God will be glorified in the situation where evil makes an attempt to take over.

Moses’ prophecy about Dan

“And of Dan he said, Dan is a lion’s whelp: he shall leap from Bashan.” (Deut. 33:22)

As mentioned under the Judah prophecy, a lion’s whelp is a young lion. It is symbolic of strength, prowess, and the ability to overcome with boldness. (Note--Bashan (1316): (baw-shawn’) lit. make secure or put at ease; fertile, stoneless plain.)

This prophecy was fulfilled in Judges 18 when Dan conquered a city of Bashan and renamed it Dan.

Application: When saints exercise righteous judgment against evil, they display boldness like a lion’s whelp. It is because we are secure and at ease in the Lord that we can leap out at evil when it rears its ugly head.

Summary of ideas & characteristics in Dan and the sapphire: Royalty; rulership; honor; pure motives; abundant life; atonement with God by his grace; power & authority to judge righteously and stand against evil; our security and ease in Christ.

4 Strong, p. 24.
Chapter 6–Naphtali and the Diamond

The sixth stone is the diamond(3095): (yahalom /yah-hal-ome’) from the root word halam /haw-lam’/ meaning to strike down or hammer; to conquer; the use of this root word denotes the hardness of the stone.¹ As a matter of fact, the diamond is the hardest known jewel.

Symbols in the stone

The hardness of the diamond is symbolic of Christians conquering sin, the devil, the world, and hell through the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:37; 1 Cor. 15:57; 1 John 5:4).

The crystal clearness of the diamond is symbolic of purity or the lack of guile (deceit). This encompasses purity of character as well as purity of motives.

Symbols in the stone’s order

Six is symbolic of the finishing and fulfillment of God’s works; the reproduction of a thing after its kind (sowing and reaping); fruitfulness; replenishment; exercising God-given dominion over something (Gen. 1:24-31).

Facts about Naphtali

- His name means “my wrestling.”
- He was Jacob’s sixth son and the second son of Bilhah, Rachel’s maid.
- Rachel rejoiced that she had offspring through Bilhah and compared her competition with her sister to bear children as a wrestling match in which she was the victor.

Observation: The Christian life is like a wrestling match. Our godly nature is constantly wrestling our sin nature to the point where we do the things we hate and don’t do the things we know we should (Rom. 7:15-21). As if that isn’t enough, we have to wrestle against devils also (Eph. 6:12). Furthermore, we must contend for the faith (Jude 1:3).

- This tribe settled in the northernmost region of Israel.
- It was a tribe full of valiant men who helped Deborah and Barak defeat Sisera (Jud. 4:6,10), helped Gideon defeat the Midianites (Jud. 6:35, 7:23-25), and helped David defend his right to rule Israel (1 Chron. 12:34).
- They were a visible part of the congregation that praised God in the sanctuary (Ps. 68:27).
- Isaiah predicted that Naphtali along with Zebulun would have the light (the Messiah) shine on them ( Isa. 9:1-2). This was fulfilled when Jesus ministered in Capernaum, Chorazin, and Tiberias.

Jacob’s prophecy about Naphtali

“Naphtali is a hind let loose: he giveth goodly words.” (Gen. 49:21)

¹ Strong, pp. 33, 48.
A hind is a female deer that runs along the rocks of mountains (Job 39:1). It could be that the hind is similar to, or the same as, the roe (compare 1 Chron. 12:8 and Ps. 18:33). It was known for its swiftness and grace when running on the rocky mountains. Naphtali would be known for its freedom to move swiftly and gracefully. This proved true whenever Israel needed help to defeat their enemies. As mentioned above, Naphtali moved quickly to Israel’s aid when hard times came.

Naphtali’s words to Israel during troublesome times were beautiful words of comfort and encouragement. The tribe was also known for blessing God in the congregation (Ps. 68:26-27).

**Application:** Once we repent and surrender to Christ, we are let loose from our sins. The Lord gives us freedom to live graciously.

Believers should be ready to move swiftly to aid a cause that pleases God when the opportunity arises. It could be as simple as giving a brother or sister financial assistance, visiting someone who is sick, telling a lost person about Christ, or volunteering time to a Christian organization.

In the same way a hind can move across rocky hills and mountains gracefully without stumbling, saints have the God-given ability to walk through troublesome times with grace as we remain humble so God can order our steps.

