

*Beyond Twelve Gates by Rabbi Ze'ev Smason
Parshas Ki Seitzei August 16, 2013*

Welcome to Beyond Twelve Gates

A number of impressive consecutive streaks stand out in the history of modern sports. Cal Ripken Jr. played in 2,623 games, never taking a day off for more than 15 years while playing at a Hall of Fame level. Over a span of almost 10 years, Edwin Moses did not lose a single race in the 400m hurdles, winning 122 consecutive races. Byron Nelson won 11 consecutive professional golf tournaments, and British rower Steven Redgrave won a gold medal at 5 consecutive Olympic Games. A sports streak of a different type began in the 1960s when a 19-year-old kid bought a standing-room ticket to watch a Chicago Blackhawks hockey game. It was an experience Bob Gertenrich found to be so electrifying that he attended the next home game, and the one after that, and every home game since. The Skokie resident, now in his mid-60s, has saved ticket stubs from every home game since January 23, 1966, sporting a consecutive attendance record totaling 2,155 games.

Gertenrich was once one of only several hundred people at a Blackhawks game during a Chicago blizzard that grounded flights and paralyzed the city. He recalls that the car he was riding in was the "only thing moving" down the highway. On another occasion, superfan showed up at a home game against doctor's orders after breaking his wrist the morning of the game. If this isn't enough to convince you that Gertenrich is a 'Regular Guy', he even showed up on October 6, 1991 - the day his beloved mother died. Gertenrich said his mother passed away at 2 A.M., and the game started at 6:30 P.M. Forty-seven seasons of consecutive attendance is a streak that will be hard to beat.

The Talmud records a number of occasions when students asked their teachers the following question: "By what merit did you live so long?" One rabbi answered, "I never took a shortcut through the Study Hall". One answered, "I never called a person by a nickname". Many answers are given, with no apparent common thread as to what provided the merit for longevity. However, one contemporary rabbi suggests the following common thread: Each rabbi answered, "I NEVER...." The key is NEVER -- day-in/day out consistency. Tony Robbins said, "It's not what we do once in a while that shapes our lives. It's what we do consistently." The number one quality for all major accomplishments is consistency.

Rabbinic Ruminations

Are you a nomophobic? *Nomophobia*, an abbreviation for "no-mobile-phone-phobia", is affecting many of the 56% of Americans who own a smartphone. The phone, computer, tablet and other high tech devices have become not just an object, but for many a best friend. Many suffer from anxiety if their phone is unavailable even if only for a few minutes. Surprised? At many dinner tables it has become the norm to constantly check for texts, emails, tweets and Facebook updates. But nomophobes are using their smartphones in increasingly unusual and inappropriate situations.

A 2013 Mobile Consumer Habits study found that some adults use their smartphones:

In a movie theater – 35%

During a dinner date – 33%

At a child's or school function – 32%

In church or a place of worship – 19%

While in the shower (!) - 12%

Nearly three-quarters (72%) of respondents report being within five feet of their smartphones the majority of the time. We are so addicted that despite warnings and laws in most states about the dangers of talking or texting while driving, more than one-half (55%) of users admit to using their smartphone while driving their cars.

Nomophobia isn't a uniquely American affliction. A recent British study found that nearly 53% of mobile phone users in Britain tend to be anxious when they "lose their mobile phone, run out of battery or credit, or have no network coverage". The study found that 9% feel stressed when their mobile phones are off.

The smartphone-penetration rate among children and teenagers in South Korea tripled last year to 65%, and the government says roughly one in five students is addicted to the devices. This addiction is defined as spending more than seven hours a day using the phone and experiencing symptoms such as anxiety, insomnia and depression when cut off from the device.

A Jew says the "Modeh Ani" prayer as soon as he opens his eyes each morning, to say, "Although I feel myself to be the center of this world, I acknowledge Your presence as the Author of this world. You are bigger than me." With those words, we open ourselves to freedom. We all have free choice to direct our lives. Realize that we choose our thoughts, and with the help of the Almighty put those thoughts into actions.

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.

Quote of the Week

How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world -- *Anne Frank*

Joke of the Week

A yeshiva bochur (student) was feeling very nervous about his first shidduch (date) and went to his father for advice.

"My son, there are three subjects that always work on a shidduch: food, family, and philosophy."

The bochur picks up his date and they stare at each other for a long time. The bochur's nervousness builds, but he then remembers his father's advice and asks the girl,

"Do you like latkes (potato pancakes)?"

"No," comes the answer, and the silence returns like a suffocating blanket.

"Do you have a brother?"

"No."

After giving it some thought, the bochur plays his last card: "If you had a brother, would he like latkes?"