

Beyond Twelve Gates by Rabbi Ze'ev Smason
Parshas Shemini March 21, 2014

Welcome to Beyond Twelve Gates

A recent 'missing tourist' story had a strange twist and a happy ending. Just off the coast of Iceland's Eldgja canyon, a tourist bus stopped to look at the volcanic canyons. One woman went into the bathroom to freshen up and change her clothes at the rest stop. When she came back, there was word of a missing passenger which launched an intensive search party effort that lasted until 3 a.m. The missing woman, however, was *her*; her bus mates didn't recognize her!

Word spread among the group of a missing passenger, and apparently the woman didn't recognize the description of herself -- "Asian, in dark clothing, and speaks English well." Soon, a 50-person search party was canvassing the area, and the coast guard was mobilizing to deploy a search party of its own. By 3 A.M., after hours of searching, it was discovered that the missing woman was among the search party and was in fact looking for herself. Chief of police Sveinn K. Rúnarsson said that the woman didn't recognize her own description and "had no idea that she was missing."

Who am I? Let's answer that question with a second question: What does it mean to be a child of G-d? Numerous Torah sources speak to humans having been created *b'Tzelem Elokim* -- in the image of G-d. *B'Tzelem Elokim* means that G-d loves each of us unconditionally, as a parent loves his or her own child. Who am I? I'm a child of G-d who is deeply and unconditionally loved by *Avinu Sh'b'Shamayim* -- my Father in Heaven.

Parshas Shemini Leviticus 9:1 - 11:47

This week's Torah portion begins by discussing the events which occurred on the eighth and final day of the inauguration service of the Mishkan. After months of preparation, Aaron and his sons are finally installed as Kohanim in an elaborate service. Aaron blesses the people, and the entire nation rejoices as G-d's presence rests upon them. However, the excitement comes to an abrupt halt as Aaron's two eldest sons, Nadav and Avihu, are consumed by a heavenly fire in the Mishkan while innovating an offering of incense on the altar. This incident stresses the need to perform the commandments only as G-d directed. Later, Moses consoles Aaron, who grieves in silence.

Have you ever wondered where the laws of kosher food come from? Parshas Shemini concludes with a listing of the kosher and non-kosher animals. The identifying signs of a kosher land animal are that it has split hooves and chews, regurgitates and re-chews its food. A kosher fish is one that has both fins and scales. All birds not included in the list of forbidden fowl are permitted. However, today the identities of these non-kosher birds are doubtful. Therefore, we're forbidden to eat any species of bird unless there is a well-established tradition that it is kosher. The Torah forbids all types of insects except for four species of locusts. Chocolate-covered grasshoppers, anyone? The laws of kashrut help us to be distinct and holy -- like G-d, Himself.

Rabbinic Ruminations

Memory is the process in which information is encoded, stored, and retrieved -- but apparently not all memories are created equal. Echoing the words of the Chinese proverb, "I hear, and I forget; I see, and I remember", a new study reveals that our memory for things we've seen or touched is much better than for what we've heard. The study had people listening to a variety of sounds, shown pictures, and given things to touch. The researchers found that it was the things people heard that they were most likely to forget, more than things they had seen or touched.

Lead study author James Bigelow explained: "We tend to think that the parts of our brain wired for memory are integrated. But our findings indicate our brain may use separate pathways to process information." In the study people were exposed to all sorts of everyday sounds, sights and tactile experiences. They watched basketball games, heard dogs barking and touched a coffee mug that was hidden from view. Whether it was an hour later or a week later, people's recall was similar for things

they'd seen or touched, but significantly worse for those they'd heard. Studies on chimpanzees and monkeys also show that their auditory memory is worse than tactile or visual memory.

The act of remembering is important to the Jewish people. Our sages teach that it is desirable to remember daily six occurrences that occurred in our 3,300 year history. The Six Remembrances are taken directly from verses found in the Five Books of Moses. They are: Remembrance of the 1) Exodus of our departure from Egypt, 2) Receiving the Torah on Mt. Sinai, 3) Amalek's attack, 4) The Golden Calf, 5) What happened to Miriam, 6) Shabbos. Memory, it is said, is the mother of all wisdom. Nothing is really ever lost to us, as long as we remember it.

Quote of the Week

Real knowledge is to know the extent of one's ignorance. - *Confucius*

Joke of the Week

An actual synagogue e-mail sent to members:

Did a pair of women's shoes mysteriously appear on the passenger seat of your car last night (March 9) after 10:00 P.M. Maariv (*evening service*)???

If so, you are very lucky, because you have the opportunity to perform the Mitzvah of Hashavas Aveidah (return of a lost object) by calling xxxxxx, who mistakenly put the shoes in your car to begin with, at 555-1212.

And if you would like people like xxxxxx not to randomly put stuff in your car, he suggests locking it. (LOL) (*Laughing Out Loud*)

Joking aside, he does apologize for the intrusion and inconvenience (especially if your wife is no longer speaking to you).