When we speak, it should be as the “oracles of God” (1 Pet. 4:11). What a Christian says should “be always (in every manner) with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how you ought to answer every man” (Col. 4:6). This means we allow God to speak through us to others, which requires us to listen to him first and to apply what he says to our own lives first. We must be mindful that “[a] word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver” (Prov. 25:11). In other words, “a word spoken in due season, how good is it!” (Prov. 15:23)–it’s priceless! Our goodly words not only include pleasant, encouraging words, but at times can include rebukes and correction when error and sin need to be addressed. Either way, they should be spoken in love.

**Moses’ prophecy about Naphtali**

“And of Naphtali he said, O Naphtali, satisfied with favour, and full with the blessing of the LORD: possess thou the west and the south.” (Deut. 33:23)

Naphtali would experience the fullness of God’s favour and his blessings which would saturate every aspect of the tribe’s existence.

Where this prophecy mentions that Naphtali should possess the west and south, further explanation of what this means is given in Josh. 19:32-39 when the land is divided to the 12 tribes. The bulk of their land was west of the Jordan and to the south of the northern territory of the tribe of Dan. The word *west* here can also be translated *sea* and some Bible commentators take it to refer to the Sea of Chinnereth, which later became known as the Sea of Galilee at the southern border of Naphtali. *West* and *south* can also be used figuratively.

The west is the direction where the sun sets. At the setting of the sun, men rest from their labors since the day has come to an end. Spiritually speaking, this has to do with the setting of the Son (Ps. 2:6,7) to reign on the earth starting with the Millenium and afterwards. At the time Christ comes to reign, he will show favour to those who have lived to please him. Therefore, Naphtali possessing the west means that the tribe will receive great rewards from the Lord after they accomplish the things he called them to do.

The south is known as the direction where there is warmth, comfort, leisure, and
refreshment (Job 37:17; Ps. 126:4; Lu. 12:55). Naphtali, therefore, possesses the comfort and refreshment of the Lord. Also as a result of their obedience to him, they will be at ease.

Application: The saints of God experience the favour (grace) and blessings of Jehovah in abundance even in the midst of our wrestling in this world. It is important that we work the works of the Father while it is day, for the night comes when no man can work (Jn. 9:4). The setting of the Son will soon be upon us and if we are faithful to the end, we will receive great rewards. Our obedience will bring rest, comfort, and ease in the end, so we must labour to enter into the Lord’s rest (Heb. 4:10,11).

Summary of ideas & characteristics in Naphtali and the diamond: Victory through Christ in the midst of our spiritual wrestling; fulfillment of our godly works; fruitfulness; sowing and reaping godly blessings; replenishment; comfort; gracefulness in the midst of tribulation; godly speech; freedom from sin; swiftness to do what’s right.
The seventh stone is **ligure (3958)**: (leshem /leh’-shem/) from the root word *luwsh* (3888) meaning “to knead”; it is a synonym of *Laish* (3919, compare Josh. 19:47 and Jud. 18:29), meaning lion, referring to a lion’s blows to crush his prey.\(^1\) By deduction of these related terms, *ligure* probably means lion and was probably used to crush other substances. Ligure is called *jacinth* in the NT and is the eleventh foundation stone of New Jerusalem.

**Symbols in the stone**

Since *jacinth* is **yellow** (see Rev. 9:17), it symbolizes 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). Since the name of the stone means *lion*, it also represents boldness (Prov. 28:1 “…the righteous are bold as a lion.”). The power to crush and subdue enemies is also implied.

**Observation:** Christ’s enemies have been put under his feet (1 Cor. 15:25) and God will eventually place Satan under the feet of the saints (Rom. 16:20).

**Symbols in the stone’s order**

Seven is symbolic of completeness and godly rest (Gen. 2:1-3).

**Facts about Gad**

- His name means “a troop” (Gen. 30:11).
- Son of Zilpah, Leah’s maid.
- Jacob’s seventh son.
- Leah was still competing with her sister to have more children than her, so she gave Zilpah to Jacob to bear more children since she was temporarily unable to conceive.
- The more children Leah could give Jacob, the more she would be pleasing to her husband, blessed by other women, and blessed by God.
- Although Leah had the underlying issue of strife between her and her sister, her ultimate goal was to please her husband and to show others that God was pleased with her because she was despised and rejected by others based on her looks. Therefore, her giving Zilpah to be Jacob’s wife was really a selfless act for which God later blessed her.
- When Leah’s ministry of childbearing for her husband was put on hold, she selflessly supported Zilpah to continue the ministry for her husband and God showed he was pleased by making Zilpah fruitful.

**Application:** If for some reason a ministry that God gives us as a Christian is temporarily stalled, we should give selfless support to another godly ministry until God says otherwise.

