

from their value or render them less divine in the eyes of the Israelites, nor should it do so to us. The mere origin of a ceremony is of little importance, the main thing is its spiritual import to the mind of the worshipper. On this principle therefore, we have no hesitation in admitting that many of the Hebrew forms were modelled on the Egyptian; and so far from allowing that this makes any thing for the cause of infidelity, we hold that it is a mark of divine wisdom and condescension in the circumstances, and furnishes a striking testimony to the truth of the whole narrative. It is precisely what we might expect in the case of a people coming out of Egypt after a residence there of some centuries.

In addition to the ephod, girdle and breastplate of the priests, and the Urim and Thummin peculiar to the high-priest, we may notice a few other points of resemblance between the two rituals. From the evidence of the monuments, it appears that the Egyptians were accustomed to put inscriptions on their houses both inside and out. Divine wisdom took advantage of this established custom, and commanded the Israelites to write the law upon their door-posts and their gates, so that it might be continually before their eyes, and fixed in their memories. In the monuments, we find frequently processions of priests, carrying sacred shrines or arks, by staves passed through rings in the sides; and these are in some instances precisely of the size and shape of the holy ark of the Israelites, which was to them a visible symbol of the presence and majesty of Jehovah. Then again, the very customs forbidden to the Hebrews were ancient and established usages on the banks of the Nile, and therefore customs, to which, from their training, they were peculiarly inclined. I need not remind you how strictly and sternly every thing having the slightest trace of idolatry was prohibited. The Egyptians adored the sun, moon and stars; to the Jews such worship was forbidden under the penalty of death. The statues of men, beasts and birds, were worshipped in Egypt; the Israelites were forbidden to bow before any carved image. Many of the Egyptians marked their bodies in honour of their gods; the Jews were forbidden thus to cut their flesh or make any mark upon it. It was a practice in Egypt to bury food in the tombs of their friends; the Jews were forbidden to set apart any fruit for the dead. The Egyptians planted groves of trees in the spacious court yards of their temples; Moses forbade the Jews to plant any trees near the altar of the Lord. These regulations, and many others that might be enumerated, did time permit, were clearly directed against the idolatries of Egypt.