

Ezra 2:63

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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 with Thummim.

Analysis

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 with Thummim—The Tirshatha (תִּרְשָׁתָא, Persian title meaning "governor," likely Zerubbabel or Sheshbazzar) prohibited these questionable priests from eating the qodesh ha-qodashim (most holy things)—portions reserved for Aaronide priests (Leviticus 2:3,10; 6:16-18).

The restriction awaited priestly consultation via Urim v'Tummim (אֲוִרִים וְתֻמִּימִים)—mysterious objects used for divine guidance, meaning "lights and perfections." Tragically, they were lost in exile and never recovered—no subsequent biblical text records their use. This leaves the priests in perpetual limbo, illustrating that the old covenant's mechanisms of certainty had failed. Christ becomes our great High Priest (Hebrews 4:14-16), giving direct access without Urim and Thummim.

Historical Context

The Urim and Thummim were objects kept in the high priest's breastplate (Exodus 28:30), used for yes/no divine guidance. Their exact nature remains debated (stones? lots?). After the exile, they disappear from biblical record—Josephus confirms they ceased functioning in the Second Temple period. This marks the transition from mechanical revelation to prophetic and ultimately Spirit-filled guidance.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. How does the permanent loss of Urim and Thummim point forward to Christ as our final and complete revelation?
2. What happens when old covenant mechanisms of certainty fail and only faith in God's promises remains?
3. In what ways do you seek mechanical certainty (modern "Urim and Thummim") rather than trusting the Holy Spirit's guidance?

Interlinear Text

לֹא	אֲשֶׁר	לָהֶם	הַתִּרְשָׁתָא	וַיֹּאמֶר
			And the Tirshatha	said
			H8660	H559
עַד	הַקֹּדֶשׁ יִם	הַקֹּדֶשׁ יִם	יֹאכֵל וְ	
			unto them that they should not eat	
			H398	
			holy things	
			H6944	
			holy things	
			H6944	
			וְלִתְמִיִּם:	
			with Urim	
			H224	
			and with Thummim	
			H8550	
			כֹּהֵן	
			a priest	
			H3548	
			עָמַד	
			till there stood up	
			H5975	

Additional Cross-References

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.

Leviticus 2:3 (Holy): And the remnant of the meat offering shall be Aaron's and his sons': it is a thing most holy of the offerings of the LORD made by fire.

Leviticus 2:10 (Holy): And that which is left of the meat offering shall be Aaron's and his sons': it is a thing most holy of the offerings of the LORD made by fire.

Numbers 27:21 (Parallel theme): And he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall ask counsel for him after the judgment of Urim before the LORD: at his word shall they go out, and at his word they shall come in, both he, and all the children of Israel with him, even all the congregation.

Nehemiah 8:9 (Holy): And Nehemiah, which is the Tirshatha, and Ezra the priest the scribe, and the Levites that taught the people, said unto all the people, This day is holy unto the LORD your God; mourn not, nor weep. For all the people wept, when they heard the words of the law.

Leviticus 22:10 (Holy): There shall no stranger eat of the holy thing: a sojourner of the priest, or an hired servant, shall not eat of the holy thing.