

Beyond Twelve Gates by Rabbi Ze'ev Smason *Parshas Beshalach January 11, 2014*

Welcome to Beyond Twelve Gates

For Sheree Heil from Tacoma, Wash., the price was definitely right. A recent contestant on the game show ***The Price Is Right***, Sheree had the opportunity to win one of the most expensive cars to ever appear on the show—a \$157,300 Audi R8 V-8 Spyder. Sheree 'paid' for her new car with whoops and hollers in front of the studio audience, as she became the biggest winner in the show's daytime history. While not certain of Ms. Heil's previous mode of transportation, the odds are against it being a two-seater, 430-hp supercar with a 0-60 mph time of 4.6 seconds. Top speed for the Spyder? 186 mph. Her drive back to Tacoma might be a fast one.

Sheree was rather excited about her victory as you can see in the video clip.

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OTRz7nklvnM>) The winner excitedly runs circles around the studio set, pumping her arms in exultation. Even host Drew Carey couldn't help but smile incessantly, shouting, "We just gave out a \$157,000 car, everybody."

When was the last time you experienced exultation? Is exuberant gladness reserved only for lottery and grand prize winners? Are raised voices and victory laps the only outward manifestations of true joy? Judaism emphasizes the experience of deep joy through selfless giving and spiritual growth. Rambam (Maimonides) writes, "The type of joy that is a mitzvah is that joy you share with those less fortunate such as orphans, widows, those without a family and the poor. If someone closes his doors to others and only utilizes what he has for himself and his immediate family without helping the poor and unfortunate, his joy is not the joy of mitzvah, but joy of the stomach." King David said, "*Serve G-d with joy, come before Him with exultation.*" (Psalm 100:2) Constant spiritual and moral growth and selfless giving are the tickets to a life of true joy.

Parshas Beshalach Exodus 13:17 -- 17:16

As the Jewish people leave the land of Egypt, Pharaoh's heart is once again hardened. The Egyptian army pursues the former slaves, trapping them on the shores of the Red Sea. Moses raises his hand over the sea, miraculously parting the waters and allowing the Jewish people to pass through safely. Pursued by the Egyptians into the sea, Moses once again raises his hand and the waters come crashing down upon Pharaoh's army. Awed by this indisputable miracle, Moses leads the Jewish people in the *Shir Shel Yam*, a song of praise to G-d acknowledging a debt of gratitude for their remarkable salvation.

After traveling from the Red Sea, and following the miraculous sweetening of the bitter waters at Marah, the Jewish people complain to Moses and Aaron that they have no food to eat. G-d responds by providing a great test of faith; a daily ration of manna fell from the sky for forty years every morning, except for Shabbos. Some suggest that the manna was the greatest miracle the Jewish people ever experienced. A constant water source is also given when G-d commands Moses to strike a rock, miraculously causing water to flow from it. The portion concludes with the nation of Amalek's unprovoked sneak attack and the Jewish people's victory.

Rabbinic Ruminations

Until a few years ago, a giant forest on top of a mountain in Mozambique was known only to local villagers; it wasn't indicated on maps or in scientific collections or literature. In 2008, scientists from Kew Royal Botanic Gardens were browsing Google Earth's satellite view to look for potential unknown wildlife hotspots in Africa when an astonishing discovery of a new forest was made. After "finding" the Mt. Mabu forest on a Google Earth Internet map, a British-led team of scientists led a full-scale expedition into the canopy.

The forest covers about 25 square miles, located beneath the 5,600 foot peak of Mt. Mabu. Below the trees of the lost forest, which rise 120 feet above the ground, the expedition discovered a land filled with

astonishingly rich biodiversity, including new animal and plant species. There are tall evergreen trees, many vines, monkeys, birds flying high, small antelope, and pygmy chameleons. Found in the forest were at least three new species of butterfly, an unprecedented kind of viper family, and a hairless parasitic shrub that attaches to tree branches. There are likely many more new species in the forest, with candidates so far including a shrew, a pseudo-scorpion, frogs, snails, bats, catfish, and various insects.

The finding of this lost forest shows that "there are still things to discover and document in the world," said botanist Jonathan Timberlake, expedition leader. Scientists "describe" about 2,000 new species a year but discovering new ones still captures the imagination. Said Timberlake: "The phenomenal diversity is just mind-boggling - seeing how things are adapted to little niches, to me this is the phenomenal thing. If we don't have wonder as a human species, where are we? If we don't have excitement, what are we doing with our lives?"

King David said, *One thing I asked of G-d and that I shall quest for: Would that I dwell in the House of G-d all the days of my life to behold the pleasantness of Hashem and to visit in His sanctuary. (Psalms 27:4)* A visitor to a new location has a sense of freshness and surprise at having arrived. As "visitors" in this world, we should never lose that same sense of wonder and excitement at the beauty and design of G-d's world.

Quote of the Week

More people die from overeating than from hunger -- *Talmud (Shabbat 33)*

Joke of the Week

Reaching the end of a job interview, the human resources person asked the hot-shot young engineer, fresh out of MIT, "And what starting salary were you looking for?"

The engineer coolly said, "In the neighborhood of \$125,000 a year, depending on the benefits package."

The interviewer said, "Well, what would you say to a package of 5 weeks vacation, 14 paid holidays, full medical and dental, company matching retirement fund to 50% of salary, and a company car leased every 2 years – for starters, say, a red Corvette?"

The engineer tried to control his excitement, but sat straight up and said, "Wow! Are you kidding?"

"Yeah," the interviewer shrugged, "But you started it."