



SIMCHAT SHMUEL

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Our *Sedra* this week, *Parshat Vayeitzei* of course recalls the familiar account of *Yaakov Avinu departing* from *Be'er Sheva* as he flees the potential danger and retribution at the hands of his brother *Eisav*, following *Yaakov's* having received the *bracha* from *Yitzchak*.

As *Yaakov* lies down to rest under the stars the *pasuk* tells us:

Vayachalom v'hinei sulam mutzav Artza, v'roshe magia haShamaima- And he dreamt, and suddenly before him was a ladder that leaned toward earth, and its top rose to Heaven.

What exactly is the message this dream is meant to convey to *Yaakov Avinu*? What is the eternal message and relevance of *Yaakov's* dream for each of us? What does the imagery of the ladder which is grounded on Earth and ascends to the Heavens, meant to convey and teach us?

Rabbi Samson Rafael Hirsch *zt'l* points out that the ladder, which represents the link between heaven and earth, was placed from

above by *Hashem*. However the verse reads that the ladder's top reached the heavens. The ladder's purpose, explained *Rav Hirsch*, was not descent from the heavens, rather to inspire spiritual ascent, to direct our thoughts and actions toward the heavens.

The Sefat Emet, the Gerrer Rebbe *zy'a* explains that the image of the ladder represents a person's spiritual journey, where the body is grounded, but the soul reaches heaven.

Similarly, the great Chasidic Master, **Rebbe Aharon of Karlin** *zy'a* suggests that the imagery of the ladder which is placed from above with its peak reaching the heavens, is meant to emphasize

that each and every human being was placed here from above, and that each of us has the potential to ascend emotionally, spiritually and morally to reach the highest levels of refinement of character and elevated consciousness.

The **Netivot Shalom, the Slonimer Rebbe** *zy'a* offers a different interpretation on the imagery represented by the ladder. A ladder offers the capacity both to climb, as well as to descend. It is important for us to realize that in life even our descents occur within the framework of that proverbial ladder. Even as we may have come down a rung on that ladder, we continue to have the ability to climb back up, and ascend even higher than before!

Rav Yaakov Moshe Charlop *zt'l*, one of the closest and most devoted students of *Rav*



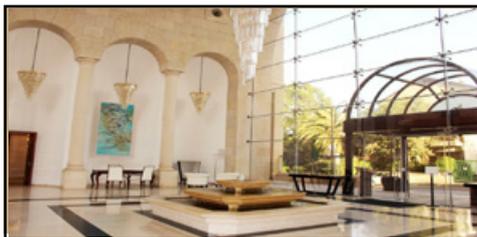
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Kook zt'l, offers a similar interpretation of the imagery of the ladder. The ladder is meant to teach us that sometimes our descents are necessary temporary steps, that actually serve as the impetus to propel us to climb even higher up that proverbial ladder, to reach even higher heights in our *Avodat Hashem*. Taking the time periodically to take a step back to gather our thoughts, to prepare ourselves to move forward, can indeed be the key to even greater accomplishments.

Yehi Ratzon, May each of us be blessed both to dream, to seek to ascend higher in our *Avodat Hashem*, as well as to have the strength and perseverance to bounce back from our temporary descents and setbacks, have the capacity to recalibrate our thoughts, and to move forward and achieve even greater clarity and growth each and every day. ■



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