

The Doctrine of the Ephod of God

Topics		
Hebrew Definition	Other Definitions	Description
Scofield's Definition and Description	All Passages Containing the word <i>Ephod</i>	All References to Ephod (the ephod not Described by God in the Law)
The Ephod of God	Other Theories	Where the Ephod of God Is Probably Used, but Not Actually Named
Summary		Brief Summary
Charts, Maps and Doctrines		
More Detailed Definitions of the Ephod	What the Ephod May Have Looked Like	Doctrine of Urim and Thummim Alluded To

Preface: The ephod was a piece of clothing, a vest, which is associated with the priesthood of God. There is the actual Ephod of God, described in detail in Ex. 28 and worn by the High Priest; and there is a vest associated with priests which is similar, but not as colorful as the one worn by the High Priest. The Ephod is associated with determining the will of God.

1. Ἐφῶδ (ἐφῶδ) [pronounced ay-FOHD], which means is transliterated *ephod*. Because this is a transliteration rather than a translation (so it is in the Greek as well), its exact meaning is unknown. In general, it appears to refer to a religious artifact of no specific sort and can refer to an idol as well as to the religious clothing to be worn by priests to God. In Judges 8:27, it apparently was made into some sort of an idol. The problem is, Judges 8:27 is the only time this word would refer to an idol rather than to a piece of clothing. When we discuss this particular passage, we will go into more detail. Strong's #646 BDB #65.
2. Other definitions:
 - a. Webster: *Ephod n. [Heb. to bind.] In Jewish antiquity, a part of the sacerdotal habit, being a kind of girdle, which was brought from behind the neck over the two shoulders, and hanging down before, was put across the stomach, then carried round the waist and used as a girdle to the tunic. There were two sorts; one of plain linen, the other embroidered for the high priest. On the part in front were two precious stones, on which were engraved the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. Before the breast was a square piece or breastplate.*¹
 - b. Easton: *Something girt, a sacred vestment worn originally by the high priest (Ex. 28:4), afterwards by the ordinary priest (1Sam. 22:18), and characteristic of his office (1Sam. 2:18, 28 14:3). It was worn by Samuel, and also by David (2Sam. 6:14). It was made of fine linen, and consisted of two pieces, which hung from the neck, and covered both the back and front, above the tunic and outer garment (Ex. 28:31). That of the high priest was embroidered with divers colours. The two pieces were joined together over the shoulders (hence in Latin called superhumerales) by clasps or buckles of gold or precious stones, and fastened round the waist by a "curious girdle of gold, blue, purple, and fine twined linen" (Ex. 28:6–12). The breastplate, with the Urim and Thummim, was attached to the ephod.*²
 - c. Fausset: *The high priest's vestment, with the breast-plate and Urim and Thrumhim (some material objects in the bag of the breast-plate, used for consulting Jehovah by casting lots). This Abiathar*

¹ From Noah Webster's 1828 Dictionary of American English taken from e-sword.

² M.G. Easton M.A., D.D., *Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, 1897; taken from e-sword.

carried off from the tabernacle at Nob, and David consulted (1Sam. 21:9 23:6, 9 30:7). The breast-plate, with its twelve precious stones, gave an importance to the ephod which led to its adoption in the idolatries of Gideon and Micah (Judges 8:27 17:5 18:14). The large amount of gold used by Gideon on his ephod was not the material of it, but the means wherewith he completed it; including the breast-plate (choshen), the 12 precious stones, and the two for the shoulders, the gold thread throughout, and gold braid, and gold twist chains fastening the breast-plate upon the ephod, and lastly the price of the labor (Ex. 28:6–30). His aim was by wearing it to have a vehicle for inquiring the will of Jehovah, through the Urim and Thummim, the holy lot, and breast-plate. The ephod was also used, but without the breast-plate, by the ordinary priests, as their characteristic robe (1Sam. 2:28 14:3 22:18 Hos. 3:4). David's ephod, in bringing the ark to Jerusalem, differed from the priests' in being of ordinary linen (baad), whereas theirs was of fine linen (sheesh).³

d. Smith: A sacred vestment originally appropriate to the high priest. Ex. 28:4.⁴

e. ZPEB: a close -fitting, armless outer vest of varying length, but generally extending down to the hips. In the OT it was almost exclusively a priestly garment, or one used in the worship of God.⁵

3. More detailed definitions by others:

At this point, a chart is appropriate. Two Bible dictionaries had so much information on the ephod, that I preferred to include all of their work. Given the length of the definitions, I did not italicize the passages. I do not agree with everything which is found in these definitions.

I should mention that, in most of these doctrines, I am providing you with far more information than you need. At the end of most lengthy doctrines, I have decided to begin including a summary, which, for the most part, is all that you will actually need.

More Detailed Definitions of the Ephod

Commentator	Definition and Explanation
The Catholic Encyclopedia	Ephod: The ephod is a kind of garment mentioned in the O.T., which differed according to its use by the high-priest, by other persons present at religious services, or as the object of idolatrous worship.

³ Taken from *Fausset's Bible Dictionary* by Andrew Robert Fausset (1821-1910); from e-sword; slightly edited.

⁴ *Smith's Bible Dictionary* by Dr. William Smith (1884); taken from e-sword.

⁵ *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; Merrill Tenney, ed., Zondervan Publishing House, ©1976; Vol. 2, p. 332.

