

Welcome to Beyond Twelve Gates

This will come as no surprise to any women who has been pained over her husband's choice of clothes: The sexes see colors differently. New research from the City University of New York has shown that male and female brains process colors in slightly different ways. This means that if both sexes look at an orange, it will appear redder to the man than to the woman. Similarly, grass looks more yellow to a man and greener to a woman. This difference is based upon the greater difficulty men have in making fine distinctions between colors in the middle of the visual spectrum, such as between greeny-blues (or bluey-greens). So, a man would perceive a turquoise vase, for instance, as being a little more blue than a woman who was also looking at it. While the degree of difference in colors is very small, it might mean that choosing a shade of paint from the dozens on a color chart is a job best suited to a woman.

Vision is far from the only sense to differ between the sexes. The journal *Biology of Sex Differences* says that research has shown women to have better hearing and a more acute sense of taste. Some studies have shown that females have a more sensitive sense of smell than males, both in the differentiation of odors and in the detection of slight or faint odors. A recent study by British psychologist Professor Keith Laws at the University of Hertfordshire was widely reported in the press to have provided the first evidence of female multitasking superiority. Men, however, do come out top in one regard: Experiments show them to be particularly good at detecting fine detail in moving images -- a trait that provides an advantage for hunting, and may be particularly useful for playing computer games . . . and watching football on TV.

Gender is a pivotal quality in each person's identity. From the Torah perspective, G-d in His infinite wisdom created humans as two distinct genders to enable them to complement and fulfill each other. Genesis describes the process of Eve's creation using the word *vayiven*, "G-d built." This word shares the same Hebrew root as *binah*, meaning "insight" or understanding. This suggests that women were created with an extra dose of "inner reasoning." Men tend to have more of what is called *da'as*, a type of understanding tending to be more connected to facts and figures. When a person is asked what he or she does, the response often given is identification of a career. But the truth is that we are not merely doctors, engineers, secretaries, educators. We are human beings trying to fulfill our unique potential - as both men and women, understanding and appreciating our unique natures.

Parshas Vayakhel--Pekudei Exodus 35:1 -- 40:38

This week we read the final portion of Exodus, a book that began with the Jewish people enslaved to Pharaoh in Egypt and now ends with the completion of the construction of the Mishkan (Tabernacle) in the desert. Exodus is known as 'the Book of Redemption'; redemption was achieved not only through our escape from slavery, but also through receiving the Torah on Mt. Sinai, which gave purpose to that freedom. The climax of that salvation was when G-d rested His presence amongst the Jewish nation when the Mishkan was completed.

Parshas Vayakhel (Exodus 35:1 -- 38:20) begins with Moses assembling the entire nation of Israel to transmit the details of the construction and fabrication of the Mishkan as described in the three previous Torah portions. However, Moses first cautions them about the fundamental mitzvah to observe Shabbat. The nation is reminded that although the construction of the Mishkan is of transcendent importance, it does not take precedence over the weekly observance of Shabbat. The portion describes that the Jewish people came forward with their generous contributions for the Mishkan's construction, producing a surplus of supplies. The craftsmen are selected and the building begins.

Parshas Pekudei (Exodus 38:21 -- 40:38) begins with a complete accounting of the gold, silver and copper contributed by the people for use in the Mishkan. Following Moses' inspection and approval of the many utensils and unassembled parts, Moses sets up the Mishkan on Rosh Chodesh Nissan as each part is anointed and arranged in its proper location. And as G-d promised, His glory fills the Mishkan.

Rabbinic Ruminations

These days it seems like 'just a second' is way too long. In the old days -- 10 years ago or so -- most of us were willing to patiently wait a few seconds for a computer to respond to a click on a Web site or a tap on a keyboard. Currently, even 400 milliseconds -- literally the blink of an eye -- is too long, as Google engineers have discovered. That barely perceptible delay causes people to search less.

"Subconsciously, you don't like to wait," said Arvind Jain, a Google engineer who is the company's resident speed maven. "Every millisecond matters."

Overcoming speed bumps is part of the history of the Internet. In the 1990s, as the World Wide Web became popular and crowded it was called the World Wide Wait. Today, the competition to be the quickest is fierce, as people will visit a Web site less often if it is slower than a close competitor by more than 250 milliseconds (a millisecond is a thousandth of a second). "Two hundred fifty milliseconds, either slower or faster, is close to the magic number now for competitive advantage on the Web," said Harry Shum, a computer scientist and speed specialist at Microsoft. Speed matters in every context, research shows. Four out of five online users will click away if a video stalls while loading. In 2009, a study found that online shoppers expected pages to load in two seconds or fewer -- and at three seconds, a large share abandon the site. Only three years earlier a similar study found the average expectations for page load times were four seconds or fewer. Experts in human-computer interaction say that the two-second rule is outdated. "The old two-second guideline has long been surpassed on the racetrack of Web expectations," said Eric Horvitz, a scientist at Microsoft.

Are you in a hurry to get things done? There's a distinction between being *busy* and being *hurried*. A life filled with meaningful and productive activities is a blessing. However, a 'gotta-get-it-done-yesterday' attitude leads to high blood pressure, frustration, and an unpleasant demeanor. Ethics of the Fathers (2:5) states "...the short-tempered can not teach." No trait is more essential for teachers and parents, than that of patience. Like a fit and toned physique, patience can't be acquired overnight. Each time you log on to your computer is a marvelous opportunity to develop the trait of patience.

Quote of the Week

Failing is an event, not a person. Yesterday ended last night. -- ***Zig Ziglar***

Joke of the Week

The Doctor called Mrs. Cohen saying, "Mrs. Cohen, your check came back."
Mrs. Cohen answered, "So did my arthritis!"