

*Beyond Twelve Gates by Rabbi Ze'ev Smason*  
*Parshas Emor May 2, 2014*

*Welcome to Beyond Twelve Gates*

If you've ever bathed a dog, you know firsthand how quickly a drenched pup can shake water off. Researchers at the Georgia Institute of Technology have found that furry mammals can shake themselves 70 percent dry in just a fraction of a second. High-speed videography and fur particle tracking was used to examine and characterize the shakes of 33 different animals – 16 species and five dog breeds. But more than simple curiosity, of what interest is the speed of animal shakes? Understanding the physics of the wet dog shake could help engineers recreate the optimal oscillation frequency and use it to improve the efficiency of washing machines, dryers, painting devices, spin coaters and other machines. It may even lead to improved functioning for robotics, such as the Mars Rover, which suffered reduced power from the accumulation of dust on its solar panels.

Animals were created with the perfect mechanism to dry quickly to avoid hypothermia. Wet fur, being a poor insulator, causes the animal to lose heat quickly. The evaporation of the entrapped water may zap an animal's energy reserves, making it a matter of life or death to remain dry in cold weather. Small animals may trap substantial volumes of water in their fur for their size. For example, when emerging for a bath, a person carries one pound of water. A rat, however, carries five percent of its mass and an ant three times its mass. The larger the animal, the more slowly it shakes dry; a mouse moves its body back and forth 27 times per second, but a grizzly bear shakes four times per second. The tinier mammals can experience more than 20 g's of acceleration.

All creation, with its complexity and wonder, was designed to inspire and lead us to love G-d. On Thursdays we recite Chapter 81 of Psalms, "Sing out to the G-d of our strength," for on this day birds and fish were created to praise G-d's Name. It is not the birds and fish themselves that sing G-d's praises; rather when people observe animals, they give praise to the One Who created them. Careful contemplation of the design of animals will lead one to proclaim, "*Mah Rabu Ma'asecha, HaShem*" -- "G-d, how great are your works!"

*Parshas Emor Leviticus 21:1 - 24:23*

Following the command in last week's portion to be sanctified and holy, Parshas Emor begins by discussing various laws directed specifically to the *Kohanim* and the *Kohen Gadol* (High Priest). Included is the command for the *Kohen* to refrain from becoming ritually impure through contact with a dead body (except for close relatives) and increased restrictions on whom they may marry. G-d requires those with greater spiritual responsibilities to maintain a higher standard of spiritual purity. Parshas Emor contains two of the most significant mitzvos in the entire Torah; to always be mindful of not desecrating G-d's name, and on the contrary, to sanctify Him at all costs.

The Torah goes on to discuss the festivals of the year -- Pesach, Shavous, Rosh Hashana, Yom Kippur, Succos and Shemini Atzeres. The festivals, including Shabbos, are referred to as moadim, appointed times; they are special days when Jews 'meet', as it were, with G-d. The festivals interrupt our ordinary weekday activities and inspire us to rededicate ourselves to those ideals that life is really about. Later, two mitzvos in the Mishkan are stated: the daily lighting of the menorah and the display of the *lechem hapanim* (showbread). The portion concludes with the horrible incident of a man who cursed G-d's name.

*Rabbinic Ruminations*

When it gets hot, do you get steamed up? Douglas Kenrick, evolutionary psychologist at Arizona State University, wanted to test the link between heat and anger. He recruited a volunteer to stop her car at a green light and he counted the seconds until the driver behind honked the horn. He did this once a week from April to August, on days when the Phoenix high temperature ranged from 84 degrees to 108, and he found that the thermometer accurately predicted how soon, and how many times, thwarted drivers would protest before the light changed. "When the weather was comfortably cool, the typical driver just

politely tapped on the horn for a second," Kenrick wrote. "When it got up near 100, though, they started blaring their horns, yelling out the window, and making hand signals they probably did not learn in driver's education."

A different attempt to see if people get "fired up" when the temperature rises was made by Richard Larrick of Duke University. Larrick examined the box scores of some 57,000 Major League Baseball games played since 1952—about 4.5 million plate appearances in all. He and colleagues looked into whether hot weather made pitchers more likely to throw at batters, based on records of game-time temperatures. The study found that after one or more batters were hit, intentionally or not, hot weather made it more likely that the opposing pitcher would retaliate later in the game. "What's interesting is that the same act—your teammate being hit by a pitch—seems to mean something different in a hot temperature than a low one," Larrick says. "An ambiguous act now seems more provocative when your own mind is in turmoil because of the heat."

The Talmud says that you can judge the worth of a person by three things: *koso*, *kiso* and *ka'aso* -- by his *cup* (what he's like when drunk), by his *pocket* (what he gives to charity) and his *anger* (how is it expressed?) Stressful events challenge our ability to stay calm. But when things get hot, keep your cool; "*The words of the wise are heeded when they are spoken softly, more than the shouts of the ruler of fools.*" (Ecclesiastes 9:17)

### *Quote of the Week*

The greatest weakness of most humans is their hesitancy to tell others how much they love them while they're alive. -- *O.A. Battista, Author (1917-1995)*

### **Joke of the Week**

A young boy had been given some Israel Bonds for his bar mitzvah. Now he was a grown man about to be married, and he wanted to cash them in. So he went to the Bonds office in New York.

"I'd like to talk to someone about some bonds I have," the young man told the secretary at the information desk.

"Are you interested in conversion or redemption?" he was asked.

At that, the young man stepped back to look at the sign over the door. "Say," he asked, "is this Israel Bonds, or is it the Baptist Mission?"