SUMMARY OF PARASHAT BEHAALOTEKHA

First Aliya: Aharon received instructions to light the Menorah, a seven-branched candelabrum illuminating the interior of the Tabernacle. The Menorah was crafted as a single piece from pure gold. All the candles on the Menorah inclined towards the middle candle, which itself was directed towards the most sacred place or Qodesh haQodashim.

Second Aliya: Moshe was commanded to prepare the Leviyim (Levites) for religious service in the Tabernacle, a temple built in the desert. The Leviyim were then installed in their sacred service. They worked in the Tabernacle starting from age 25, and retired from this service at 50.

Third Aliya: The people of Israel celebrated their second Pesach since leaving Egypt. A second Pesach, one month after the first, was established for those unable to bring the Pesach sacrifice on time. Our sages say that those impure at that time were the ones who had carried Yosef's remains. Yosef had made his brothers swear to bury him in the land of Israel. When those in charge of Yosef's body came to Moshe, uncertain of what to do because they were impure and could not celebrate the first Pesach, Moshe didn't know what to answer. Moshe then asked HaShem for instructions because everything Moshe did or said was through direct communication with God.

Fourth Aliya: This Aliya recounts the beginning of the long-awaited journey to the Promised Land. The Tabernacle or Mishkan was finished, and all the tasks related to it had been assigned to the Leviyim and the Cohanim. It was finally time to set out! The Israelites needed some sort of guidance (a GPS!) to know when to depart and where to go. HaShem indicated the creation of silver trumpets to signal when the camp should move. Also, a cloud that hovered over the Tabernacle would

rise and move in the direction they needed to follow.

Fifth Aliya: On the 20th of Iyar, the Mishkan cloud lifted, initiating the journey which should have lasted a few months but ended up taking 40 years. This Aliya also discusses Yitro, who joined us before the giving of the Tora and now, a year and a half later, decided to return to his land in Midyan. The Tora illustrates that the Aron ha'Edut, the Ark of the Covenant, would always travel ahead of the people. This interesting point underscores a fundamental principle: the People of Israel must always follow the Aron, that is, the Tora.

Sixth Aliya: This Aliya begins with the famous verse "Vayhi Binso'a haAron" that we chant before taking the Tora out. Later, the Tora describes the complaints of the people about their living conditions in the desert. The Tora depicts the "manna", a nutritious heavenly food the Israelites could gather in the desert, indicating they had ample food even in the desert. This clarifies that those complaining weren't doing so out of genuine need. Moshe expresses his immense frustration at the people's behavior. However, God promises to fulfill their desires and sends the "selav," or quail, for the people to eat meat. Moshe is instructed to appoint a Sanhedrin to help him govern the people and teach them Tora. Moshe, the greatest prophet of all time, couldn't lead an entire people alone. The Tora's message is that a leader should always strive to lead alongside other capable individuals.

Seventh Aliya: Quails descended on the camp in large numbers, and the people ate more than enough meat. This obsessive behavior, given the availability of "manna," wasn't appropriate for God's People. After overeating vast amounts of meat, many people died. Aharon and Miriam spoke negatively about Moshe (Lashon Hara), saying that Moshe was too occupied with his responsibilities to the people and never at home, even though he was married to Tzippora. Aharon and Miriam also thought it wasn't right that only Moshe had direct

communication with God (prophecy), as they were also prophets, and had regular lives with their families! HaShem responded that they couldn’t be compared to Moshe. Moshe was a “full-time” prophet who communicated with God 24/7, making a normal family life impossible. However, Moshe was the only exception in all of history exempted from having a normal family life. And yet, he was married and even had two children! Miriam was punished with a form of leprosy for speaking against Moshe, but Moshe interceded for her, and she was healed.

Rabbi Jacob Bitton