

High Priest Rope

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The following notes are based on commentary from **GotQuestions.org** a Jewish website giving **rabbinical** answers to Jewish questions:

All my life I've heard that the high priest wore a rope around his ankle when entering the Holy of Holies on Yom Kippur {the Day of Atonement}. According to **Exodus 28:33-35** bells were worn in the hem of the priest's garments so his movements could be heard during his daily routine but it is unclear whether the bells were on the garments worn into the Holy of Holies. In **Leviticus 16** the high priest is warned **twice** that he must follow God's commandments concerning proper bathing, proper dressing, proper sacrifices, etc. exactly or he would die when he entered the Holy of Holies!! According to **Jewish and Christian tradition** during the last two centuries of the second temple {Herod's temple} the high priest wore a gold or scarlet rope around his ankle because no one else was allowed in the Holy of Holies for any reason!

There is no record of this practice in Scripture, in the Mishnah or Midrash {Jewish commentaries} – or in Josephus [as I have personally verified]. The tradition as far as we can tell is first mentioned in the **Zohar** a Hebrew commentary written in the second century A.D. by **Shimon bar Yochai** based on visions he supposedly received from the angel Gabriel and published in the 13th century by **Moses de Leon**. Most Jewish scholars do not accept the **Zohar** as an authority and suspect that **Moses de Leon** may have actually fabricated the work.

My conclusion: It is evident that most scholars including Jewish scholars do not believe the **tradition** of the rope on the high priest's ankle. Since the death of the high priest in the Holy of Holies was a Biblical possibility [Leviticus 16] and no one else was allowed under any circumstances to enter the Holy of Holies the **tradition** certainly has a reasonableness about it, but we have no conclusive evidence only **tradition**.