

Parshat Ekev
Step Back and Look Around
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"Because we eat two, three or four times every day, it's easy to forget how wondrous that is. It's like the sunrise or the sunset. The sun rises and sets every day. If it's an especially beautiful sunrise, we may notice it. But if it's not "special" we may not even see it. But if we can see it as if for the first time, each sunrise becomes very special and very beautiful." – Bernard Glassman, Instructions to the Cook

How often do you look at the world around you, but actually see what is there? How often do you notice all that occurs to allow for your regular day to happen? How often do you give thanks for your accomplishments and successes in life? It is so easy to take things in our life for granted, especially when life seems to be going well and relatively smoothly.

This week's Parsha, Parshat Ekev, warns us against thinking that what occurs in our lives is because of us alone. The text warns us against not showing gratitude to God. In Deuteronomy, chapter 10, verses 17-18 we read: "And you may say in your heart, 'My strength and the might of my hand made me all this wealth!' Then you shall remember Hashem, your God: that it was He Who gives you strength to make wealth..." We are reminded that all of our accomplishments and abilities in the world come from God.

Before arriving in Australia, I was a chaplain intern at a hospital in New York. Part of my role was to pray with patients and their families. We created prayers together beseeching God for healing and strength, but also thanking God for the healing that they have started to see, for the knowledge and care that they see and feel from the staff, and for the technology that we have today that was helping to heal. These moments of spontaneous prayer made me look at all that was occurring in the hospital as acts of God, and with their help had me stop and remember to thank God. It was because of God that the technology exists, and because of God that there are people who know how to use it to heal.

This week we are reminded to take a step back and look at the world around us, not only in times of difficulty but also in times of ease, to see greatness, to see our accomplishments and strengths, and most importantly to remember that it all comes from God.



Rabbi Eryn London, is a chaplain resident at New York Presbyterian - Weill Cornell Medical Center. She earned her B.A from Goucher College, where she majored in theatre, minoring in psychology and Judaic studies. Eryn subsequently earned an M.A. at Goldsmiths, University of London. She specialized in applied drama: theatre in educational, community, and social contexts. Eryn made aliyah in February of 2010 and studied at the Pardes Institute of Jewish Studies and at the Susi Bradfield Women's Institute of Halachic Leadership at Midreshet Lindenbaum. She is one of the co-founders of "Gam Yachad", a multi-denominational Beit Midrash for Israeli rabbinical students. Eryn has served as scholar in residence and rabbinic intern at the ACT Jewish Community in Canberra, Australia, Adath Shalom B'nai Israel in Chicago, Illinois, and at the Mt. Freedom Jewish Center in Randolph, New Jersey. In addition, Eryn has lectured in various communities in Israel, Canada, Colombia, Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States.