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\(^1\) Strong, p. 60.
Leah named Zilpah’s first son Gad because she knew God would bless her and Zilpah with many descendants.

**Application:** Our ministry at times may seem ineffective. Nevertheless, our determination to please God as Leah was determined to please Jacob must not diminish. If we selflessly support other godly ministries God will cause us and the ministry we support to be fruitful and influence many lives.

**Jacob’s prophecy concerning Gad**

“Gad, a troop shall overcome him: but he shall overcome at the last.” (Gen. 49:19)

Although Gad was a troop himself, there would be a time when he would be defeated by another troop, but he would eventually be the victor in the end.

**Observation:** Saints are God’s troop. There are times when we are defeated by the devil’s troop. This will really be evident when the Antichrist comes on the scene to make war with the saints. Nevertheless, because of our faith in Christ, we have been made overcomers (1 Jn. 5:4,5) and will be victorious in the end when Christ physically returns to establish his physical kingdom on the earth (Dan. 7:21,22,25-27; Rev. 13:6,7; 17:14).

**Moses’ prophecy concerning Gad**

“And of Gad he said, Blessed be he that enlargeth Gad: he dwelleth as a lion, and teareth the arm with the crown of the head.” (Deut. 33:20)

Anyone who causes Gad to expand and increase is blessed. This is also a blessing of God since it is ultimately the Lord who causes increase and enlargement to occur. Expansion includes all things pertaining to Gad whether territorial, population, spiritual, etc.

**Application:** Those who aid in the expansion of God’s troops are blessed. They are not ashamed of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 1:16) and they know that he that winneth souls is wise (Prov. 11:30). They rejoice when they see the power of God overtake the lives of others around them.

Like a lion, Gad lives in pursuit of conquering new prey. The men of Gad, like their name implies, were known to be “men of might, and men of war fit for the battle, that could handle shield and buckler, whose faces were like the faces of lions, and were as swift as the roes upon the mountains;” (1 Chron. 12:8). Their faces were like lions’ faces because of their fierceness and determination to overpower enemies. Just as roes (small deer) have an uncanny ability to move quickly on steep, rough terrain without stumbling, the Gadites were known to be very agile in the heat of battle.

**Application:** True believers should be a people strong in their convictions to serve God, working together with the Lord to be fit for spiritual battle against all the devil’s works. How do we become fit for battle? By putting on the whole armour of God so we can stand against every wicked device of the enemy (Eph. 6:11-17) and through prayer. Like lions, we should be fiercely...
determined to overcome our flesh, the mindset and customs of the world, and ultimately, spiritual forces of wickedness in high places (Eph. 6:12). In the same manner that roes move swiftly on mountains, we should be swift to carry out what pleases God even when our way is steep and rough. The Lord has us on call 24/7 and we must be prepared to carry out his assignments at a moment’s notice.

In the midst of conquering, Gad tears the arm as well as the crown of his enemy’s head. In other words, he totally annihilates his enemies. The arm is symbolic of one’s power and might (2 Ki. 17:36). The crown of one’s head symbolizes high status and authority (Job 19:9).

“And he provided the first part for himself, because there, in a portion of the lawgiver, was he seated; and he came with the heads of the people, he executed the justice of the LORD and his judgments with Israel.” (Deut. 33:21)

Gad, along with Reuben and the half tribe of Manasseh, settled east of the Jordan River which was the first part of the land that was conquered for Israel (Num. 32:1,5,33). The region where Gad settled was Gilead (Deut. 3:16). In this prophecy, the area where Gad was seated was referred to as “a portion of the lawgiver.” From scripture, we know the lawgiver is the LORD in the person of Jesus Christ (Isa. 33:22; Jas. 4:12). This is also alluded to in the prophecies concerning Judah since that was the tribe from which Jesus descended. A portion of Jesus’ ministry was in this region (Perea and Decapolis (ten cities)).

Gad sent all their mighty men across the Jordan to help the rest of Israel settle the Promised Land, which was part of their agreement with Moses. By helping conquer the Promised Land, they “executed the justice of the LORD and his judgments with Israel.”

Application: Christians are called upon by the Lord to execute his justice and judgment in the earth (Prov. 21:3; Mic. 6:8; Jn. 16:8-11). However, this does not refer to physical force, but the preaching of the gospel, a portion of it being to speak out against sin. Furthermore, it is imperative that we confront others when they do wrong in the midst of our assemblies, turning them over to Satan if necessary so their carnal ways can be broken and they can have godly sorrow to repent (1 Cor. 5:1-5; 2 Cor. 7:8-10; 1 Tim.1:19-20). Nevertheless, all of this must be done with love and mercy.