More Detailed Definitions of the Ephod

Commentator	Definition and Explanation
<p>The Catholic Encyclopedia</p>	<p>Ephod of the High-Priest: Supplementing the data contained in the Bible with those gleaned from Josephus and the Egyptian monuments, we may distinguish in the ephod three parts: a kind of waistcoat or bodice, two shoulder-pieces, and a girdle. The first of these pieces constituted the main part of the ephod; it is described by some as being an oblong piece of cloth bound round the body under the arms and reaching as far as the waist. Its material was fine-twisted linen, embroidered with violet, purple, and scarlet twice-dyed threads, and interwoven with gold (Exodus 28:6; 39:2). The ephod proper must not be confounded with the "tunick of the ephod" (Exodus 28:31-35), nor with the "rational of judgment" (Exodus 28:15-20). The tunick was worn under the ephod; it was a sleeveless frock, made "all of violet", and was put on by being drawn over the head, something in the manner of a cassock. Its skirt was adorned with a border of pomegranates "of violet, and purple, and scarlet twice dyed, with little bells set between", whose sound was to be heard while the high-priest was ministering. The "rational of judgment" was a breastplate fastened on the front of the ephod which it resembled in material and workmanship. It was a span in length and width, and was ornamented with four rows of precious stones on which were inscribed the names of the twelve tribes. It held also the Urim and Thummim (doctrine and truth) by means of which the high-priest consulted the Lord. The second part of the ephod consisted of a pair of shoulder-pieces, or suspenders, fastened to the bodices in front and behind, and passing over the shoulders. Each of these straps was adorned with an onyx stone engraved with the names of six of the tribes of Israel, so that the high-priest while ministering wore the names of all the tribes, six upon each shoulder (Exodus 28:9-12; 25:7; 35:9; 39:16-19). The third part of the ephod was the cincture, of the same material as the main part of the ephod and woven in one piece with it, by which it was girt around the waist (Leviticus 8:7). Some writers maintain that the correct Hebrew reading of Ex., xxviii, 8, speaks of this band of the ephod; the contention agrees with the Syriac and Chaldee versions and with the rendering of Josephus (cf. Exodus 28:27 sq.; 29:5; 39:20 sq.). It must not be imagined that the ephod was the ordinary garb of the high-priest; he wore it while performing the duties of his ministry (Exodus 28:4; Leviticus 8:7; 1 Samuel 2:28) and when consulting the Lord. Thus David learned through Abiathar's ephod the disposition of the people of Ceila (1 Samuel 23:11 sq.) and the best plan of campaign against the Amalecites (1 Samuel 30:7 sqq.). In I K., xiv, 18, it appears that Saul wished the priest Achias to consult the Lord by means of the Ark; but the Septuagint reading of this passage, its context (1 Samuel 14:3), and the text of Josephus (Ant. Jud., VI, vi, 3) plainly show that in I K., xiv, 18, we must read "take the ephod" instead of "bring the ark".</p> <p>The Common ephod: An ephod was worn by Samuel when serving in the time of Heli (1 Samuel 2:18), by the eighty-five priests slain by Doeg in the sanctuary of Nobe (1 Samuel 22:18), and by David dancing before the Ark (2 Samuel 6:14). This garment is called the linen ephod; its general form may be supposed to have resembled the ephod of the high-priest, but its material was not the celebrated fine white linen, nor does it appear to have been adorned with the variegated colours of the high-priest's ephod. The Septuagint translators seem to have intended to emphasize the difference between the ephod of the high-priest and that worn by David, for they call this latter the idolatrous ephod.</p>

More Detailed Definitions of the Ephod

Commentator	Definition and Explanation
The Catholic Encyclopedia	<p>The Idolatrous ephod: According to Judges, viii, 26 sq., Gedeon made an ephod out of part of the spoils taken from the Madianites, their golden earlets, jewels, purple raiment, and golden chains. All Israel paid idolatrous worship to this ephod, so that it became a ruin to Gedeon and all his house. Some writers, following the Syriac and Arabic versions, have explained this ephod as denoting a gold casing of an oracular image. But there is no other instance of such a figurative meaning of ephod; besides, the Hebrew verb used to express the placing of the ephod on the part of Gedeon denotes in Judges, vi, 37, the spreading of the fleece of wool. The opinion that Gedeon's ephod was a costly garment like that of the high-priest, is, therefore, preferable.⁶</p>
The Jewish Encyclopedia	<p>Biblical Data:</p> <p>In the Old Testament this word has two meanings; in one group of passages it signifies a garment; in another, very probably an image. In the former the ephod is referred to in the priestly ordinances as a part of the official dress of the high priest, and was to be made of threads "of blue and of purple, of scarlet, and fine twined linen," and embroidered in gold thread "with cunning work" (Ex. xxviii. 4 et seq., xxix. 5, xxxix. 2 et seq.; Lev. viii. 7). The description of the garment in these passages is not detailed enough to give a clear picture of its shape, nor does the description of Josephus do so ("B. J." v. 5, § 7; "Ant." iii. 7, § 5). All that can be gleaned from the text is the following: The ephod was held together by a girdle () of similar workmanship sewed on to it (Ex. xxviii. 8); it had two shoulder-pieces, which, as the name implies, crossed the shoulders, and were apparently fastened or sewed to the ephod in front (Ex. xxviii. 7, 27). In dressing, the shoulder-pieces were joined in the back to the two ends of the ephod. Nothing is said of the length of the garment. At the point where the shoulder-pieces were joined together in the front "above the girdle," two golden rings were sewed on, to which the breast-plate was attached (see Breastplate).</p> <p>As a Garment: In other passages from the historical books, dating back to an early period, "ephod" probably means a garment set apart for the priest. In I Sam. xxii. 18 the eighty-five priests of Nob are designated as men that "did wear a linen ephod" ("efod bad"). In this passage the Septuagint omits the word "bad," and if this omission is correct, the passage might be explained as referring to the wearing of the ephod by the priests. The word "bad" is also omitted in the Septuagint I Sam. ii. 18, where it is said that Samuel was girded with a linen ephod, and likewise of II Sam. vi. 14, which relates how David, girded only with a linen ephod, danced before the Lord. Here certainly reference must have been made to a species of garment worn only by the priest on ceremonial occasions; but even this passage gives the reader no idea of what its appearance was.</p>

