

Beyond Twelve Gates by Rabbi Ze'ev Smason
Parshas Nitzavim-Vayelech August 30, 2013

Welcome to Beyond Twelve Gates

A lighthearted video project that sent a 4-year-old boy's toy train into the stratosphere captured the hearts of YouTube viewers. "A Toy Train in Space" has been viewed more than 4 million times since it was posted last September by its producer and doting father, Ron Fugelseth of Aptos, California. Ron found a weather balloon and rigged a camera to a pole with his son Jayden's favorite train, Stanley, on the end of it. Then he made a box of foam and filled it with an old mobile phone that could relay GPS coordinates to another cellphone to track it. He added pocket warmers on the electronics' batteries so they wouldn't freeze up in the colder high altitudes. Stanley, the star of the entire 2 and a half minute show, floated 18 miles up in the air before the balloon burst and landed back onto Earth— in a corn field 27 miles away from where he was launched.

The best part of the video is when father and son go looking for Stanley. Ron trudged through a field and found the orange box that he had marked "Harmless Weather Balloon Project" with black letters -- so he knew it was the right one. He didn't touch it, then he woke up Jayden, sleeping in the car, and let him find it on his own. The pure joy on the 4-year-old's face is unadulterated awesomeness—he's so happy that his favorite toy got to go to space and that he got home safely. Watch the video here -- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XoMN-zg7r3M> -- and have tissues nearby.

Good parenting is THAT important. Know and follow the values you want your children to live with, and understand your child's uniqueness. As King Solomon said, "Educate a child according to his way, so even when he grows old, he won't depart from it." (Proverbs) Fill your children's hearts and heads with love, dreams, and aspirations and inspiration at an early age. And, then, like Stanley the train, your child's imagination and ambition will soar.

Parshas Nitzavim - Vayelech Deuteronomy 29:9 - 31:30

Nitzavim begins with Moses gathering every member of the Jewish people for the final time. He initiates them into a Covenant with G-d as the Almighty's 'Chosen People'. This Covenant applied not only to those present on that day, but to all future Jewish generations. A question for your consideration; how could someone not present be bound to a commitment made by their ancestors? What is the binding force today that obligates all Jews to keep a Torah accepted over 3,000 years ago?

Moses tells the people that although eventually they will sin, in time they will repent and return to the Torah, and G-d will usher in the messianic era when we all return to the land of Israel. Furthermore, he assures them that the commandments are neither distant nor inaccessible ('it is not in heaven'). This means that a committed Jewish life is well within everyone's reach.

Vayelech opens with Moses walking through the Jewish camp on the final day of his life to say goodbye to his beloved people. He teaches them the mitzvah of *Hakel*, the once-in-seven-years gathering of the entire nation to hear the king read certain passages from the Torah. G-d commands that a special Torah, written by Moses, be placed by the Levites at the side of the Holy Ark to bear witness against Israel if they were to ever deviate from its teachings.

Rabbinic Ruminations

In 2006 researchers from Columbia's Business School asked students to appraise the resume of an entrepreneur named Howard Roizen. His resume showed that Mr. Howard had worked at Apple, launched his own software company and been a partner at a venture capital firm. He was a proficient networker and had very powerful friends including Bill Gates. Colleagues described him as a "catalyst" and a "captain of industry". The students thought he'd be an excellent person to have within a company because he was someone who got things done and was likable. The interesting part of this experiment was that Mr. Howard didn't exist. Heidi Roizen, however, was the real-life entrepreneur with the accomplishments and qualifications stated in 'Howard's' resume. The professors then had another group of students read Roizen's story with her real name attached. While the students rated Howard and Heidi

equally in terms of success, they thought Howard was likable while Heidi seemed selfish, less likable, and not "the type of person you would want to hire or work for." Many studies underline the obstacles women face. A 2000 study found that female musicians advanced 50 percent more often in orchestra auditions when their gender was masked. A study from 1998 found that when college students read anonymous essays written by sixth-graders in stereotypically male or female handwriting, they gave the "boys" higher grades.

Perception can have a powerful impact on how we think and act. "A human being is a deciding being," Victor Frankl wrote in his 1946 book, "Man's Search for Meaning," which sold more than 10 million copies. "Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom." The first statement in Ethics of the Fathers teaches, "Be deliberate in judgement". Don't be quick to pass judgment -- not on others nor on any other perspective on life or wisdom.

Quote of the Week

For beautiful eyes, look for the good in others; for beautiful lips, speak only words of kindness; and for poise, walk with the knowledge that you are never alone -- **Audrey Hepburn**

Joke of the Week

Moishe Goldberg was heading out of the synagogue on Rosh Hashana and as always, Rabbi Mendel was standing at the door, shaking hands as the congregation departed.

The rabbi grabbed Moishe by the hand, pulled him aside and whispered, "You need to join the Army of G-d!"

Moishe replied: "I'm already in the Army of G-d, Rabbi."

The rabbi questioned: "How come I don't see you except for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur?"

Moishe whispered back: "I'm in the secret service."