

*Beyond Twelve Gates by Rabbi Ze'ev Smason  
Parshas Lech Lecha November 1, 2014*

*Welcome to Beyond Twelve Gates ~*

You've heard of the Powerball Lottery. But have you heard of the *Speed Camera Lottery*? In 2011, a contest called the 'Fun Theory' was devised by an advertising firm for Volkswagen Sweden. The contest yielded concepts to enhance environmental protection, strengthen speed-limit adherence, and to boost public transportation ridership. The winning idea, devised by San Francisco resident Kevin Richardson, was the *Speed Camera Lottery*.

Mr. Richardson's winning idea was comparably low on novelty but high on behavioral science. Every car driving on the highway had its license plate recorded by a speed camera. If you sped you got a ticket in the mail. However, the twist was that the money you paid did not go to the government, but to the other drivers on that road that drove safely. Those drivers who drove within the speed limit were entered into a lottery, with the winner receiving a check for approximately \$3000 worth of Swedish Kroners! The *Speed Camera Lottery* demo in Stockholm produced compelling results: The average speed before the installation of the *Speed Camera Lottery* sign on a multi-lane street was 32 kilometers an hour (about 20 mph). That figure dropped to 25 kilometers an hour (15.5 mph) during a three-day test.

An effective way to success is success itself. If you want your child or student to succeed, help them succeed. Start with small accomplishments. Focus on what he or she is already doing right, and your child will proceed in that direction. Positive reinforcement is a self-fulfilling prophecy -- and in a sense, a 'Fun Theory.' To quote the *Tanya* (an early work of Hasidic philosophy), *A little bit of light dispels a great deal of darkness.*

*Parshas Lech Lecha Genesis 12:1 -- 17:27*

Abraham was called by G-d to leave his homeland, his father's house, and his position of status and prosperity to travel to the land that G-d would show him. Upon arrival with his wife Sarah and nephew Lot in the land of Israel, they discover it to be ravaged by a horrible famine. Traveling to descend to Egypt for a temporary stay, the immoral Egyptians immediately capture Sarah and take her to the Egyptian king. G-d responds by afflicting the king and his household with a debilitating plague until he releases her. Guess what the plague was?

Back in the land of Israel, Lot parts ways with Abraham, with Lot relocating to the fertile plains of Sodom. Abraham subsequently rescues the kidnapped Lot by miraculously defeating four kings and their armies. Through a Covenant, G-d promises Abraham that his descendants will be as numerous as the stars in the sky. Because she had no children, Sarah gives her maidservant Hagar to Abraham as a wife, and their son Yishmael is born. At the age of 99 Abraham circumcises himself, his son Yishmael, and the other male members of his household.

*Rabbinic Ruminations*

The first comprehensive survey of what Americans are afraid of has revealed that at the top of the list of personal fears isn't 'snakes' or 'public speaking', but 'walking alone at night.'

The full top 5 list of personal fears is:

Walking alone at night.

Becoming the victim of identity theft.

Safety on the Internet.

Being the victim of a mass/random shooting.

Public speaking.

People in the Chapman University survey were asked separately about fear of crime, and the researchers were surprised by the results. Despite evidence to the contrary, Americans do not feel like the United States is becoming a safer place. *The Chapman Survey on American Fears* asked how they

think prevalence of several crimes today compare with 20 years ago. In all cases, the clear majority of respondents were pessimistic; and in all cases Americans believe crime has at least remained steady.

Dr. Edward Day, who led this part of the study, said:

“What we found when we asked a series of questions pertaining to fears of various crimes is that a majority of Americans not only fear (serious) crimes, but they also believe these crimes (and others) have increased over the past 20 years. When we looked at statistical data from police and FBI records, it showed crime has actually decreased in America in the past 20 years. Criminologists often get angry responses when we try to tell people the crime rate has gone down.”

It has been said that 'fear is a darkroom where negatives develop.' While it is prudent to protect ourselves against real dangers, we have a confounding habit of worrying about remote possibilities. Fear can paralyze us and rob us of the joy of living. Realistically, there are few monsters that warrant the fear we have of them. But while there are many things in the world that can make us afraid, there is much more in our faith in G-d that can make us unafraid. It would be wise to remember the words of Isaiah (41:13), "For I am the L-rd your G-d who takes hold of your right hand and says to you, Do not fear. I will help you."

### *Quote of the Week*

We'll be remembered for our love, not our opinions. -- **Bob Goff** (*Contemporary Author and Speaker*)

### **Joke of the Week**

A man writing at the post office desk was approached by an older fellow with a post card in his hand.

The older man man said, "Sir, I'm sorry to bother you but could you address this post card for me? My arthritis is acting up today and I can't even hold a pen."

"Certainly sir," said the younger man, "I'd be glad to."

"He wrote out the address and also agreed to write a short message and sign the card for the man.

Finally, the younger man asked, "Now, is there anything else I can do for you?"

The older man thought about it for a moment and said, "Yes, at the end could you just add? . . .  
“P.S.: Please excuse the sloppy hand-writing.”