⁶ Taken from <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05497a.htm>

More Detailed Definitions of the Ephod

Commentator	Definition and Explanation
<p>The Jewish Encyclopedia</p>	<p>As an Image: The word "ephod" has an entirely different meaning in the second group of passages, all of which belong to the historical books. It is certain that the word can not here mean a garment. This is evident in Judges viii. 26-27, where it is recorded that Gideon took the golden earrings of the Midianites, weighing 1,700 shekels of gold, and made an "ephod thereof, and put it in his city, even in Ophrah," where it was worshiped by all Israel. In Judges xvii. 5 Micah made an ephod and teraphim for his sanctuary. I Sam. xxi. 9 records that an ephod stood in the sanctuary at Nob, and that Goliath's sword was kept behind it. In these passages it is clear that something other than a mantle or article of attire is meant. Even where the phrase "to carry" the ephod occurs, it is evident from the Hebrew "nasa" that reference is made to something carried in the hand or on the shoulder (comp. I Sam. xxiii. 6).</p> <p>The most natural inference from all these passages is that "ephod" here signifies an image that was set up in the sanctuary, especially since the word is cited with Teraphim, which undoubtedly refers to an image (comp. Hosea iii. 4). This assumption obtains strong confirmation from the fact that in Judges xvii. 3 et seq., which is compiled from two sources, the words "pesel" and "massekah" (graven image and molten image) are used interchangeably with "ephod" and "seraphim."</p> <p>Connection Between Ephod and Oracle: The ephod is frequently mentioned in close connection with the sacred oracle. When Saul or David wished to question Yhwh through the oracle, they commanded the priest, "Bring hither the ephod" (I Sam. xiv. 18 [A. V. "ark of God"], xxiii. 9, xxx. 7). This connection between the ephod and the oracle may also be seen very clearly in the combination of Urim and Thummim with the ephod in the official robes of the high priest. It is the prerogative of the priests to carry and to question this ephod with the oracle. The sentence "Ahiah was at that time carrying the ephod before Israel" actually means that Ahiah was then the chief among the priests of Shiloh (I Sam. xiv. 3, xiv. 18 [LXX.]; compare xxiii. 6). On the oracle compare Urim and Thummim.</p> <p>This juxtaposition of "ephod" and "oracle" has led to the assumption that in the last-mentioned passages "ephod" originally meant a kind of receptacle for the sacred lots, similar to the oracle pocket in the robe of the high priest (comp. Cheyne and Black, "Encyc. Bibl." and Foote in Johns Hopkins University Circulars). This assumption would harmonize all the early passages of the historical books, for if the word "bad" be omitted, the above-mentioned passages (I Sam. ii. 18, xxii. 18) may also be taken to mean that the priests "girded" this pocket about them. But this interpretation is impossible in II Sam. vi. 14, and is not very suitable in the stories concerning the ephods of Gideon and Micah. It might be adopted, however, where "ephod" is mentioned in connection with the oracle, for the image called "teraphim" is associated with the oracle in the same way (comp. Ezek. xxi. 26 [21]; Zech. x. 2). "Ephod" would then refer to a portable image, before which the lots were cast.</p> <p>It can not be definitely ascertained what connection, if any, there was between the two meanings, "image" and "priestly robe." If the designation for "image" is connected with the original meaning of "ephod" as a covering or a dress, it may be inferred that these images were made of wood, clay, or some inferior metal, and covered with a "mantle" of gold or silver (comp. Isa. xxx. 22). Smend endeavors to prove an inner connection between the two meanings by assuming ("Religionsgesch." p. 41) that the image itself was originally clothed with an "ephod bad": witness the ancient custom of the Arabs of hanging garments and swords upon their idols (Wellhausen, "Skizzen," iii. 99).</p>

