

## OZTORAH

### WATERGATE & CITYGATE

America has its Watergate which changed the course of national history. The Bible has its Citygate where deals were made and decisions formulated.

It appears a number of times in Scripture beginning with this week's sidra, where negotiations secure the site of Machpelah for Avraham's family.

The gate of the city was not only where individuals came in and out but the place where people met and where community affairs were decided.

That's why in the famous "Eshet Chayil" chapter of Mishlei, the wise woman's husband is "known in the gates" - a public figure who was an acknowledged partner in the community's counsels.

There is a Jewish teaching that the word SHA'AR, a gate, is composed of three of the most useful letters we have in the Hebrew alphabet - SHIN, AYIN and RESH. Whichever way you use them you have one of the community's leading concerns.

SHIN-AYIN-RESH, SHA'AR, a gate, symbolises discussion: decisions are not imposed or taken lightly but thoroughly considered.

AYIN-SHIN-RESH is OSHER, wealth: a community's stability stands or falls by its economic stability.

AYIN-RESH-SIN is ERES, a cradle: the

birth rate and how we bring up children determines our future.

RESH-SHIN-AYIN, RESHA, wickedness, tells us that a community must have its criteria of acceptable and unacceptable behavior.

All these combinations of letters (and others) identify the agenda for the discussions at Citygate.

Rabbi Apple served for 32 years as the chief minister of the Great Synagogue, Sydney, Australia's oldest and most prestigious congregation. He was Australia's highest profile rabbi and held many public roles. He is now retired and lives in Jerusalem. Rabbi Apple blogs at [www.oztorah.com](http://www.oztorah.com)