

Take for Me a tithe... (Ex. 25:2). Rashi explains that “for Me” means for “My sake” (literally, “for My Name”). Rabbi Meir of Premishlan (in *Chasdei Avos*, cited by Rabbi Reuven Margolis in *Marginisa deRabbi Meir*) that the *gematria* of the word “tithe” (תרומה = 651) equals רפא שלם (= 651). If one adds the *gematria* of Hashem’s Tetragrammaton (יהוה = 26) to that sum, one reaches the *gematria* of the phrase “a complete healing” (רפואה שלמה = 667). This is alluded to in the passage at hand which speaks of taking “a tithe” for Hashem’s name. In other words, if one “takes” the word “tithe” and adds it to Hashem’s name, one reaches *refua shleima* “a complete healing”.

Take for Me a tithe... (Ex. 25:2). Why does it say “take for Me a tithe” instead of “give for Me a tithe”? Rabbi Moshe Alshich (*Toras Moshe* here) explains that is in line with what the Talmud says that when a prominent individual accepts a present from somebody else, then the give is considered to have received something, because he enjoyed the benefit of a prominent individual accepting his gift (see *Kiddushin* 7a). The same is true here when Hashem accepts the Jews’ tithes, the Jews are in essence taking something from Him (because in truth, everything really comes from Him), rather than giving. Rabbi Shimon Sofer (*Shevet Sofer*, *Shaarei Simcha Parshas Vayislach*), as cited by his student Rabbi Yonasan Shteif (*Amaros*, *Terumah* 3) uses this to explain a peculiarity in the wording of Yaakov’s messengers who were sent to deliver Esav a tribute. Yaakov told them, “When you meet my brother Esav and he asks, ‘to whom do you belong’... and you will say, ‘to your servant, to Yaakov it is a tribute that has been sent’” (Gen. 32:19). In phrasing it this way, Yaakov meant to imply that if Esav would accept his tribute, then Yaakov would take that as a prominent person accepting his gift and he would consider himself a recipient, as well as a giver. *Chasam Sofer*, takes another approach in his work *Toras Moshe* (here). The Gemara (*Brachos* 35a) raises a contradiction between two Scriptural passages concerning Hashem’s hegemony over This World, one passage reads, “The Earth belongs to God, as does everything in it” (Ps. 24:1), while the second verse reads, “Earth was given to mankind” (Ps. 115:16). The Talmud reconciles this contradiction by explaining that the first verse reflects the reality before one blesses Hashem, and the second verse is afterwards. In other words, says Chasam Sofer, if a person uses his worldly possession to “bless” Hashem and give Him honor, then possessions can be considered his. But if a person uses his worldly possession for purposes that are counter to service of Hashem, then those possession are not considered his, but Hashem’s. This is why when Haman wanted to use his wealth to destroy the Jewish People, the Midrash (*Shemos Rabbah* 33:5) says that Hashem responded by saying, “The Jewish People are Mine, as it says, ‘For the Sons of Israel are slaves to Me’ (Lev. 25:55), and gold and silver is Mine, as it says, ‘Mine is the silver, Mine is the gold’ (Chaggai 2:8)”. Once Haman sought to use his property for unholy endeavors, then the ownership of that property reverted to the One Above. A person can only own worldly possessions if his

intent is to use them for holy purposes. For this reason, when talking about the Jews donating for the Tabernacle, it says “Take for Me” not “Give for Me”. This wording is meant to teach us that if one gives tithes, and shows that the reasons for his possessing stuff is to use that stuff for loftier purposes, then he will essentially be “taking” that which is otherwise “for Hashem” because now the ownership will be ascribed to him and not to Hashem. Rabbi Yonason Shteif further writes (*Amaros* 5) that the idea of “taking” instead of “giving” tithes refers to the concept cited by the Midrash (*Vayikra Rabbah* 34:8) that more the poor man does more for the philanthropist than the philanthropist does for the poor man. This is because the poor man’s accepting charity causes the philanthropist to be successful both in This World and the Next World. For this reason, the philanthropist’s act of “giving” can really be described as “taking”, just like the Jews’ act of donating to the Tabernacle is described as “taking”. This idea is also reflected in the famous saying, “tithe (עשר) so that you can become rich (שתתעשר),” as found in *Shabbos* 119a and *Taanis* 9a.

