

***Welcome to Beyond Twelve Gates***

Here in the U.S., you can name your child almost anything, but that's not the case everywhere in the world. Some countries have fairly strict baby-naming laws, such as:

**Sweden:** Enacted in 1982, the Naming law in Sweden reads: "First names shall not be approved if they can cause offense or can be supposed to cause discomfort for the one using it, or names which for some obvious reason are not suitable as a first name." "Brfxccxmxnppccclllmmnprxvclmncckssqlbb11116" (pronounced Albin, naturally) was submitted by a child's parents in protest of the Naming law. It was rejected. The parents later submitted "A" (also pronounced Albin) as the child's name. It, too, was rejected.

**Denmark:** Parents can choose from a list of only 7,000 pre-approved names. If you want to name your child something that isn't on the list, you have to get special permission from your local church, and the name is then reviewed by governmental officials. Of the approximately 1,100 names that are reviewed each year, 15-20% of the names are rejected. **Rejected names:** Pluto, and Monkey. **Approved names:** Benji, Jiminico, Molli, and Fee.

**New Zealand:** The Births, Deaths, and Marriages Registration Act of 1995 doesn't allow people to name their children anything that "might cause offence to a reasonable person; or [...] is unreasonably long; or without adequate justification ..." **Rejected Names:** Stallion, Yeah Detroit, Fish and Chips, Twisty Poi, Keenan Got Lucy, Sex Fruit, Satan, and Adolf Hitler. **Approved names:** Benson and Hedges (for a set of twins), Midnight Chardonnay, Number 16 Bus Shelter, Violence.

Names are of great importance in Jewish tradition. Ruth was no ordinary convert, and her name gives us a clue to her essence. In Hebrew, Ruth's name is comprised of the letters *reish*, *vav*, *tav*, which add up to a numerical value of 606. All human beings have an obligation to observe the seven Noachide commandments -- so called because they were given after the flood -- as did Ruth upon her birth as a Moabite. Add those seven commandments to the value of her name and you get 613, the number of commandments in the Torah. Choose your child's name carefully. A thoughtfully chosen name carries with it our collective history.

***Parshas Naso Numbers 4:21 - 7: 89***

Among the topics appearing in Naso is the mitzvah of the 'Sotah'. When compelling circumstantial evidence suggests an act of marital infidelity may have taken place, the Torah provides a means to clarify the hoped-for innocence of the suspect parties. Contained in this mitzvah is dissolving G-d's name that was written on a parchment. We learn from this the supreme importance of *shalom bayis* -- peace in the home. If G-d allows His Holy Name to be erased for the sake of peace between husband and wife, certainly each of us should seek *shalom bayis* with our spouses and other family members. What can each of us do to increase *shalom bayis* with those whom we love? Parshas Naso also describes the nazir -- an individual who takes a vow to refrain from drinking wine, cutting his hair, and other restrictions. Remember the story of Samson? Samson -- who was a nazir -- was the great Jewish judge and hero who 'brought down the house.'

***Rabbinic Ruminations***

Can men and women ever be 'just friends'? Daily experience may suggest that non-romantic friendships between males and females are not only possible, but common -- men and women live and work side-by-side, and generally seem to be able to avoid spontaneous intimacy. However, new research suggests that while we may think we're capable of being "just friends" with members of the opposite sex, the opportunity (or perceived opportunity) for "romance" is often lurking just around the corner. In a 2012 study titled "*Benefit or burden? Attraction in cross-sex friendship*" by Bleske-Rechek, et. al, 88 pairs of undergraduate opposite-sex friends were gathered. The friendship pairs were then separated, and each member of the pair was asked a series of questions related to his or her romantic feelings (or lack thereof) toward the ostensibly platonic friend with whom they were taking the study.

The results suggest large gender differences in how men and women experience opposite-sex friendships. Men were much more attracted to their female friends than vice versa. Men were also more likely than women to think that their opposite-sex friends were attracted to them, and more willing to act

on this mistakenly perceived mutual attraction. These results suggest that men, relative to women, have a particularly hard time being “just friends.” In a follow-up study with 249 adults (many of whom were married), males were significantly more likely than females to list romantic attraction as a benefit of opposite-sex friendships. Taken together, these studies suggest that men and women have vastly different views of what it means to be “just friends”—and that these differing views have the potential to lead to trouble.

The Torah is replete with guidelines acknowledging the power of attraction between males and females. These guidelines help us to preserve and enhance appropriate relationships, and to make sure our natural drives are focused in the right way, and under proper circumstances.

### *Quote of the Week*

And in the end, it's not the years in your life that count. It's the life in your years. -- *Abraham Lincoln*

### **Joke of the Week**

An elderly lady hobbled into the rabbi's office and asked for help in arranging for a divorce. The rabbi just didn't believe it. "Tell me," he said, "how old are you?"

"84," she said. "And my husband is 87."

"How long have you been married?"

"Almost 62 years."

The rabbi slapped his forehead. "Married 62 years. Why do you want a divorce now?"

"Because," she said, "enough is enough!"