

## **Parshas Tetzaveh-the Sacred Stones** **by Rabbi Eliyahu Kirsh**

One of the major themes of this Parsha is the *Bigdai Kehuna*, the clothing of the Kohanim. When the Kohanim did their service in the Mishkan and later in the Bais Hamikdash, they had to wear only the designated garments. The Regular Kohen wore 4 garments and the Kohen Gadol wore 8 garments. The regular Kohen wore a hat, kesones [tunic], belt, and pants under robe all of white linen. The Kohen Gadol in addition wore Choshen Mishpat [breastplate] with 12 stones, Ephod [worn like a backwards apron], Miil [robe with bells on bottom] and the Tzitz [gold plate on forehead]. In order for avodah to be kosher these garments had to be worn by the cohen nad they had to be the right clothes; a regular cohen could not wear the cohen gadol's clothes and vice versa.

The Ephod had two Avani Shoham in front on each side. The names of six shevatim were engraved on each according to birth order. The Choshen had 12 stones on it. The Nesiim contributed the stones. Sefarim bring two versions of how the nesiim got them:

1. They were wealthier, and
2. The Ananei hakvod brought them as a reward for their leadership.

They are blamed for bringing them late. They should have brought them right in the beginning of the collection of materials. Therefore a yud is missing in nesiim in the beginning of Vayakhel. This follows a principle that when a letter is missing from a word, there is an indication of something missing. Even though they made up for this by being the first to bring korbonos at the Chanukas Hamishkan, the dedication of the mishkan, the impact of their not giving it over quickly enough remained

Much emphasis is placed on the sacred stones. Each stone was different, giving each tribe its own special identity and color. The stones were in sockets of gold. Rabbeinu Bachaya al haTorah makes the observation that generally, the less precious thing serves the more precious thing. We see this all of the time in the design and manufacture of jewelry. Precious stones are placed in gold and silver rings, showing the stone is the important thing and the gold or silver are the holder. Furthermore, the names of the tribes were engraved on the stones, in this case making the precious stones the holders. The letters are the basis for the Torah which is the blueprint for the world. This emphasizes that the Torah is the most precious

thing. As the *pasuk* says '*Mipaz Umipninim yekarah*', the torah's worth is more than fine gold and gems. Indeed, the torah is the most precious item much more precious than anything in *olam hazeh*. We use precious stones and similar analogies only to give us an idea. In truth, however, not only is the Torah so much more valuable but it is so above and beyond anything of this world, For the Torah comes from the higher, spiritual worlds and is only contracted to fit into our world. Indeed, it is through the Torah we connect ourselves with the Ribono Shel olam , creator of all worlds.