Take for Me a tithe... (Ex. 25:2). The Midrash (*Tanna DeVei Eliyahu*, ch. 17) relates: Once the Jews happily accepted upon themselves the Yoke of the Heavenly Kingdom, and they said, “Whatever Hashem speaks, we will do and we will listen”, then Hashem immediately told Moshe to tell the Jewish People, “Take for Me a tithe... and make for Me a sanctuary, and I will live in your midst.” The Ramban (to Ex. 35:1) writes that when Moshe congregated the entirety of the Jewish population, this includes men and women, as everybody donated for the purposes of the Tabernacle. It seems that this gathering happened the day after Moshe returned from Mount Sinai following the absolution of the sin of the Golden Calf. Once Moshe prayed for their forgiveness and He granted a reprieve of sorts, then the Jews returned to their earlier status archived when they said, “we will do and we will listen” and were now once again charged with building sanctuary for Hashem’s presence. In essence, building the Tabernacle served a means of rectifying the sin of the Golden Calf. As the Midrash says (Song of Songs 1:5) “I am black and beautiful” refers to the blackening of the Jews’ by sinning with the Golden Calf and the rectification of that sin by building the beautiful edifice that is the Tabernacle.

And red rams’ skin (Ex. 25:5). The Talmud Yerushalmi (*Shabbos* 7:2) explains that they would redden the skin of the rams by hitting them with a stick, such that the skin would be reddish later. Rabbi David Frankel (*Korban HaEdah*) asks: Why does the Talmud explain how they dyed red skins for the Tabernacle, but does not explain how they dyed blue (*techeiles*) skins for the Tabernacle? He answers that when the Jews left Egypt, they did not have access to any *chilazon* (the aquatic creature which produces the blue dye *techeles*), so they used whatever blue fabrics they had that were dyed with that color from when they were in Egypt. This is because the *chilazon* is only found in the Holy Land off the coast of the tribal territory

of Zevulun (in the north, see *Megillah* 6a), so they did not dye their own fabrics blue like they did with the red. Nonetheless, Rabbi Yosef Engel questions the assumption that they only used pre-dyed blue fabrics from when they were in Egypt in light of the fact that they were given the commandment of *tzitzis* while they were in the wilderness, and that required them to dye fabrics specifically with intention for use in that mitzvah, yet according to Rabbi Frankel, they did not have access to the required blue dyes while they were in the desert? Moreover, according to *Tosafos* (Menachos 42b), dying the fabrics for use in the Kohen's clothing also must be done with specific intentions for the *mitzvah*, so how did they do that if when they were in the desert they did not have access to the *techeles* dye? He answers that just as the Midrash (*Tanchuma*, Terumah 9) says that Yaakov prepared shittim wood for the Jews because he knew they would later need it for the Tabernacle's rituals, so did Moshe, Aharon and the Elders teach the Jews about the Torah which would one day be given and how the Torah would call for the use of specifically-made blue fabric, such that they were able to dye the fabrics blue with the proper intentions *even before they left Egypt*.

And make for Me a sanctuary and I will dwell in your midst, like all that I show you... (Ex. 25:8–9). The *Dorshei Reshumos* notes that the last letters of the words “And made for Me a sanctuary and I will dwell in your midst, like all” (ועשו לי מקדש ושכנתי בתוכם) (ככל אשר) spells out Jerusalem (ירושלים), the place where His presence sits.

And make for Me a sanctuary and I will dwell in your midst (Ex. 25:8). Rabbi Mordechai HaKohen of Tzfas (*Sifsei Kohen*, here) points out that it does not say, “And make for Me a dwelling-place”, rather it says Sanctuary (מקדש), which is a cognate of the word “holy”. This teaches that if a person sanctifies himself and makes himself holy, then he can be a vehicle for the presence of Hashem. In such a case, Hashem will literally dwell *inside* such a person's body. In line with this idea, he explains that the different components of the Tabernacle correspond to the different physiological components of a person's body. The Holy Ark hints at the heart, the two Cherubim hint to the lungs, which rest atop the heart like wings, the *shulchan* represents the liver, the Mishkan itself is like the outer form of one's body, with the beams representing the ribs, the copper Altar representing the stomach, and the *paroches* (curtain) representing the diaphragm (that serves to separate the digestive limbs from the respiratory limbs). The *Menorah* represents the intellect, which have three branches on either side that represent the three sensory limbs which input data to the intellect, the eye, the ear, and the hand, which are also on both sides of a man's person. And, of course, the Golden Altar for the *ketores* represents the nose and the sense of smell.

