

*Welcome to Beyond Twelve Gates by Rabbi Ze'ev Smason
Parshas Ki Seitzei August 29, 2015*

“Wearing Eyeglasses Without Making a Spectacle of Yourself!”

Superman. Batman. Wonder Woman. Thor. Mariana Villarreal. In the preceding list of names, only one is a real-life superhero. Mariana Villarreal, a waitress in Roswell, GA., donated one of her kidneys to longtime customer Don Thomas, who had lost both of his kidneys. Don Thomas, Vietnam War veteran and father of two, had a grim prognosis before he met Mariana Villarreal. They were but acquaintances at the restaurant and barely knew each other when the idea of the life-changing swap took hold — and became a reality. "Mariana had only been here a short time," the 70-something Mr. Thomas said. "I just barely knew her when she made the offer." "I said, 'Well I have two kidneys, do you want one of mine?'" the 20-something Mariana said. It was an offer he couldn't refuse. Don's response: "I will accept it." And just like that, she gave him the gift of life.

What prompted Mariana to give a near-stranger a piece of herself to save him? The young waitress explained that she felt like this was coming from a higher calling. Especially since she had recently lost her grandmother to kidney failure. "Around the same time I met him, my grandmother was going through something similar but I wasn't able to help her and it will forever be in my heart," Mariana said. "My higher calling maybe wasn't for my grandma but for a complete stranger. If [Don] can live two more years, happy as he's ever been, that's fine with me. That's not up to me. I did my part, now it's G-d's turn to keep him alive." Dr. Harrison Pollinger, one of the program directors of the Piedmont Transplant Institute, said, "You can live your whole life with just one kidney. You only need one kidney for normal kidney function." According to reports, both donor and recipient are doing well.

The Torah says, "*When there will be a poor person amongst you...do not tighten your heart and do not close up your hand in front of your poor brother. Rather, open your hand to him....*" (Deut. 15:7-8) Somewhere hidden within our self-centered inclinations, all of us have the desire to give selflessly to others. The idea of selfless service is central to the way of life of lofty individuals. Judaism demands of us, too, a life of service, of carrying out mitzvot for the sake of others. Although the Torah doesn't *require* the type of gift that Mariana Villarreal gave to Don Thomas, her lesson can inspire all of us to serve others.

Parshas Ki Seitzei Deuteronomy 21:10 - 25:19

This week's Torah portion contains 74 *mitzvos* (commandments) -- more than 10% of the 613 mitzvos of the Torah. Among the highlights:

- Guidelines for treatment of captured female prisoners of war
- Treatment of the 'stubborn and rebellious son'
- Prohibition of wearing *shatnez* -- a mixture of wool and linen in the same garment
- The case of the defamation of a married woman
- Men are forbidden from wearing women's clothing and vice versa.
- Taking interest for lending to a Jew is forbidden
- The requirement of a *get* (bill of divorce) when divorce takes place
- The obligation to pay workers in a timely fashion (handymen, babysitters, etc.)
- Special consideration must be given to a widow and orphan

This power-packed Torah portion concludes with the command to remember the atrocities which the nation of Amalek (from whom Haman came) committed against us upon our exodus from Egypt.

Rabbinic Ruminations

Want to look good? Wearing glasses is one way to be seen as more competent. According to research by the College of Optometrists (UK), 43 per cent of people think that glasses make someone look more intelligent, while 36 per cent believe they make you look more professional and business-like. As a result, 40 per cent of people would consider wearing clear lens glasses that they don't need in order to get ahead at work and look fashionable. But this strategy carries with it side effects not all would consider desirable. In one study, spectacle-wearers were regarded as more 'geeky' and 'good with

computers' than people who do not wear them. Another study shows that wearing glasses makes you look 3.3 years older. And the perceived image was even worse for those aged 45 and over, who were thought to be five years older.

In more ways than one, wearing glasses can help you to 'look' good. However, the eye-opening results of a [new study](#) suggest an even better strategy. According to the research, if you want to have an 'attractiveness halo', looking healthy is far more important than looking smart. When looking for leaders participants chose more healthy-looking faces over less healthy-looking faces in 69% of trials. This makes sense. When someone looks well rested, has a good complexion, and is in good shape, it's a good sign. It probably means they take care of themselves, which is a likely indicator of good physical and mental health.

Eight hundred years ago, Maimonides wrote in *Hanhagot Habriyot* (The Regimen of Healthcare): "If a person cared for himself the way he cares for his horse, he would avoid many serious illnesses. You won't find a person who gives his horse too much fodder. But he himself eats to excess. He makes sure his animal gets proper exercise to keep it healthy. But when it comes to himself, he neglects exercise even though this is a fundamental principle in health maintenance and in the prevention of most illnesses." The Torah decrees, *Venishmartem meod lenafshoteichem* -- "Be very careful about your lives." (Deut. 4:15). For many reasons beyond 'looking good', we are obligated to preserve our health.

Quote of the Week

How many slams in an old screen door? Depends how loud you shut it. How many slices in a bread? Depends how thin you cut it. How much good inside a day? Depends how good you live 'em. How much love inside a friend? Depends how much you give 'em. – **Shel Silverstein**, Sheldon Allan "Shel" Silverstein, American poet, singer-songwriter, cartoonist, screenwriter, and author of children's books.

Joke of the Week

This year for our rabbi's birthday, the congregation decided to give him a new suit. He was so touched by the gift that the following Shabbos before he began his *drasha* (sermon) he stood before everyone and, with tears in his eyes, said, "I can't tell all of you how happy I am. Today I will be delivering my *drasha* to you in my birthday suit."