Summary of ideas and characteristics represented by Gad & the figure: Liberty; exaltation through the Holy Spirit; faith in God; purity; boldness; defeating enemies; completion of godly works; the Lord’s rest; soldiering for God; evangelism; skill in the midst of spiritual battles; strong determination to do God’s will; the portion every believer has in Christ’s kingdom; executing God’s justice and judgment in the earth.
Chapter 8 – Asher and the Agate

The eighth stone is **agate (7618)**: (shebuw /sheb-oo'/) from a root meaning *to flame* (prob. used to describe the sparkle of the gem); *flaming*.\(^1\) It is a type of quartz that has fibers “with bands or patterns of various colors.”\(^2\)

**Symbols in the stone**

This stone sparkles as if it were a flame of fire. Flames are symbolic of God’s power and presence (Ex. 3:2; Acts 2:3), his judgment against sin (Is. 66:15,16), and the purging of the Holy Spirit (Is. 4:4). Judgments of God would also include his insight into the intents of a person’s actions and their inward character (Rev. 2:18,23).

Diversity of colors symbolizes being highly favored (Gen. 37:3; 2 Sam. 13:18; Ezek. 17:3).

**Symbols in the order of the stone**

Eight is the number of circumcision (Gen. 17:12).

*Application*: Believers must have circumcised hearts (Rom. 2:29; Phi. 3:3; Col. 2:11) which means they at some point have godly sorrow for their sins that leads them to repentance.

Eight is also the number of cleansing and sanctification (Lev. 14:23; 2 Chron. 29:17; 1 Pet. 3:20,21).

**Facts about Asher**

- He was Jacob’s eighth son and the second from Zilpah, Leah’s maid.
- His name means “happy and blessed.”
- Leah was happy at his birth because the women would consider her blessed since she continued to have offspring through Zilpah.
- The tribe settled in the northernmost region of Israel between Naphtali and the Mediterranean Sea.

**Jacob’s prophecy over Asher**

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\(^1\) Strong, p. 111.

\(^2\) Lockyer, p. 569.
“Out of Asher his bread shall be fat, and he shall yield royal dainties.” (Gen. 49:20)

Here are a couple of definitions to help us understand this verse:

1. fat (8082): (shamen /shaw-mane'/) fig. rich, plenteous.
2. dainties (4574): (ma’adannah /mah-ad-an-naw'/) a delicacy or pleasure; delight.

Asher was destined to be rich agriculturally so that a lot of food would come from that region. Unfortunately, they never conquered all of the heathens inhabiting their land, which led to them eventually losing control of it.

The men of Asher were known as “choice and mighty men of valour, chief of the princes.” (1 Chron. 7:40). They were always ready to defend Israel’s honor in battle (Jud. 6:35; 7:23; 1 Chron. 12:36). They yielded much delight to Israel with their agriculture and their warriors.

Application: Our happiness and blessedness comes from knowing the Lord has saved us from our sins. Consequently, his word becomes our spiritual food that he gives to us in abundance. As we read, study, meditate, and obey it, we become enriched spiritually (i.e. spiritually fat) in accordance with his love growing in our hearts not only on earth, but especially in heaven where our true riches are stored. This leads to us producing results as a royal priesthood for God that bring him great delight.

Moses’ prophecy over Asher

“And of Asher he said, Let Asher be blessed with children; let him be acceptable to his brethren, and let him dip his foot in oil. Thy shoes shall be iron and brass; and as thy days, so shall thy strength be.” (Deut. 33:24-25)

Asher would be blessed with having many descendants to pass down a godly heritage for following generations. The word acceptable has the idea of being a delight or a good pleasure. Therefore, this portion of the prophecy is directly tied to Jacob’s prophecy for Asher and, as previously mentioned, Asher was a delight to the nation of Israel.

Feet are symbolic of one’s lifestyle, or walk. The land of Asher was full of olive trees from which they got their oil. Oil is symbolic of God’s anointing, the presence of the Holy Ghost. Essentially, Moses encourages Asher to be covered by the Holy Spirit in his walk.

Shoes are symbolic of the manner in which one carries out his lifestyle. Iron and brass symbolize the persistence in exercising authority and power to carry out righteous judgment against ungodliness (Ps. 2:9; Rev. 19:15; Mic. 4:13; Rev. 2:18). Asher was to be known as a

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3 Strong, p. 118.
4 Ibid., p. 69.