And you shall make two cherubim (Ex. 25:18). The commentators ask: Why does the Torah use the word two (שנים) in the absolute form, instead of in the construct form (שני)? The *Imrei Emes* of Ger, (*Titzaveh* p. 79) answers that because the *cherubim* were in the form of

human faces, and no two people have the exact same face, the Torah did want to word it as though both cherubim looked exactly the same.

And the cherubim should have their wings spread out upwards, covering the kappores with their wings, and their faces shall be each to his brother, facing the kappores, should be the faces of the cherubim (Ex. 25:20). The Talmud (*Brachos* 56b) says that if one sees a camel in his dream, it is a sign that from Above they decreed upon him death, and he was saved from it. To support this assertion, Rabbi Chama bar Rabbi Chaninah cites the verse which says that Hashem will, metaphorically-speaking, go down to Egypt with Yaakov and later return to the Holy Land with the Jewish People. It says in *Perek Shira* that the song of the camel is the verse: “From the high place, he roars, and from the holy abode, he gives his voice. Roar—he shall surely roar—over his place of living”. In this passage, we see that the camel represents the “pain” Hashem suffers in the destruction of the Holy Temple, by which His presence is not settled in its proper place. What does all of this mean? The Talmud (*Bechoros* 8b) says that unlike other animals, the posture of a male and female camel during intercourse is back-to-back. What is the significance of this? The great Kabbalist Rabbi Yosef Ergas writes in *Shomer Emunim (HaKadmon)* that there are three types of interactions/intercourses: face-to-face, face-to-back, and back-to-back. Rabbi Chanoch Zundel of Bialystok (*Knaf Renanim* to *Perek Shira*, Camel) elaborates on this point, and explains that when we speak of interactions/intercourses this refers to the inflow of divine energies from Above to This World. Just as in the intercourse of This World, there can be no offspring without the interplay between the male and female elements, so does the Divine intercourse refer to some combination of male (*rachamim*-mercy) and female (*din*-justice) components. As Rashi (to Gen. 1:1) explains, the Jewish People are the purpose of creation, such that when Hashem “connects” to the Jewish People to give them an influx of influence, He does so in the manner of face-to-face (Deut. 5:4). This is symbolized by the faces of the Cherubim in the Temple who faced each other, just as Hashem and the Jewish People interact face-to-face—but only as long as their relationship with Him is strong, and they act how they are expected to. When Hashem influences other nations of the world, He does not give them their influence straight to their face, but rather “flings” it over His shoulders to show His dissatisfaction with them. In this way, Hashem’s influence over the nations of the world can be characterized as “back-to-face”. This is symbolized by an animal’s manner of intercourse whereby one partner’s face is opposite the other partner’s back. For this reason, the nations of the world are compared to animals (see Isa. 34:6). However, there is a third way of Hashem interacting with the world, and that is how He influences the Jewish People at times when they are not acting properly. In such times, the Jewish People have figuratively “turned their back” on Hashem (see Jer. 2:27), so He too “turn His back” away from them, even when influencing them with His divine energies. This

again is symbolized by the Cherubim in the Temple who turn away from each other when the Jews are not acting in accordance with Hashem's wishes. Nonetheless, this disharmony between Hashem and the Jewish People is not absolute. Even though both turns their backs away from each other, this is comparable to a married couple who got in a fight and are too embarrassed of each other to look the other in the face, so they refuse to meet face-to-face. But deep down, they are really pained over their fall-out because they actually love each other, and are waiting for the other partner to open up with words of appeasement so that they could return to their marital bliss of before. In short, Hashem's relationship with the Jewish People can either be considered face-to-face or back-to-back, but nothing in between. As such, the camel whose manner of intercourse is always back-to-back represents Hashem's relationship with the Jewish People when in exile, in which He is—so to speak—"pained" over the destruction of the Temple, and hopes that the Jewish People will make some overtures to return to Him. By characterizing the Jews' relationship with Hashem in their most down-trodden times as back-to-back, we include an expression of hope that they will once again return to the relationship of face-to-face. This too is alluded to in the verse at hand in which Hashem promises to join the Jewish People in their exiles (i.e. feel the pain of the exile in the same way that the Jews feel that pain) and then later come back with the Jewish People to place of redemption. We can add that just as a camel's nature allows it to stock up on water and sustenance and last a long time without replenishing itself, so do the Jewish People have the wherewithal to last throughout the bitter exiles and continue to live and wait for their return to their land, may it come speedily and in our days.

