

Deuteronomy 33:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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;

Analysis

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;

Moses blesses Levi extensively (vv. 8-11, longest tribal blessing) due to their priestly role. The Urim ve-Tummim (אֲוִרִים וְתֻמִּיִּם) were sacred lots kept in the high priest's breastplate for discerning God's will (Exodus 28:30). The names likely mean "lights and perfections" or "curses and blessings," representing binary yes/no divine guidance. Le'ish chasidekha ("to your holy/faithful one") refers collectively to the Levitical priesthood, described as God's chasid (covenant-loyal one).

The reference to Massah and Meribah (מַסָּה and מֵרִיבָה) recalls Israel's water-testing incidents (Exodus 17:1-7; Numbers 20:1-13). Nissito ("you tested him") and terivennu ("you contended with him") describe the people's rebellion, yet Levi's loyalty contrasts with Israel's murmuring. After the golden calf apostasy, the Levites sided with Moses (Exodus 32:26-29), earning their priestly inheritance through zealous covenant loyalty when others rebelled.

This verse establishes Levi's qualifications for priesthood: proven faithfulness under testing, zealous loyalty to Yahweh, and entrusted with Urim and Thummim for mediating divine guidance. The priesthood requires moral integrity and

covenant fidelity before ceremonial function—character precedes office. Hebrews develops this Levitical typology, showing how Christ as superior High Priest fulfills and surpasses Levi's ministry (Hebrews 7:11-28).

Historical Context

The Levites' inheritance was the priesthood rather than tribal territory (Numbers 18:20-24; Deuteronomy 18:1-8). They received forty-eight cities scattered among other tribes (Numbers 35:1-8) and lived on tithes. Levi's priestly role originated in their response to the golden calf crisis—while Israel worshiped idols, the Levites executed judgment at Moses' command (Exodus 32:25-29), consecrating themselves for service.

The Urim and Thummim were used for major decisions requiring divine guidance (1 Samuel 14:41; 28:6; Ezra 2:63) but disappear from biblical record after the exile, perhaps indicating their cessation. The testing at Massah (Exodus 17) and Meribah (Numbers 20) were Israel's rebellion moments, yet Moses' sin at Meribah (striking the rock in anger) cost him Canaan entry—showing even covenant leaders face consequences. Levi's corporate loyalty despite these crises earned their priestly blessing.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How does Levi's proven faithfulness under testing inform qualifications for church leadership today (1 Timothy 3:1-13)?
2. What does the Urim and Thummim's role in discerning God's will teach about seeking divine guidance, and how does this relate to New Testament Spirit-leading?

Interlinear Text

וְלֵוִי יֵאָמֶר	תָּמִי יְיָ	וְאוּרִי יְיָ	לֹא יֵשׁ	חֲסִידְךָ	
And of Levi	he said	Let thy Thummim	and thy Urim	one	be with thy holy
H3878	H559	H8550	H224	H376	H2623
אֲשֶׁר	נָסִיתוֹ	בְּמַסָּה	תָּרִיב הוּא	עַל	
H834	whom thou didst prove	at Massah	and with whom thou didst strive	H5921	
	H5254	H4532	H7378		
מִי	מֵרִיבָה:				
at the waters	of Meribah				
H4325	H4809				

Additional Cross-References

Exodus 17:7 (Parallel theme): And he called the name of the place Massah, and Meribah, because of the chiding of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the LORD, saying, Is the LORD among us, or not?

Exodus 28:30 (Parallel theme): 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.

Numbers 20:13 (Holy): This is the water of Meribah; because the children of Israel strove with the LORD, and he was sanctified in them.

Psalms 106:16 (Holy): They envied Moses also in the camp, and Aaron the saint of the LORD.

Leviticus 8:8 (Parallel theme): And he put the breastplate upon him: also he put in the breastplate the Urim and the Thummim.

Revelation 3:7 (Holy): And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth;

Hebrews 7:26 (Holy): For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens;

Psalms 16:10 (Holy): For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.

Psalms 81:7 (Parallel theme): Thou calledst in trouble, and I delivered thee; I answered thee in the secret place of thunder: I proved thee at the waters of Meribah. Selah.

Nehemiah 7:65 (Holy): And the Tirshatha said unto them, that they should not eat of the most holy things, till there stood up a priest with Urim and Thummim.

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