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tribe whose manner was to use their God-given authority and power to carry out righteous judgment against evil. As I mentioned above, they did this in Jud. 6:35, 7:23, and 1 Chron. 12:36.

Asher’s strength was destined to be as great as their days. As long as they would be in existence, they would always be strong.

**Application**: Believers should have joy in bringing up children if they can have them so they can raise up a godly heritage to affect the world. They must be open to having spiritual offspring as well by sharing the gospel. If someone believes through them they should help raise them to spiritual maturity by spiritual guidance.

Christians are to be a delight to other saints. We are to make sacrifices for the good of our brothers and sisters whether that sacrifice requires time, godly counsel, or material goods. When we sacrifice for them, it is to be done in a spirit of love.

Our lifestyle should reflect a mindset of seeking God’s face and submitting to the direction of the Holy Spirit. We are partners with God in this walk. He has bought us with a price and we are not our own. The Lord is supposed to order our steps in whatever way pleases him. The manner in which we live under God’s anointing is that we are prepared at all times to exercise the God-given authority and power to carry out God’s judgment against ungodliness that rears its ugly head in our midst, whether we are in or out of church (2 Cor. 10:6). Of course, we must exercise this in our own lives first, judging ourselves so we are not judged by God (1 Cor. 11:31,32).

It is God’s desire for us to have enough strength (spiritual and physical) to carry out what pleases him as long as we are here on earth. Therefore, “[l]et us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not” (Gal. 6:9).

**Asher & the agate represent the following**: Power of the Holy Spirit; the high favor of God; righteous judgment; cleansing; sanctification; happiness (joy); godly pleasure; delight (to the saints and in the Lord); valour; hunger for God’s word; passing down a godly heritage; being led by God’s Spirit; strength that endures.
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.¹ 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.² 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.³ (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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¹ Strong, pp. 11, 40.
² Merriam-Webster, p. 37.
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.4

- 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): (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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4 Lockyer, p. 853.

5 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).
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"¹; 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).²,³

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).⁴ 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.”⁵ 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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¹ Merriam-Webster, p. 108.


⁵ Gosling.
Ten is the number of law, order, government, and restoration\(^6\)(Ex. 34:28; Dan. 7:24). It is also the number of trial, testing, and responsibility\(^7\)(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 /khôfe/) is derived from a root word meaning *to cover.*\(^8\) 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


\(^{7}\) Ibid.

\(^{8}\) Strong, p. 37.
Christian Symbolism in the Breastplate of Judgment – Chapter 10

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. (Prophecically 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.
Chapter 11 – Joseph and the Onyx

The eleventh stone is onyx (7718): (shoham /sho’-ham/) from an unused root probably meaning to blanch; blanched, whitened, or paled (made pale).\(^1\) It is taken from the root shuwb (7725, /shoob/) meaning to turn and the word ham (2525): (cham /khawm/) meaning hot; literally “turn hot” which describes the process of blanching when an object is scalded or parboiled in water or steam to whiten it.\(^2,3,4\)

Onyx is a “form of chalcedony with contrasting layers of colors arranged in parallel lines. The colors are usually black and white…”\(^5\) Since the bands on the stone turn from black to white, it is easy to see why it was named shoham. The onyx, in its red form, is the fifth foundation stone of New Jerusalem.

Symbols in the stone

The way the bands on the stone change from black to white speaks of our conversion from sinfulness to righteousness through Jesus Christ. He called us out of darkness into his marvelous light (1 Pet. 2:9). It also speaks of the two opposing natures dwelling in us and their struggle for domination (Rom. 7:15-21).

Bands on the onyx can also represent the following:

- **As saints, we have an ongoing process of confessing our sins so God can forgive us and cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 Jn. 1:9).** In other words, the black marks on our record in heaven that affects the amount of our rewards can be erased when we confess and repent.

- **Discernment of believers, seeing issues of life in black and white.**

- **The various times in our lives when we go through periods of struggle (persecutions, tribulations, etc.) which are then followed by periods of ease.**

Symbols in the order of the stone

Eleven is the number of spiritual covering (Ex. 26:7).

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1 Strong, p. 113.

2 Ibid.

3 Merriam-Webster, p. 120.

4 Strong, p. 40.

5 Lockyer, p. 571.

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Observation: Only eleven of the original twelve disciples were covered.

