



Terumah

What Is The Most Powerful Image in the Torah?

There are so many candidates to answer the question of what the most powerful image is in the Torah. My answer would be from Parshat Terumah:

The כְּרֻבִים - the cherubs.

Remarkably, Hashem commanded us to build a sanctuary, and right in the heart of it, the holiest place on earth, would be the Holy of Holies. Within it would be the Ark of the Covenant, and emerging from the lid of the Ark there would be two three-dimensional figures made out of gold - one of a male cherub, and the other of a female cherub - both facing each other while their wings spread out heavenwards.

What a powerful image!

Hashem here is conveying to us the way that he would like us to be while we reach out heavenwards in our desire to cleave spiritually to our creator. Our focus should be to face our fellow human beings so that we can show our love, our compassion, our concern, and our desire to help.

And isn't it remarkable that while in the Ten Commandments we are told **not** to create three dimensional molten images - Hashem makes an exception to that very rule in order to convey this eternally relevant and important message to us?

Interestingly, in the Gemara בבא בתרא צט ע"א - Chazal, our sages, ask a question: In the sanctuary, in the wilderness, with regard to the cherubs:

וּפְנֵיהֶם אִישׁ אֶל אָחִיו
'They were facing each other'

But in the temple of King Solomon:

וּפְנֵיהֶם לְבֵית
'And their faces were turned toward the [temple]'

And the Gemara explains: while we were in the wilderness, largely our people were keeping the word of Hashem. And therefore, when we were facing each other. That is what Hashem was pleased with. However, in the times of Solomon, we were largely rebelling against the word of Hashem, and therefore we weren't facing each other.

The message that the Gemara gives is: when we face each other, that is the will of Hashem. That's when Hashem is pleased with us. That is what Hashem wants of us.

Therefore, this most powerful image conveys an eternally relevant message: for us to be good Jews means that we have to love others, reach out to them with passion and with concern, while always reaching out heavenwards to please the Almighty.

Shabbat Shalom.