

# OHRNET

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## PARSHA INSIGHTS

by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

### Being a Mensch

*"And let them take for Me a portion, from every man whose heart motivates him, you shall take My portion." (25:2)*

"Being a mensch" is one of those untranslatable Yiddish phrases which define what it means to be Jewish.

A few years ago an El Al flight to London was carrying a young child in need of an urgent and critical operation. Apart from the child's medical problem, there was another problem: money. The parents had barely enough to cover the cost of the flight to London, which involved the purchase of a whole row of seats to accommodate the stricken child and his medical support systems.

During the flight, a religious Jew who was traveling in first class came to the back of the plane to pray with a *minyan*. On his way back to his seat he went over to the father of the child and asked how the child was doing. In the course of the conversation the father mentioned he had no idea how he was going to be able to cover the cost of the operation. He was already way over his head in debt with the medical expenses that he had already incurred. He would need nothing short of a small miracle.

Without further ado the man took his leave, walked back to the first class cabin, pulled out his hat, and proceeded to tour the aisles of the first-class cabin collecting for the operation. In approximately ten minutes his hat contained checks to the value of some \$100,000, sufficient for both the operation and the flights and all the medical expenses to date.

If Jews excel at anything, it's *tzedaka* – charity.

"Charity," however, really doesn't translate the word *tzedaka*. *Tzedaka* means "righteousness." Unfortunately, as we live in a largely selfish and unrighteous world, the

word righteousness usually finds itself being used with the reflexive pronoun "self" as in "self-righteous." However, "righteousness" is no more than "rightness," doing what is right. A Jew gives *tzedaka* not because it's charity, not because he is charitable, but because that's what's right. The definition of what is right is what G-d wants. Thus, ultimately we give *tzedaka* not because our hearts reach out to the plight of others but because that's what G-d wants from us.

*"And let them take for Me a portion, from every man whose heart motivates him, you shall take My portion."*

There are three kinds of *tzedaka*, and they are all hinted at in this verse.

The highest level is "*let them take for Me a portion.*" Here the giving is "for Me" – because that's what G-d wants us to do. The second level is when we give *tzedaka* out of the kindness of our hearts because we cannot bear to see the suffering of the poor – "*From every man whose heart motivates him.*" Noble as it is, this is not the highest level of giving.

And the third level is the person who would really prefer not to give at all, but he is too embarrassed to say no. About him the verse says, "*You shall take My portion.*"

No one will ever know from which of these groups were the passengers in that first-class El Al cabin, but one thing is clear: whatever a Jew's motives, he knows what it means to be a *mensch*.

- Source: *Nachalat Chamisha in Iturei Torah*

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# TALMUD TIPS

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by Rabbi Moshe Newman

## Terumah: Berachot 51-57

### Just the Right Length

Rav Yehuda said, "There are three things that if one extends them, his days and years are extended: at prayer, at the table and in the bathroom."

The *gemara* explains that the correct manner of prayer that Rav Yehuda refers to is only if one prays without expecting to receive everything that he desires on his own terms. A prayer that is unhurried, and accepting of whatever answer Hashem provides, is praiseworthy and deserving of being rewarded by Above with "long days and years."

The Maharsha cites another *gemara* where a *beraita* states that a person who says a "long Amen" is rewarded with long days and years. (Berachot 47a) Based on this *beraita*, he asks why Rav Yehuda seemingly failed to include an extended Amen in his list on our *daf*. The Maharsha answers that Rav Yehuda in fact included Amen in his list of three activities. When Rav Yehuda said "One who takes his time in his prayer," he was also speaking about saying Amen as well as other prayers.

Why is extending the Amen such a positive act? From another teaching in the *beraita* the significance of extending Amen is clear: "And he shouldn't throw a *beracha* from his mouth." Rashi explains that saying it too quickly makes it appear as if it is a burden to the person, something that he merely needs to rid himself of and get done. Rashi also notes that Amen is the ending of a *beracha*. Conversely, therefore, saying Amen without haste shows a person's love of Hashem, and that saying a *beracha*, a prayer or Amen is a divine pleasure.