More Detailed Definitions of the Ephod

Commentator	Definition and Explanation
Bibliography	<p>Benzinger, Arch. p. 382; Nowack, Archäologie, ii. 21 et seq., 118 et seq.; Cheyne and Black, Encyc. Bibl.; Hastings, Dict. Bible; Foote, in Johns Hopkins University Circulars, May, 1900; idem, in Journal of Biblical Literature, 1902, pp. 1-48. E. G. H. I. Be.</p>
The Jewish Encyclopedia	<p>In Rabbinical Literature:</p> <p>Although the high priest in the Herodian temple wore an ephod (id. 31a), tannaitic tradition has little to say regarding its character. The material of which the ephod was made was a texture consisting of twenty-eight threads, one thread of leaf gold being spun with six threads of each of the four textures mentioned in Ex. xxviii. 6 (Yoma 71b). Rashi, closely following the Bible, describes the shape of the ephod as follows:(Rashi to Ex. l.c.; similarly, also, Maimonides, "Yad," Kele ha-Mi dash, ix. 9-10).</p> <p>"The ephod was made like a girdle which women wear in riding, and was fastened in the back, against the heart, under the arms. In breadth it was somewhat wider than the back, and in length it reached to the heels; a girdle, long enough to be used as a belt, was fastened lengthwise above. The shoulder-bands, which were fastened to this girdle, were made of the same material as the ephod, and fell in front a little below the shoulders. The 'shoham' [A. V. "onyx"] stones were then fastened to the shoulder-bands, and golden threads connected the edges of the shoham stones with the breastplate () by means of the rings on the latter"</p> <p>Even in the tannaitic tradition there was a difference of opinion as to the order in which the names of the twelve tribes were put on the "shoham" stones (So ah 36a). According to Rashi's explanation of the passage, the Tannaim differ in that according to the one opinion the names followed in the sequence of the ages of the Patriarchs, with the exception of Judah, who headed the list; while according to the other opinion, the names of Leah's sons were on the stones of the right shoulder-band, and on the left side the name of Benjamin came first, followed by those of the four sons of the concubines , with Joseph's name at the end. Maimonides, however, probably basing his reasons on a lost baraita, says (l.c.) that there were 25 letters on each side and that the sequence was as follows: see table</p> <p>According to this opinion, if the list was read from right to left, the names were arranged in the sequence of the ages of the Patriarchs, with the exception, however, that Naphtali's name, instead of following Dan's, preceded it. That Joseph's name was spelled in the unusual form Yehosef is asserted in the Talmud (l.c. 36b). In conformity with the view that the garments of the high priest possessed the power of absolving from sin (compare High Priest in Rabbinical Literature), it is asserted that the ephod was used in atoning for idolatrous sins, "ephod" meaning also "the idol" (Zeb. 87b). The ephod of the high priest must be distinguished from the linen ephod which is mentioned in Scripture as a common garment of priests and of the disciples of prophets (Maimonides, l.c. x. 13; Ibn Ezra on Ex. l.c.; but compare Yer. Sanh. x. 29a). Compare Breastplate of the High Priest; Gems; Urim and Thummim.⁷</p>

⁷ Taken from <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?artid=401&letter=E>

More Detailed Definitions of the Ephod

Commentator	Definition and Explanation
Bibliography	Epstein, Mi- admoniyot, pp. 83-90; A. Portaleone, Shil e ha-Gibborim, xlv.

Most of these points and the various theories will be examined below.

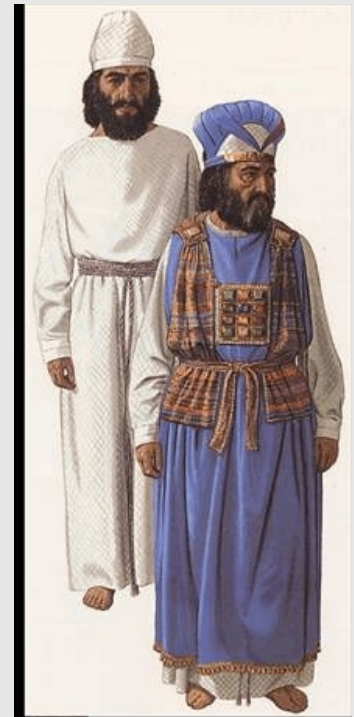
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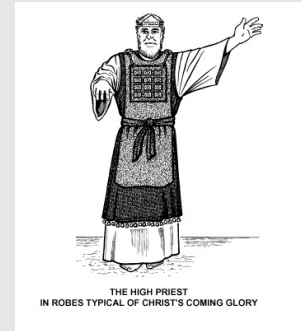
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It may be instructive to see how others have interpreted the Ephod worn by the High Priest:

What the Ephod of God May Have Looked Like



What the Ephod of God May Have Looked Like



The first two are taken from <http://www.templemountfaithful.org/Newsletters/2001/5761-9.htm>

The third is from <http://www.concours-biblique.com/Site/Jtint130/ephod.htm>

The fourth is from http://philologos.org/__eb-thlatb/chap20.htm

The fifth is from: http://saratogachabad.com/mainpages/Avot/1_14a.htm

The sixth image is from <http://www.bibletruthkeys.com/tabstudyII.htm>

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Now, to the actual doctrine:

4. Aaron, the High Priest, was to wear a particular garb, which God describes in great detail. Aaron was to wear a breastplate, which was affixed to the Ephod, which appears to be, more or less, a vest. Bear in mind that some of the details may be lost in the translation. Ex. 28:1–30
 - a. The Ephod would be made of gold as well as blue (violet?), purple and scarlet with fine twisted linen.
 - b. The Ephod would have two shoulder pieces and a woven band.
 - c. There would be two onyx stones, set in gold, with the names of six tribes of Israel engraved on each one of them which would be affixed to the shoulders.
 - d. There would also be two chains made of pure gold which are affixed to the gold settings for the onyx stones.
 - e. What appears to be attached to the Ephod, is the breast piece of judgment (or, a *breast pocket of decision*), which would be made like the Ephod, from gold, as well as blue, purple and scarlet material and fine twisted linen. My impression is, although the Ephod is presented as different from the breast piece, they do appear to be affixed to one another and it also appears that the two together are called the ephod.
 - f. The breast piece is square and folded over double with four rows of three stones each: a ruby, topaz and emerald; a turquoise, sapphire and diamond; a jacinth, agate and amethyst; and a beryl, onyx and jasper; each set in a gold setting. Each stone would be associated with one of the 12 tribes of Israel.
 - g. There would be gold chains for the breast piece and the ephod and the breast piece would be permanently attached by rings and cords of gold.
 - h. “And Aaron will carry the names of the sons of Israel in the breast piece of judgment over his heart when he enters the holy place, for a memorial before Jehovah continually. And you will place in the breast piece of judgment the Urim and the Thummim, and they will be over Aaron’s heart when he goes

