

Welcome to Beyond Twelve Gates

We can't always avoid events that upset us, but we may be able to change how we feel about them. If you are cut off in traffic, you may respond by blowing your horn. It is then possible you'll spend the rest of your commute thinking about the actions of that careless driver. But by mentally taking a step back from the situation and your emotions -- a process known as self-distancing -- you can diffuse your anger and reduce your aggression, researchers say.

Ohio State University psychology graduate student Dominik Mischkowski and his colleagues set out to annoy a group of student volunteers by leading them to believe they were waiting for a study to start. The researchers avoided answering questions and were generally curt. After confirming that the volunteers were indeed upset, Mischkowski asked them to re-imagine the experience: half the group by reliving it through their own eyes and the other half by mentally moving away from the situation and watching it at a distance, as if it had happened to someone else. The self-distancing students had less anger and were less likely to respond aggressively to others in a subsequent task.

It's important to work on controlling our temper. Will Rogers said, "People who fly into a rage always make a bad landing." Anger can take many forms; a heated argument, blowing a fuse (or horn), or simply fuming with aggravation. The Torah perspective is that while we may not be in control of what happens, we are certainly in control of how we deal with things. Proverbs 16:32 says, "He who is slow to anger is better than a strong man, and master of his passions is better than a conqueror of a city." Control your anger - don't let your anger control you.

Parshas Behar /Bechukosai Leviticus 25:1 -- 27:34

Behar focuses primarily on mitzvos concerning the land of Israel, beginning with the command to observe a Sabbatical (Shemitta) year. During the Sabbatical year one's fields are to remain uncultivated every seventh year, refraining from the normal cycle of planting and harvesting. Similarly, the land in Israel is to remain unworked in the Jubilee (Yovel) or 50th year, at which time ownership of all land automatically returns to its ancestral heritage. A quote found on the Liberty Bell, "And you should sanctify the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout the land . . ." is taken from the passage describing the Jubilee year. *Behar* also speaks about the poor and downtrodden. Not only are we commanded to give them tzedaka and do acts of loving-kindness for them but ideally, we are to provide them with the means to raise themselves out of their poverty-stricken state.

Bechukosai, the last Torah portion in the book of Leviticus, begins by briefly listing some of the blessings and rewards that the Jewish people will receive for diligently learning and following the Torah. The Portion then shifts to the subject matter, which has made it famous -- G-d's admonitions and warnings of the consequences if the Jewish people abandon the Torah. Step by step, the Torah describes the tragedies that will befall the Jewish people if they abandon observance of the Torah, providing an eerie account of what has been part of our history to this day. There is good news, however; teshuva (return, or repentance) is possible at any time to avert an otherwise harsh decree. The book of Leviticus concludes with a brief discussion of tithes.

Rabbinic Ruminations

It was a small mistake. But it was a mistake that cost a British hairdresser and mother of two, thousands of dollars. In October of 2012, "Sally Donaldson" (not her real name) experienced a sickening moment; she discovered that over the course of two years, each time she had transferred her monthly paycheck of \$1,500 from her personal account to the joint one she shares with her husband, she had been accidentally placing the money in a total stranger's account. After two years, the amount she had transferred was roughly \$40,000.

Mrs. Donaldson explained what happened: "I frantically checked my numbers for the bill payment scheme I had set up . . . and could see that, on setting it up, I was one digit outthe money has been going to another account holder for the past two years amounting to (\$40,000)! Phone calls to (the bank) that night, many tears, and numerous subsequent calls and letters have left us with just (\$1000) returned and a complete blank of information." It may be difficult for Mrs. Donaldson to get her money back. The recipient refuses to return the money and the bank can't reveal his or her identity due to data protection

rules. What's more, British law dictates that when money goes into the wrong hands, it can be withdrawn without gaining permission first for up to six years after it's wrongfully transferred.

Judaism teaches us that even the smallest of details are of supreme importance. Many spiritual seekers are often puzzled and frustrated by the Torah's concern with the minutia of religious observance. Yet in Jewish observance, through the careful arrangement of the details of mitzvos something much greater can take place. Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz sums this up as follows: "The system of the mitzvos constitutes the design for a coherent harmony, its separate components being like the instruments of an orchestra. So vast is the harmony to be created by this orchestra that it includes the whole world and promises the perfecting of the world." Like in banking, so in life: G-d is in the details.

Quote of the Week

Education never helped morals. The smarter the guy, the bigger the rascal -- **Will Rogers**

Joke of the Week

My neighbor was working in his yard when he was startled by a late model car that came crashing through his hedge and ended up in his front lawn.

He rushed to help an elderly lady driver out of the car and sat her down on a lawn chair.

He said with excitement, "You appear quite elderly to be driving."

"Well, yes, I am," she replied proudly. "I'll be 97 next month, and I am now old enough that I don't even need a driver's license anymore. The last time I went to my doctor, he examined me and asked if I had a driver's license. I told him yes and handed it to him. He took scissors out of the drawer, cut the license into pieces, and threw them in the waste basket."

The elderly woman continued, "My doctor then said, 'You won't need this anymore,' so I thanked him and left!"