It is important to note, Tosefot points out, that although a "long Amen" is good, too long of an Amen is not good. The reason for this, Tosefot explains, is because when a person says Amen for too long, the word is not said correctly and will lose its meaning and may even take on a different meaning.

Despite Tosefot's reasoning, it appears that the Maharsha offers a different reason for not saying Amen for longer than is appropriate. The *gemara* says that there is a dispute between two Amoraim regarding when a person who says *hamotzi* may cut the bread to eat it. One opinion is that he needs to wait until all others at the table have finished saying Amen. The other opinion is that he waits only until the majority of the

others have concluded Amen. By means of explaining the latter opinion, the *gemara* states: "Whoever extends the word Amen for longer than is appropriate is mistaken." One way to understand this statement would be as Tosefot reasons, that saying the word for too long changes the word, and thus the minority of people at the table who are saying it at length are not really saying it and may be ignored. The Maharsha, however, writes a different explanation, an explanation that is quite novel and thought-provoking.

He writes that a person who says Amen for too long does so based on the teaching in the *gemara* that one who lengthens his saying of Amen is rewarded with the lengthening of his days and his years. While such a person's intention may be understandable, it is wrong, claims the Maharsha. The verse in Kohellet (12:1) states: "And remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the days of evil come, and years arrive, about which you will say, 'I have no desire in them.'" We are taught here that each person has an age beyond which is not desirable or good for him. Only Hashem knows what that age is. A person who prays for days and years beyond this age may unwittingly be asking for something not good for him. Therefore, a person should pray for a lifetime that is appropriate and good for him, as known by Hashem. According to this idea, a person who says Amen for too long – showing his desire to increase and increase his lifetime span – should be interrupted by the one who says *hamotzi* and not allowed to complete his long Amen. The interruption and disruption of his Amen is for his own benefit.

The practical halacha of how to say Amen is recorded in Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 124:8. "One should not answer Amen this is short, rather it should be somewhat long, the length of time that it would take to say 'El Melech Ne'eman' (Hashem is a faithful King), and one shouldn't lengthen it too much because the reading of the word won't express its meaning if it's extended too much." The Mishna Berurah points out that the ideal length for saying Amen is based on these three words since they are the meaning of Amen and Amen is an acronym for these words.

- Berachot 54b

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# Q & A

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## Questions

1. How many types of items were the Jews to donate?
2. The donation of silver for the Mishkan differed from the donation of the other items. How?
3. What property do *techelet* and *argaman* share that *orot eilim m'adamim* do not share?
4. What property do the above three share that *shesh* and *orot techashim* do not share?
5. Onkelos translates "*tachash*" as "*sasgona*." Why?
6. What kind of trees did Yaakov plant in Egypt?
7. Describe two uses of:
  - (a) oil
  - (b) spices
  - (c) jewels
8. The *aron* was made with three boxes, one inside the other. Exactly how tall was the outer box?
9. Why is the Torah referred to as "testimony"?
10. What did the faces of the *keruvim* resemble?
11. On what day of the week was the *lechem hapanim* baked?
12. What does *miksha* mean?
13. What was the purpose of the *menorah's gevi'im* (cups)?
14. How did Moshe know the shape of the *menorah*?
15. What designs were embroidered into the tapestries of the Mishkan?
16. What is meant by "standing wood"?
17. How long was the Mishkan?
18. How wide was the interior of the Mishkan?
19. Why was the altar coated with *nechoshet*?
20. Which function did the copper *yeteidot* serve?

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary, unless otherwise stated.

