

Welcome to Beyond Twelve Gates

Residents of a rural New Hampshire town voted earlier this month to rename a fishing and skating spot that's been called Jew Pond since the 1920s. The 104-33 vote was accompanied by enthusiastic debate, with some Mont Vernon residents urging that the name be changed and others saying it should be kept. "I don't know if it was meant to be offensive or not, but if people are offended by the name I don't see why we shouldn't change it," said Bill Davidson, who has lived in Mont Vernon for 13 years. But 34-year resident Lawrence Rondo and his wife, Annette, disagreed. "Changing it is stupid. People just like to stir up trouble," Rondo said. Added his wife, "People are too sensitive today." A Mont Vernon town health officer Rich Masters pushed for the vote after the name appeared in a news report about an algae bloom at the pond. "I, frankly, find it to be inappropriate, disrespectful to some people," he said, "and I feel it needs to be changed."

Over the years, the pond, near the center of town, has been called by many names. The pond originally was named Spring Pond because the owners of a hotel there created it by digging up a spring to irrigate their golf course. They made clear in a brochure that Jewish guests were not welcome. The rest of the story is a bit murky, but it's generally believed that the body of water became Jew Pond when two Jewish businessmen from Boston bought the hotel. Resident Kevin Schmidlein thought the name should be changed. "If we're going to be known for something, I'd rather it be for something other than this," he said. The town, about 35 miles southwest of the state capital, Concord, has Jewish residents, but census data don't indicate how many. The only synagogue Masters said he knew about is in Nashua, about 15 miles away. Proposed new names for the pond include Carleton Pond and the original Spring Pond. What's in a Jewish name? Judaism considers our names to be of great significance. The Book of Exodus begins with the words, "And these are the names of the Children of Israel ..." In Hebrew, the name for the Book of Exodus is *Shemos*, meaning, 'Names'. And the Midrash relates that the Jewish people were redeemed from Egypt in the merit of three primary actions: they spoke their own language, they wore distinctively Jewish clothing, and they gave their children only Jewish names. Parents receive a glimmer of Divine inspiration when they give their child a Jewish name. What's in a Jewish name? Nothing less than a connection to our heritage and to our identity.

Parshas Tzav Leviticus 6:1 -- 8:36

The portion begins with G-d continuing to teach Moses many of the laws relating to the *Mishkan* service. However, while last week's portion described the *korbanos* (offerings) from the perspective of the giver, this week the Torah focuses more directly on the Kohanim, providing details about their service. After first describing the maintenance of the fire which burned on the altar, the Torah discusses the various kinds of *korbanos* which Aaron, his sons, and the succeeding generations of Kohanim would be offering. The offerings must be brought with the proper intention and eaten in a state of spiritual purity. Finally, Moses performs the lengthy consecration service of the *Mishkan*, and Moses anoints Aaron and his sons for their service in the *Mishkan*, in front of the entire congregation of Israel.

Passover

Passover begins on Monday evening, March 25. On the first day of Passover, Tuesday, the Torah reading is from Exodus 12: 21- 51. This reading describes the Exodus from Egypt and the Passover offering. On the second day of Passover, Wednesday, the Torah reading is from Leviticus 22:26 -- 23:44. This reading describes journeying to the Holy Temple in Jerusalem on the three pilgrimage festivals (Passover, Shevuous, Sukkos) and the counting of the Omer.

This Shabbos preceding Passover is referred to as *Shabbos HaGadol*, or the Great Shabbos. What is it that makes this particular Shabbos 'Great'?

The Midrash states that in Egypt Moses was able to convince Pharaoh that the enslaved Jews should have one day a week to rest. This day, Moses argued, would enable them to be more productive than the other days of the week. So, the Jews observed Shabbos while in Egypt, and it was known as "The Day of Moses." Shabbos is, however, much more than a day of physical rest.

A 'National Day of Unplugging' was recently advocated by a secular not-for-profit Jewish group to 'unplug' from technology on Shabbos. They suggested that all Jews put down their cell phone, stop the status updates on Facebook, shut down Twitter, sign out of e-mail and reclaim time to slow life down and reconnect with friends, family, the community and themselves for 24 hours. Doesn't that sound like a nice idea?!

Contemplating the purpose of existence and what we hope to do with our lives is a central goal of Shabbos. More than simply a day of not working, a person who is truly free will utilize Shabbos to choose their goals and determine their purpose. The Shabbos on the eve of our liberation from Egypt differed from the Shabbos that was "The Day of Moses." This was no longer to be a day of rest for weary slaves, but a day of spiritual uplifting for people who are free. That Shabbos was -- just as each and every Shabbos can be -- a Great Shabbos. (adapted from *Living Each Day*, Rabbi Dr. Abraham Twerski)

Quote of the Week

Patriotism is supporting your country all the time, and your government when it deserves it -- **Mark Twain**

Joke of the Week

A man is walking along a street in New York and sees a tailor's shop called COHEN and O'REILLY. He goes in and talks to what seems to be a typical Jewish tailor behind the counter, telling him how impressed he is that for once the Irish and the Jews, often at one another's throats, have come together like this.

The tailor seems unmoved.

'You sopprized by dis!?' he asks.

'Well, yes' the man replies, still oozing enthusiasm.

'I mean...COHEN and O'REILLY working together in the same shop. I mean, It's different! It's heartwarming! I'm truly surprised!'

'Vell', says the tailor...

'Here's annuder sopprize for you...I'm O'Reilly!'