And you shall make a table out of Shittim wood, two handbreadths its length, and one handbreadth its width, and one and a half handbreadths its height (Ex. 25:23).

Rabbi Chaim Palagi asks why in the dimensions of the Table are the length (2) and width (1) given as whole numbers, but the height is given as a fraction, an incomplete, or "broken" number (1.5)? He explains that this is meant to teach us that when it comes to "length" and "width" of the table (i.e. who we allow to join our meals), the numbers should be whole, because anybody who comes in good faith should be seated at one's meals. However, when it comes to the quality of the food, if it should be the highest quality possible and most well-regarded foods, then one should have a "broken" number and not go all-out and try to get the very best. A person does not need to strive for completeness in the luxuries of life, but instead completeness in devotion to helping others. The Talmud (*Brachos* 54b) says that there are three things about which we say "the longer, the better", and if one does them longer, he will have a longer life: praying, eating a meal, and using the bathroom. The Talmud explains that one who spend a long time eating his meal has a special merit because maybe a poor person will come in the meantime, and since he will still be in middle of his meal, he will have food around to give the poor person. Because of this, one who has long meals will have

a longer life. It is interesting to note that the Talmud used the word “length” in this context, which alludes to the “length” of the Table in being used to accept as many guests as possible.

And you shall make a table out of Shittim wood... (Ex. 25:23). Rabbenu Bechaya explains that the word Shittim (שטים) is an acronym for “peace, goodness, salvation, atonement” (שלום טובה ישועה מחילה). He further writes that the Holy Ark and the Altar are harbingers of such positive elements, as is the *Shulchan*. This is because the Altar atones for one’s sins, and the bread on the *Shulchan* is also considered like a sacrifice on the Altar, such that if he “sacrifices” the bread of his table by giving some to the poor, then then is tantamount to having offered a sacrifice. As long as the Holy Temple stood, one could get his atonement through ritual sacrifices, but now that the Temple is gone, we can only achieve that sort of atonement by giving to the poor from our table. Rabbenu Bechaya mentions that the custom amongst the French righteous Jews in his time was **to build their coffin out of their dining room table**, in allusion to the idea that one’s table serves to make his life longer (because he gives to the poor from what he has on his table). See also what Rabbenu Bechaya writes about this in his work *Shulchan Shel Arba* (Shaar 1, ד”ה גמר). Rabbi Mordechai HaKohen of Tzfas (*Sifsei Kohen*, here) cites Rabbenu Bechaya’s explanations and adds that this is hinted to in the acrostic of the word *Shulchan* (שלחן) which can be an acronym for “preserved for burial is the kindness of your generosity” (שמור לקבורה חסד נדיבותך). Rabbi Tzvi Hirsch Kardinover writes in *Kav HaYashar* (ch. 46) that there was once a tailor in Brisk who wrote in his will that the *Chevre Kadisha* should make his coffin out of his work table, and should bury him with his ruler in his hand. They asked him about the meaning of these items, and he explained that the ruler and table should serve as two witnesses on his behalf to testify that he never stole or cheated anybody in his dealings. Similarly, we find that Rabbi Yitzchok Lamprotni (author of the encyclopedia *Pachad Yitzechok*) wrote that he asked to be gifted one of the tables from the school where he studied Torah so that they can make the table into a box to serve as his coffin when he would die. Rabbi Avraham Azulai (*Chesed L’Avraham*, 4:46) writes that we do not find explicitly in the Torah that anybody was buried in a coffin, except for Yosef who was called a *tzaddik* because he passed certain tests of fortitude. However, somebody who is not on the level of Yosef should not be buried in a coffin, because in the Heavens they are quite exacting with such people to punish every little sin. But somebody who is not buried in a coffin is only punished from his more serious sins.

Eleven... (Ex. 26:7). Radak in his *Sefer HaSharashim* explains that the Hebrew phrase for the number eleven *ashtei esreh* is related to the word *eshtonos* (“thoughts”), as it is the first “thought” that somebody counting has after he reaches the number 10. However, R. Yonah

ibn Janach in his *Sefer HaShorashim* writes that the phrase *ashtei asar* means *al shteim esreh* (“on top of twelve”) because the number eleven is the number immediately before twelve, so it is called *ashtei asar*. Ibn Janach also writes about this in his work *Sefer HaRikmah* (p. 237).

