

Beyond Twelve Gates by Rabbi Ze'ev Smason
Parshas Noach October 25, 2014

Welcome to Beyond Twelve Gates ~

A bright spot in the St. Louis Cardinals' season was their 3-1 victory in the National League Division Series against the Los Angeles Dodgers. In the second game, however, things went the way of the Dodgers. Leading off the eighth inning, slugging Dodger outfielder Matt Kemp skipped down the first base line, watching his drive fly while calling out to the ball, trying to coax it to stay fair. Once it sailed inside the foul pole and landed in the lower left field seats, Kemp's go-ahead homer was the difference maker, lifting the Dodgers to a 3-2 win over the Cardinals.

The Dodger home crowd of 54,599 erupted in cheers as Kemp rounded the bases. Bubbles percolated into the hot night air from a machine in the dugout the Dodgers turn on to celebrate homers. No one looked happier greeting Kemp in the dugout than a once-distraught J.P. Howell, who had served up a tying, two-run homer to Matt Carpenter in the top of the inning. Kemp hugged Howell, who pointed skyward in relief. "It was incredible, man," Howell said. "*To me it was almost religious because I was praying so hard and it happened pretty quickly. I was pretty thankful.*"

One of the problems that many theologians have grappled with is: "Why and how does prayer work?" If we pray for the sick to recover -- or for a long fly ball to stay fair -- we are assuming that G-d can answer such prayers. Regardless of the answer received, genuine, sincere prayer brings a person into a closer relationship with G-d -- Dodger and Cardinal fan, alike.

Parshas Noach Genesis 6:9 -- 11:32

As a result of Mankind's evil, G-d brings a flood to destroy every living creature. Only Noah, his family, and at least one pair of every animal species were spared. Trivia question: Do you know the name of Noah's wife? (hint -- it is NOT 'Joan of Ark') When the flood waters begin to recede after a lengthy deluge, Noah sends forth from the ark a raven and dove to determine whether the land has dried sufficiently so that they can leave the ark to once again resettle the earth. G-d promises that He will never again destroy all of Mankind by means of a flood, and He designates the rainbow as a sign for that eternal covenant.

Noah plants a vineyard, drinks from its produce and becomes drunk. In his intoxicated state, he shamefully uncovers himself. While his son Ham dealt with his father inappropriately, Noah's other two sons, Shem and Japeth, cover their father in a respectful manner. Generations pass and the world is repopulated. The people attempt to wage war against G-d by building the Tower of Babel. G-d responds by mixing up their languages into a 'babble', and dispersing them across the planet.

Rabbinical Ruminations

Do you turn on the *faucet* or the *spigot*? Are eggs scrambled in a *frying pan* or in a *skillet*? Do you drink *soda*, *pop*, or *Coke*? A number of everyday words and expressions are characteristic of different dialect areas of the United States, especially the North, the Midland, and the South. Many terms spread from their area of origin and have come to be used throughout the nation for the same object interchangeably. A number of words, however, remain exclusive to specific regions.

In *Scientific American Mind* (Oct. 2014), Jill Goodwin of Alpine, Texas, relates that in the early 1950s when she was in elementary school in Louisiana, her class was asked to bring in some math supplies, which included a "compass." Jill duly returned to school with a device for finding true north, only to produce a room full of giggles. Everyone had brought a protractor, which is what was expected when a "compass" was requested.

We need to be aware of regional vocabularies. But perhaps more important, we need to be aware of the tone of the words we choose. In the Torah portion of Noach, when G-d instructs Noah to gather all of the animals into the ark, He describes the non-kosher animals as "and of the beasts that are not clean." The

Talmud points out that the Torah uses eight extra letters in this description since it could have said, "the impure animals." The reason the Torah chose to say "not *tahor*" rather than *tamei* is to impart a lesson to us that we should use speech that is pure and clean. The lesson: Regardless of your accent or regional vocabulary, the words you choose determine how you affect the feelings of others -- and the type of person you become.

Quote of the Week

I find that the harder I work, the more luck I seem to have - *Thomas Jefferson*

Joke of the Week

"What is that sound?" a woman asked at our nature center.

"It's the frogs trilling for a mate," Patti, the naturalist, explained. "We have a pair in the science room. But since they've been together for so long, they no longer sing to each other."

The woman nodded sympathetically, "The trill is gone."