

*Beyond Twelve Gates by Rabbi Ze'ev Smason*  
*Parshas Mikeitz ~ Shabbos Chanukah      December 20, 2014*

*Welcome to Beyond Twelve Gates ~*

When Tarrant, Alabama Police Officer William Stacy was called to the Dollar General store, he wasn't especially surprised. "We get shoplifting calls at Dollar General all the time," he said. "Usually people are stealing things like makeup or phone chargers – not things they need to get by." So when Officer Stacy arrived to find 47-year-old Helen Johnson stealing eggs to feed her two daughters, her niece, and two young grandkids, he knew this incident was different. Helen explained to Officer Stacy that her family hadn't eaten for two days. So instead of making an arrest, the officer bought Helen a carton of eggs. "When she mentioned the kids and said they were hungry, that's when I knew I wanted to buy the eggs," Officer Stacy said. "No matter what financial situation kids are in, it's not their fault they're hungry." The act of kindness was caught on video and [posted to Facebook](#), where it was been viewed more than one million times.

After letting Helen go home, Officer Stacy helped her sign up for a Fire Dept. Toy Drive, which provides toys and food for families at the holidays. Soon, donations from across the country started pouring in for the Johnson family – a response to the viral video. "It took an entire shift to take all the stuff to her house and unload it," Officer Stacy said of the afternoon he spent delivering groceries to the Johnsons. "I've taken three Tahoe loads of food to her house, and I know a food bank came to bring her food." On Facebook, users are calling Officer Stacy "an angel in disguise," but the officer says he was just doing his job. "There's a real trust issue between law enforcement and citizens right now, but hopefully this shows we are not robots who just want to arrest people," Officer Stacy said. "We have hearts – you have to have a big heart and clear conscience of mind to do this job."

In Ethics of the Fathers (2:13) Rabbi Elazar ben Arach stated that having a *lev tov* -- a good heart -- is the best character trait a person can have. A good heart is reflected by how we treat the poor and downtrodden. Many go to bed hungry every night. Acts of compassion and kindness -- like that of Officer William Stacy -- reflect the compassion and kindness of the Almighty.

*Parshas Mikeitz Genesis 41:1 -- 44:17*

Pharaoh has a two-part dream about seven scrawny cows devouring seven robust cows, followed by seven thin stalks of grain swallowing seven healthy, good ones. When his advisers are unable to adequately interpret the dream, Pharaoh summons Joseph, who had been in prison for a total of twelve years. Ascribing his power of interpretation solely to G-d, Joseph tells Pharaoh that Egypt will first experience seven years of abundant crops, and then will be ravaged by a devastating famine. Pharaoh appoints Joseph as viceroy of Egypt, making him the second most powerful man in the land (this is a source for the sport of tennis in the Torah -- we see that Joseph ... served in Pharaoh's court). Joseph's wife Asnat gives birth to two sons, Menashe and Ephraim, and the years of plenty and famine unfold just as Joseph had predicted. With the famine devastating the land of Canaan (Israel), Joseph's brothers descend to Egypt to purchase food. When they don't recognize their royal brother, Joseph sets in motion a plan to determine if the brothers have fully repented for their sin of selling him almost twenty-two years before. Joseph acts detached, accusing them of being spies, and holds Simeon hostage. Joseph then allows the rest of the brothers to go with food to their father on the condition that they return with their youngest brother Benjamin. With great reluctance, Jacob agrees to this condition. Mikeitz concludes with the looming threat that Benjamin will be made a slave to the Egyptian ruler.

*Rabbinic Ruminations*

We tend to divide the world into two types of people—neat freaks or slobs. We assume neat freaks are organized, driven achievers who know how to get things done, get up early and make their beds with hospital corners. On the other hand, we think of those who are messy as lazy, disorganized and lacking motivation and self-discipline. Is there any truth to these assumptions?

Many studies show how our surroundings influence behavior. When researchers placed flyers on car

windshields in two different kinds of parking lots – one tidy and clean, the other filled with litter – they found that test participants were more likely to throw the flyers on the ground in the litter-filled lot than the clean one. For another study, researchers divided participants into two groups. Half were sent to a tidy office, the other half were sent to a messy office. After the participants were asked to fill out forms for 10 minutes they were offered chocolate bars or apples on their way out. Those who had been in the orderly office were twice as likely to take the apple. Both studies support the 'Broken Window Theory' ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Broken\\_windows\\_theory](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Broken_windows_theory)) -- that even slight disorder or neglect can lead to poor choices and reduced self-discipline. The broken windows theory was first introduced in 1982 by social scientists James Q. Wilson and George L. Kelling, who offered the following example: Consider a building with a few broken windows. If the windows are not repaired, the tendency is for vandals to break a few more windows. Eventually, they may even break into the building, and if it's unoccupied, perhaps become squatters or light fires inside. In other words, chaos begets chaos.

The Mussar Movement -- a traditional Jewish ethical and educational movement -- attached great importance to neatness and certain areas of self-discipline. The Mussar Movement emphasized striving for excellence, with an intolerance for habits such as sloppiness and carelessness. One who failed to return a chair to its proper place or who dressed sloppily displayed casualness that was at odds with a Jew's duty in this world -- to be a seeker of excellence and closeness to G-d.

### *Quote of the Week*

People see G-d every day, they just don't recognize him. -- *Pearl Bailey*

### **Joke of the Week**

We all know that Columbus believed the world was round when others believed it was flat and that if you traveled far enough you would go over the edge. We also know that Columbus reached what we now know as America. While there are still a few who believe Columbus returned to Spain and told Queen Isabella that he discovered a new world, most believe he had told her he had reached India.

Recently documents written by Queen Isabella's official scribe were uncovered revealing what Columbus actually said on returning from his first voyage. His first words were, "I'll bet I'm the first man who ever got nineteen hundred miles on a galleon."