## Answers

1. 25:2 - 13.
2. 25:3 - No fixed amount of the other items was required. The silver was given as a fixed amount: a half-shekel.
3. 25:4-5 - They are wool; *orot eilim* are not.
4. 25:4-5 - They are dyed; *shesh* and *orot techashim* are not.
5. 25:5 - The *tachash* delights (*sas*) in its multi-colors (*g'vanim*).
6. 25:5 - *Arazim* - cedars.
7. 25:6-7:
  - (a). The oil was lit in the *menorah* and used for anointing.
  - (b). The spices were used in the anointing oil and for the incense.
  - (c). The precious stones were for the *ephod* and the *choshen*.
8. 25:11 - The outer box was one and a half *amot* plus a *tefach* plus a little bit, because it rose a little bit above the *kaporet*. (The *kaporet* was a *tefach* thick – see 25:17).
9. 25:16 - It testifies that G-d commanded us to keep the mitzvahs.
10. 25:18 - The faces of children.
11. 25:29 - Friday.
12. 25:31 - Hammered.
13. 25:31 - Purely ornamental.
14. 25:40 - G-d showed Moshe a *menorah* of fire.
15. 26:1 - On one side a lion; on the other side an eagle.
16. 26:15 - The wooden beams were to be upright and not stacked one upon the other.
17. 26:16 - 30 *amot*.
18. 26:23 - 10 *amot*.
19. 27:2 - To atone for brazenness.
20. 27:19 - They secured the curtains against the wind.

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# WHAT'S IN A WORD?

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*Synonyms in the Hebrew Language*  
by Rabbi Reuven Chaim Klein

## Foreheads and Fadihot

**A**fter detailing how to fashion the Kohen Gadol's *tzitz*, the Torah commands that the *tzitz* be placed on Aharon's *meitzach*\* (Ex. 29:38). The word *meitzach* is commonly translated as "forehead," although we will see below that this is not universally agreed upon. Targum pseudo-Jonathan (there) translates *meitzach* as *padachta*, a word which is also used in later Hebrew. In this essay we will attempt to distinguish between the Hebrew word *meitzach* – forms of which appear some thirteen times in the Bible – and the later *padachat*, which does not appear in the Bible but is found in rabbinic literature. In doing so we will explore several etymological theories regarding the origins of the word *padachat* and where it comes from.

Contrary to popular belief, most commentators understand that the Kohen Gadol's *tzitz* ought to be placed *above* the forehead in the same space where the *tefillin* is laid. These commentators will encounter difficulty in rendering the word *meitzach* as "forehead" because they maintain that the *tzitz* is not placed on the forehead, but higher up. How, then, do they explain the Torah's requirement to place the *tzitz* on Aharon's *meitzach*?

*Chiddushei HaRitva* and *Tosafos Yeshanim* (to *Yoma* 71b) explain that although the Torah literally says that the *tzitz* should be "on Aharon's *meitzach*" (Ex. 28:38), this actually means "on top of Aharon's *meitzach*." Thus, they understand that while *meitzach* means "forehead," the Torah never says that the *tzitz* should be placed on the forehead, but rather *above* the forehead. Alternatively, these two sources explain that while in Rabbinic Hebrew the term *meitzach* refers to the "forehead," in Biblical Hebrew it actually means the "top of the head" (or at least includes the top of the head along with the forehead). According to this explanation, the word *meitzach* cannot accurately be translated as "forehead." (See also *Tosafos HaShaleim* to Ex. 39:28 which states that *meitzach* does not mean *padachat*.)

Rabbi Shlomo Pappenheim of Breslau (1740-1814) connects the word *meitzach* to *netzach/nitzachon* ("victory"), explaining that the forehead is the most noticeable and visible part of the body, such that it seems to "overpower" the rest of one's person. Rabbi Pappenheim connects both words back to the biliteral root TZADI-CHET (*tzach*), although his way of explaining that connection may seem a bit farfetched. Rabbi David Chaim Chelouche (1920-2016), the late Chief Rabbi of Netanya, offers a more direct connection between *meitzach* and *tzach*. He explains that a person's forehead is generally smooth and devoid of hairs, so it can appropriately be described as *tzach* ("clean," "pristine").