Facts about Joseph

- His name means “may Jehovah add.”
- He was Jacob’s eleventh son and Rachel’s first.
- Rachel thought of Joseph’s birth as God taking away her reproach and hoped he would give her another son.
- He was Jacob’s favorite son.
- God gave him dreams and their interpretations.
- Joseph had a double portion in the promised land through his sons Manasseh and Ephraim, who became the tribes of Joseph.
- Ephraim had great influence in Israel. They became the leading tribe in the north after Israel split.
- The tribe of Manasseh split in two and settled territories both east and west of the Jordan River.
- Two strong judges came from Manasseh—Gideon and Jephthah (Jud. 6-8; Jud. 11-12).
- Manasseh had mighty men of valor who supported David (1 Chron. 12:19-21, 31, 37).

Jacob’s prophecy over Joseph

“Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well; whose branches run over the wall.” (Gen. 49:22)

A bough is a main branch of a tree. “Fruitful bough” speaks of Joseph’s natural and spiritual success placed on him by God. As a matter of fact, Joseph named his second son Ephraim (fruitful) because God made him fruitful in the land of his affliction. The “fruitful bough by a well” has a never-ending source of nourishment to help it remain fruitful. The well refers to God in the person of the Holy Spirit (John 4:14, 7:38). Joseph prospered because the Holy Spirit was with him.

The wall mentioned here is symbolic of any hindrance that stands in the way of progress while branches, which are offshoots of the bough, are symbolic of Joseph’s descendants. Jacob knew Joseph’s descendants would eventually encounter obstacles (like the Egyptians) that they would overcome.

Application: Saints are designed by God to be fruitful both spiritually and naturally because the Holy Spirit is with us and in us like a well of living water. Not only will he cause us to prosper, but if we are faithful to train up our offspring in the Lord’s laws and judgments, generations that come after us will prosper also.

“The archers have sorely grieved him and shot at him, and hated him: But his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob;
Christian Symbolism in the Breastplate of Judgment – Chapter 11

(from thence is the shepherd, the stone of Israel)” (Gen. 49:23, 24)

The archers are all of Joseph’s enemies including his brothers and Potiphar’s wife. They shot at Joseph with their fiery darts of persecution, deceit, and defamation which caused him a lot of grief. In spite of the archers, Joseph’s bow (his steadfastness in living righteously) remained strong.

Arms are symbolic of power and might while hands symbolize godly works (Ps. 18:34). Joseph’s power and might to perform godly works were strengthened by God himself. As an underlying thought, Jacob adds that from God’s hands comes the Shepherd (Jesus Christ) who is the stone of Israel (see Isa. 28:16; Eze. 34:23; Jn. 10:11).

**Application:** The saints of God face archers all the time who go out of their way to grieve us, persecute us, and hate us because of our love for the Lord. Jesus told us these things would happen (Lu. 21:17; Jn. 16:33). Whether they know it or not, they are the agents of Satan sent to shoot their fiery darts at us. However, we must be willing to examine ourselves to make sure that our suffering is not our fault (1 Pet. 2:20). God is only glorified when we suffer for doing well.

When we face tribulations, we must be determined to remain steadfast in righteousness like Joseph. Consequently, God will give us strength to perform godly works with power and might in spite of what our enemies do.

“Even by the God of thy father, who shall help thee; and by the Almighty, who shall bless thee with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lieth under, blessings of the breasts, and of the womb: The blessings of the father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills: they shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren.” (Gen. 49:25,26)

Continuing the thought started by the previous verses, Joseph was made strong by God who is always available to help in times of need. God is all-powerful and would bless Joseph with heavenly and earthly blessings. He would also be blessed with many descendants.

Jacob acknowledged that his blessings exceeded those of his forefathers, including the boundaries of the land he possessed. These blessings would be passed on to Joseph who was despised and rejected by his brothers.

**Application:** Saints are able to prosper because of God. When we are pleasing to him, we are rewarded with spiritual and natural blessings. These blessings bring fruitfulness, boldness, and power. Characteristics such as these are manifested in how we conduct ourselves in public and private and may not necessarily be shown in the amount of our earthly possessions as is often taught via the “prosperity gospel.” God measures our fruitfulness by his standards, not by what feeble humanity considers important. We, as saints, must learn how to do the same.

Our descendants, both natural and spiritual, can be blessed with greater blessings than us if they take advantage of the godly things we teach them and add more godly things to what they’ve been taught. Greater blessings also come when we stand firm in our godly beliefs and
actions in spite of being despised and rejected by the ungodly. Jesus said “Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.” (Matt. 5:10-12; see also Gal. 6:9.)

