

Beyond Twelve Gates by Rabbi Ze'ev Smason
Parshas Acharei Mos ~ Passover April 11, 2014

Welcome to Beyond Twelve Gates

Famous St. Louisan and Hall of Fame catcher Yogi Berra once said, "It ain't the heat, it's the humility." Don't sweat it, Yogi -- let's talk about humility. The term "humility" comes from the Latin word *humilitas*, a noun related to the adjective *humilis*, which may be translated as "humble" but also as "grounded", since it derives in turn from *humus* (earth). Humility confers multiple benefits, including the ability to give to others.

A 2011 study suggested that humble people are, on average, more helpful than people who are conceited or egotistical. Study participants were presented with an unexpected opportunity to help someone in need. Those who ranked higher in measures of humility were more likely to offer help, and offered more of their time, to those in need. Researchers concluded that implicit humility predicted helping behavior in a selfless, altruistic way. Unsurprisingly, humble people have also been found to be more generous.

How does the Torah define humility? Rabbi Jonathan Sacks states that humility is an appreciation of oneself, one's talents, skills and virtues. It is not meekness or self-deprecating thought, but the effacing of oneself to something higher. Humility is not to think lowly of oneself, but to appreciate the self one has received. King Solomon said, "*The reward of humility and reverence of G-d are riches, honor and life.*" (Proverbs 22:4) If a person is humble, they have honor and riches in many ways -- including a satisfied mind and a satisfied life.

Parshas Acharei Mos Leviticus 16:1 - 18:30 / Passover

Acharei Mos begins with a lengthy description of the special Yom Kippur service to be performed in the *Mishkan* by the *Kohen Gadol*. The service included the lottery selection from amongst two identical goats, one of which would become a national sin offering and the other which would be pushed off a cliff in the desert as the bearer of the people's sins (the 'scapegoat'). We also find described the command that Yom Kippur and its laws of fasting and refraining from work be observed eternally by the Jewish people as a day of atonement. Acharei Mos concludes with a listing of immoral and forbidden sexual relationships, and the command that the Jewish people maintain and ensure the holiness of the land of Israel.

This coming Monday evening, April 14, begins the major festival of Passover. Passover, known in Hebrew as *Pesach*, is a national birthday party; it was then that the 'Children of Israel' who later became the 'People of Israel' began their march through history with the exodus from Egypt. Passover is the celebration of the beginning of our mission to become a 'Light unto the nations.' On the first day of Passover, Tuesday, the Torah reading is from Exodus 12:21-51. This reading describes the Exodus from Egypt and the Passover offering. On the second day of Passover, Wednesday, the Torah reading is from Leviticus 22:26 -- 23:44. This reading describes journeying to the Holy Temple in Jerusalem on the three pilgrimage festivals (Passover, Shavous, Sukkos) and the counting of the Omer. May you and your families have a meaningful and joyous holiday.

Rabbinic Ruminations

"Pants on fire" isn't the only problem liars face. Research from the University of Notre Dame shows that when people managed to reduce their lies in given weeks across a 10-week study, they reported significantly improved physical and mental health in those same weeks. Lead author, psychology professor Anita Kelly, said, "We found that the participants could purposefully and dramatically reduce their everyday lies, and that in turn was associated with significantly improved health."

Approximately half the study participants were instructed to stop telling both major and minor lies for the duration of the 10-week study. The other half served as a control group that received no special instructions about lying. Both groups came to the laboratory weekly to complete health and relationship

measures and to take a polygraph test assessing the number of major and white lies they had told during that week. According to Dr. Kelly, Americans average about 11 lies per week.

Over the course of 10 weeks, the link between less lying and better health was significantly stronger for participants in the no-lie group, the study found. For example, when participants in the no-lie group told three fewer white lies than they did in other weeks, they experienced on average about four fewer mental-health complaints, such as feeling tense or melancholy, and about three fewer physical complaints, such as sore throats and headaches, the researchers found. The 2012 study also revealed positive results in participants' personal relationships, with those in the no-lie group reporting improved relationship and social interactions overall going more smoothly when they told no lies.

There are multiple reasons to strive to become a person of honesty and integrity. In addition to the benefits of healthy living, our connection with *emes*, honesty, is vital to enrichment of a spiritual life and a close connection with G-d. Every artisan has their own unique signature that they integrate into their work so that the identity of the artist can be ascertained immediately. The seal of G-d, Judaism teaches, is that of *emes*, honesty. .

Quote of the Week

When you're through changing, you're through. -- **Bruce Barton**, American author, died in 1967.

Joke of the Week

A duck walks into a pharmacy and says, "You got any duck food?"

"No," says the pharmacist, "we don't sell duck food." The duck leaves.

The duck comes back the next day and says, "You got any duck food?"

"No," says the pharmacist with a frown, "This is a pharmacy. We don't sell duck food." The duck leaves.

The duck comes back the next day. "You got any duck food?"

"Look," screams the pharmacist. "This a pharmacy! We don't sell duck food! We sell medicine! If you come in here tomorrow and ask for duck food, I'm going to nail your little, yellow webbed feet to the floor!" The duck leaves.

The duck comes back the next day. The pharmacist is bristling. The duck asks timidly, "You got any nails?"

"No," says the pharmacist. "This is a pharmacy! We do not sell nails!"

"Good! You got any duck food?" says the duck.