



## Stepping Over The Bag Of Gold, by Rachel Naomi Remen

My patient, a physician who has cancer, comes to his session enormously pleased with himself. Knowing my love of stories, he says that he has found a perfect story and tells me the following parable:

Shiva and Shakti, the Divine Couple in Hinduism, are in their heavenly abode watching over the earth. They are touched by the challenges of human life, the complexity of human reactions, and the ever-present place of suffering in the human experience. As they watch, Shakti spies a miserably poor man walking down a road. His clothes are shabby

and his sandals are tied together with a rope. Her heart is wrung with compassion. Touched by his goodness and his struggle, Shakti turns to her divine husband and begs him to give this man some gold. Shiva looks at the man for a long moment. "My Dearest Wife," he says, "I cannot do that." Shakti is astounded. "Why, what do you mean, Husband?

You are the Lord of the Universe. Why can't you do this simple thing?"

"I cannot give this to him because he is not yet ready to receive it," Shiva replies. Shakti becomes angry. "Do you mean to say that you cannot drop a bag of gold in his path?"

"Surely I can," Shiva replies, "but that is quite another thing."

"Please, Husband," says Shakti.

And so Shiva drops a bag of gold in the man's path.

The man meanwhile walks along thinking to himself, "I wonder if I will find dinner tonight--or shall I go hungry again?" Turning a bend in the road, he sees something on the path in his way. "Aha," he says. "Look there, a large rock. How fortunate that I have seen it. I might have torn these poor sandals of mine even further." And carefully stepping over the bag of gold, he goes on his way.

It seems that Life drops many bags of gold in our path. Rarely do they look like what they are.