



TORAS JR AVIGDOR

Parshas Noach

LEFT FOOT, RIGHT FOOT

“WAIT!”

Twelve-year-old Meshulem froze with one foot in the air. Dr. Friedman stared at him. “Did I say you should put your foot down on the ground?”

Meshulem slowly lowered his foot back onto the examination table. “No.”

“So why are you walking?”

“I wasn’t walking,” Meshulem said. “I was just putting my foot on the floor to see what it feels like.”

Dr. Friedman raised one eyebrow, and Meshulem sighed. There was no point arguing with Dr. Friedman. His eyebrows could win arguments by themselves.

Dr. Friedman looked at Mrs. Kugelbaum. “No change. Still no walking.” And he looked at Meshulem with his eyebrows which meant “And no putting feet on the ground even to see what it feels like.” “Alright, I’ll see you again next week.”

It was already eleven long weeks that Meshulem had been stuck at home with a broken leg. It began when he decided that jumping off the top of the playground equipment was more exciting than climbing down the normal way. He had been correct. Unfortunately, it had also broken his leg — in a few places.

While the other boys went to cheder, played ball and rode their bikes, Meshulem sat home with his cast. At first it wasn’t so terrible. His

mother brought him his meals and Miri brought him snacks whenever he asked. His friends visited him.

Even Mr. Schwartz came by to cheer him up with a joke: “What should Meshulem do if he broke his leg in a few places?”

“He shouldn’t go back to those places.”

But after eleven weeks Meshulem was sick of the couch, sick of his crutches, and especially sick of watching everybody else walk.

Everybody was walking! His father walked to shul. Miri and Mimi walked to school. Baby Mattis was taking his first steps. Menachem walked across the living room to go to the fridge. Sometimes Meshulem watched people going down the block. Look at these people! he thought. Left foot, right foot, left foot, right foot — and they don’t even care!



Finally, after another week, Dr. Friedman examined the X-ray and said the words Meshulem had been waiting to hear. “All right, Meshulem. You may walk.”

Carefully, Meshulem lowered one foot onto the floor and then the other. He stood up and took a step. Then another.

“I’M WALKING!”

“Meshulem! Slowly!” his mother said.

He walked down the hallway, through the waiting room and onto the sidewalk. It was drizzling and cold. Smelly garbage bags were piled in front of the building. It was beautiful! It was so much fun to walk!

The next Shabbos in shul, Meshulem was half listening to Rabbi Elefant’s speech, half daydreaming about playing at his friend’s house, when he heard something that made him pay attention. The Rav was talking about someone else who had been waiting a long time to walk on land — except this person had waited twelve months instead of twelve weeks.

Rabbi Elefant was describing how Noach and his family had been squeezed inside the *teivah* with camels, lions, elephants, chickens and thousands of other animals for a full year. And then came the big moment: Noach removed the covering and looked outside. Dry land!

After a year of riding the waves with animal noises and smells and feeding times, now the beautiful dry earth was right there. All Noach had to do was step out.

But he didn’t. Even though the ground was dry and the door was right there, Noach waited.

You know why? Because nobody had told him he could leave. During that year Noach had understood one of the big lessons of the Mabul: Walking on Hashem’s earth is a gift from Him. And if He doesn’t let me walk on dry land, then I can’t. And so Noach waited until finally the words came: יֵצֵא מִן הַתֵּיבָה! “Noach, leave the *teivah*!” Now he had permission!

“Imagine that first step,” said Rabbi Elefant. “After an entire year! Finally! Solid ground! Noach must have appreciated every step. Thank You, Hashem! I’m walking on Your earth! You’re letting me walk again!”

“Hey,” thought Meshulem, “that’s me! I know that feeling! And it’s only five days and I already forgot to appreciate walking. I guess that’s how everyone feels; they get so used to it that they forget the lesson of Noach coming out of the *teivah*.”

On the way home from shul, Meshulem was walking slower than usual.

“Meshulem, is your leg still bothering you?” Totty asked. “We can walk back to shul to ask Dr. Friedman to look at it if you want.”

“No, it’s perfect,” said Meshulem. “But I’m just thinking about what Rabbi Elefant said and trying to enjoy every step. And starting tomorrow I’ll bli neder start saying the bracha על הארץ every morning with extra *kavanah* as a daily reminder.”

**RABBI
MILER
SPEAKS**

Earth to walk on?! You have to be grateful to be able to walk on the earth! The truth is every block should have a turnstile which requires us to drop in a dime. A long block, you should drop in a quarter! He gave it to us and we pay the toll by saying thank you. – June 1978



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