

*Beyond Twelve Gates by Rabbi Ze'ev Smason
Parshas Shemos January 10, 2015*

Welcome to Beyond Twelve Gates ~

On an Airplane, What Seat Do You Normally Choose?

When it comes to flying, not all seats are created equal. Have you ever wondered why some people feel the need to get a window seat while others are perfectly happy squeezing themselves between two complete strangers? What seat do you normally choose? According to a study done by psychologist and University of Washington professor Jonathan Bricker, Ph.D., the airplane seat you choose may say something about you.

Do you normally choose an aisle seat? If so, you may....value freedom, be an introvert, be all business, like to be in the power position, and tend toward claustrophobic.

Do you normally choose a window seat? If so, you may...value privacy, be a nester, be a dreamer, and be open to new experiences.

Do you prefer the middle seat? If so, you may....be an extrovert, be considerate -- or maybe you're just disorganized and didn't reserve a seat earlier!

Do you prefer flying Business Class or First Class? If so, you may.... value your time, like to be in control, be a little pretentious, be rich....or maybe you fly a lot and get upgrades.

While the airplane seat you choose may say something about you, how you treat others *certainly* says something about you. King David declared that there are three wonderful gifts that G-d gave the Jewish nation -- one of which is *gomlei chassadim*, the propensity to bestow kindness. Chesed is an identifying characteristic of the Jewish people.

Parshas Shemos Exodus 1:1 -- 6:1

The book of Exodus begins by describing the gradually increasing enslavement of the Jewish people in Egypt. Pharaoh, fearing the population explosion of the Jews, initially hopes that backbreaking labor would stunt their rapid physical growth. When their birth rate continues to increase he orders the Jewish midwives to kill all baby boys. Moses is born, and when his mother is unable to keep him hidden from the Egyptian authorities any longer she places him in a basket and sends him down the Nile River. He is found by Pharaoh's daughter and raised in the royal palace, even though she realizes he is a Hebrew. She names him Moshe (Moses) meaning "drawn from the water." Years later as a grown man, Moses kills an Egyptian who he witnessed beating a Jew. Moses flees to the land of Midian and marries Zipporah, the daughter of Jethro, and they have two sons.

When Moses is shepherding his father-in-law's flock, he witnesses the "burning bush" on Chorev (Mt. Sinai) where G-d commands him to lead the Jewish people from Egypt to the land of Israel, which G-d promised to their ancestors. Initially reluctant, Moses is shown three miracles to perform before the Jewish people to prove he was sent by G-d: Changing his staff into a snake, his healthy hand into a leprous one, and water into blood. Moses, accompanied by his brother Aaron, encounters an obstinate Pharaoh. The Egyptian king not only refuses their request for a three-day respite to worship G-d, but declares that the Jews must produce the same quota of bricks as before but without being given straw. The people complain to Moses and Aaron for making their situation worse, but G-d assures Moses that He will force Pharaoh to let the Hebrews leave.

Rabbinic Ruminations

Oh, the joys of parenting! Sort of. New research has found that first and second children provide parents a boost in happiness both before and after they are born but the third child does not. Researchers ([Myrskylä & Margolis, 2014](#)) found that parents — mothers in particular — experienced a huge surge in happiness during the pregnancy period for their first child, and after that child was born. With their second child, a similar — though less intense — phenomenon occurred: Parents were about *half* as happy as they were during and after their first pregnancy, but they were still happier than usual.

The happiness boost from the first child was equivalent in size, on average, to getting divorced or losing your job — except obviously it made people happy rather than sad.

When it comes to the third child, it isn't so much that parents are unhappy — they simply don't get the big happiness boosts they experienced with their first two children. "The arrival of a third child is not associated with an increase in the parents' happiness, but this is not to suggest they are any less loved than their older siblings," researcher Mikko Myrskylä noted. "Instead, this may reflect that the experience of parenthood is less novel and exciting by the time the third child is born or that a larger family puts extra pressure on the parents' resources." Also, he added, "the likelihood of a pregnancy being unplanned may increase with the number of children a woman already has — and this brings its own stresses." Parents who are highly educated or have their first children between the ages of 35 and 49 show the strongest gains in happiness around the birth of their children. For these parents, happiness gained when they became parents was sustained over the long-term.

Judaism teaches that G-d delights in every soul that comes to this world. By bearing and raising children, parents emulate the ways of G-d. Parents are comparable to G-d, Who created and sustains the world and Who brings life into the world. In this way, parents become partners with G-d, as the Talmud says: "*There are three partners in man, the Holy One, blessed be He, his father and his mother.*" Having children is a mitzvah, and a privilege.

Quote of the Week

One resolution I have made, and try always to keep, is this: To rise above the little things. - **John Burroughs**

Joke of the Week

A man walks into "Goldberg's All-You-Can Eat" restaurant.
He orders. When brought his meal, he sees it's an extremely skimpy portion.
He complains. Goldberg then comes over.
He tells Goldberg, pointing to his plate: "I thought this is an all you can eat restaurant."
To which Goldberg replies: "Yes...that's all you can eat!" (Thanks to Ben Rothke)