As we mentioned in the beginning, another word for "forehead" in Hebrew is *padachat*. This word appears in the Mishna (*Niddah* 3:5), which states that a child is, according to halacha, considered "born" once his or her *padachat* has already exited the mother. Similarly, the Talmud (*Yevamos* 120a) rules that a corpse can be positively identified (to allow his widow to marry someone else) only if the *padachat* and face are intact. Of course, the Mishna and the Talmud do not explain what *padachat* means, so how do we know that it is a "forehead"?

A tradition going back to the Geonic period explains that the words *meitzach* and *padachat* are synonyms, but that the former is Biblical Hebrew and the latter is Rabbinic Hebrew. This idea is found in Rabbeinu Hai Gaon's commentary to the Mishna (*Niddah* 3:5) and in his student's commentary to the Talmud (*Shabbos* 80b). It is also cited by Rabbi Zecharia Aghmati (1120-1195) in *Sefer HaNer* (to *Shabbos* 80b) in the name of Rav Hai Gaon. This idea is later repeated by Rabbeinu Chananel (to *Shabbos* 80b) and *Sefer HaAruch*. According to this, *meitzach* and *padachat* mean the same thing, just in different versions/dialects of the Hebrew Language. Indeed, Rashi (*Shabbos* 151b, *Yevamos* 120a, *Kesubos* 75a, *Bechoros* 46b) always defines *padachat* as *meitzach*, suggesting that he too understood them to be perfectly synonymous. (My Belgian friend Rabbi Yosef de Jong suggests that *meitzach* refers specifically to the front of one's forehead, while *padachat* includes even the temples, although he concedes that he has no source to support this

suggestion. That said, the Academy of the Hebrew Language's official anatomical dictionary defines *padachat* as *glabella*—a Latin term which refers to the smooth part of the forehead above and between the eyebrows, thus seemingly excluding the temples.)

Now that we have essentially established that *meitzach* and *padachat* mean the same thing, we can begin to explore the etymological basis of the word *padachat*. Its root seems to be PEH-CHET-DALET, but such a root is not attested to anywhere else in Hebrew. Dr. Alexander Kohut (1842-1894) writes in *Aruch HaShaleim* that the word *padachat* is of Persian origin. Indeed, according to the *Comprehensive Aramaic Lexicon Project* (known to scholars as CAL), the few places in which the word *padachat* appear in the Talmud and Rabbinic literature are the only instances of this word in Aramaic texts. This suggests that it is not really an Aramaic word, supporting Kohut's theory that the word is originally Persian, because if it is not from Hebrew or Aramaic, then Persian would be the next logical candidate.

Nonetheless, some learned rabbis argue for a Semitic or even Hebrew basis for the word *padachat*. By way of metathesis, Rabbi Yaakov Yehuda (Zilberberg) de Kassif (1914-2003) connects three different Hebrew roots which use the consonants PEH, DALET, and CHET in various orders: *dachaf* ("push"), *pachad* ("fear"), and *padachat*. He explains that haste and confusion oftentimes "push" their way to the forefront of a person's emotions, thus causing "fear" to become one's dominant feeling. One's internal sense of fear is, in turn, "pushed" outwards and is oftentimes physically manifest on his or her "forehead."

Rabbi Chelouche argues that since the letters MEM and PEH are interchangeable (because both are pronounced by the lips), and the letters TZADI and DALET can be interchangeable (as evidenced by their orthographic similarity in Arabic), *padachat* can actually be understood as a cognate of *metzach*.

Similarly, Rabbi Yehoshua Steinberg of the Veromemanu Foundation suggests connecting the root PEH-DALET-CHET with PEH-REISH-CHET because of the interchangeability of the letters DALET and REISH. The latter means "flowering" or "blossoming" and thus refers to something that protrudes or sticks out. This somewhat echoes Rashi's (to *Shabbos* 151b) comment about the *padachat/metzach*, that it is the smoothest and shiniest part of the face, such that it sticks out the most.

