



SIMCHAT SHMUEL

BY RABBI SAM SHOR

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Parshat Vayeitzei 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'rosho magia hashamaima- And he dreamt, and suddenly before him was a ladder that leaned toward earth, and it's 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?

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 *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!

Similarly, Rav Yaakov Moshe Charlop zt'l, one of the closest and most devoted students of Rav Kook zt'l, explains that 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.

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, to achieve even greater clarity and growth each and every day. ■

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