

FEBRUARY 25, 2013

## Parashat Ki Tisa

### A Small Contribution

**A half shekel (Exodus 30:13)**

**מתצית השקל (שמות ל:יג)**

Eliyahu Kitov (see Sefer Haparshiot vol. 2 p 276) writes that according to the Sages, Moses enacted three separate collections in the desert, and that during the first collection each and every male age 20 and above contributed a half shekel. Rashi (on 30:15) explains that the silver was melted down and used to form the sockets which served as the solid base upon which the Tabernacle stood. Every member of the nation made a small but critical donation which formed the foundation of the Tabernacle, highlighting the power of small contributions to make a critical difference from which everyone could benefit.

Just as the small donation of a half shekel from each Israelite benefitted the larger community, American foreign aid, which is only a tiny fraction of the U.S. budget, has made a critical difference to American and Israeli security.

For four decades Congress has provided Israel with vital aid. U.S. security assistance has strengthened America's leading ally in an unstable region that is critical to U.S. national security interests. Foreign aid, about one percent of federal spending, represents a tiny fraction of the total U.S. budget and is a cost-effective tool for keeping America safe, strong and prosperous, and is essential in helping Israel counter increasing threats in the region. For just one penny of every tax dollar, foreign aid funding provides economic development that helps create American jobs, provides disaster relief aid around the world and goes toward vaccinations and humanitarian missions like preventing HIV/AIDS. In Israel, a country that is forced to spend close to seven percent of its gross domestic product on defense, American aid is crucial to ensuring that Israel maintains its qualitative military edge and its deterrence capabilities, including the Iron Dome missile batteries which played a crucial role in protecting Israelis during the rocket barrage from Gaza. We must ask Congress to support the administration's request for \$3.1 billion in security assistance for Israel in fiscal years 2013 and 2014, and also support continued security assistance to the Jewish state in accordance with the 2007 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the two countries that calls upon America to provide \$30 billion to Israel over a 10-year period. For more foreign aid, click [here](#).

Just as the half shekels collected from every member of the nation in the desert were used to build the foundation of the Tabernacle, America's foreign aid proves that even a small fraction of the U.S. budget can make a critical difference for the safety of both American and Israelis. ■

### Too Much Gold

**Break off the golden rings (Exodus 32:2)**

**פרקו נזמי הזהב (שמות לב:ב)**

According to Rashi (see Mussaf Rashi on 32:3), God blessed the people with an abundance of gold so that they would donate from their wealth to build the Tabernacle. They instead used that gold to construct an idol that nearly caused their destruction. According to the Talmud (Berachot 32a), Moses actually blamed God for giving the people the gold necessary to make the calf. "Said Moses...Master of the Universe, it is due to the silver and gold that you gave in overflowing fashion to Israel...which caused them to make the [Golden] calf." The Talmud relates that God ultimately agreed with Moses and took at least part of the blame for the building of the Golden Calf.

An abundance of gold in the desert enabled the nation to commit a grave, dangerous mistake. Today, Iran's abundance of gold has enabled it to avoid the full force of sanctions as it proceeds down the grave, dangerous path to nuclear weapons.

Earlier this month the United States announced a new round of sanctions designed to limit Tehran's access to foreign exchange. But Washington needs to step up enforcement of these and earlier sanctions if it hopes to persuade Iran to abandon its illicit nuclear pursuit, as the impact of sanctions [has been blunted](#) by insufficient enforcement and Iran's exploitation of loopholes to bypass restrictions. Iran has evaded U.S. sanctions targeting financial transactions by using barter transactions to trade oil for gold and other commodities. Despite the new restriction prohibiting these activities, Turkey has continued to send billions of dollars in gold to Iran in order to pay for oil and natural gas imports. Moreover, according to [Reuters](#), "world powers were planning to offer to ease sanctions barring trade in gold and other precious metals with Iran in return for steps to shut down [the] Fordow [nuclear facility]," a move that Iran immediately rejected. As the international community prepares for talks with Iran, the United States must let Tehran know that the country will face unremitting pressure until the Islamic regime changes course. Iran's only path out of increasing sanctions and isolation is through the suspension of its nuclear program and compliance with all relevant U.N. Security Council resolutions. For more on Iran, visit [www.aipac.org/Iran](http://www.aipac.org/Iran).

The abundance of gold in the Jewish camp enabled the people to create a destructive and dangerous idol. As Iran's abundance of gold has similarly aided its nuclear weapons pursuit, the U.S. must act quickly and decisively to enforce the crippling sanctions already in place. ■

## Shining the Light of Knowledge

**The skin of his face sent forth beams (Exodus 34:29)**

**קרן אור פניו (שמות לד:כט)**

The Torah states that when Moses descended from Mount Sinai the second time his face "sent forth beams" of light, the Sages (Midrash Agadah) wonder why his face shone after his second visit to the mountain, and not his first. They explain that while the first set of tablets were written "with the finger of God" (31:18), Moses wrote the second set of tablets on his own. His face shone to reflect the light of wisdom that he gained in the process, echoing the verse Solomon wrote, "The wisdom of man will illuminate his face" (Ecclesiastes 8:1).

Just as the light that shone from Moses represented the knowledge he gained during his sojourn on Sinai, a recent "enlightened" Israeli discovery represents an amazing technological advance recently developed in the Jewish state.

Researchers at the Weizmann Institute of Science in Israel recently discovered a new physics trick, allowing them to see through objects using a simple light bulb, a standard digital camera and the basic technology found in everyday digital projectors, the website [Israel21c](#) reported. The camera, developed by Ori Katz, Eran Small and Prof. Yaron Silberberg, can see through nearly opaque surfaces such as skin or frosted glass—even around a corner into another room if the door is open. While a human body, for instance, doesn't appear to be transparent, when you shine a flashlight on the back of your hand in the dark some "scattered" light does shine through, Katz explains. While it was thought to be too difficult to make sense of scattered light because it appeared to be incredibly random and chaotic, by developing an algorithm that projects the inverse pattern, the researchers were able to detail what can be found inside an object that the naked eye could never decipher. While the researchers don't think their camera will replace MRIs, they do hope that it can help cut back the need for invasive procedures such as biopsies or radiation-based imaging techniques like mammograms that aim to detect cancerous cells. For more on Israeli innovations, click [here](#).

Just as the light of the Torah caused Moses' face to shine brightly, scientific advances made in Israel shine a bright light on the amazing Israeli hi-tech innovations that have changed lives around the world. ■

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