Moses’ prophecy over Joseph

“And of Joseph he said, Blessed of the LORD be his land, for the precious things of heaven, for the dew, and for the deep that coucheth beneath, and for the precious fruits brought forth by the sun, and for the precious things put forth by the moon, and for the chief things of the ancient mountains, and for the precious things of the last long hills, and for the precious things of the earth and fulness thereof, and for the good will of him that dwelt in the bush: let the blessing come upon the head of Joseph, and upon the top of the head of him that was separated from his brethren.” (Deut. 33:13-16)

This prophecy by Moses is basically the same as what Jacob said in Genesis. In essence, Moses acts as a second witness to confirm what Jacob said. The point of it all is to say that God will use all of his creation, whether in the heavens, on the earth, or under the earth, to bless Joseph because he suffered for righteousness’ sake. Ultimately, Manasseh and Ephraim prospered agriculturally and militarily in fulfillment of this prophecy.

Application: Saints who suffer for righteousness will receive all kinds of blessings from the Lord. He will move heaven and earth to bring about prosperity in the lives of his servants that please him.

“His glory is like the firstling of his bullock, and his horns are like the horns of unicorns: with them he shall push the people together to the ends of the earth: and they are the ten thousands of Ephraim, and they are the thousands of Manasseh.” (Deut. 33:17)

A firstling is the firstborn of an animal and is symbolic of something that is most excellent. All firstlings were set apart as the Lord’s possession (Ex. 13:2). In this prophecy, Joseph’s glory is considered most excellent.

Horns are symbolic of power and influence (Hab. 3:5). Unicorns are probably a reference to the aurochs, “an extinct large long-horned wild ox” which have been shown being hunted in the Middle East on ancient Assyrian bas-reliefs and were possibly known to have the most
powerful horns. The tribes of Joseph were destined to have so much power that they would conquer anyone who they would war against. Ephraim, however, would have the greater influence and population than Manasseh, who was the firstborn. This was also prophesied by Jacob in Gen. 48.

Application: God has given excellent glory to his followers so they can exert their influence around the world to speak out against evil and persuade men to be saved.

Summary of symbols & characteristics in Joseph & the onyx: Conversion; the battling of two natures within us; ongoing confession of sins for forgiveness; discernment; alternating periods of darkness and light in our lives; God’s spiritual covering for his saints; the Lord’s continual adding of blessings to the lives of obedient saints; fruitfulness through the Holy Spirit; overcoming obstacles; God-given strength to perform godly works in the midst of persecution; resources in heaven and earth being used by God for the benefit of his children; glory and power from God to subdue enemies.

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6Merriam-Webster, p. 77.

Chapter 12 – Benjamin and the Jasper

The twelfth stone is *jasper* (3471): (yashepheh /yaw-shef-ay/) from an unused root meaning to polish.\(^1\) Modern jasper is an opaque stone that is usually red because of its iron content. However, it is also found in brown, yellow, or green.\(^2\) It was known for taking a high polished finish.

The jasper that is used in New Jerusalem is described as being “clear as crystal” in Rev. 21:11. Although the jasper mentioned here in Exodus has been thought by many biblical scholars and translations to have been green, it is more likely to have been red. The Egyptians gave the Israelites their riches right before the Hebrews left Egypt (Ex. 12:35,36) and the gems in the breastplate were probably among the spoils. That being the case, Egyptian jasper was known to be available in three colors—brown, yellow, or red, not green.\(^3\)

The strongest proof, in my opinion, that this jasper was red is in Rev. 4:3. It says that the one who sat on the throne “was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone.” This phrase is a comparison of two similar things—jasper and sardine. As a matter of fact, both stones are in the *chalcedony* family of stones and are both known to be cryptocrystalline in nature, meaning that they both are obviously crystal to the naked eye but the crystals cannot be individually distinguished even when placed under a microscope.\(^4\) It is my belief that John mentioned sardine here next to jasper to let us know that jasper was red. Jasper is the first foundation stone of New Jerusalem.

### Symbols in the stone

Since the stone is red, it symbolizes the blood atonement we have through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ and the passing over of God’s destructive judgment on us. It also represents royalty, prosperity, prestige, and valiance (Lam. 4:5; Dan. 5:7,16,29; Nah. 2:3).

Jasper also represents the perfection of the saints. In the same manner that the gem was known for its high polished finish, we are to be known for our high moral standards and character that are brought forth in us by obedience to the Lord. It does not mean we are sinless, but that we are humble enough to recognize our weaknesses and are willing to take the necessary steps to overcome them.

