DESIGNED
FOOTSTEPS
Blessed are you Hashem our God, King of the Universe who firms the footsteps of man

DO YOU BELIEVE IN SIGNS?

I am not really sure if I do. I had few incidents that made me stop believing in them, thinking that a decision or a feeling could possibly be taken or felt depending on random flying signs, that "happened to" match the mode of thinking you had for that period or day.

But how come sometimes, a thing happens, and you don’t give it a lot of thought. And then, it happens again, so you pay attention to it. And then that thing forces itself to show up once more, so it finally attracts your attention and curiosity. And just like that, it gets a spot in your awareness of surroundings. And afterwards, the thing stops its pushiness into your life. So you wonder, but you do not overdo it, until, it comes back, but this time with signs. All related to the subject of matter, but in different forms and three times in one day. Three very obvious and very subject related, where each sign feels as if it screams about its notion! Wouldn’t that nock your mind off and make you think. What does this mean?

So do I believe in signs?! I don’t know. I am very tempted to, despite the fact how misleading they could be, I am attracted to the thought.

I guess, I’ll be a better judge of that tomorrow, when the sign’s intensity diminishes, and things are normal again...
BACK TO THE SOURCE

The Bracha of המכין ومعרכי ובו comes from these sources. Both suggest that God impacts the direction of our life’s footsteps, but each seem to conclude differently.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Psalms 37</th>
<th>תהלים פרק ל</th>
<th>From Hashem are the footsteps of man, planned out, but his way is the way he desires.</th>
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<tr>
<th>Proverbs 20</th>
<th>משלי פרק כ</th>
<th>From Hashem are the footsteps of man, but what does man know of his way?</th>
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**WHICH CONCLUSION DO YOU AGREE WITH MORE?**

WALKING ON OUR OWN 2 FEET

If you notice the text of the blessings, up until this point we are thanking Hashem for blessings we have received from Him such as sight and clothing. Now, however, we are proactive; we thank God for firming or shaping our footsteps but the footsteps are ours to be taken.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Aruch Hashulchan 42</th>
<th>ערוך השולחן אורח חיים סימן מו</th>
<th>We bless Hashem when we walk, saying &quot;Blessed are You who firms man’s footsteps&quot; because humans are taller than animals who walk on 4 feet and man walks on feet alone and is able to gaze upwards and give praise and thanks to God for this.</th>
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The Aruch Hashulchan explains that we bless God when we walk for allowing us to walk on 2 feet and look up. As opposed to animals who look down because they walk on 4 feet.

**WHAT IS IMPORTANT ABOUT LOOKING UP?**
WHO DECIDES?

**Chullin 7b**

R’ Chanina said: A person will not bruise his finger in this world unless it was decreed so from above. As is says: “God establishes the goings of man” How then, can man understand his way?

**Makkos 10b**

The way, in which a person wants to go, God guides him. From the Torah the proof is: Will you not go with them, get up and go with them (with regard to Bilam who was asking permission from God to curse the Jewish people)

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**THE PATH AHEAD**

*The Mishna in Avos can help us try to answer the question above.*

**Avos chapter 4**

Ben Azzai said: Be eager to fulfill the smallest mitzvah and flee from transgression; for one mitzvah leads to another mitzvah and one transgression leads to another transgression. The reward of a mitzvah is a mitzvah and the reward of one transgression is another transgression.

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HOW DO THE SOURCES DIFFER IN THEIR PERSPECTIVE?

CAN YOU RECONCILE THEM?

HOW DOES THE MISHNA HELP RECONCILE THE TWO SOURCES ABOVE?

WHY DOES MITZVAH LEAD TO MITZVAH AND SIN LEAD TO SIN?
**R’ Ovadia Bartenura Commentary**

Mitzvah leads to another mitzvah: this is the nature of the world: that one who does one mitzvah it is easy for him to do others. And one who starts sinning; it is hard to separate from them.

And furthermore, the reward for a mitzvah is a mitzvah, that is from heaven, it is ordained that opportunity is placed in the hand of a person who does one mitzvah, that he does more in order to give him more reward. And likewise in the case of sins.

Another explanation, that the reward for a mitzvah is a mitzvah, that reward is also based on the enjoyment of the action of the mitzvah-he gets reward for the action and reward for the enjoyment in doing the action.

And the reward for a sin is a sin-the pleasure that a person gets in doing the action of the sin is as important to him as the sin itself. And he is punished on the sin he did and on the pleasure he received in the action.

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**Based on the Bartenura, it is human nature for us to continue in the path we set ourselves, good leads to good and sin leads to sin.**

God gives us more opportunities to do mitzvas as a reward for doing good and likewise more occasions to do Averios when we do bad.

Bartenura also suggests that we are rewarded or punished for the enjoyment experienced from the action both good and bad.

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**Rav Tzaddok’s Commentary**

And there are instances in which a person can accidentally fail and be blinded to the fact that he is on the right path. In such cases God will concoct a circumstance that he will fail and sin accidentally in a much more blatant fashion and through that failure the person will become more aware of his initial path as well and start to correct his ways.
A young and successful executive was travelling down a neighborhood street, going a bit too fast in his new Jaguar. He was watching for kids darting out from between parked cars and slowed down when he thought he saw something. As his car passed, no children appeared. Instead, a brick smashed into the Jag's side door! He slammed on the brakes and backed the Jag back to the spot where the brick had been thrown.

The angry driver then jumped out of the car, grabbed the nearest kid and pushed him up against a parked car shouting, “What was that all about and who are you? Just what the heck are you doing? That's a new car and that brick you threw is going to cost a lot of money. Why did you do it?” The young boy was apologetic. “Please, mister...please, I'm sorry but I didn't know what else to do,” He pleaded. "I threw the brick because no one else would stop..." With tears dripping down his face and off his chin, the youth pointed to a spot just around a parked car. "It's my brother, "he said "He rolled off the curb and fell out of his wheelchair and I can't lift him up."

Now sobbing, the boy asked the stunned executive, "Would you please help me get him back into his wheelchair? He's hurt and he's too heavy for me.”

Moved beyond words, the driver tried to swallow the rapidly swelling lump in his throat. He hurriedly lifted the handicapped boy back into the wheelchair, then took out a linen handkerchief and dabbed at the fresh scrapes and cuts. A quick look told him everything was going to be okay. "Thank you and may God bless you," the grateful child told the stranger. Too shook up for words, the man simply watched the boy push his wheelchair-bound brother down the sidewalk toward their home.

It was a long, slow walk back to the Jaguar. The damage was very noticeable, but the driver never bothered to repair the dented side door. He kept the dent there to remind him of this message: "Don't go through life so fast that someone has to throw a brick at you to get your attention!"

God whispers in our souls and speaks to our hearts. Sometimes when we don’t have time to listen, He has to throw a brick at us. It’s our choice to listen or not.
CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

ברוך אתה ה’ אלהינו מלך העולם המכין מצעדי назад

Blessed are you Hashem our God, King of the Universe who firms the footsteps of man

- God is intimately involved in our lives. The extent to which we see life events as signs is really our own interpretation.
- God will allow us to walk on our own and choose our own path, but He will also guide us when we choose.
- Sometimes life will send us “signs”, when choosing the path to go, the question should always be: Is this something God would want me to do?