The Arabic word *fadiha* (or *fadichah*) has entered Modern Hebrew slang and is commonly used to refer to a "shameful occurrence," a "scandal," or an instance of "public shaming." When asked about an etymological connection between *fadiha* and *padachat*, Rabbi Shaul Goldman suggested two possible ways of understanding the word *fadiha*. Firstly, he suggests that the word *fadiha* is related to the Aramaic root BET-DALET-CHET, which means "happiness" or "joking" (and is the etymological basis for the Hebrew word *bedichah*, "joke," and the Hebrew/Yiddish word *badchan*, "joker"). Because synonyms for joyous expressions are often used to also refer to "ridicule," the BET morphed into a PEH to become *fadiha*.

Alternatively, Rabbi Goldman supposes that *padachat* and *fadiha* are related in that both imply "exposure" (noting that the verb *fadah* in Arabic means "to expose"): The forehead is the most *exposed* part of the body, and a *fadiha* is an embarrassing incident which *exposes* one's foibles. Although totally anachronistic, we may perhaps add that Jean-Luc Picard's memetic facepalm is a very human reaction to an embarrassing situation, which further cements the connection between *padachat* and *fadiha*.

\*NOTE: Cognates of this word in the Bible are always in the possessive/construct form, so they are vowelized with a TZEIRI (or CHIRIK) under the MEM to become *meitzach*. That said, there is a controversy over how the word should be vowelized when not in the construct form. Some argue that the MEM should still have TZEIRI and the word remains *meitzach*, while others maintain that the MEM should be vowelized with a SEGOL and becomes *metzach*. This dispute has practical ramifications in the Yom Kippur liturgy in which we confess sin committed with a "brazen forehead," as some prayer books read "*azut metzach*" and some read "*azut meitzach*."

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# LETTER AND SPIRIT

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*Insights based on the writings of Rav S.R. Hirsch by Rabbi Yosef Hershman*

## The Menorah: Enlightened Spirit

The materials used in the construction of the Mishkan have symbolic value and convey a great deal about our relationship to G-d and the manner in which we are to consecrate our lives. The meaning of the menorah would seem obvious – it is the source of light, of spiritual enlightenment.

Normally we associate light with knowledge and wisdom, intellectual or spiritual enlightenment. Rav Hirsch cites a plethora of verses from the Tanach where lamp and light denote teaching, wisdom and Torah. But he cites an even greater number of verses in which *lamp* and *light* are used as metaphors for the source of growth and life, of unfolding and flowering, of progress and joy.

Perception and enlightenment are only part of the spiritual symbolism of light. The other essential component is movement, which, together with perception, epitomizes the effect and meaning of light. This movement is not physical movement, but organic and spiritual movement. In this sense, the light of the menorah represents both perception – the element that enlightens, and movement – the element that mobilizes. In man, this duality takes the form of *perception* and *volition*. The exercise of these two faculties demonstrates the presence of the human spirit.

At their root, volition and perception are one, and they strive to reunite in their objectives. Any perception of truth is of value only if there is practical implementation. And conversely, all doing of good must be oriented

towards the recognition of truth. Only from this perception of truth does the good deed derive its motivation and assurance that it is truly of value.

The menorah was constructed of three pairs of lateral branches emerging from a central shaft. Each pair, representing perception and volition, issued from the same point on the central shaft. When they reach up to the top of the menorah, the two branches directed their light towards each other, and also to the central branch common to both. This central flame points upwards, symbolizing the spirit dedicated to G-d. The entire menorah is thus a call to set the dedication to G-d as the goal of our united perception and volition.

The menorah ideally is to be constructed from single piece of gold, chiseled away to create its structure. It is to be made of gold, the noblest of metals, but if gold is not available it may be made of other metals, excluding scrap metal. If necessary, it may also be constructed piece by piece. While the menorah's ideal construction symbolizes the purity of spirit that the Jew aspires to, the fact that it may be fashioned from other metals, and even piecemeal, suggests that the call to spiritual ascent is for every Jew. In every circumstance, at his level, with the faculties with which he is endowed, whether he lives in turbulent or tranquil times – he can achieve moral perfection.

