

Numbers 27:21

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

The command 'he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall ask counsel for him after the judgment of Urim before the LORD' establishes that Joshua's leadership operated under priestly mediation for divine guidance. The Urim and Thummim were objects used by the high priest to discern God's will in binary decisions (Exodus 28:30). Joshua, unlike Moses, could not speak with God directly but required priestly mediation. This demonstrates that even the highest civil authority operates under spiritual authority. The principle continues: civil magistrates should heed spiritual counsel derived from Scripture.

Historical Context

The Urim and Thummim (Hebrew: lights and perfections) were mysterious objects in the high priest's breastplate that provided yes/no answers to inquiries. Their precise nature is debated—perhaps sacred lots, stones, or other divinely appointed means. They functioned during the period of judges and early monarchy (1 Samuel 28:6) but apparently ceased before the exile. They pictured divine guidance, fully realized in the Spirit's internal witness to believers (Romans 8:14).

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does the relationship between Joshua and Eleazar model proper separation yet cooperation of civil and spiritual authority?
2. What replaced the Urim and Thummim for discerning God's will—Scripture and the Spirit?
3. How should civil leaders today seek spiritual wisdom for governance?

Interlinear Text

לֹא יִשְׁאַל בְּפָנָיו אֶלְעָזָר הַכֹּהן יִשְׁעַט דָּבָר

before **Eleazar** **the priest** **And he shall stand** **who shall ask** **HO**

H6440

H499

H3548

יִשְׁעַט דָּבָר

H5975

לֹא יִשְׁאַל בְּפָנָיו

H7592

בְּמַשְׁפֵּט יְהִי הַלְּפָנָן בְּאָורָם עַל

counsel for him after the judgment **of Urim** **before** **the LORD** **HO**

H4941

H224

H6440

H5921

H3068

פְּנֵי

יְצַא וְ

וְעַל

פְּנֵי

יְבָא וְ

הַאֲ

and at his word **shall they go out** **and at his word** **they shall come in**

H6310

H3318

H5921

H6310

H935

H1931

וְכָל

בְּנֵי

וְכָל אֲתָת וְיִשְׁרָאֵל

both he and all the children

of Israel

H854

H3605

H1121

H3478

בְּעִדָּה:

with him even all the congregation

H5712

Additional Cross-References

Exodus 28:30 (Judgment): 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.

Joshua 9:14 (References Lord): And the men took of their victuals, and asked not counsel at the mouth of the LORD.

1 Samuel 28:6 (References Lord): And when Saul enquired of the LORD, the LORD answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets.

Nehemiah 7:65 (Parallel theme): 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.

