

JANUARY 31, 2011

## Parashat Terumah

### The Gift of Sight

According to all that I show you (Exodus 25:8)

ככל אשר אני מראה אותך (שמות כה:ח)

The Torah makes clear that despite the most detailed instructions, Moses could not have constructed the vessels of the Tabernacle without clear visual plans. In fact, several times in our *parshah* (see 25:40, 26:30 and 27:8) God “shows” Moses visions of the vessels. Nechama Leibowitz (see *New Studies in Shemot* vol. 2 p. 476) notes that the Hebrew word for “shown”—*mar’eh*—appears in the “passive causative form of the verb. This ‘causing to see’ repeated with respect to Moses...is designed to show us how deeply this great vision...penetrated Moses’ mind.” Because God did not just describe what the vessels looked like, but rather literally caused Moses to see them in their final form, Moses was able to perfectly construct the vessels.

Just as God “caused Moses to see,” an Israeli company hopes to “cause” countless aging seniors to see as well—helping them avoid the trauma of degenerative vision, and allowing them to richly experience the world they live in.

More than eight million people in the U.S. and many millions more worldwide suffer from age-related macular degeneration, the main cause of visual impairment in people over 50. Fortunately, the Israeli company CellCure Neurosciences has developed a new stem cell technology for the treatment of age-related eyesight deterioration. According to the [Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#), researchers found a method for converting human embryonic stem cells into cells which can be transplanted into the patient’s eye. The transplants, performed on animal models with macular degenerative disease, showed that the new cells could protect the retina from degenerating. This innovative treatment is unprecedented in the medical field.

Moses’ visions remind us that our ability to see is a gift that enhances every aspect of our lives, and thanks to the work of CellCure, many people will soon be able to enjoy it—the magnificence of seeing those we love, reading words on a page, taking in a phenomenal sunset, or even just seeing passing towns from the window of a train. ■

### An Image to Emulate

With their faces one to another (Exodus 25:20)

ופניהם איש אל אחיו (שמות כה:כ)

Describing the placement of the angels in heaven, the Talmud (Berachot 58a) relates that the “Kingdom below is like the kingdom above,” and that God specifically instructed us to model the terrestrial world after the celestial world. For this reason, because the angels in heaven face each other, the *cherubim* on the Ark of the Covenant also faced one-another. The placement of the *cherubim* also emphasizes the essence of true and direct communication. As Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook wrote, like the *cherubim* “it is our obligation to break through the barrier that divides between brothers, and heart to heart will speak, and soul to soul will express; and then words will surely be heard with great attention...” (Mo’adei Hara’ayah page 380).

The face to face positioning of the *cherubim* covering the Ark of the Covenant reminds us that true, effective communication stems from facing your audience and speaking directly. While this message may seem intuitive to most, to the Palestinian Authority (PA), who refuses to engage in direct talks with Israel, it is not.

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton recently underlined strong American opposition to Palestinian efforts to have the United Nations (U.N.) Security Council condemn Israeli settlements, [Agence France Presse](#) reported. “The only way that there will be a resolution of the conflict... is through a negotiated settlement,” said Clinton. “Therefore we don’t see action at the U.N. or any other forum as being helpful in bringing about this desired outcome.”

While the resolution represents the latest attempt by the PA to avoid direct negotiations with Israel, as the recently leaked [Palestine Papers](#) indicate, when Israeli and Palestinian leaders meet together privately, deep and meaningful conversations take place. Moreover, the leaked documents further discredit the PA’s current stance that it will not negotiate about anything until Israel halts all construction east of the Green Line. Logic dictates that if the PA was previously willing to accept Israeli control over certain disputed areas, then the PA should not demand, as a *precondition* for talking, that Israel stop building in those disputed areas. The negotiations about settlements clearly show that Israeli construction in the West Bank is not an obstacle to continued talks.

The *cherubim* offer us a visual representation of successful communication. Once the Palestinians follow this example, and engage in serious face to face talks with Israel, the Jewish state will have a genuine partner that is ready to negotiate a lasting peace. ■

## The Wisdom of Solomon (Haftarah)

**And God gave Solomon wisdom (Kings I 5:26)**

**וְהָיָה נָתַן חֵכְמָה לְשֹׁלֹמֹה (מְלָכִים א' ה:כו)**

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We often associate the wisdom of Solomon with the way he brilliantly determined the true mother of a child by offering to split the baby in half (see Kings I 3:16). In this case, though, the text relates to Solomon’s intelligence in the construction of the Temple, underscoring an even greater wisdom. While Radak (on 15:26) explains that the verse alludes to Solomon’s architectural and engineering talents, Yehudah Kil, in his commentary on the book of Kings (see Da’at Mikra on 15:26), explains that the reference to Solomon’s wisdom contains far greater implications: “Included in wisdom was not only the wisdom of construction and organization, but also the wisdom of governance, economics and foreign relations. Thus, the verse continues, ‘and there was peace between Hiram [King of Tyre] and Solomon.’”

Solomon’s political wisdom allowed him to reach a deal with Hiram that benefited both his own people and the people of Tyre. Nowadays, as Iran continues to reject the international community’s demands to curb its nuclear ambitions, it must learn from Solomon’s wisdom and follow his path to peace and prosperity.

Iranian officials recently walked out of nuclear talks aimed at restraining the Islamic Republic’s nuclear weapons program and “refused to bargain with the United States and other world powers unless they first agreed to conditions including an immediate halt to economic sanctions,” the [Washington Post](#) reported. While the failure of the talks is disheartening, it also points to the efficacy of harsh economic sanctions imposed against the Islamic Republic. The [Wall Street Journal](#) highlighted a recent report published by the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) which offers a picture of an economy under growing pressure. The report outlines how Iran experienced both a 7% drop in imports over the previous six months as well as a 45% drop in applications for building permits for commercial and industrial units. These statistics, while powerful, show that the U.S. must continue to demonstrate that Iran’s failure to suspend its illicit nuclear program will lead to increased economic pressure. For more on Iran visit, [www.aipac.org/Iran](http://www.aipac.org/Iran).

Solomon’s wisdom allowed him to see the benefits of establishing peace with his northern neighbor and helped him procure the raw materials necessary for the construction of the Temple. Unfortunately, because Iran refuses to see the wisdom of abandoning its nuclear program and reaching an accord with the international community, its people are forced to suffer under the pressures of biting economic sanctions. ■

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