

## Walking the Dog in the Time of Corona

I was out taking my dogs for a walk the other day. Something that they have gotten me quite trained to do, by the way. Waking up in the morning they just kind of give me that look. Or snuggle up to me with a tail wagging. And then again in the afternoon. And by golly, again in the evening. Dogs seem to have gotten a bit leaner, a bit happier during this time, haven't they?!

But walking the dog has taken on a different meaning. For one, it is one of the few times I am out during the day. Social distancing and being sheltered at home has meant that I really have not gotten out much except to officiate in my capacity as a rabbi. And even then the time is short. And the interactions very different. Who would have thought I would be officiating at a funeral where only I and the camera and a couple of members from the funeral home would be present? People are afraid to travel. Afraid to leave their homes. And others simply are trying to shelter at home as much as possible.

But the pups know that it is important to leave the house, even if it is for a short walk. It's an interesting thing about the dogs. They stop a lot. Something that I normally would never do. I really just wanted to walk the dogs briskly and get it done. But not now. Now I find myself waving at neighbors who I never paid much attention to. I came home from one walk and mentioned to my wife that I had never noticed how colorful our front yard was. "Did our plants always bloom so brightly?" I asked. "Yes" she said. "You always have left too early and come home too late to notice." Literally, the dog was having me make time to smell the roses. The other day, I overheard another family with small children say, "Look Mom I found another painted rock!" And I smiled because I knew it was my wife Joni who had left that painted rock, among dozens and dozens of others, one day as we walked our dogs. Walking the dog became an opportunity to spread a bit of good will, perform a simple act of kindness.

And then there is the notion of exploration. Pretty much we had always gone the same route over the past few years. But now, we zig. And we zag. We look for a new place to visit. We walk a bit further. And in different directions. The neighborhood has seemingly changed before our eyes. But really, it hasn't. I have. I have begun to walk the road less travelled. And yes, it has made all the difference. And now I know it.

I used to think that I was taking the dog for a walk. But now, I am not so sure. Perhaps it is the other way around. "Common, it's time. Let's go. You have to keep moving. Doing. Seeing. Feeling. Smelling (?)" the pups say. All with the wag of a tail. And a loving look into my eyes. I got the message. It took me a while. But they want me to keep moving. And feeling. And getting a bit of fresh air. And if some days, I don't feel like getting out, because perhaps I am in a bit of funk. The pups encourage me to keep moving forward. Always forward.