

## **Beyond Twelve Gates -- Parshas Emor -- Rabbi Ze'ev Smason -- April 26, 2013**

When he was 13 years old, Tim Harris told people that one day he would own and operate a restaurant. And for the past three years he has: Tim's Place, of Albuquerque, N.M. Why is yet another owner-operated restaurant a big deal? Because Tim, now 27, has Down Syndrome. Running any type of business was never something that Tim's parents expected of him. But after he expressed interest in the restaurant business, Tim's parents, Keith and Jeannie, figured out a way to make Tim's dream a reality. "We were very motivated for Tim to have as normal a life as possible," Keith Harris said.

From the start, it was clear that Tim's Place was something special. In addition to standard American and Mexican breakfasts and lunches, Tim serves hugs, and lots of them. So far, he's given out up to 32,475 according to a "hug counter" on the eatery's website. Giving hugs "is my favorite part of the day," said Tim, who arrives at work every morning between 7 and 7:30 and leaves around 2 P.M. every day except Tuesdays, his day off. Tim attended a mainstream high-school where he was voted homecoming king, and earned certificates in Food Service and Office Skills at Eastern New Mexico University. He lived in a college dorm, and graduated. He's had a girlfriend, Whitney, for the past 10 months. Tim, who has won several gold medals in the Special Olympics, is also a motivational speaker. His top message? "I tell people with disabilities to stay in school, so they can follow their dreams."

What is your greatest dream? Everyone has a dream of what they would like to do and who they would like to be. Someone once said, "Reach for the stars; you may not catch one, but at least you won't get your hands caught in the mud!" One who has an insatiable desire to serve G-d and reach their potential will be driven to grow, achieve -- and like Tim Harris -- have their dreams fulfilled.

### **Parshas Emor Leviticus 21:1 - 24:23**

Following the command in last week's portion to be sanctified and holy, Parshas Emor begins by discussing various laws directed specifically to the *Kohanim* and the *Kohen Gadol* (High Priest). Included is the command for the *Kohen* to refrain from becoming ritually impure through contact with a dead body (except for close relatives) and increased restrictions on whom they may marry. G-d requires those with greater spiritual responsibilities to maintain a higher standard of spiritual purity. Parshas Emor contains two of the most significant mitzvos in the entire Torah; to always be mindful of not desecrating G-d's name, and on the contrary, to sanctify Him at all costs.

The Torah goes on to discuss the festivals of the year -- Pesach, Shavous, Rosh Hashana, Yom Kippur, Succos and Shemini Atzeres. The festivals, including Shabbos, are referred to as moadim, appointed times; they are special days when Jews 'meet', as it were, with G-d. The festivals interrupt our ordinary weekday activities and inspire us to rededicate ourselves to those ideals that life is really about. Later, two mitzvos in the Mishkan are stated: the daily lighting of

the menorah and the display of the *lechem hapanim* (showbread). The portion concludes with the horrible incident of a man who cursed G-d's name.

### **Rabbinic Ruminations**

Find a .300 hitter in Major League Baseball, and you'll find someone who hits the ball until their hands bleed trying to perfect their swing. Ask a surgeon about how much sleep they got for the eight to 10 years it took them to get through medical school, internship and residency. Both these jobs take magic hands -- and an abundance of persistence. A new study published in the *Journal of Early Adolescence* found that dads are in a unique position to instill persistence and hope in their children, particularly in the pre-teen and teen years.

Researchers from Brigham Young University analyzed 325 families over a four-year period, when fathers responded to questionnaires regarding their parenting style, and children ages 11 to 14 responded to questions about school performance and attaining goals. Fathers who practiced authoritative parenting, defined as providing feelings of love, granting autonomy and emphasizing accountability to a child, were more likely to have kids who developed the art of persistence, which led to better outcomes in school and lower instances of misbehavior. "Fathers have a direct impact on how children perceive persistence and hope, and how they implement that into their lives," said professor Randall Day, co-author of the study. "It's important to say that moms can do this, too, but it turns out that when fathers use authoritative parenting, they have an impact on how their adolescents perceive themselves and how persistent they are in their lives."

A well-known part of the Shema Yisrael prayer states: *veshinantam levanecha* -- and you shalt teach them (G-d's commandments) diligently unto thy children (Deuteronomy 6:7). Educating our children includes helping them to develop important character traits such as persistence. John D. Rockefeller said, "I do not think there is any other quality so essential to success of any kind as the quality of perseverance. It overcomes almost everything, even nature." Teach your children to "stick with it" by instilling accountability, along with freedom to make their own choices and mistakes, in a supportive environment.

### **Quote of the Week**

People do not lack strength; they lack will. -- Victor Hugo

### **Joke of the Week**

The commanding officer at the Russian military academy (the equivalent of a 4-star general in the U.S.) gave a lecture on Potential Problems and Military Strategy. At the end of the lecture, he asked if there were any questions.

An officer stood up and asked, "Will there be a third world war? And will Russia take part in it?"

The general answered both questions in the affirmative.

Another officer asked, "Who will be the enemy?"

The general replied, "All indications point to China."

Everyone in the audience was shocked. A third officer remarked, "General, we are a nation of only 150 million, compared to the 1.5 billion Chinese. Can we win at all, or even survive?"

The general answered, "Just think about this for a moment: In modern warfare, it is not the quantity of soldiers that matters but the quality of an army's capabilities. For example, in the Middle East we have had a few wars recently where 5 million Jews fought against 150 million Arabs, and Israel was always victorious."

After a short pause, yet another officer - from the back of the auditorium asked, "Do we have enough Jews?"

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