

Beyond Twelve Gates by Rabbi Ze'ev Smason
Parshas Masei July 25, 2014

Welcome to Beyond Twelve Gates

Here's a good story: 25-year-old Rory McIlroy of Northern Ireland won the British Open Sunday. It is McIlroy's third major golf tournament victory; the only one that eludes him is the Masters. Here's a better story: A decade ago, McIlroy's father, Gerry, placed a (legal) wager that his son would win the British Open within a 10 year-period, which was coming to an end with this year's tournament. In 2004 the elder McIlroy bet £200 at 500-1 odds, meaning that on Sunday his son won the Open -- and Gerry won £100,000 pounds, just a bit less than \$171,000.

To be clear, the elder McIlroy's bet wasn't without any hope of success; by then Rory McIlroy was a top junior, who would turn pro at age 18 and win his first major in a romp at the 2011 U.S. Open. Still, it was a touching and meaningful expression of faith from a parent, whom, like McIlroy's mother, Rosie, had made numerous sacrifices on his son's path to pro golf.

Judaism teaches that raising a child is like holding a bird in your hand: Open your hand too loose, the bird will fly away. Close your hand too tight, you'll crush the bird. What's needed in raising a child is a combination of love (the open hand) and discipline (the closed hand). Love is the way you give your child a sense of self. This is accomplished by sharing our time with our children, really listening to them, sharing in their joy, and encouraging them by identifying their successes and expressing belief in their great potential.

Parshas Masei Numbers 33:1 - 36:13

Masei (a word that means 'journeys') begins with a listing of the 42 encampments of the Jewish people's 40 year journey from the Exodus until the crossing of the Jordan River into the Land of Israel. G-d commands the Jewish people to drive out the Canaanites from the Land of Israel and to demolish all vestiges of their idolatry. The Jewish people are warned that if they fail to rid the land completely of the Canaanites, those who remain will be 'pins in their eyes' and 'thorns in their sides.'

The boundaries of the Land of Israel are defined, and the tribes are commanded to set aside forty-eight cities for the Levites, who do not receive a regular portion in the division of the land. Cities of refuge are established; one who unintentionally murders can flee there. The daughters of Tzlofchad marry members of their tribe so that their inheritance will stay in their own tribe. So ends the book of Numbers, the fourth of the Books of the Torah. Next week -- on to Deuteronomy!

Rabbinic Ruminations

Albert Einstein said, "The only reason for time is so that everything doesn't happen at once." Einstein's tongue-in-cheek remark helps to focus our attention upon time as a great equalizer; minutes tick by at the same pace for all. Yet for some, time seems to pass by at different rates. Experiments show that older people feel time passes more quickly, while younger people experience time more accurately. The more people enjoy a musical composition, the more time seems to slow down. Boredom slows our perception of time. And as our body temperature rises, perception of time speeds up, studies show.

The effect of a person's status on time perception is a new frontier in the study of management psychology. "We all adhere to the same clocks," said social psychologist Serena Chen at the University of California at Berkeley, who conducted experiments on the perception of time. "Yet we are showing that power can shift your perception of time." In the UC Berkeley research, Dr. Chen studied the effects of power on time perception by conducting surveys of 557 men and women. The volunteers filled out three questionnaires designed to gauge their sense of power and their perspective on time. They ranked themselves on such queries as: "Time is slipping away;" "My future is infinite;" and "I have a lot of time in which to get things done." Dr. Chen said, "People who feel generally more powerful feel they have more time. The effect is very easy to find over and over again."

The Torah teaches us to value time. We ask G-d, "Teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom." (Psalm 90:12) Every moment a person can do good, perfect his character, and make the world a better place. 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. But ask someone who values time: They'll tell you that every moment of life is precious.

Quote of the Week

He who excuses himself accuses himself -- *William Shakespeare*

Joke of the Week

Moshe couldn't sleep one night. He was tossing and turning for hours. When his wife couldn't take any more, she asked her husband for an explanation. He told her that he owes Chaim from across the road \$10,000. He is supposed to pay it back the next day and he hasn't got the money.

His wife got out of bed, opened up the window and screamed:"CHAIM! CHAIM!!" out the window, until the light in Chaim's house lit up. She told Chaim that her husband doesn't have the money which he owes him.

She returned to her bed and told her husband: "It's all right you can go to sleep now. It is Chaim who won't be able to sleep instead."