

Welcome to Beyond TwelveGates

This year, a father and daughter in Arizona celebrated a very special Father's Day that was 24 years in the making. Amy Roberson had been put up for adoption shortly after birth, and spent many years hoping to someday find her biological father. Her story took an interesting -- and some might say Divinely directed -- turn, when it was revealed the pair had both felt the urge to volunteer at the same charity at the same time last year.

Amy had long held out hope to meet her birth parents. She said, "As I entered my teens, I really began to wonder about the people who gave me life." After a diligent search via social media, Amy discovered that both she and her father, Pastor Will Russell, were working at the Phoenix Rescue Mission. Pastor Russell said he gave her daughter up for adoption knowing he wasn't ready at the time to raise a child. Years later, he hoped that he would someday meet his daughter, too. "I found myself just kind of drawn here. So I started serving here," Pastor Russell said about volunteering at the mission.

Though both Amy and her father worked side-by-side for a year, their first awareness of their family connection came through a phone call Amy placed upon discovering her father through the Internet. When she reached her father by phone Amy said, "I don't know how to say this, but I'm your daughter. Please say something. Anything." Pastor Will said, "I found myself smiling on the phone and said, 'It's going to be OK'. I had been praying that she would come into my life, and receiving that phone call was as if G-d said, 'I heard you.'"

Jews have always appreciated the importance and centrality of a strong family unit. Abraham understood that the key to the fulfillment of his greatest desire -- bringing to the world the knowledge of one G-d -- was through a family. This concept was confirmed by G-d, who stated, "For I have loved him because he (Abraham) commands his children and his household after him that they keep the way of the Lord, doing righteousness and justice..." (Gen. 18:19). Embrace and cherish your family. Through those closest to us, we can bring the light of G-d into the world.

Parshas Balak Numbers 22:2 - 25:9

This week's portion shifts from the Jewish people's travels in the desert to the story of Bilam, the anti-Semitic prophet who attempted to curse the Children of Israel. Hired by Balak, the king of Moav, Bilam embarks upon a journey to the Israelite encampment. An angel brandishing a sword blocks Bilam's path, causing his donkey to repeatedly swerve off the road. Unable to see the angel, Bilam responds by striking the donkey three times. Miraculously, G-d causes the donkey to speak to Bilam -- shades of Mr. Ed, the talking horse in the 1960's TV show! Bilam's eyes are uncovered, and the humiliated prophet sees the angel standing in the path. The angel reminds Bilam that he may only speak the words that G-d places in his mouth. Upon arrival near the Jewish camp, Bilam repeatedly attempts to curse the people; each time G-d prevents him from doing so, but instead he ends up uttering several sets of praises, much to Balak's dismay.

The Torah portion concludes with the Jewish men's debauchery with the promiscuous daughters of Moav and Midian, and the public immoral act of Zimri (a prince of the tribe of Simeon) with a Midianite princess. Pinchas, Aaron's grandson, zealously responds by piercing them to death with a spear, halting a plague from G-d, which had broken out in the camp.

Rabbinic Ruminations

While perceptions of color are somewhat subjective, there are some color effects that have universal meaning. Red has been shown to increase blood pressure, stimulate the adrenal glands, increase one's attractiveness and compel teachers to grade papers more harshly. A recent study suggests a new item can be added to the "Red List": Tricking men into overpaying for "sale priced" items. The June issue of *Journal of Retailing* reports that in a series of experiments, male consumers perceived greater savings when prices were presented in red than when presented in black. In one experiment volunteers were asked to imagine they were setting up an apartment. They then looked at a mock retail ad featuring three toasters and two microwave ovens. Half saw a version of the ad in which the prices were printed in black

ink; the others saw an alternate version in which the figures were in red. After examining them, participants were asked to evaluate whether they felt the store was offering genuine bargains. The results: Males perceived greater savings and felt more positively when the prices in the retail ad were presented in red. "In contrast," researchers said, "women appear immune to the effects of prices in red, due to their tendency to process ads in greater depth." The gender difference appeared, however, only among men with relatively low levels of knowledge or interest in the items. This suggests that the red-equals-savings trick only works when men aren't particularly engaged, and are thus more susceptible to such cues.

The two-part message from the *Journal of Retailing* study seems to be clear. First: The report corroborates the Torah concept that women were created with an extra dose of "inner reasoning", and that in His infinite wisdom G-d created humans as two distinct genders to enable them to complement and fulfill each other. Second: Don't send your husband to the store to buy a new microwave, or any other appliance he's uninterested in. If the store is savvy enough to print the prices in red, he's apt to come home having spent too much -- and leave you seeing red.

Quote of the Week

Nothing will make you feel younger than being a beginner at something again. -- *Sam Grossman*

Joke of the Week

Grumbled the new groom at dinner:

"Why can't you make bread like my mother does?"

Answered his bride:

"Why can't you make dough like my father does?"