

**Good Shabbos Everyone.** During the days before Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, Reb Moshe Leib Sassover was noticeably absent from the pre-dawn Slichos - special prayers said in preparation for the High Holidays. Some skeptics of the Chassidim made fun of Reb Moshe Leib, saying that the Rebbe obviously enjoyed sleeping late. The Chassidim answered "The reason the Rebbe is not at the early services is because each morning he goes up to heaven." The answer caused the skeptics to ridicule the Rebbe even more than they had before.

One skeptic, however, found it difficult to believe that the Rebbe missed the Slichos prayers because he slept late. Therefore, the skeptic woke up very early one morning and went to spy on the Rebbe. He saw the Rebbe put on the clothes of a woodsman and take a huge ax to the woods. There the Rebbe chopped wood and took the bundles of wood to a little hut on the outskirts of town. Inside the hut an elderly, frail woman was lying in bed.

As the Rebbe lit the fire for the old lady, the spy heard the Rebbe reciting the Slichos prayers. The Rebbe gave the old woman milk, eggs, and home baked bread and cookies. The Rebbe then returned home, where he changed his clothes and went to shul.

Later that day, the skeptic met several Chassidim and told them, "I told you that you were mistaken when you said that your Rebbe goes up to heaven each morning. That is not true. He goes up much higher!"(Hishtadel Lhiyos Ish Calendar Av/Elul 5761)

Reb Moshe Leib Sassover climbed the spiritual heights through his tremendous acts of chessed. We read about climbing the spiritual ladder in our Torah portion this week Vayeitzei. On the way to Haran, Yakov the patriarch stopped to rest for the night on Mount Moriah, the future site of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem.

As he slept, Yakov dreamt that he saw a ladder. The famous dream of the ladder contains some of the most inspirational lessons of the entire Torah. The verse tells us that Yakov "dreamt, and behold! A ladder was set on the earth and its top reached towards the heavens..."(Genesis 28:12)

The Rabbis teach us that the ladder symbolizes the position of a Jew in this world. Although we stand on the ground like the base of the ladder, we strive to reach up to the heavens, like the top of the ladder in the dream. As the verse states, "A ladder was set on the earth and its top reached towards the heavens..." It is important to review the fact that a Jew is made up of body and soul.

As the verse tells us "And Hashem G-d formed the man of dust from the ground, and He blew into his nostrils the soul of life; and man became a living being."(Genesis 2:7) Hashem implanted the holy soul into the earthy body. The body craves earthy pleasures such as eating, sleeping, etc. While the soul, craves spiritual pleasures such as Torah study, prayer and other mitzvahs.

This idea is hinted to in the dream of Yakov. As the verse tells us "A ladder was set on the earth and its top reached towards the heavens..." The challenge of a Jew is therefore to elevate his earthy being to become more like Hashem in heaven. The ladder must stay on the ground in order to climb on it, yet the purpose of the ladder is to climb higher. So too, although we although we must take care of our earthy needs such as eating, and sleeping, etc., our primary goal is to reach the heavens.

On Shabbos we have a great opportunity for spiritual growth. Shabbos is in fact the spiritual highlight of the week. The kabbalistic Zohar teaches us that the power of Shabbos propels us through the coming week.

In conclusion, whenever we see a ladder we should stop to reflect on our position in life.(R.Pliskin) Are climbing higher towards our spiritual source in Heaven above? Are we using mitzvahs and Shabbos as a way to elevate ourselves? If we can stay focused on climbing the spiritual ladder, we will all live happier lives. **Good Shabbos Everyone.**