The stones should be upon the names of the Sons of Israel—twelve on the names—opened engravings, each according to his name, they shall be for the twelve tribes (Ex. 28:21). The Gemara (*Yoma* 73b) asks how one can receive Divine messages from the Urim and Tummim if there was no letter צ amongst the names of the tribes (ראובן שמעון לוי)? The Gemara answers that the stones also had the names of the Three Patriarchs, in which the letter צ does appear (אברהם יצחק). Then the Gemara asks how they can receive messages from the Urim and Tummim if the letter ט does not appear in the names of the Twelve Tribes nor does it appear in the names of the Three Patriarchs? The Gemara answers that upon the stones were also written the words “The Tribes of Jeshurun” (שבטי ישורון) which has a letter ט. This Talmudic passage is somewhat baffling because it asks about the absence of the letter צ before asking about the letter ט even though ט precedes צ in the order of the alphabet, and because the Talmud never even bothered to ask about the letters ק and ח which also only appear in the names of the Three Patriarchs, but not in the names of the Tribes. Rabbi Moshe Itzel of Ponovezh answers as follows: A literal reading of the verse at hand suggests that they were supposed to write the name of each stone on top of the name of each tribe, as it says, “The stones should be upon the names of the Sons of Israel”. With that assumption in place, the Gemara originally thought that the letters ח, ט, and ק are accounted for because they already appear in the names of the twelve stones (אדם, נטדה, ברקת, נפך, ספיר, יהלום, לשם, שבו, אחלמה, תרשיש, שהם, ישפה). For this reason, the Gemara only asked about the letter צ which does not appear in the names of the Twelve Tribes, nor does it appear in the names of the twelve stones. To answer that question, the Gemara introduces the idea that besides the names of the Twelve Tribes, the names of the Three Patriarchs are also supposed to be inscribed on the stones. With this, the Gemara now accounts for the letter צ, but another problem arises: How can the Gemara say that the names of the Three Patriarchs are supposed to be on the stones if the Torah does not say anything about the names of the Three Patriarchs? The answer to this question must be that the Gemara understood that when the Torah says, “The stones should be upon the names of the Sons of Israel”, the word “stones” does not refer to the *names* of the stones, as was previously held, rather it refers to the names of the Three Patriarchs, as the word *even* (אבן) is related to the word *av* (אב). Now that the Talmud dispensed with the prior assumption that the *names* of the stones were supposed to be written on the stones (instead just the names of the Three Patriarchs and Twelve Tribes are to be there), then the letter ט is left unaccounted for, because that

letter does not appear in the names of the Three Patriarchs nor in the names of the Twelve Tribes. To that, the Gemara answered that the stones also said: “The Tribes of Jeshurun.”

And Aharon shall bear the names of the Sons of Israel on the Choshen Mishpat on top of his heart, when he goes in the Holy, as an eternal remembrance in front of Hashem (Ex. 28:29). Rabbi Shlomo Kluger writes in his will (published as *Kesef Nivcar L'shon Tzadik* 5) that when they bury him, they should take two of the *seforim* which Hashem graciously allowed him to write, and place them on top of his body face down with the text facing his corpse, one on top of his head, and one on top of his heart. In a gloss to the annotated edition of his will, Rabbi Shlomo Kluger's son writes that this is what they did, and then they noticed that the *sefer* which they put over his heart was his novella to *Choshen Mishpat*—a fulfillment of the verse at hand which describes wearing “the *Choshen Mishpat* on top of his heart...”

...from it it shall be... (Ex. 25:31). Rabbi Moshe Sofer, author of *Chasam Sofer*, writes in *Toras Moshe* that when one presents a homily based on *Divrei Torah*, he should not use ideas from outside forms of wisdom as introductory concepts to build up to his idea. Rather, all introductory materials for sermons and homilies should come from the Torah itself, be they Scriptural verses or Aggadic passages. This is alluded to in the requirement that even the flowers and buttons which adorn the Menorah are supposed to be made of the same piece of gold that from which the rest of the Menorah is fashioned.

Six branches... (Ex. 25:32). Rabbi Yonason Shteif (*Amaros* 76 in the name of *Likutei Basar Likutei* in the name of *Einei Yesharim* citing *Amaros Hashem*) writes concerning the six branches of the Menorah that the closer that each one was to the middle candle, the shorter each branch was, and the farther away, the longer. This teaches us the lesson that when somebody comes very close to a Torah giant, he is expected to “make himself smaller” by showing his submission to that great person.