

ONE SMALL STEP

By: Rabbi Yehoshua Fass

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We've all felt it, at one moment or another, anyone who ever visited Israel shares the same experience of having it take one's breath away. It could be emerging from the Old City streets and seeing the magnificent panoramic view of the *Kotel*; or finding yourself on a bus huddled with a diverse group of Jews from around the world; or welling up with pride at seeing an Israeli soldier protecting our people in our land; or even something as simple as an intoxicating whiff of *challot* as you navigate the frenzied *shuk* on a Friday afternoon.

Who knows how or when or even why it happens – sooner or later, though, the Land of Israel never falls short in stealing the breath from out of our lungs. Inevitably, we fall fast and hard for that place; inevitably, we sense the tectonic plates of Jewish history shifting beneath the ground; and inevitably, our imaginations wander to what could be, what might be, if somehow this otherworldly place could become our *actual* home. The place that we, in the year 2016, live out our everyday lives.

And then...gone.

Perhaps as soon as it came, that feeling passes. The taxi pulls up to Ben Gurion, the jet plane's wheels lift off the runway, and we hurtle westward, leaving a trail of those moments behind in a plume of dust.

But why? Why does it end there? Where does all that magic go, all of that energy dissipate to? Why do so many have such a transcendent experience and leave it at that, without at least exploring the *possibility* of making this magical place their permanent dwelling place? Here's how I've come to understand it:

"The journey of a thousand miles begins with one step." Lao Tzu said that, and while there's at least 5,000 miles of Atlantic Ocean separating North America and the Tel Aviv shore, the same holds true for the process of Aliyah, and for anything worthwhile, really.

If Point A is where we are and Point B is where we want to be, the distance between can seem endless. It can feel like it's on the other end of an amorphous, unconquerable abyss. And the uncertainty and anxiety brought about through this realization, I believe, can stop the whole process before it even starts. By definition however, there can only be *one next step* at any point, on any journey. Anyone who ever achieved greatness began somewhere, took their first step beyond the cozy confines of Point A in the general direction of Point B.

But not all steps are created equal – *everything hinges on the first*. That first step means we're no longer standing still. The first step wakes

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- Rabbi Yehoshua Fass ”

#MAKEITHOME

us from our reverie; it stirs us from our immobility. And it's hard. *Really, really hard*. But it's also everything. Because the first step is not about distance travelled – it's about what the decision to take it means to us and signals to those around us.

For world Jewry, the barriers of entry to our ancient homeland have never been lower – not in over 2,000 years. Every single day, Nefesh B'Nefesh sees prospective *olim* take those first steps towards Aliyah and helps them shatter whatever obstacles lay on their path. This is happening every year, by the thousands, across demographic, geographic, and denominational lines.



From young professionals looking to advance at the height of their professional careers, to empty nesters looking for a change of pace; from religious Jews moving in fulfillment of *yishuv ha'aretz*, to secular Jews moving in fulfillment of the Zionist dream to play their part in bolstering this "start-up-nation." For so many, Point B suddenly isn't a far-flung fairy tale land – it's a concrete strip of earth in which they are there to stake their claim.

So here's my challenge to you: If you've ever had one of those transcendent moments in Israel; if you love Israel and appreciate the beauty and importance of Jews living there; if you've ever daydreamed about making Israel your home – then find out what the *smallest possible* next step is, and take it.

No giant leaps – just one step. You're not quitting your job, selling your house, or signing on any dotted lines. In fact – and I know this will be perceived as rhetoric, but it really isn't – whether or not you choose to pursue Aliyah further is essentially besides the point. This is about an exercise in mindfulness, it's about searching yourself to identify what you value, how much you value it, and what you'll do about it.

In one of the most famous scenes in *Torah*, God appears to Avraham and instructs him "*lech lecha*," that he should leave everything he knows and begin his journey to the Land of Israel. God instructs him to "look at the heavens and count the stars, if you are able to count them; and He said to him, your children will be like *this*." Rav Meir Shapira, founder of the Daf Yomi movement, explains that Avraham actually, literally, began to count the stars, one by one. When God says your children will be like "this," says Rav Shapira, He refers to this act of Avraham, of making an ostensibly farfetched attempt to count all the stars in the sky. Anyone else might balk at the futility of such a task, but Avraham took it seriously.

This is Avraham, our forefather, and his actions reverberate across the millennia to the Jewish people of today. The prospect of "*lech lecha*" can seem to us as daunting and as distant as to Avraham. But similarly, in the face of the impossible, however, we do not cower and we do not despair – we simply take one small step.

Take your step today. Join us at the Aliyah Mega Event or at one of our Aliyah Fairs. For more information please visit www.nbn.org.il/



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