Dedicated in the *zechus* for a *refuah shleimah* for Shoshana Emuna Bas Penina Devora and everyone else who needs.

Living Appreciation

בס"ד
פרשת לך לך
Issue 243

Appreciation in the Parashah

Presence: the biggest present.

A fierce battle was raging between an alliance of four mighty kings against an alliance of five kings. The armies of the four kings were so powerful that they defeated all five kingdoms! During the battle, Lot, Avraham's nephew, was taken captive.

When Avraham heard what had happened, he sprang into action, determined to rescue him despite the enormous danger involved. After all, he was going to war against armies that had just defeated five kingdoms, while he had only 318 men at his disposal! In fact, Chazal (*Nedarim* 32a) teach that according to one opinion, he was accompanied by just his servant Eliezer, whose name has a *gematria* of 318. What could have moved Avraham to risk his life against such overwhelming odds?

The *Ramban* (*Bereishis* 19:29) reveals something remarkable. Avraham felt deeply grateful to Lot for accompanying him on his journeys. Traveling alone through unfamiliar places can be lonely and unsettling. Yet Lot had accompanied Avraham wherever he went, providing him with the comfort and reassurance of having someone by his side. Avraham appreciated this kindness so deeply that he was willing to risk his own life to rescue him!



What makes this even more remarkable is that Lot himself had benefited tremendously from Avraham's company. Chazal (*Pesikta Rabbasi* 3) teach that merely being in the presence of such a great *tzadik* brought Lot tremendous wealth. Yet this did not diminish Avraham's gratitude toward him.

Moreover, Lot did not always follow Avraham's righteous ways. His shepherds allowed their animals to graze in other people's fields, and he chose to settle in Sedom, surrounded by evildoers. Nevertheless, Avraham did not allow these differences to overshadow the kindness he had received. He remembered how Lot had accompanied him on his journeys, and his heartfelt appreciation moved him to go to extraordinary lengths to save him.

We find another example of this in the *Gemara* (*Chullin* 7a). Rebbi Pinchas ben Yair was once traveling to perform the great *mitzvah* of redeeming captives, accompanied by an Arab merchant. When they reached a river blocking their path, Rebbi Pinchas ben Yair commanded it to split, and miraculously, it did! He then asked the river to split for the Arab merchant as well out of gratitude for accompanying him.

Rav Meir Hadash explains that the merchant was accompanying Rebbi Pinchas ben Yair for his own benefit, and Rebbi Pinchas did not actually need his assistance. Nevertheless, he appreciated the fact that the man had accompanied him and wanted him to benefit from the miracle as well. This is remarkable. The laws of nature were overturned, and a river split, all because Rebbi Pinchas ben Yair appreciated the simple kindness of another person's company! (*Leolam Odechah*, p. 405)

There is something deeply comforting about having others around us. Their presence gives us reassurance, companionship, and someone with whom to share our thoughts and feelings. Rav Yerucham Levovitz teaches that being part of society and enjoying the company of others is an essential human need (*Da'as Chochmah U'Mussar* 3:17) How fortunate we are to have people around us, people to confide in, people whose very presence enriches our lives in countless ways.

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One morning, shortly after sunrise, the Chazon Ish was walking with a talmid in an orchard outside the city, after davening vasikin Suddenly, the sky darkened, and heavy rain began pouring down. Neither of them had an umbrella or raincoat, and they were far from anywhere they could take shelter. As the rain grew heavier, they stood helplessly by the roadside, hoping that someone might stop and offer them a ride. Thankfully, a kindhearted truck driver pulled over and invited them inside. As the talmid helped the Chazon Ish into the truck, the Chazon Ish noticed that there was only one sheltered seat beside the driver. He immediately insisted that his talmid sit there, while he himself would travel in the exposed cargo section, despite the pouring rain!

The talmid protested, but the Chazon Ish would not hear of it. He explained that he owed his talmid a debt of gratitude for accompanying him on his walk, and therefore wanted him to have the more comfortable seat.

