

Exodus 39:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And they wrought onyx stones inclosed in ouches of gold, graven, as signets are graven, with the names of the children of Israel.

Analysis

The onyx stones engraved with Israel's tribal names, set in gold (שֹׁהַם, shoham, onyx), were 'graven, as signets are graven' (פִּתּוּחֵי חֹתָם, pituche chotam, engravings of a seal). Signet engravings denote ownership and authority—Israel belongs to God, sealed by covenant. The stones' permanence contrasts with human fickleness; the names engraved on unchanging stone symbolize God's unbreakable covenant promises. These stones on the priest's shoulders prefigure Christ bearing His elect perpetually before the Father (John 10:28-29; Hebrews 7:25).

Historical Context

Onyx, a semi-precious stone with alternating bands of color, was highly valued in the ancient world. Signet engraving required exceptional skill to produce mirror-image text. The comparison to signet engraving emphasizes the permanence and authority of these tribal names.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. What assurance does it give that believers' names are engraved, not written in erasable ink, before God?
2. How does Christ bearing His people 'as a seal' demonstrate the security of salvation?

Interlinear Text

וַעֲשׂוּ	אֶת	אֲבָנֵי י	הַשֹּׁהַם	תְּחַסְּבֵם	תְּשַׁבְּצֵם	בַּזָּהָב
And they wrought	H853	stones	onyx	inclosed	in ouches	of gold
H6213		H68	H7718	H4142	H4865	H2091
יִפְתּוּחֵי י	יִפְתּוּחֵי י	חֹתָם	עַל	שְׁמֹת	בְּנֵי י	יִשְׂרָאֵל:
graven	graven	as signets	H5921	with the names	of the children	of Israel
H6605	H6605	H2368		H8034	H1121	H3478

Additional Cross-References

Exodus 28:9 (References Israel): And thou shalt take two onyx stones, and grave on them the names of the children of Israel: