

*Beyond Twelve Gates by Rabbi Ze'ev Smason
Parshas Shoftim August 9, 2013*

Welcome to Beyond Twelve Gates

We've all lost our keys at some point, but one man found his along with an extraordinary hidden treasure. When Welsh farmer Ifor Edwards dropped his keys on a tract of land he owns he was determined to find them, so he called in enthusiasts from Wrexham Heritage Society. But as well as finding his keys – which had gone through a lawn mower – the team armed with metal detectors also found 14 medieval coins dated from the 14th and 15th centuries. An expert who examined the findings described the coins, which are composed of 90 percent silver and likely from the days of Edward III, Henry V and Henry VI, as a “treasure.”

Mr. Edwards said, “It is a once in a lifetime thing. It is such a shock, you just can't quite believe it. You realize those coins were there before they ever found America or anything. You just can't believe you're holding something that is 600 and something years old. We only bought the land three years ago and nothing like this has ever been found before.” Certified coin appraiser Beth Weingast said, “It's extraordinarily rare to find a coin like this—you have better odds of being hit by lightning than finding this particular coin.” A local museum has expressed interest in acquiring the coins, with Mr. Edwards and Mr. Massey splitting the proceeds. Surprisingly, it's not the first time rare treasures have been found in the area. In 2011 a local man found a gold ring (known as a mourning) in a pasture, imprinted with the words, “tho ded I bee remember mee” and experts confirmed it was a popular accessory during the reign of Charles II during the late 17th century. And in 2010, an area man found a silver buckle that was 99.7 percent silver and believed to be from the 13th century.

Although the Torah can be read by the simplest individual, one must delve beneath its surface meaning if one is to discover its true treasures. What will one discover if one 'digs' more deeply into the Torah? Guidelines to living a meaningful, purposeful life. A popular misconception is that the word 'Torah' means 'the law.' In fact, 'Torah' means 'instructions.' Instructions for what? Instructions for living, as King Solomon said, “If you seek it (Torah) like silver, and search for it as for hidden treasures; then you shall understand awe and reverence of the Lord, and find the knowledge of G-d.” (Proverbs 2:4-5)

Parshas Shoftim Deuteronomy 16:18 - 21:9

Moses proceeds to review the regulations necessary for a civilized society. Local judges and officers were to be appointed in every city, and justice was to be administered righteously and impartially. A bribe of even an insignificant sum is forbidden. The Sanhedrin -- the Jewish High Court of seventy one judges -- is to make Torah-based binding decisions on new situations to prevent the fragmentation of the Jewish people.

When the Jewish people request a king, the king was not to misuse his power to amass many horses, maintain a harem nor accumulate great wealth. To order his priorities and not become haughty he should write a copy of the Torah and carry it with him. When the Jewish people had righteous kings such as David and Solomon, it was a blessing. When we had wicked kings such as Jereboam and Ahav, it was a curse.

The nation's conduct in war is mentioned. The Jewish people are told not to be afraid of the enemy, not to destroy any fruit trees in battle, and that they should first give the enemy a chance to make peace. The portion also forbids all forms of superstition and 'magic' practiced by the soothsayer. We have no need for such tricks because of our true prophets and faith in G-d. The Jewish people are promised by G-d that He will send prophets to guide them, and Moses explains how a genuine prophet may be distinguished from a false one.

Rabbinic Ruminations

You've probably read an advertisement inviting you to buy an overpriced suit or shirt that said “It's true, clothes do make the man.” Do clothes make the man (or woman)? On the one hand, we'd like to think

that people aren't affected by something as superficial as clothing. On the other hand, it's well-established that what we wear affects how others perceive us. Women who wear more masculine clothes to an interview (such as a dress suit) are more likely to be hired. People dressed conservatively are perceived as self-controlled and reliable, while those wearing more daring clothing are viewed as more attractive and individualistic. But in addition to influencing how others perceive you, could your choice in clothes actually change your perception and thoughts?

To examine this question, two professors at Northwestern University had two sets of people wear the same white coat. One group was told the coat belonged to a doctor and the other group was told the coat belonged to a painter. The group wearing the "lab coat" showed a sharp increase in their ability to pay attention, while the group wearing the "painter's coat" showed no improvement whatsoever. Doctors are attentive, focused people; thus, through a process referred to as "enclothed cognition", when someone in the study put on a doctor's lab coat he or she unwittingly adopted those qualities as well. This study, published by the *Journal of Experimental Psychology*, revealed that in terms of how clothing affects our feelings, it's less about the actual clothes we wear and more about what we associate with them. The symbolic value and emotional attachments we have toward clothing give it their meaning -- and affect how the clothing we wear makes us think, feel and respond.

The billions of dollars spent by the fashion industry, not to mention the celebrity status of fashion mavens, testify to the importance attached to proper dress by the modern man and woman. But it may come as a surprise that Judaism also stresses the importance of clothing, well beyond aspects of modesty. Jewish law emphasizes the importance of wearing clean, even fashionable clothing, and warns against wearing dirty or unkempt clothing. Clothes represent the outermost dimension of our being. They are the means by which we present ourselves to the world -- and are inextricably linked to who we are and how we understand ourselves.

Quote of the Week

The man who does not read has no advantage over the man who cannot read. -- *Mark Twain*

Joke of the Week

At the turn of the previous century, a new immigrant to America from Eastern Europe took his pregnant wife to the hospital, but during the delivery of twins, he fainted. The father's brother had to be brought into the room to name them.

"My brother named the kids?" the father asked. "My brother barely speaks English. What did he name the girl?"

"He named her Denise" said the doctor.

"Denise? Well, that's not such a bad name" said the father. "I kind of like it. And what did he name the boy."

The doctor said, " He named your son -- Da nephew."