

Beyond Twelve Gates by Rabbi Ze'ev Smason
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Welcome to Beyond Twelve Gates

New Haven, Connecticut Rabbi Noah Muroff bought a desk he found listed on Craigslist and ended up discovering a bag filled with cash stuffed inside the purchase. Rabbi Noah said that when he got the piece of office furniture home, "The desk didn't fit into this office by fraction of an inch." So he and his wife took it apart and noticed something unusual: A bag of cash containing \$98,000. Rabbi Noah continued, " ...Right away (we) looked at each other and said, 'We can't keep this money.'"

Rabbi Noah called the original owner, Patti, and explained his find. Patti was speechless on the other end of the phone, and only able to say, "Oh my gosh, because I... oh my G-d." Apparently Patti knew she stored the money she inherited in the desk, but was unable to find it when it fell behind the desk's filing drawer. She assumed that the money was elsewhere in her home when she couldn't locate it, and sold the desk never thinking it still contained her nest egg.

Rabbi Noah, a father of four young children and also a ninth grade Rabbi at the Yeshiva of New Haven, brought his entire family along when he returned the money, believing it was an opportunity to teach his kids a lesson about honesty and truth. When they arrived, Patti refunded the \$150 purchase price of the desk and also insisted that the rabbi accept reward money. She was overwhelmed with the family's good deed and wrote a note saying, "I cannot thank you enough for your honesty and integrity. I do not think there are too many people in this world that would have done what you did by calling me. I do like to believe that there are still good people left in this crazy world we live in. You certainly are one of them," ending the note, "I will be forever grateful.

Each of us is a Jewish Ambassador. And there's no better way for such an ambassador to act than with honesty and integrity. 'Ambassador' Rabbi Noah created an enormous *Kiddush Hashem* -- a sanctification of G-d's Name. Let us all be inspired to live our lives in such a way that we do the same.

Parshas Vayishlach Genesis 32:4 -- 36:43

Jacob and family return from the house of Laban to the land of Israel, only to find Esau heading toward them with 400 men, ready for battle. After preparing his family for war and praying to G-d for help, Jacob attempts to appease his brother by sending him a gift of many animals. After his family crosses the river to await the meeting with Esau, Jacob is left alone for an all-night 'confrontation' with an angel disguised as a man. Although Jacob is victorious, he is left limping from a hip-dislocation. Rejoining his family, Jacob encounters Esau who accepts him with an apparent new-found brotherly love. Jacob and Esau part ways in peace.

Another crisis arises when Jacob's daughter Dinah is abducted and raped by Shechem, the prince of a town with the same name. Two of Jacob's sons, outraged at the humiliation caused to their sister, trick the town's residents into circumcising themselves on the condition that they would then be allowed to intermarry with Jacob's family. Simeon and Levi (two sons of Jacob) then decimate the entire city and save Dinah. Later in the portion, G-d blesses Jacob and gives him the additional name, Israel. Soon after, Rachel dies while giving birth to Benjamin, Jacob's twelfth son. Finally, Jacob returns home and is reunited with his father Isaac. The Torah portion concludes with a lengthy genealogy of Esau's family.

Rabbinic Ruminations

Does having children make you happier? Academics have long believed that parenting is a driver of unhappiness, based in part on a 2004 study by Nobel prize-winning economist Danny Kahneman. But a recent study suggests that parents are not nearly the miserable creatures that some popular representations make them out to be.

Researchers (Nelson et al., 2013) conducted three studies that tested whether parents are happier overall than their childless peers, if parents feel better moment-to-moment than nonparents, and whether parents experience more positive feelings when taking care of children than during their other daily activities. The consistency of their findings across all three studies provides strong evidence that children are associated with increased well-being.

Among the findings:

- Parents are happier when taking care of their children than while doing other daily activities.
- Fathers in particular expressed greater levels of happiness, positive emotion and meaning in life than their childless peers.
- Older and married parents tend to be the happiest.

Sonja Lyubomirsky, professor of psychology at UC Riverside and a leading researcher on the study, said, "Contrary to repeated scholarly and media pronouncements, people may find solace that parenthood and child care may actually be linked to feelings of happiness and meaning in life." Rabbi Noach Weinberg, of blessed memory, would often say that if you ask any parent what their greatest pleasure in life is, they'll tell you, 'My children!' But if you also ask them, 'And what is your greatest pain?' they'll also answer, 'My children!' From here we learn, Rabbi Noach Weinberg would say, that the greatest pleasures in life come through great effort.

Quote of the Week

As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them. -- *John Fitzgerald Kennedy*

Joke of the Week

Moskowitz and Garfinkel were in a cafeteria, drinking tea. Moskowitz studied his cup and said with a sigh, "Ah, my friend, life is like a cup of tea."

Garfinkel considered that for a moment and then said, "But why is life like a cup of tea?"

Moskowitz replied, "How should I know? Am I a philosopher?"