### Symbols in the order of the stone

Twelve is the number of divine order or divine government (12 tribes of Israel, 12 apostles).

### Facts about Benjamin

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1. Strong, p. 53.
2. Lockyer, p. 571.
His name means “son of the right hand.” The right hand is symbolic of strength, power, and authority (Ps. 18:35; Heb. 1:3; 8:1; 10:12).

**Observation:** Jesus is seated at the right hand of the Father. Since believers are seated in heavenly places in Christ, spiritually speaking, we are also seated at the Father’s right hand. One day we will physically be able to sit there (Rev. 3:21).

- Benjamin was Jacob’s twelfth son and Rachel’s second.
- Rachel died right after his birth.
- Israel’s first king, Saul, came from this tribe.
- The apostle Paul was also from this tribe.

**Jacob’s prophecy of Benjamin**

“**Benjamin shall ravin as a wolf: in the morning he shall devour the prey, and at night he shall divide the spoil.**” (Gen. 49:27)

Ravin means to plunder, pillage, or devour. This prophecy speaks of the fierceness of the tribe of Benjamin. When a wolf goes on the prowl, it is persistent in its hunting and Benjamin would be the same way in fighting his enemies. As wolves move swiftly in overtaking their prey, so Benjamin would move quickly to defeat his enemies.

At the beginning of the day, Benjamin would conquer the prey while at the end of the day he would divide his loot with others. This prophecy was fulfilled in several places in the Bible. Ehud the Benjamite, one of the judges, killed the Moabite king in Judges 3 and then gathered Israel to defeat the remaining Moabites. The Benjamites defeated the other Israelite tribes in several battles before they were defeated for their wickedness (Jud. 20). King Saul was a warrior king who won many battles for Israel. The apostle Paul, in the spiritual sense, conquered Gentiles with the gospel of Jesus Christ throughout the Roman empire in the first century. He still continues to do so today through the words he wrote and has divided his loot with those of us who preach or teach using his writings.

**Application:** Christians must work the works of the Father while it is day because the night cometh when no man can work (Jn. 9:4). Our words and actions must meet the standards of God’s word to be effective. It is imperative that we take advantage of the fact that it is still daylight. Judgment day, when our work will come to a halt, has not arrived yet, so we must redeem the time by fulfilling what God wants us to do.

Like wolves on the prowl, we should be persistent in our cause of righteousness. Just because we don’t get everything right all of the time doesn’t mean we should back away from our God-given course. If we sin, we should repent and get back in the battle quickly. Night can come at any time. Therefore, there is no time to waste.

When night finally arrives for us, we will divide the spoil. That is when we will receive the things done in our body, whether they be good or bad. Christ will take into account everything we’ve said and done while we were on earth and will reward us accordingly. The ultimate dividing of the spoil is when we will reign with him for eternity.

**Moses’ prophecy of Benjamin**
“And of Benjamin he said, The beloved of the LORD shall dwell in safety by him; and the LORD shall cover him all the day long, and he shall dwell between his shoulders.” (Deut. 33:12)

Benjamin was called the “beloved of the LORD” because he had a special place in God’s heart. Since he was the “son of the right hand”, a position of favor, this should come as no surprise.

The Lord was the tribe’s protector, which explains why they won so many battles. All day every day, God provided shelter for Benjamin from all kinds of dangers. Benjamin dwelt between God’s shoulders. In other words, God constantly carried him and held him up.

Application: True believers are the beloved of the Lord, the sons of his right hand. We are precious in God’s eyes which is why he paid the highest price possible to redeem our souls.

God causes us to dwell in safety so we can fulfill his purpose in the earth. This does not mean we will never have problems or suffer persecution. These are a regular part of being a Christian (Jn. 16:33; 2 Cor. 1:7). It only means God will preserve our lives until our time here is up. Afterwards, we will live forever with him where nothing can harm us.

While we are here taking care of our God-given ministries, God shelters us all the time, including those times when we feel that he is distant from us. Because he is constantly with us, we can walk through the valley of the shadow of death and fear no evil (Ps. 23:4). He has promised to never leave us nor forsake us (Heb. 13:5). Furthermore, we live between God’s shoulders, where he constantly bears us up and carries us if we are caught up in doing his will.

Summary of ideas & characteristics in Benjamin and the jasper: Spiritual perfection; blood atonement; God’s divine order in our lives; royalty; prosperity; prestige; strength, power, and authority; persistence and swiftness to do righteous works; conquering spiritual enemies to share the plunder with other saints; we are the Lord’s beloved; God is our constant protector; the Lord consistently carries us.

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