- Source: Commentary, Shemot 25:39

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## PARSHA OVERVIEW

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Hashem commands Moshe to build a Mishkan (Sanctuary) and supplies him with detailed instructions. The *Bnei Yisrael* are asked to contribute precious metals and stones, fabrics, skins, oil and spices. In the Mishkan's outer courtyard is an altar for the burnt offerings and a laver for washing. The Tent of Meeting is divided by a curtain into two chambers. The outer chamber is accessible only to the *Kohanim*, the descendants of

Aharon. This contains the table of showbreads, the *menorah*, and the golden altar for incense. The innermost chamber, the Holy of Holies, may be entered only by the *Kohen Gadol*, and only once a year, on Yom Kippur. Here is the ark that held the Ten Commandments inscribed on the two tablets of stone which Hashem gave to the Jewish nation on Mount Sinai. All of the utensils and vessels, as well as the construction of the Mishkan, are described in great detail.

## Immunity in the Community

Michael from NY asked:

*With the current Corona virus scare, although there is no vaccine at this time, I was wondering: Are we required to immunize our children? Since the scientific knowledge is not 100% accurate and there is some proof that vaccines can cause harm, are we even allowed to vaccinate children?*

Dear Michael,

Our Torah Sages teach that in medical matters we should rely on the experts in each generation. Therefore, as with any medical issue, one is required to find a doctor with sufficient expertise in the subject, such that his opinion may be relied upon.

There's no blanket answer concerning *all* vaccines, but certainly many childhood diseases have been practically eliminated or reduced since their introduction. Smallpox, for example, once a great killer of children, is today extremely rare. On the other hand, some vaccinations are of highly questionable value. Find a doctor whom you trust to help select the proper immunizations for your child.

The main point in Judaism is to take great care with one's own health and to take great care not to be negligent in caring about the health of someone else. There are two related principles in Judaism that may be seen to be reasons for making vaccination mandatory. I will present them to provide a basic understanding of the issue, but this discussion is only for general interest and not for making a real-life decision.

The first principle is that is forbidden for a Jew to place

his life or health in unreasonable danger. In a classic article Rabbi Shlomo Yosef Zevin discusses the halachic enforceability of Shylock's agreement with Antonio in "The Merchant of Venice." Shylock stipulates that if Antonio does not pay his debt on time, Shylock will be entitled to a pound of Antonio's flesh. Rabbi Zevin demonstrates that such a clause would be absolutely unenforceable under Jewish law because "our bodies are not our own; they are the property of G-d." In effect, the Torah teaches us that our bodies are not our own property but belong to G-d to be used in His service and to be protected and preserved until such time as He chooses to reclaim it. This is in sharp contrast to modern medical ethics and political theory which posit autonomy and self-determination as supreme values, and enshrine the attitude that "it is my body and I can do with it what I will" – including reckless endangerment. And, obviously, if I do not have the right to endanger myself, I certainly don't have the right to endanger my children.

The second principle focuses on the duty that is owed to others. Just as we are commanded to preserve and protect our own lives, we are similarly commanded to remove impediments or stumbling blocks that cause dangers to others. This is derived from the mitzvah of erecting fences around flat roofs so that people who climb onto the roof should not fall down. Moreover, even if I am not the source of the danger I have a duty to do what I can to rescue someone from whatever peril they may be in, such as rescuing someone from drowning etc. "Do not stand by idly over your friend's blood" (Leviticus 19:16). Thus, we have duties owed to G-d not to expose ourselves, our children or others to hazards, risks or dangers. Since failure to vaccinate endangers both my children and the children of others, both obligations would lead to same result – a duty to minimize danger.

*For questions, comments, or to propose ideas for a future article, please contact the author at [rcklein@ohr.edu](mailto:rcklein@ohr.edu)*

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