

*Welcome to Beyond Twelve Gates by Rabbi Ze'ev Smason*  
*Parshas Pinchas July 11, 2015*

*“Dorit, The Porcupine’s Prickly Problem!”*

Some Israeli zookeepers have a prickly problem. Workers at the Ramat Gan Safari Park uncovered evidence of a porcupine love affair between a captive female and a wild male. Dorit the porcupine has been living at the Safari Park in Israel for eight years since being orphaned as a baby. Unable to survive in the wild, she lives alongside three eagle owls. Staff were baffled when they found porcupine droppings outside her enclosure, and after a spiky creature was spotted on the other side of the wire, they feared the worst, thinking Dorit had made a break for freedom. A night-time camera proved otherwise. "The mystery was solved," the zoo said in a statement. "Dorit has a secret boyfriend."

The camera footage showed a large male porcupine visiting Dorit each night for a few hours of one-on-one time, separated only by the enclosure's bars. Staff were surprised by his consistent interest because it wasn't mating season, and they didn't know how he got into the safari park. "If he's hiding inside the park, he's doing it very efficiently," spokeswoman Sagit Horowitz said. The discovery has left them with a dilemma over whether to let the pair unite. In the meantime, the droppings keep piling up, suggesting that Dorit's persistent male suitor hasn't lost interest yet. (See a video of Dorit's mystery boyfriend at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ImOVd-r0cWw>.)

An important tool for success in living is persistence. King David said, "Place your hope in G-d, strengthen yourself and He will place courage in your heart, and place your hope in G-d" (Psalms 27:14). Citing this passage, the Talmud says, "If a person sees that he has prayed but has not been answered, he should go back and pray again, as it says "Hope in G-d...and hope in G-d". Nothing in the world can take the place of persistence.

*Parshas Pinchas Numbers 25:10 - 30:1*

In last week's Torah portion we found the Jewish hero Pinchas saving the day for the Jewish people by publicly executing the Jewish tribal head, Zimri, and his Midianite girlfriend, Kazbi. Those two had desecrated the Name of G-d and His Torah by having relations in plain view of Moses and the entire Jewish leadership. This week, Pinchas is rewarded for sanctifying the Name of G-d and is granted the blessing of peace and priesthood (Kehuna). Pinchas' zealous response saves the Jewish people from a plague which had broken out in the camp. Five righteous daughters of Tzelofchad file a claim with Moses: In the absence of a brother, they request their deceased father's share in the Land of Israel. Moses asks G-d for a ruling. The Almighty responds that the claim of these five women who so dearly love the Land of Israel is, indeed, just. Moses is told that he will ascend a mountain to view the Land that the Jewish people will soon inherit, though he will not be allowed to enter. Moses asks G-d to appoint a successor. Do you know who is chosen? Joshua, Moses' dedicated assistant and student. The Torah portion concludes with a lengthy description of the special offerings brought on various festivals. These sections are also read from the Torah throughout the year on the appropriate holidays.

*Rabbinic Ruminations*

Is it best to live in the mountains, by the ocean, on the plains? The answer seems to depend upon whether you're an introvert or extrovert. In a series of studies (<http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2015/02/150227181329.htm>), researchers tested whether there is a link between personality and where you choose to live. Results showed that introverts tend to live in mountainous regions -- areas viewed as being more peaceful and calm. Extroverts, meanwhile, tend to prefer flat, open areas, which are viewed as more exciting, sociable and stimulating. The study found that when people want to socialize with others, they prefer the ocean far more (75%) than mountains (25%). In contrast, when they want to be alone, they choose mountains (52%) as much as the ocean (48%).

Shige Oishi, lead researcher in one study, says that individuals should consider their personalities more closely when choosing a place to live; "Some cities and towns have geography that is more accommodating for some people than for others...if you know you're introverted, then you may be

rejuvenated by being in a secluded place, while an extrovert may be rejuvenated more in an open space." Dr. Wiebke Bleidorn, who led another study, said: "Individuals low on openness to experiences had significantly lower self-esteem in open cities, like New York City, but relatively higher self-esteem in cities that score relatively lower on openness to experience, for instance, Tuscaloosa, Alabama." In other words, people may have higher self-esteem when their personality matches the region or city. What's so great about living in Israel? Multiple reasons are suggested. Israel is the only country in the world where ....1) Bank robbers kiss the mezuzah as they leave with their loot. 2) Kids read Harry Potter in Hebrew. 3) Patients visiting physicians end up giving the doctor advice. 4) One is unlikely to be able to dig a cellar without hitting ancient archaeological artifacts. 5) Making a call to G-d is a local call. But what's best of all about living in Israel? For the Jewish people, Israel is home.

### *Quote of the Week*

Life isn't about finding yourself. Life is about creating yourself. -- *George Bernard Shaw*

### **Joke of the Week**

During a recent hot spell in St. Louis, a bum collapsed on the street. Immediately a crowd gathered and began offering suggestions.

"Give the poor man a drink of whiskey," a little old lady said.

"Give him some air," a man cried out.

"Give him some whiskey," she cried again.

"Give him some water," another man said.

"Give him some whiskey," the old lady said yet again.

Several other suggestions were made, and the bum suddenly sat up and hollered, "Will all of you be quiet and listen to the little old lady?"