Only when they were approaching the city did the talmid manage to persuade the Chazon Ish to switch places, explaining that it would be disrespectful for people to see the talmid sitting comfortably beside the driver while the Chazon Ish remained exposed to the rain. Before parting, the Chazon Ish gave both his talmid and the driver a heartfelt berachah, expressing his deep appreciation for their kindness. (*Leolam Odechah, p. 346*)

Appreciation in the *Siddur* — *Hamechin Mitzadai gever*

Did you know that the average person takes around five thousand steps a day? That is close to two million steps a year! Walking seems so simple. We lift one foot, place it in front of the other, and make our way from place to place without much effort. Yet behind this seemingly ordinary movement lies an incredibly complex process, involving numerous muscles, nerves, bones, and joints working together in remarkable harmony.

It all begins in the brain, which sends signals through our nerves, directing the muscles in our legs to move in remarkable coordination. Our hips, knees, ankles, and feet work together to support our entire body weight and propel us forward. At the same time, our eyes, inner ears, and sensory nerves constantly help us maintain our balance, making countless tiny adjustments to prevent us from falling, all without us even realizing it!

In truth, every step we take is another reason to thank Hashem. Yet considering the thousands of steps we take each day, how could we possibly stop to thank Hashem for every single one?

Chazal, in their wisdom, gave us a beautiful way to express our gratitude for this extraordinary gift. Each morning we say, *Hameichin mitzadei gaver* — "Who prepares the steps of man." Through this *berachah*, we thank Hashem not only for our first steps upon arising, but for all the countless steps we will take throughout the day. With just one *berachah*, we express the gratitude we owe for thousands of individual steps, each one a gift in its own right. (*Toras Chaim, Baba Kamma* 16a)

Parashah Pearls

In *Bereishis* (12:1), Hashem commands Avraham Avinu, "Go from your land, from your birthplace, and from your father's house." These three places represent progressively deeper levels of attachment. A person feels connected to his country, even more so to his birthplace, and most of all to his family home, where he grew up surrounded by familiar influences from his earliest years. Each departure therefore presents a greater challenge. Rav Leib Chasman explains that Hashem was teaching Avraham an important lesson about overcoming negative influences and deeply rooted habits. True change is often best achieved gradually, beginning with what is easier before moving on to greater challenges. Yet we need not face these challenges alone. Chazal (*Yumah* 38b) teach that when a person sincerely seeks to purify himself, he receives help from Above. Every small step we take toward becoming better opens the door to Hashem's assistance, giving us the strength to take the next step and continue growing, little by little.

After many painful years of longing for a child, Avraham Avinu received the joyous promise that he would be blessed with descendants. Hashem took him outside and said, "Look toward the heavens and count the stars, if you are able to count them. So shall your descendants be" (*Bereishis* 15:5). Why did Hashem compare his descendants specifically to the stars? Rav Simchah Wasserman explains a beautiful idea. Every star is unique, as the *pasuk* says, "He counts the number of stars; He calls each one by name" (*Tehillim* 147:4). Similarly, every Jew is a unique star, with his own special light to shine upon the world. Each of us has been blessed with unique gifts and abilities, and a special purpose that no one else can fulfill. There is a light that only we can bring into this world, and when we use the gifts Hashem has given us, we make the world a little brighter. (*Simchas Eliezer* vol.2 p.25)

Avraham Avinu did not have an easy life. He endured ten difficult tests, including leaving behind his homeland and being commanded to sacrifice his beloved son. Chazal teach (*Avos* 5:3) that he overcame all ten tests. Rav Chaim Volozhin (*Ruach Chaim*) explains that by overcoming these challenges, Avraham instilled within all his descendants the strength to face their own tests. Whatever challenges we face, we have inherited the strength of Avraham Avinu, and with Hashem's loving assistance, we too can overcome them.

Things to appreciate: *Sefarim,* We are blessed with a vast selection of affordable *sefarim* on countless Torah topics, making it easier than ever to broaden our Torah knowledge.

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