

Dear Chavraya,

At a time of needing uplift, I once received a card on whose cover were two sets of footprints that appeared side by side. In what I imagined to be the sands of time, the time of one's own life journey, there was at one point a gap in the parallel footprints, for a space of time only one set appearing. Inside the card were words of prayerful exchange between a person and God. Reflecting on a life lived in God's presence, of walking with the Holy One, the person asked God, "why are there only one set of footprints here?" God answered, "that was a time when I carried you."

This beautiful image comes to me through a line in this week's Torah portion, *Parashat D'varim*. Recounting their journey of forty years, Moses tells the people of a time in the wilderness, *where you saw that God, your God, carried you just as a person carries their child, on all the way that you went until you came to this place*. There are times when we walk with God as Noah did, and at times of greater confidence we may walk before God as Abraham did. At other times, we give ourselves over to God and allow ourselves to be carried.

That is the spirit in which I write to you now. About a year ago, as you may recall, I had some surgery. I now need to have some follow-up surgery. The doctor initially suggested doing it in August. Knowing what the recovery was like last year, I felt that I would not be ready for Yontev if I did it in August. As the doctor and I bargained about time, I asked about doing it in October. In the end, after further consultation, I accepted the doctor's wisdom and agreed that it would be better to do it sooner rather than later. While he is not alarmed, he feels that the prudent course is to do it now, in order to allay concern. As a result, I am going to have surgery on Wednesday of the coming week. While I may not be able to respond, I will receive your prayers in my heart with great appreciation.

As God carries us, so we carry each other. That is what it means to be the *chavraya*, those joined together in common concern. Community is not an abstraction. It is the gathering and focus of ultimate concern that is the life of each of its members. In a beautiful commentary called *Ha'emek Davar*, the "Depth of the Word," the way that God carries us, as explained by Moses, is the model by which we carry each other. Just as a person carries their child, so *a person carries their friend..., in order to support her or his hands and strengthen them; but in the end a person must strive to stand upon her or his own feet*.

In allowing ourselves to be carried, by God and by each other, we come to stand more surely upon our own feet. I am grateful for your support and your prayers, and for the presence of each one. Walking together as a community, there are many more than two sets of footprints in the sand.

Shabbat shalom,
Rabbi Victor