- in before Jehovah. And Aaron will carry the judgment of the sons of Israel over his heart before Jehovah continually." (Ex. 28:29–30). This seems to indicate that Urim and Thummim were separate from the Ephod, but placed inside the breast piece itself, so that they were not seen.
- i. Whereas, I see the ephod as more of a shoulder covering, ISBE presents it as more of a shirt, held together with two shoulder pieces; and that there was a woven band (possibly a belt?) which acted sort of like a girdle for the ephod. ISBE suggests that the ephod extended down either to the waist or to the hips.⁸
 - j. No matter how large the ephod is, it was easily identifiable, and we will find instances where those only associated with the priesthood wore one (not the Ephod of God but an ephod). My thinking is, in the realm of clothing, it would be quickly identified just as the backward collar of the Catholic priesthood is today.
5. That which is worn by Aaron is described in Ex. 29:5: **And you shall take the garments, and clothe Aaron with the tunic, and the robe of the ephod, and the ephod, and the breast-pocket, and bind it to him with the band of the ephod.** Scofield expands upon this below:⁹
- a. The "robe of the ephod" (Ex. 28:31-35) a long seamless garment of blue linen with an opening for the head, worn over the "coat." Pomegranates, symbol of fruitfulness, were embroidered on the skirt of the robe in blue, purple, and scarlet, alternated with golden bells, symbol of testimony, which gave a sound as the high priest went in and out of the sanctuary. The robe was secured by a golden girdle.
 - b. The ephod (Ex. 28:5-12) was next put on. A short garment made of linen, embroidered with gold, blue, purple, and scarlet, it consisted of two pieces, front and back, united by two shoulder-pieces and by a band about the bottom. Two onyx stones, set in gold and fastened upon the shoulder-pieces of the ephod, were engraved with the names of the twelve tribes: "and Aaron shall bear their names before Jehovah upon his two shoulders (the place of strength) for a memorial." Compare (Isa. 9:6 Luke 15:4–5).
 - c. The breastplate was a square pouch (Ex. 28:16) of linen to contain the Urim and Thummim.
 - d. To the linen pouch was attached the oblong gold setting containing four rows of precious stones, on each stone a tribal name. The breastplate with the jewel work was attached at the upper corners to the shoulder-pieces of the ephod by golden chains. Golden rings were sewn on ephod and breastplate, and the latter was further secured to the ephod by laces of blue through the rings. Altogether, it was called "the breastplate of judgment" because worn by the high priest when judging the causes of the people.
6. This can be found in the following passages: Ex. 25:7 28:4, 6, 12, 15, 25–28, 31 29:5 35:9, 27 39:2, 7–8, 18–22 Lev. 8:7 Judges 8:27 17:5 18:14, 17–18, 20 1Sam. 2:18, 28 14:3, 18¹⁰ 21:9 22:18 23:6, 9 30:7 2Sam. 6:14 1Chron. 15:27 Hos. 3:4
7. First of all, we should deal with the passages where we find the word *ephod*, but it does not refer to the Ephod of God. However, in all of these passages, it is generally associated with a priest or a priest-figure. This would indicate that, whatever kind of clothing the ephod is, it was probably visually recognizable as being associated with the priesthood (much like the backward collars of Catholic priests). From what I have read, an ephod looks sort of like the clothing version of shoulder pads combined with a vest; and the Ephod of God was fairly colorful. We do not know how similar the ephods worn by others were, but, not doubt, the unofficial ephod was probably something which was worn on the shoulders and around the torso.
- a. There appears to be a non-technical use of the word *ephod* in Judges 8:27 where Gideon makes an ephod out of some of the spoils of defeating Midian. In this case, the ephod was apparently some sort of an idol or some kind of a statue or artifact which became an idol. It might have been originally constructed as an artistic object to represent Israel's defeat of Midian, but it soon took on a whole other meaning and it was taken as having a divine nature of sorts. After all, it was a symbol of God speaking directly to a man (Gideon), which is the only time that had happened in that generation. This symbol therefore took on a religious significance beyond that of a simple remembrance. If this seems far-

⁸ *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*; James Orr, Editor; ©1956 Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.; © by Hendrickson Publishers; Vol. I; p. 962.

⁹ The sub-points to follow are taken from C. I. Scofield, *Scofield Notes from the Scofield King James' Bible*; from e-Sword, Ex. 29:5. This was edited so that only the things relating to the Ephod are covered.

¹⁰ In the Hebrew, this reads *Ark of God*, which is probably a scribal error. See my exegesis of 1Sam. 14:18.

fetched, recall some of the things which have been worshipped as of late in Mexico in quasi-connection to the Catholic Church. Food and stains which appear to have, because of their form, some religious significance, have drawn thousands of people, some curiosity seekers and some sincere religious types.¹¹ The Polychrome Bible renders this particular use of *ephod* as an *Ephod-idol*. I must admit to having some difficulty squaring this concept of an ephod with the piece of clothing described in the Law. Given all the other passages found in Scripture, I would guess that an ephod was easily recognizable and that Gideon made an ephod out of gold—not to be worn, per se, but as a memorial to Israel's defeat of Midian. This would allow this understanding of an ephod to be in agreement with all other occasions that it occurs in Scripture.

