

Exodus 39:10

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And they set in it four rows of stones: the first row was a sardius, a topaz, and a carbuncle: this was the first row.

Analysis

The first row—sardius (שָׁדִיא, odem, red stone), topaz (פִּתְדָּה, pitdah, yellow-green), and carbuncle (בָּרֶקֶת, bareqet, emerald)—begins the twelve stones representing Israel's tribes. Each stone's unique color and character symbolizes tribal distinctiveness within covenant unity. The sardius/ruby's blood-red hue may represent Reuben (firstborn); topaz's golden glow suggests divine light; carbuncle's green brilliance evokes life. Together, these precious stones teach that God's people, though diverse, form a unified, costly treasure. Revelation 21:19-20 echoes this imagery in the New Jerusalem's foundations.

Historical Context

Identifying ancient gemstones with modern equivalents is challenging, but the Hebrew terms indicate precious, colorful stones. The stones' arrangement in four rows of three may correspond to the camp arrangement in Numbers 2, with three tribes per side of the tabernacle.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. How do twelve distinct stones in one breastplate illustrate unity in diversity within the church?
2. What does God's people being represented by precious, not common, stones reveal about believers' value to Him?

Interlinear Text

וְיִמְלָא	אָתָם	בְּנֵי	אֶת	בְּנֵי	בְּט	וְרֹא	אַרְבָּעָה	וְרֹא	בְּט	וְרֹא	אַתְּ
And they set	H0	in it four		row		of stones		row		was a sardius	
H4390		H702		H2905		H68		H2905		H124	

פָּטָה	בְּאָתָד	בְּנֵי	וְבָרְקָת	וְרֹא	בְּט	וְרֹא	וְבָרְקָת	בְּנֵי	וְרֹא	בְּט	וְרֹא
a topaz		**and a carbuncle**		**row**		**this was the first**					
H6357		H1304		H2905		H259					

Additional Cross-References

Exodus 28:21 (Parallel theme): 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.

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