

Welcome to Beyond Twelve Gates

Habits are hard to break. But with a substantial incentive from her father, Rachel Baier is taking a break from Facebook until the end of the school year. The 14-year-old Rachel made a deal with her father; stay off of Facebook for five months, and pocket \$200. Terms of the arrangement include Rachel having given her father her password, which he has changed to prevent her from accessing her account. Rachel's father Paul said the creative arrangement was Rachel's idea. "She is an honors student but she says Facebook can be distracting." Rachel originally asked for \$70, but then, like an expert negotiator, she came back and asked for \$200. "When she realized it would be for five months and she wanted an amount that would really excite her," Paul explained. Paul hopes this may start a trend. "I've realized that she is part of generation of kids that has grown up on Facebook. She's been on it for two years full time. This is two years of 24/7 teen discussion of friends, clothes, parties, etc. They can't get away from it. I'm proud she recognized the benefit of a hiatus. She plans to go on using it after the contract end." The contract ends June 26 -- the last day of school.

The most precious commodity we have is time. The secular world says "time is money"; Judaism says "time is life." There are several ways to make better use of time. Each day, ask yourself, "What are the most important things I need to do today?" As often as possible, ask: "What is the best use of my time right now?" The Torah teaches us to value time. The Almighty gives us a limited amount of time and it is up to us to make the most of it. Many of us live our lives as if we will live forever, putting off even important things for another day. Even a moment of life can have great spiritual value. Psalm 90:12 says, "Teach us to number our days that we may gain a heart of wisdom." May the Almighty grant us the understanding to value our days -- and even to value each and every second.

Parshas Terumah Exodus 25:1-27:19

Parshas Terumah begins a series of four out of five portions which discuss in detail the construction of the Mishkan, the traveling Tabernacle which would serve as a 'resting place' for G-d's presence amongst the Jewish people. This week's portion recounts G-d's description to Moses of how to construct the Mishkan, beginning with a listing of the various precious materials to be collected from the Jewish people for this monumental project. G-d describes the magnificent golden and wooden Ark which would house the tablets of the Ten Commandments, complete with its dazzling cover depicting two cherubim (angels with faces of children) facing each other. Next, G-d provides Moses with the blueprints of the *shulchan* (holy table) upon which the *lechem hapanim* (showbread) would be placed each week. Following the description of the pure golden menorah which was to be hammered from one large piece of gold, G-d describes the structure of the Mishkan itself. It contained splendidly woven and embroidered covers, curtains and partitions, and the sturdy outer walls. The Torah portion concludes with instructions for the copper altar and the Mishkan's large outer courtyard.

Rabbinic Ruminations

On August 18, 1913, at the casino in Monte Carlo, there was a panicked rush by the gamblers to bet on red in a game of roulette. Players doubled and tripled their stakes, beginning about the time black had come up a phenomenal fifteen times in a row: Many believed there was not a chance in a million of another repeat. But that day in Monte Carlo the ball fell on black a record 26 times in a row, an extremely uncommon occurrence (against odds of 67,108,863 to one, neglecting the 0 slot on the wheel), and gamblers lost millions of francs betting *against* black after the black streak began. Gamblers reasoned incorrectly that the streak was causing an "imbalance" in the randomness of the wheel, and that it had to be followed by a long streak of red.

The Gambler's fallacy, also known as the Monte Carlo fallacy (from the incident described above), is based upon a failure to understand statistical independence. This glitch in our thinking leads us to put a tremendous amount of weight on previous events, believing that they'll somehow influence future outcomes. The classic example is coin-tossing. After flipping heads, say, five consecutive times, our inclination is to predict an increase in likelihood that the next coin toss will be tails — that the odds must certainly be in the favor of heads. But in reality, the odds are still 50/50. Another instance of the Gambler's fallacy occurs concerning child birth: Some expectant parents believe that, after having

multiple children of the same sex, they are "due" to have a child of the opposite sex, when the probability of having a child of either gender is still regarded as 50/50.

William Blake said, " To the eyes of a miser a guinea is more beautiful than the sun, and a bag worn with the use of money has more beautiful proportion than a vine filled with grapes." An objective source of truth is invaluable when we find ourselves leaning in the wrong direction. Where can we turn for such a source? "The Torah of G-d is perfect," says King David in Psalm 19:8, "restoring the soul; the testimony of G-d is trustworthy, making the simple one wise." Let your source of objectivity be the truth of the Torah.

Quote of the Week

Progress today can be defined as man's ability to complicate simplicity. -- *Thor Heyerdahl* (from his book, *Fatu-Hiva*)

Joke of the Week

Two Texans are sitting on a plane from Dallas and an old Jewish Texan is sitting between them.

The first Texan says, "My name is Roger. I own 250,00 acres. I have 1000 head of cattle, and they call my place The Jolly Roger."

The second Texan says, "My name is John. I own 350,000 acres. I have 5000 head of cattle and they call my place Bog John's."

They both looked down at the Jewish man who says, "My name is Irving and I own only 300 acres.

Roger looks down at him and says, "300 acres! What do you raise?"

"Nothing" Irving says.

"Well then, what do you call it?" asks John.

"Downtown Dallas." (Thanks to Rabbi Sheldon Grafstein)