- b. Unfortunately, we do not really know the definition of the Hebrew word *ephod*. Everywhere that we find it, it appears to be an article of clothing worn by those who are related to God. However, if it means *related to God* or *of God* (which is unlikely, as the Hebrew generally combines known words to come up with meanings like these), then perhaps what Gideon built was an ephod-idol. Personally, I do not see it that way, and for two reasons: (1) it is inconsistent with the other times this word is found in Scripture (Except, perhaps Judges 17); (2) and there is nothing of the Hebrew word which lends itself to mean *an idol, a thing related to God, of God* or anything else which would allow us to interpret its meaning in this way. There are two suggestions concerning the ephod made by Gideon: (1) it was made of pure gold as a copy of that which is found in Scripture; or, (2) it was a copy of that which is found in Scripture that the gold described Judges 8 simply refers to the amount of money raised in order to purchase these items.
 - c. An ephod is mentioned several times in Judges 18 and it appears to be a part of the clothing of the renegade priest Micah. It does not appear to be related to the actual Ephod of God.
 - d. Samuel is said to have also worn a linen ephod, which would not have been the Ephod of God. Given the context, this was probably a part of the clothing made for him by his mother, as she would have seen Eli wear the Ephod of God year after year. 1Sam. 2:18
 - e. Saul, in his complete insanity, ordered the execution of all the priests in Nob. They are all said to have worn the *linen ephod* in 1Sam. 22:18, which would have been similar to the ephod worn by Samuel when he was a boy. It marked them as priests, but they did not all have their own personal *Ephod of God*, as described in Scripture.
 - f. When David brings the Ark of God into Jerusalem, he is dancing before it wearing a linen ephod. This would not be the Ephod of God, but an article of clothing associated with the priests of God. 2Sam. 6:14 1Chron. 15:27
8. The Ephod of God is first mentioned in Ex. 25:7 where God tells Moses that the congregation is to give specific items for His Tabernacle, the furniture and supplies, and the Ephod.
 9. In Ex. 35, the offerings for the Tabernacle and all associated with it (including the Ephod) are brought to Moses, the men who would oversee the work are chosen, and specific instructions and restrictions are given (e.g., for the Sabbath).
 10. Ex. 39 describes the actual work in making the priest's clothing and the Ephod. Interestingly enough, Urim and Thummim are not mentioned in this chapter.
 11. The Ephod is mentioned with the consecration of Aaron and his sons in Lev. 8:7; however, that is the last mention of the Ephod in the Law. Furthermore, the Ephod is not even mentioned in the book of Joshua.
 12. The Ephod of God, last mentioned is Lev. 8:7, is spoken of again by a prophet who speaks to Eli in the name of God. [And a man of God came to Eli, and said to him, "So says Jehovah: 'Did I reveal Myself plainly to the house of your father when they were in Egypt, at the house of Pharaoh, even to choose him out of all the tribes of Israel to be priest to Me, to go up on My altar, to cause incense to smoke, to bear an ephod before Me? And did I give to your father's house all the fire offerings of the sons of Israel?' "](#) (1Sam. 2:27–28). The expected answer is, *yes, you revealed yourself to the house of Aaron, to put these responsibilities in his hand.*¹²

¹¹ In fact, I would be quite appreciative of anyone who could point me toward some sources dealing with some of these specific incidents which I recall more because of the parodies which have been made than because of the individual incidents themselves. An Internet source would be great.

¹² Specifically, God revealed Himself to Moses, who is a part of the *house of Aaron*.

