

## *Welcome to Beyond Twelve Gates by Rabbi Ze'ev Smason* *Parshas Emor May 9, 2015*

### *Welcome to Beyond Twelve Gates*

When he was 13 years old, Tim Harris told people that one day he would own and operate a restaurant. And for the past four years he has: Tim's Place, of Albuquerque, N.M. Why is yet another owner-operated restaurant a big deal? Because Tim, now 28, has Down Syndrome. Running any type of business was never something that Tim's parents expected of him. But after he expressed interest in the restaurant business, Tim's parents, Keith and Jeannie, figured out a way to make Tim's dream a reality. "We were very motivated for Tim to have as normal as life as possible," Keith Harris said.

From the start, it was clear that Tim's Place was something special. In addition to standard American and Mexican breakfasts and lunches, Tim serves hugs, and lots of them. So far, he's given out up to 32,475 according to a "hug counter" on the eatery's website. Giving hugs "is my favorite part of the day," said Tim, who arrives at work every morning between 7 and 7:30 and leaves around 2 P.M. every day except Tuesdays, his day off. Tim attended a mainstream high-school where he was voted homecoming king, and earned certificates in Food Service and Office Skills at Eastern New Mexico University. He lived in a college dorm, and graduated. He's had a girlfriend, Whitney, for the past 10 months. Tim, who has won several gold medals in the Special Olympics, is also a motivational speaker. His top message? "I tell people with disabilities to stay in school, so they can follow their dreams."

What is your greatest dream? Everyone has a dream of what they would like to do and who they would like to be. Someone once said, 'Reach for the stars; you may not catch one, but at least you won't get your hands caught in the mud!' One who has an insatiable desire to serve G-d and reach their potential will be driven to grow, achieve -- and like Tim Harris -- have their dreams fulfilled.

### *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*

During the course of the Apollo space program, astronauts obtained roughly 700 lbs. of lunar materials. The vast majority of those samples were used for scientific research. However, specific lunar samples from Apollo 11 and Apollo 17 were earmarked as political souvenirs. Precisely 270 prepared lunar rock samples were distributed in the 1970s as part of the Goodwill Moon Rocks program, most of them going to the 50 U.S. states and a number of foreign countries as tokens of appreciation for support of Apollo, NASA and U.S. interests. Four decades later, no one can account for a significant number of those nigh-irreplaceable moon rocks. 180 are missing. That means that two out of every three Goodwill Moon Rocks were lost or stolen!

Many of the rocks were lost due to outright negligence or lack of oversight. In 2010, former Senator Kit Bond was cleaning out his Washington, D.C., office when he found Missouri's missing moon rock. Bond was governor in 1973 when then-President Richard Nixon distributed the Apollo mementos. The rock was inside a box of tapes, plaques and other paraphernalia. Arkansas, Hawaii and Oregon misplaced their moon rocks in desk drawers for decades. A former Colorado governor simply took his state's moon rock home with him when he left office (though he returned it later). Ireland accidentally threw its moon rock in a landfill when cleaning up damage from a museum fire and then dug it up when they realized their mistake.

The Torah obligates the finder of an article to return the lost object to its owner. Known in Hebrew as *Hashovas Aveida*, we're required to honor and preserve the possessions of others. If one cannot ignore his friend's *material* items, and must make sure they are returned to him, surely one cannot ignore a fellow Jew's *spiritual* well-being. Thus it is an obligation to reach out to those Jews who unfortunately have been distanced from their Jewish heritage and spiritual connection to the Almighty. This enormous obligation to care for all Jews is a great challenge of the current generation -- and a personal challenge for each of us.

### *Quote of the Week*

People do not lack strength; they lack will. -- *Victor Hugo*

### **Joke of the Week**

The commanding officer at the Russian military academy (the equivalent of a 4-star general in the U.S.) gave a lecture on Potential Problems and Military Strategy. At the end of the lecture, he asked if there were any questions.

An officer stood up and asked, "Will there be a third world war? And will Russia take part in it?"

The general answered both questions in the affirmative.

Another officer asked, "Who will be the enemy?"

The general replied, "All indications point to China."

Everyone in the audience was shocked. A third officer remarked, "General, we are a nation of only 150 million, compared to the 1.5 billion Chinese. Can we win at all, or even survive?"

The general answered, "Just think about this for a moment: In modern warfare, it is not the quantity of soldiers that matters but the quality of an army's capabilities. For example, in the Middle East we have had a few wars recently where 5 million Jews fought against 150 million Arabs, and Israel was always victorious."

After a short pause, yet another officer - from the back of the auditorium asked, "Do we have enough Jews?"