

Beyond Twelve Gates by Rabbi Ze'ev Smason
Parshas Yisro February 7, 2015

Welcome to Beyond Twelve Gates ~

Sam Smith's "Stay With Me" has sold nearly four million copies worldwide, making it one of the most successful singles of 2014. It's also up for both Best Pop Performance and Record of the Year at the 2015 Grammy Awards. But upon the release of "Stay With Me" in April 2014, a number of listeners were quick to note the distinct resemblance to Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers' 1989 classic "I Won't Back Down" -- specifically, the melodies of the respective choruses. Without drama, Sam Smith granted Tom Petty and his original co-writer credit for writing the track. The settlement reportedly included a 12.5% writing credit to both Petty and singer-composer Jeff Lynne. (compare the songs:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nvITJrNJ5IA> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pB-5XG-DbAA>
(skip to 30 seconds))

For his part, Tom Petty praised Sam Smith for quickly addressing what he called a "musical accident" -- i.e., the similarities between two songs. In a statement to Billboard, Petty said, "Let me say I have never had any hard feelings toward Sam. All my years of songwriting have shown me these things can happen. Most times you catch it before it gets out the studio door but in this case it got by. Sam's people were very understanding of our predicament and we easily came to an agreement." Petty also strongly denied the scattered reports that the songwriting snafu ever inspired legal action. "The word lawsuit was never even said and was never my intention," Petty said. "Sam did the right thing and I have thought no more about this. A musical accident no more no less. In these times we live in this is hardly news. I wish Sam all the best for his ongoing career. Peace and love to all." Unlike many similar songwriting cases that have turned ugly publicly, when the similarities were pointed out to Sam Smith he didn't try to fight it and amicably dished out royalties and attributed credit.

Three of the most difficult words to say in the English language may be: I was wrong. We regularly meet people who can't bring themselves to admit mistakes -- particularly when the consequences have financial ramifications. Ethics of the Fathers (5:10) teaches that one of the seven things that characterizes a wise person is the ability to acknowledge the truth and admit mistakes. If we can find the spiritual strength to say "I'm sorry", and "I was wrong", the quality of our lives and of our relationships will improve dramatically.

Parshas Yisro Exodus 18:1 -- 20:23

The weekly portion begins with Moses' father-in-law, Yisro, arriving at the Jewish people's camp in the desert, where he is greeted warmly by a large entourage. Yisro was inspired to join them when he heard about all of the wonders and miracles which G-d performed for the Jewish people during the Exodus from Egypt. Upon witnessing Moses serving as the people's sole judge from dawn until dusk, Yisro declares that this system will never work. He therefore suggests that subordinate judges be appointed to adjudicate the smaller cases. Moses agrees to this plan. The Jewish people arrive at Mt. Sinai and prepare to receive the Torah. Moses ascends the mountain and G-d tells him to convey to the people that they will be to Him a treasure from among the nations. After three days of preparation the moment of revelation finally arrives. Amid thunder, lightning and the sound of the shofar, G-d descends upon the mountain and proclaims -- with the entire Jewish people listening -- the Ten Commandments. Referred to in Hebrew as the *Aseres HaDibros*, a more accurate translation would be the Ten Sayings or the Ten Statements. One noteworthy feature of the revelation is that both before and since Sinai, no nation has ever made the claim that G-d spoke to an entire nation of millions of individuals. Moses then ascends the mountain to receive the remainder of the Torah from G-d, both the written and oral segments. The portion concludes with several mitzvos concerning the construction of the altar in the Temple.

Rabbinic Ruminations

If you're looking to drop those numbers on the bathroom scale, it's okay to think about eating your favorite candy bar. In fact, go ahead and imagine devouring every last bite -- all in the name of your diet -- with the key word being "imagine." A study published in "Science" ([Morewedge et al., 2010](#)) shows

that when you imagine eating a certain food, it *reduces* your actual consumption of that food. This flies in the face of the old assumption that thinking about something desirable increases cravings for it and its consumption. In fact, when you think about eating something, maybe you trick your mind into thinking it is satisfied, that it has received that candy bar.

Researchers tested the effects of repeatedly imagining eating something against its actual consumption. In one of several experiments, people imagined performing 33 repetitive actions, one at a time. A control group imagined inserting 33 quarters into a laundry machine (an action similar to eating "M&M'S"). Another group imagined inserting 30 quarters into a laundry machine and then imagined eating three M&M'S, while a third group imagined inserting three quarters into a laundry machine and then imagined eating 30 M&M'S. Then, all participants ate freely from a bowl filled with M&M'S. Those who imagined eating 30 M&M'S ended up eating far fewer candies than those in the other groups did. This result was backed up by another experiment using different numbers, but came to the same conclusion: those who imagined eating 30 candies ate fewer than others.

It seems from the above-stated study, the very process of imagining eating a food also starts the process of getting bored or tired of it. Applying this insight to our spiritual lives, through the power of imagination each of us has the ability to transform our inner world. A prominent rabbi once said, "*Adam*" is from the same root as *dimyon* (imagination), and the aleph is extra. The advantage of humanity over all other creatures is our power of imagination. (Rabbi Bunim of Przysucha, 1765-1827, Poland). The term "image of G-d" refers to our inner endowment as a creative being. Definitely some food for thought, wouldn't you say?

Quote of the Week

I hate vacations. I hate them. I have no fun on them. I get nothing done. People sit and relax, but I don't want to relax. I want to see something. *Sit down and have a massage, have a spa, have a cupcake -- I go nuts. If I want to relax, I go home. -- Paul Theroux, Travel Writer*

Joke of the Week

As the rabbi began to say the *mishabayrachs* (get-well prayers) one Shabbos morning, he was handed a note to be read to the congregation.

The note said, "Chaim Goldberg having gone to sea, his wife requests the prayers of the congregation for his safety."

The rabbi picked up the slip and read aloud, "Chaim Goldberg having gone to see his wife, requests the prayers of the congregation for his safety."