13. In 1Sam. 14, we have Ahijah, the son of Ahitub, the son of Phinehas,¹³ the son of Eli as the one bearing the Ephod. In fact, interestingly enough, even though Samuel offered up sacrifices, he is never closely associated with the Tabernacle as an adult (insofar as we know); and he is never associated with the Ephod of God. Here, Ahijah is associated with the Ephod of God and with Saul, who will ask him to bring the Ephod to him in 1Sam. 14:18.¹⁴
14. The sword of Goliath was kept next to the Ephod of God in Nob (whether this was within the Tabernacle of God or not is unknown, as Shiloh had been destroyed around this time, even though the Tabernacle itself had been preserved. 1Sam. 21:9)
15. As with all things Biblical, there are the weird theories and what seems to be reasonable. Some theorize¹⁵ that the ephod here (1Sam. 21:9) is some kind of idol or something made different than the piece of clothing found elsewhere. Sorry; this approach just seems silly to me.
- a. There is no Scripture anywhere which clearly suggests that the Ephod of God or that the ephod worn by others is something other than an article of clothing (apart from Judges 8, which has already been discussed). That it was easily recognizable is clear; however, the idea that it is something else other than a piece of clothing is pure conjecture. Why not suggest that it is a transistor radio which fell into a worm hole and was time warped?
 - b. The Bible clearly forbids idolatry; therefore, the idea that Abiathar would grab an idol of some sort, and then to run to David and for David to later use this idol in order to be guided by God also does not fit in with Scripture. I have nothing against exploring some other options now and again; however, these options should be explored to a point where we can reasonably dismiss them (as this case) or embrace them. I often explore other approaches to an interpretation of Scripture or of a Hebrew word; and I often share these explorations with you. However, if this different approach does not square with the rest of Scripture, then I explain why and drop it.
 - c. My explanation here does not preclude an ephod from becoming an object of idolatry, as we have in the book of Judges (Judges 8:26–27). Under the right circumstances (well, under the wrong circumstances, actually), even the Ephod of God could become an object of idolatry.
 - d. The best argument for this viewpoint is, how could an ephod cost 1700 shekels of gold to make (Judges 8:26–27)? There are several approaches to answer this:
 - i. This ephod was made of pure gold.
 - ii. The ephod together with all of the gems referred to in Scripture could cost this much. This makes me ask, *where is the Ephod of God at this time?*
 - iii. Gideon made an ephod as well as other objects of idolatry. You may counter with, *but Gideon is such a good guy!* He was; however, as we have found over and over again, all believers have old sin natures, and we find many believers who fall deeply into reversionism (Saul is an excellent example of this).¹⁶
 - iv. There is a problem with the number in this passage. I think this is the least likely explanation.
 - e. In Judges 17:4–5, we have an ephod being associated with idols. Here, it is *distinguished* from the idols, and there is nothing in this passage which precludes the ephod from being a very recognizable article of clothing which is associated with the priesthood.
16. Saul calls for the Ephod of God in 1Sam. 14:18 (it is mistakenly called the *Ark of God* in the Masoretic text). However, he does not ask God's guidance at first, and makes some bonehead decisions (1Sam. 14:14–30). By the time that he asks God something, God does not answer him (1Sam. 14:37).
17. Abiathar, the son of Abimelech, the son of Ahitub the son of Phinehas escaped Saul's bloody attack and ran to David. He brought with him the Ephod of God, which Ephod David even makes use of (1Sam. 22:20 23:6). Affixed to the Ephod is the breast piece (or, *breast pouch*) and, apparently, in the pouch are Urim and Thummim, which were discussed in Deut. 33:8. See the **Doctrine of Urim and Thummim**.

¹³ This line is examined in great detail in the exegesis of 1Sam. 14:3.

¹⁴ That it is called the *Ark of God* appears to be a scribal error; see the exegesis of 1Sam. 14:18.

¹⁵ ISBE presents, but does not support, this theory. *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*; James Orr, Editor; ©1956 Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.; © by Hendrickson Publishers; Vol. I; p. 962.

¹⁶ Saul is such a good example of this that many believers over the centuries deny that Saul was ever saved.

18. Please notice that the Ephod of God did some moving around. It was with Ahijah, who was associated with Saul for awhile (1Sam. 14:3, 18) but it ended up in Nob sometime after that (1Sam. 21:9). Although this movement is not recorded, it is simple to explain. Ahijah (along with the names Ahi and Ahiah) are short for Ahimelech. Saul employed Ahijah for a short time, but, after awhile, was no longer given guidance by him (1Sam. 14:37). If this occurred on several different occasions, then it is reasonable that Saul simply sent Abijah packing, as he would have been useless to Saul. Saul later confronts Abijah (addressing him by the more formal Ahimelech ben Ahitub) at which times, Saul calls for his execution, on the basis of treason, as well as personal betrayal (1Sam. 22:11–16). When all of the priests at Nob are slaughtered at Saul's command, Ahimelech's young son, Abiathar¹⁷, escapes, taking the Ephod of God to David (1Sam. 22:20).
19. David knew that Saul was plotting evil against him; however, he did not know the mood of the people of Keilah, whom he had just delivered. David used the Ephod of God to determine whether these men would turn him in or not. 1Sam. 23:9–12.
20. After this time, although David did have access to the Ephod, he chose not to use it, which resulted in him being out of God's geographical will. 1Sam. 24–29
21. We know that David is restored to fellowship when he strengthens himself in Jehovah and asks for the Ephod of God in order to be guided. 1Sam. 30:6b–7
22. Interestingly enough, even after David brings the Ark of God into Jerusalem and even after Solomon builds a Temple to God, the Ephod of God is never mentioned again except for Hosea, who warns that a time is coming when Israel would no longer have a prince or a king nor have access to Ephod of God. Although this can be taken in its most literal sense, we may also understand that this means that the king has no access whatsoever to divine guidance. Hosea 3:4
23. There are several instances where the Ephod of God is probably used, but not actually named:
 - a. Joshua appears to have used the Ephod; however, it is never named specifically. In Joshua 6, God communicates with Joshua, but we are not given the exact mechanics—God simply appears to speak directly to Joshua (Joshua 6:1–5). When Joshua is defeated at Ai, he appears again to speak directly to God (Joshua 7:7–15). However, when he determines which person from which tribe is responsible for Israel's defeat, we are not given any details whatsoever, and some suggest¹⁸ that he used Urim and Thummim (which are associated with the Ephod of God) to determine who transgressed God's command (Joshua 7:16–19).
 - b. Although God appears to speak directly to Joshua in Joshua 13:1–7, the land appears to be distributed by lots, which method is never really explained to us (Joshua 15:1 16:1 17:1). We really have no idea whether this is related to Urim and Thummim or the ephod.
 - c. After Joshua died, the sons of Israel still had a great deal of land which needed to be conquered. They inquire of God who should continue the fight against the Canaanites in the land, and Judah and Simeon go up together against several cities held by the Canaanites. This narrative is found in the first two-thirds of Judges 1; however the key passage is the exchange between Israel and God in vv. 1–2. Even though the High Priest is not mentioned here, or the Ephod, or Urim and Thummim, it is reasonable to assume this was their approach to God.
 - d. We have a similar inquiry made of God in Judges 20:18–28. The tribe of Benjamin had become extremely degenerate, and God had Judah wipe out almost all of the tribe of Benjamin at that time. However, when Israel suffered some serious setbacks, they went to Phinehas ben Eleazar, the High Priest, for direction. Urim and Thummim are not mentioned, but it would seem reasonable that is what Eleazar used in order to communicate with God. Also, there are several instances of God communicating to the people of Israel in this chapter; we may reasonably assume that all of this was done through Eleazar, the High Priest.
24. Summary points:
 - a. The Ephod of God is described in the Law as a colorful shoulder piece and vest which is permanently affixed to the breast piece (or, *breast pouch*) of judgment (or, *decision*). On the shoulders were two

