

Beyond Twelve Gates by Rabbi Ze'ev Smason
Parshas Ekev July 26, 2013

Welcome to Beyond Twelve Gates

When actress Samantha Futerman logged on to Facebook in February she got a message that would change her life forever. "So...I don't want to be too Lindsay Lohan, well...but...how to put it... I was wondering where you were born?" The writer was Anais Bordier, a French woman studying in London. And that "Lindsay Lohan" mention? A reference to the remake of the film "Parent Trap," in which twins separated at birth discover each other for the first time. The women, both 25 years old, confirmed that they were born on Nov. 19, 1987 in the same town in South Korea. Both had been adopted -- Futerman by a family in Verona, N.J., and Bordier by parents in Paris, France.

Last December, Bordier and her friends stumbled across Futerman acting in a You Tube clip and marveled at the facial similarities between the two. A couple of months later, Bordier saw her again in a trailer for a film. That's when Bordier decided to reach out. "We both share a twisted sense of humor, a love of cheese despite any & all lactose intolerance....and an apparent napoleon complex to name a few," writes Futerman. Both women also tend to "artistically sleep 10 hours a day & eat the rest of it," adds Bordier. "Our incredible twist of fate can lift one to rejoice that anything is possible, and the biggest boundaries in life are the ones we set for ourselves. There are so many possibilities and so many crazy things that happen in a lifetime, and it is a gift to embrace them all." Futerman said. The newly-discovered identical twins are collaborating on a book about their improbable discovery, scheduled to come out in the fall of 2014.

The term "twist of fate" refers to a random occurrence with far-reaching consequences. But are there such things as random occurrences? While few of us have unexpectedly met a long-lost sibling, our lives are filled with frequent 'small miracles'. In our daily prayers we thank G-d for "Your miracles, which are with us daily, and for Your continual wonders and kindnesses." Because we become accustomed to life and nature, we rarely see the levers and pulleys of the small and hidden miracles that surround us. In *Hamlet* Shakespeare wrote, "There's a divinity that shapes our ends, Rough-hew them how we will." G-d is certainly with us and speaks with us. We need only to open our eyes and see.

Parshas Ekev -- Deuteronomy 7:12 - 11:25

Moses continues to encourage the Children of Israel to trust in G-d and in the prosperity and health, which will follow if they keep the Torah. If they are careful to observe even those 'minor' mitzvos that are usually 'trampled' underfoot, he promises that they will be the most blessed of the nations of the Earth. Moses reminds them of their numerous transgressions in the desert, including the mystifying sin of the Golden Calf. Moses describes the bountiful Land of Israel filled with wheat, barley, grapes, figs and pomegranates, a land of oil-yielding olives and date-honey. He teaches the people the second paragraph of the Shema, which stresses the fundamental doctrine of reward for keeping the mitzvos and the consequences of non-compliance. All that G-d requires of us, Moses says, is to love G-d, revere Him, and to observe His Torah. Easier said than done! Parshas Ekev concludes with the promise that G-d will provide the Jewish people with protection if they observe the laws of the Torah.

Many are familiar with the famous phrase (found in this week's portion), "Man does not live by bread alone." The less-familiar second half of the verse says, "..... but by all that comes from the mouth of G-d." This important idea teaches that physical nourishment and external pleasures aren't sufficient for a satisfied life. Every human being has spiritual needs that must also be met.

Rabbinic Ruminations

Singing in groups is one of the universal features of human musical cultures, and group singing has been often suggested as the primary form of the early human musical activity. In the United States alone, more than 23 million adults sing in groups every week. Organized, regularly scheduled sing-along sessions are held in some cities, notably Seattle, where most of them are known as "song circles". Many of these are organized by formal societies like the Seattle Folklore Society. Given the direct link between music and mood, there exists an entire branch of psychology devoted to music, appropriately called 'music therapy.' Modern music therapy developed as a way to help wounded World War II veterans

cope with their pain. Music as a therapeutic activity has been around thousands of years; in his investigation of the therapeutic value of harmonics, the Greek philosopher Pythagoras discovered that the seven modes--or keys--of the Greek system of music had the power to incite or sooth the various emotions.

In the Journal of Correctional Education (2009), researcher Mary L. Cohen reported on the positive influences of performing in a prison choir. An experiment compared well-being measurements between a group of prison inmates singing in a choir and prison inmates not singing in a choir. Results showed significant differences between experimental and control groups on four subscales: emotional stability, sociability, happiness, and joviality. One need not be in a prison choir to appreciate the joys of group singing, as the chorus experience can be positive for just about anybody. Studies confirm the benefits of group singing across a wide spectrum of positivity: better mood, influx of endorphins, increased feelings of communal value. Research illustrates not just the power of music, but also the power of participation and active involvement.

Judaism emphasizes the trait of joyfulness. We are enjoined to serve G-d through joy – *“Ivdu et Hashem b’simchah”*. It is natural to include singing and music in the context of our prayers in synagogue and at your *Shabbos* table. Learn the basic songs and prayers of the Shabbat services, so you can join and sing along with ease many of the popular tunes. Maria van Trapp said, “Music acts like a magic key, to which the most tightly closed heart opens.” There’s no excuse, then -- sing along!

Quote of the Week

Give me a stock clerk who wants to work and I will give you a person who will make history. Give me a person who does not want to work, and I will give you a stock clerk. -- **J.C. Penny**

Joke of the Week

A man approached old Mr. Katz in a town he was visiting. "What's the quickest way to New York?" Mr. Katz scratched his head. "Are you walking or driving?" he asked the stranger. "I'm driving." "That's the quickest way!"