

PARSHA SUMMARY FOR PARSHAS TETZAVEH

by Rabbi Aron Tendler

Note: The Shabbos Torah Reading is divided into 7 sections. Each section is called an Aliya [literally: Go up] since for each Aliya, one person "goes up" to make a bracha [blessing] on the Torah Reading.

The following Aliya summary will list the numerous laws detailed in Parshas Mishpatim. A total of 53 Mitzvot are commanded.

1st Aliya: The Parsha opens with the commandment to use pure olive oil in lighting the Menorah. Aharon and his four sons were selected to be the Kohanim. The basic garments of a Kohain consisted of a turban, shirt, pants, and belt. The Kohain Gadol wore four additional garments: the Me'ill - a long outer robe; the Ayphod - a quilted vest or bibbed apron; the Choshen - jeweled breastplate; and the Tzitz - engraved, golden, forehead plate. The quilted vest is described in this Aliya along with the two Shoham stones. These were engraved with the names of the 12 Tribes and set on the shoulders of the Kohain Gadol.

2nd Aliya: The cloth settings for the Shoham stones are described along with the jeweled breastplate. The method of fastening the breastplate to the quilted vest is explained. The breastplate was a quilted garment set with 12 stones, each engraved with the name of a Tribe.

3rd Aliya: The long outer robe is described. The hem of this garment was edged with small bells intended to announce the presence of the Kohain Gadol as he walked through the Bais Hamikdash. (From this the Gemara derives that a husband, prior to entering the door of his own home, out of respect for his wife, should announce his arrival by knocking on the door.) The engraved, golden forehead plate and the Kohain Gadol's turban are described, along with the four basic garments worn by all Kohanim. All the garments were hand made of the finest white linen. The special vestments of the Kohain Gadol were woven from a special thread spun from five different colored threads, including a thread made of pure gold.

4th, 5th, & 6th Aliyot: The seven day ceremony consecrating the Kohanim into their priestly service is detailed along with the consecration of the Mizbeach - Altar.

7th Aliya: The last vessel to be described is the inner, golden Altar, used to burn the daily incense offering. This offering, as well as the daily preparation for the lighting of the Menorah, could only be performed by the Kohain Gadol. The special mixture of incense called the Kitores, could only be

formulated for this purpose. (The renowned biblical archeologist, Vendell Jones, claims to have unearthed a hidden cache containing 600 kilos of the Kitores, buried before the 1st Bais Hamikdash was destroyed.)