¹⁷ Abiathar would be Ahijah's (Ahimelech's) son, as we examined back in the exegesis of 1Sam. 22:20. If Ahijah and Ahimelech are brothers, then Abiathar would be Ahijah's nephew.

¹⁸ E.g., *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*; James Orr, Editor; ©1956 Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.; © by Hendrickson Publishers; Vol. IV; p. 3040.

stones, each representing 6 tribes of Israel. On this breast piece, we have the 12 precious stones, each of which represents a tribe of Israel. What appears to be the case is, Urim and Thummim (or, *Lights and Perfections*) are put inside the pouch. Exactly what Urim and Thummim are is really not known to us. Ex. 28 35:20–35 39

- b. There are several times when an *ephod* is mentioned that do not refer to the Ephod of God. Some examples of these are: Samuel as a young boy wears an ephod (1Sam. 2:18); David wears a linen ephod when bringing the Ark of God into Jerusalem (2Sam. 6:14); Micah, the renegade priest, wears an ephod (Judges 18); Gideon makes an ephod which is later idolized (Judges 8). These passages indicate that the *linen ephod* (as it is often rendered in these examples) is a very recognizable type of clothing associated with the priesthood and with God.
- c. The Ephod of God is mentioned, but not actually used, in Lev. 8:7 1Sam. 2:27–28 14:18 21:9 23:6.
- d. There are several instances where the Ephod of God is not mentioned (nor is Urim and Thummim), but it appears as though it is utilized. Joshua 7:16–19 Judges 1:1–2 20:27–28
- e. The number of recorded times when a leader calls upon the High Priest to use the Ephod are relatively few: In fact, there are only three clear instances where the Ephod is clearly used (1Sam. 14:3–42 24:9–12 30:6–8).
 - i. Saul calls for it in 1Sam. 14:18, but does not actually use it. Later, in the same chapter, but sometime after 1Sam. 14:18, Saul appears to make use of the Ephod, but God does not answer him (1Sam. 14:37). Then Saul appears to use the Ephod in order to determine who broke his vow (1Sam. 14:36–42). King Saul decides not to execute Jonathan and he does not pursue the Philistines soldiers further either (1Sam. 14:45–46).
 - (1) Saul's inability to make contact with God is told to us in 1Sam. 28:6. The principle is simple: if you are out of fellowship, then you cannot be guided by God. Saul had been out of fellowship for about a decade. The passage quoted, I believe, does not speak of Saul simply in that hour of need, but refers pretty much to the previous decade of Saul's life out of fellowship.
 - ii. David makes use of the Ephod of God through the priest Abiathar in 1Sam. 30:6–8.
- f. Although the Ephod of God was called upon probably more times than we find a record of it, the sparse number of times that it is found in Scripture indicates to us that this was never used (or, at least, not ever supposed to be used) for trivial decisions. If you are one of those people who is always *sensitive* to the urging of God, and you sometimes hyperventilate about whether you should make a right or a left turn up ahead, even the possession of the Ephod of God would not solve this problem. It was simply not to be trivialized.
- g. Finally, the reason our knowledge of the Ephod and Urim and Thummim is so restricted is, God does not need for us to attempt to duplicate these objects and then use them to determine our immediate futures. The entire Word of God is sufficient to provide us with guidance.

Brief Summary: An ephod is a signature piece of clothing, not unlike a sweater-vest or a vest, which was associated with the priesthood of Israel. Samuel wears on as a young man (1Sam. 2:18); the priests at Nob all wear linen ephods (1Sam. 22:18—probably inspired by Samuel); David wears one when bringing the Ark into Jerusalem (2Sam. 6:14); and even the renegade priest Micah wears one in Judges 18. Just as the backwards collar clearly identifies a Catholic priest, so was the ephod clearly associated with the true Old Testament priesthood.

However, there is the Ephod of God, as described in detail in Ex. 28 and 39. God explained to Moses how it was to be made. It was extremely ornate and colorful, and affixed to a breast piece (or, *breast pocket, breastplate*) on which were 12 precious stones representing the 12 tribes of Israel. This was associated with Urim and Thummim, whose exact nature is unknown. Some believe it to be the stones on the breast piece and ephod (there were two more stones on the shoulders); some believe it to be two more stones in the pouch of the breast piece; some believe them to be lots which were thrown (and kept in the breast pouch). In any case, the Ephod and Urim and Thummim are associated with determining God's will. However, the actual incidents of this clearly recorded in Scripture are few (1Sam. 14 24:9–12 30:6–8). There are also a few passages which suggest that the Ephod was called upon, but this is not clearly stated (Joshua 7:6–19 15:1 16:1 Judges 1:1–2 20:18–28).

