

*Welcome to Beyond Twelve Gates by Rabbi Ze'ev Smason*  
*Parshas Acharei/Kedoshim      May 2, 2015*

*“Is it Raining Meatballs – or Falafel?”*

Blockbuster season is almost upon us, but what will this coming summer's big hitters be? Regardless of the film you're most looking forward to seeing (did someone say *Mission: Impossible - Rogue Nation?*), you may have a problem finding your favorite flick in a non-English speaking country. Most countries translate American titles, especially those based on localized idioms, into something that rarely resembles the source. Things in the title-translation world in Israel can be particularly bewildering. Comedies often take a beating in Hebrew. The 2009 film *Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs* became “It's Raining Falafel,” perhaps being yummiier to Sabras. The animated feature film *Despicable Me 2* was called “Crazy about the Minions” in Hebrew. Was that titled by a translator who loves to *daven* (pray) in a group of ten? The first *Despicable Me* was called “Crazy about the Moon,” and *Frozen* was “Breaking the Ice.” Some other unusual Hebrew titles: *The Terminator* was translated as “Lethal Delivery,” *In The Land of Women* is “Go Figure Women,” and *Groundhog Day* is “Wake Up Yesterday.” Historically, some Israeli titles honored cultural sensitivity: *The Six Million Dollar Man*, the 1970s TV series about a bionic man, was changed to “The Man Worth Millions” due to the Holocaust- association of the phrase ‘six million.’

A translation rarely is a perfect rendering of the original. Exodus 34:29 says, “*When Moses descended from Mount Sinai ... Moses did not know that the skin of his face had become radiant when He had spoken to him.*” A famous 4th century Christian mistranslation rendered Moses' "radiance" into "horned." From this error came centuries of paintings and sculptures of Moses with horns and the odd offensive stereotype of the horned Jew. Umberto Eco, Italian essayist and philosopher, said, “*Translation is the art of failure.*” The solution? Study Hebrew yourself, to better -- and accurately-- understand the nuances and richness of the Torah and other classic Jewish texts.

*Parshas Acharei / Kedoshim      Leviticus 16:1 - 20:27*

*Acharei* begins with a lengthy description of the special Yom Kippur service to be performed in the *Mishkan* by the Kohen Gadol. The service included the lottery selection from among two identical goats, one of which would become a national sin offering and the other to be pushed off a cliff in the desert as the bearer of the people's sins (the 'scapegoat'). We also find described the command that Yom Kippur and its laws of fasting and refraining from work be observed eternally by the Jewish people as a day of atonement. *Acharei* concludes with a listing of the immoral and forbidden sexual relationships, and the command that the Jewish people maintain and ensure the holiness of the land of Israel.

*Kedoshim* begins with G-d's command to the entire nation of Israel to be holy, emulating the supreme sanctity of G-d Himself. The Torah goes on to delineate a multitude of *mitzvos* through which we can achieve sanctity, covering a wide variety of subjects, both positive commandments and negative injunctions, dealing with our unique relationships to G-d and our fellow man. Amongst the highlights; revere your parents, guard Shabbos from desecration, have honest dealings with our neighbors, refrain from tale-bearing, don't hate your brother in your heart, and the well-known commandment to love your friend as yourself. *Kedoshim* concludes with the commandment that we be a holy and distinct people from among the nations of the world.

*Rabbinic Ruminations*

A three-person U.S.-Russia crew departed last month to the International Space Station for a year-long flight. Scientists are interested in seeing how the human body fares during longer stays in space, as the United States and other countries begin planning for multi-year missions to Mars. Medical studies on the effects of weightlessness after many months in low-Earth orbit thus far have clearly shown one hard truth -- humans aren't cut out for life without gravity. Over time, microgravity reduces muscle and bone mass; weakens cardiovascular systems; greatly diminishes an astronaut's natural immune system; and may even hinder critical thinking. Some believe, however, that *artificial gravity* could solve all these problems. Artificial gravity is the increase or decrease of apparent gravity by artificial means. Artificial gravity habitats are now being discussed as a crucial component of long-duration stays in space. “If we want to

stay in space longer than a year we're going to have to have artificial gravity systems or else we're going to sacrifice people in the process," said William Kemp, a defense-contractor who believes he has come up with a design that offers a viable solution in such instances. It's a 30-meter diameter cylindrical space station, capable of creating artificial gravity by spinning the cylinder about its long axis. Kemp's proposed space station would create 0.6 gravity; the minimum needed to keep humans safely in a gravitational environment for at least two years.

The Talmud relates Rabbi Akiva taught Torah to the Jewish people at a time when the Romans banned it under penalty of death. When warned that he was endangering his life, Rabbi Akiva replied with the following parable: A fox was once walking by the bank of a river, and saw fish darting from place to place. "What are you fleeing from?" he asked the fish. "To escape the nets of the fisherman," the fish replied. "In that case," said the fox, "come and live on dry land together with me and I will protect you." "Are you the one they describe as the cleverest of animals?" the fish asked the fox. "You are not clever, but foolish. If we are in danger here in the water where we live, how much more so would we be in danger on dry land, where we would surely die?"

Torah is to Jewish survival, said Rabbi Akiva, as water is to fish. If we were to abandon the study of Torah and the Torah way of life which sustains our existence, we would certainly perish. Artificial gravity or not, a Jew can be sustained only by the Torah. Without Torah, a Jew is a fish out of water.

### *Quote of the Week*

Judge a man by his questions rather than by his answers -- *Voltaire*

### **Joke of the Week**

A young man who had been hired by the personnel department of a large supermarket chain reported to work at one of the stores. The manager greeted him with a warm handshake and a smile, handed him a broom and said, "Your first job will be to sweep out the store."

"But," the young man protested, "I'm a college graduate."

"Oh, I'm sorry," the manager said, "I didn't know that. Here, give me the broom and I'll show you how."