

Welcome to Beyond Twelve Gates by Rabbi Ze'ev Smason
Parshas Vayikra March 21, 2015

“Stand Up For Downs”

Desiree Andrews is an eighth-grader cheerleader at Lincoln Middle School in Kenosha, Wis. She has Down syndrome — and as some hecklers learned last year, she has the full support of her school's basketball team and her community. After realizing members of the crowd were making fun of Desiree during a game, three players delivered a simple message: "Don't mess with her." Eighth-graders Miles Rodriguez, Chase Vasquez and Scooter Terrien stormed off the court in the middle of the game to confront the bullies, who were giving Desiree a hard time. (See a news report on the story, including an interview with Desiree: <http://www.jrn.com/tmj4/news/Basketball-players-defend-cheerleader-targeted-by-bully-295810851.html>)

"We were mad; we didn't like that," Miles said. "'We walked off the court and went to the bullies and told them to stop because that's not right to be mean to another person.'" Scooter added, "It's not fair when other people get treated wrong, because we're all the same." Chase said, "The kids in the audience were picking on D, so we all stood up for her." Miles, Scooter and Chase have since become close friends with Desiree, who now never walks to class alone. The gymnasium where Desiree was bullied is being called "D's House" as a tribute to the young girl. She is introduced at home games, along with the team. "It's amazing," Desiree said. Desiree's father Cliff said that his daughter was inspired to take up cheerleading after watching *Glee*. "(The show has) a character with Down syndrome who is a cheerleader," Cliff said. "And (Desiree) said, 'If she can be a cheerleader, I can be a cheerleader.'" Is your synagogue sensitive to persons with disabilities? If someone with a physical, communication, hearing, vision, behavioral, or developmental disability moves into your community and is looking to belong to a shul, how would they perceive your synagogue? As welcoming, or as another closed door?

The Torah provides guidance as to how we react to those with disabilities: Ethics of the Fathers says, "*Do not look at the container, but what is in it.*" (4:27) Genesis states that each of us is created *B'tzelem Elo-him*, in the Image of G-d. (1:27) And if someone with a disability is being mistreated or bullied -- "*Speak up for those who cannot speak...speak up, judge righteously, champion the poor and the needy.*" (Proverbs 31:8) Speak up like Miles, Scooter and Chase did for Desiree Andrews.

Parshas Vayikra 1:1 -- 5:26

This Shabbos marks the beginning of our reading the third book of the Torah, Sefer Vayikra which deals primarily with the services and responsibilities of the Kohanim. This week's portion focuses on many of the *korbanos* (offerings) to be brought in the newly-constructed Mishkan. Parshas Vayikra begins with G-d calling Moses into the Mishkan where he will receive the many relevant mitzvos to be ultimately passed on to the Jewish people. The first half of the Torah portion describes the various optional *korbanos* brought by individuals. They can be classified into three general categories, each one comprised of several gradations in size and expense; the *korban olah* (elevation offering) which is completely consumed on the altar; the *korban mincha* (meal offering) which, because of its inexpensive contents, is usually brought by someone of modest means; and the *korban shelamim* (peace offering) partially burned on the altar, with the remainder divided between the owners and the Kohanim. The second half of the portion (beginning with chapter four) discusses the required *chatos* (sin) and *asham* (guilt) offerings to be brought as atonement for unintentional transgressions.

Rabbinic Ruminations

In modern society, silence is not simply golden but increasingly rare to find. Even when we are alone or away from the city, phones chirp, televisions blare, and iPods beckon. Wherever we go, a constant drone surrounds us. Can you get in your car and comfortably drive music and radio-free? Noise is pervasive and has become the soundtrack of our lives, so much so that it is not unusual for many of us to feel scared by silence.

Research shows that we should be concerned about constant noise. A Penn University [report](#) highlights noise-related problems of hearing loss, sleep, cardiovascular function, anxiety, and even a patient's ability to heal in a hospital after surgery. "In our 24/7 society, noise is pervasive and the availability of quiet places is decreasing. We need to better understand how this constant exposure to noise is impacting our overall health," said Mathias Basner, MD, PhD, MSc, lead author of the review. "From earbuds blasting music during subway commutes to the constant drone of traffic heard by those who live or work near congested highways to the beeping of monitors that makes up the soundtrack heard by hospital patients and staff, what we hear all day impacts many parts of our bodies."

Silence is a great source of strength. William Penn said, "*True silence is the rest of the mind; it is to the spirit what sleep is to the body, nourishment and refreshment.*" Noise lets us ignore our most precious possession; our true and profound selves. Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel would say: "*All my life I have been raised among the wise, and I have found nothing better for the body than silence.*" (Ethics of the Fathers 1:17). When needed, don't be afraid to turn the quiet up.

Quote of the Week

You have enemies? Good. That means you've stood up for something, sometime in your life. --
Winston Churchill

Joke of the Week

Harry gets stopped by a police car. When the police officer gets to his car, Harry says, "What's the problem officer?"

- **Officer:** You were going at least 65 in a 50 mph zone.

Harry: No sir, I was going 50.

Wife: Oh Harry, You were going 70.

Harry gives his wife a dirty look.

- **Officer:** I will also give you a ticket for your broken brake light.

Harry: Broken brake light? I didn't know about a broken brake light!

Wife: Oh Harry, you've known about that brake light for months.

Harry gives his wife a really dirty look.

- **Officer:** I am also going to book you for not wearing your seat belt.

Harry: Oh, I just took it off when you were walking up to the car.

Wife: Oh Harry, you never wear your seat belt.

Harry turns to his wife and yells, "Oh, be quiet!"

- **Officer** turns to the woman and says, "Madam, does your husband talk to you this way all the time?"

Wife: "No, only when he's drunk..."